

PLUS + BLOOD DIAMONDS | MURDER: NYC, PHILLY, D.C.

# DO AND DIVA

Magazine Issue | 0021

THE ORIGINATOR'S STREET BIBLE

LLOYD  
BANKS

G-UNITS  
MONEY IN  
THE BANK

LADIES  
ARE YOU  
HIS WIFEY  
OR HIS  
JUMP OFF?

*Play your position!*

*Also Inside*  
PITBULL  
PROJECT PAT  
LYFE

+

UNCENSORED  
JEEZY

MARRIED TO THE STREETS

PARENTAL  
ADVISORY  
GANGSTA CONTENT

# A TRAIL OF BODIES

*"Javier 'Panama' Card ... allegedly left a trail of bodies from New York to Philly to Washington DC. Court records indicate that the ruthless gang dealt up to fifty kilos of cocaine a month from the Deli Den, a lunch spot on Martin Luther King Jr. Ave in Southeast Washington DC"*

Words By | EYONE AND SOUL MAN

"African American people who populate our hoods and ghettos have become accustomed to accepting violence as a way of life- a norm. Death by violence goes hand in hand for us and we have become desensitized to the actual social implications and repercussions that violence has on generations of our people. Long before the concept of Don Diva Magazine was developed violence had a strong hold on us. Our societies preoccupation and fascination with violence is evident in our music and our movies and the use of violence as a tool of survival or a "come up" has been around since the beginning of time. There is no one group, race, ethnicity or social class that does not have their own stories of violence in the pursuit of the all mighty dollar."

*- Tiffany Chiles, Don Diva Magazine*

In the chronicles of the ever expanding gangsta files and criminal underworld, different crews at different times have gotten props for their various MO's (motis operandi) whatever they may be. Some crews are about territory, protecting the home turf as it is, while others are known as money getting muthafuckas. Some crews go the flamboyant route and are recognized for their extravagant lifestyles while others are known as finesse hustlers, putting their B.I (business) above all else. Some crews are all about power and respect. They disdain violence and work from the shadows to get that dollar while others are on Front Street living large and in charge. And then there are the crews that use violence as a means to an end. They thrive off the fear and paranoia that they inspire whenever they step on the block.

Javier "Panama" Card and his crew were one of the latter. They allegedly left a trail of bodies from New York to Philly to Washington DC. Court records indicate that the ruthless gang dealt up to fifty kilos of cocaine a month from the Deli Den, a lunch spot on Martin Luther King Jr. Ave in Southeast Washington DC; where 7th District police officers often ate lunch. A DC police officer was even said to be a part of their crew. A crew that prosecutors said ran one of the largest drug operations ever encountered in the city. But the story only ended in the Chocolate City. It began in Panama. *"My hood was Santa Cruz," Card says. "It was located in the city of Panama. Its one of the most notorious*

*hoods in the city. Poverty was thick in my hood. I started robbing tourists at a young age. The police would murder you for this. This was one of the reasons I came to America. I didn't want to get killed like a dog in the streets with a wallet in my hand. In America, I knew I could get rich like my homies that took the trip before me."*

And one of those homies was Santa Cruz and Brooklyn street legend Julio "Jack" Guerrero who hit US streets in the 80's with cocaine and machine guns, chasing his piece of the American Dream. "Julito (as Panama called Guerrero) taught me everything I know," says Panama. "When Julito said that he would bring me up I was ready to go." And the 20 year old with nothing but a few hundred dollars and the clothes on his back made his way to the states via Canada in the summer of 1986. And this is when Assistant United States Attorney G. Paul Howes said the double digit body count began. "He came to New York city in the mid 80's," AUSA Howes wrote in court papers. "Ostensibly as a student and quickly established himself as a violent purveyor of drugs, with a charismatic flair that attracted followers to do his bidding." But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

**Is it true you were introduced to the game in the notorious Red Hook projects?**

**Panama:** Red Hook Projects were like a whole different world in Brooklyn. I arrived in New York in 1986, these were vicious times in New

York. Red Hook was a gold mine; millionaires were made in those days. Gunplay was an everyday thing. Red Hook was like a house made of soap, those that didn't slip, eventually fell anyway. It was dangerous. I was amazed by this environment coming from Panama. I felt the same way Scar-face felt about America when he first got here. It was like one big pussy ready to get fucked.

In the Red Hook projects of Brooklyn New York, Julito taught Panama the intricacies of the drug game. Julito's crew, La Banda, had a stronghold on Columbia Road and Panama who never held a gun in his hand back home soon was one of the Uzi-spraying frontrunners for the crew. Seeing that Panama was catching on to the American way, Julito put him behind the door of his Red Hook coke spot. Panama ran the spot with an iron fist. Allegedly opening fire as a first recourse for all infractions when he was behind the door. Up to \$25,000 a day came through the door and most of the money lined Julito's pockets.

**How was Red Hook Projects for you?**

**Panama:** Red Hook was a dog eat dog world where only the strong survived and the weak perished. Julito was the first Panamanian around there and he was definitely not welcomed. They were not willing to share the profits with an outsider. Keep in mind that we are talking about 1986, the crack epidemic was in full blast. Gates as we called them were bringing in 25 to 30 thousand dollars a day sometimes. The wars were always about money, power and respect. Red Hook was another world in the middle of Brooklyn. Big up to the Red Hook Massive.

"I was a kid back then," Panama says. "A kid that made Julito over a million dollars during his first year in Brooklyn, according to street sources. Eventually, Panama opened up his own Red Hook spot and brought his little brother Pimpo to New York. "Pimpo was making a nice piece of change when he hit Red Hook. I made way for him and everybody in the crew honored it. When Pimpo was running my spot it was making \$8,000 a day. I didn't want Pimpo to go through what I went through."

So he set his little brother up but it didn't last. Pimpo was murdered at the age of 19. His death was somewhat the beginning of the end as far as Panama was concerned with Red Hook. His welcome in New York wore out when he allegedly opened fire with a Mac-11 sub machine gun inside a Brooklyn nightclub one May night in 1988. A former girlfriend was killed. On the run for murder there was only one thing to do, leave New York.

**How did Pimpo's murder affect you?**

**Panama:** I was devastated by Pimpo's murder. That was my baby brother. Thinking things out was out of the equation. That was a very dark time. A great warrior's time was cut short. The game is not fair nor just. It shouldn't be called the game, it's as serious as cancer.

North Philly was Panama's first stop where he established a base



around Dauphin Street. "No one in New York could connect me to Philly," he says. "One of the first things Julito taught me was that America had 50 states, when shit get hot a nigga just roll to the next city and the next city after that and set up shop." He hooked up with dudes from the notorious 11th and York projects. One thing led to another and he ended up in the Logan section of Philly where police and prosecutors say he and his drug gang evolved into a murderous organization that dealt crack cocaine by the kilo. The crew's alleged base of operations was Marvine Street. This was where Panama met Jerome "Rome" Edwards who prosecutors say became the enforcer of the alleged drug gang.

**Where are you from and what's up with the enforcer label?**

**Rome:** Let's just say I came from the toughest streets in North Philly. In life we all have a part to play, I just played my part in our family. Not saying I was out there doing reckless shit but when something was wrong and my family needed me to handle it I was there.

**How was your run in Philly?**

**Panama:** Philly was a gold mine back in those days (88-89). Serious shit was going down. Philly was good to us; it wasn't as intense as it was in New York or DC. Nevertheless the city was good to us. We brought some of our Philly soldiers to DC with us, most of them crumbled under the pressure when the feds vamped down. My man Rome didn't do no crumbling, that's my brother. We walked through the fire together.

Rome was a street-smart, aggressive 18-year old when he met Panama some time in 1988. Witnesses called him a little man that carried big guns and wouldn't think twice about using them. Their desire to get paid brought them together. They were so close that outsiders often thought Rome was also Panamanian. When homicide detectives inves-

One of Rome's alleged drug spots.



tigated murders the crew was suspected of witnesses said, "The Panamanians did it." Another Philly soldier, Yusuf Battle, was brought into the fold and after allegedly ripping off some Colombians the crew moved on to the murder capital of the world, Washington DC.

**Were you the little man with the big guns as the witnesses claim?**

**Rome:** Let's just say when I was brought up I was taught to never take anything from anybody, so I made it my business because of my height to be the best at everything I did. So whatever problem I came across if I had to put that work in, I did. I mean I wasn't a troublemaker or anything I just handled my business. Besides it isn't the size of a man, it's the size of his heart that counts the most.

When Panama, Rome, and Yusuf hit DC in 1989 the city was a war zone. On Valentines Day 1989, 13 people were shot dead in one twenty four hour period. Then DC mayor Marion Barry told reporters, "Washington is not Dodge City." Referring to the gun-slinging town of legend. The Mayor added, "There are some neighborhoods that are not safe, but most murders are targeted assassinations." With the crack epidemic holding the city hostage Panama and his comrades knew that DC was no place to play. According to AUSA Howes, Panama established himself in Southeast DC through his homie Julito who had moved his La Banda cocaine ring south from New York to Maryland's Prince George's Country. Through Julito, Panama hooked up with heavyweight southeast drug trafficker Jimmy Murray, court documents relate. This led to the Deli Den setup, which became Panama and Murray's headquarters on Martin Luther King Ave in Southeast. Murray's mother owned the deli and 50 kilos flew out its door a month bringing in tens of thousands of dollars a day.

**What role did Jimmy Murray play in the crew?**

**Panama:** Jimmy was our backbone in DC, a jack-of-all-trades. We started off as business partners but became closer than friends. We became brothers. You wouldn't see one without the other. Nothing came between us, not money, not cars, not women, I mean nothing.

By mid-1990, the crew was well established in the Washington area with cocaine sales allegedly over one million dollars. Authorities claimed the crew was the prime drug organization between South Capitol Street and Chesapeake Street, Southeast. Prosecutors said that Panama and Murray processed cocaine, stored fully automatic weapons and conducted wholesale drug transactions out of the Deli Den. Meanwhile Rome, Yusuf, and Antoine Rice operated out of apartments around Chesapeake Street. Prosecutors also contended that award winning DC police officer, Fonda C Moore, was also a member of the crew. She allegedly served as an armed driver when large sums of cash, weapons or cocaine were transported, obtained police photos of rivals so the crew could identify and eliminate them and warned the crew of drug sweeps and undercover operations. Witnesses told police that Moore was so cool with the crew that she was seen in the Deli Den comparing her Glock with Panama's.

According to AUSA G. Paul Howes, Moore became involved in the drug ring through her relationship with Jimmy Murray. Government wit-

ness, James Crallie testified, "Jimmy was having sex with her, that's why we never got raided at the deli. She was keeping Jimmy informed."

**How did ex-DC police officer Fonda Moore get caught up with your case?**

**Panama:** Fonda was in love with Jimmy, she just got caught up in a bad situation. Her association with Jimmy and us was what created the whole fiasco. Fonda and I became friends. The rats and the media painted a whole different picture, they went as far as to insinuate that she and I had a romantic relationship. As if I would fool around with my comrade's woman. That would be dishonor. Fonda is a stand up sister, she was facing life and could have told lies on me as a vehicle to obtain her freedom but she chose to fight for her freedom and eventually obtained it like a trooper. She took a stand when so-called gangsters folded under pressure. Fonda Moore is a stand up kind of lady. She walked through

the fire with us, her only crime was being in love with my man, Jimmy, like I said previously. The rats painted a whole different picture, especially James Crallie, known as Studda in Philly. He was the star witness. We had 42 witnesses in total, it was a sad sight.

Court documents alleged that by the end of 1990, the drug gang headed by Murray and Panama was at its zenith. It all came to a murderous halt on October 29, 1990. Jimmy Murray, 26 at the time, was found shot three times in the head and neck, dumped upside down in the passenger seat of his new BMW with a Glock in his waistband and \$2,000 in his pocket. He had supposedly been robbed of \$40,000, five kilos of cocaine, a Rolex watch, and a diamond ring. According to homicide detectives, first blood had been drawn and the so-called trail of bodies began.

Furious, Panama and Rome allegedly

called a series of meetings at 4018 South Capitol Street, Southeast. Just hours after Murray's body had been found. The crew's objective, according to government witness, James Crallie who was present, was to avenge Murray's murder. Crallie said that Fonda Moore was present at one of the meetings. The crew came to the conclusion that an associate of Murray's, Billy Ray Tolbert, who had met him the night of his death to buy some weight, was Murray's killer, Crallie said. Witnesses said that the crew not only planned to kill Tolbert, but three other men as well, all of which were deemed to have taken part in Murray's robbery and murder.

A short while after the first meeting at 4018 South Capitol Street, Crallie said that Tolbert was lured to the apartment under the impression that he would be helping the crew find Murray's killers. Once Tolbert was inside the apartment "Panama excused himself and went to the bathroom. When he returned, he had a Glock in his hand and demanded to know why Tolbert had killed Murray." Crallie said from the witness stand during trial. "He pointed the gun at Billy and asked where his coke and money were."

Crallie said that Panama and Rome ordered their associates to duct tape Tolbert to keep him quiet. Meanwhile Crallie said, "Panama went to call an associate of Tolbert's who was also suspected in Murray's slay-

**"Red Hook Projects were like a whole different world in Brooklyn. I arrived in New York in 1986, these were vicious times in New York. Red Hook was a gold mine; millionaires were made in those days."**

*-Panama*

4018 South Capital, Washington, DC- Stash House where Billy Ray Tolbert and Yusef Murders allegedly took place.



ing, "hoping to lure him to the apartment as well." "Others began to beat Tolbert," Crallie continued. "Rome was kicking him in the face. He was bleeding so much that the duct tape kept sliding off his mouth. Then Tolbert stood up and tried to throw himself out the window but knocked himself out. Unconscious, he was hanging out the window. Panama got off the phone and returned to the bedroom and handed me his gun. He told me to shoot Tolbert."

"What did you do?" Asked the prosecutor, "I fired." Crallie said. "Why?" He was questioned. "Because I was ordered to do it," Crallie said, "when Panama says do it, you do it." Tolbert was shot several times at point black range, court documents indicate and Panama and Rome were believed to be among the shooters. Tolbert's body was later found in his white 1990 Acura Legend under the 11th Street Bridge on Oct 30, 1990, one day after Jimmy Murray's body was found in his BMW.

Fonda Moore was not present when Tolbert was murdered but was patrolling the alley behind the apartment building, witnesses said. They also said that in the days after the Tolbert murder while the drug gang was on the hunt for others suspected of Murray's murder, Moore kept them up to speed on the investigation into the murders.

Meanwhile, bodies continued to drop. The AUSA said of the murders allegedly connected to Panama and his crew, most of which occurred in a nine-month period between '90 and '91, "One leads to the next. It's literally a trail of bodies."

#### How did you survive in Southeast DC?

**Panama:** The streets were moving from 0 to 60 in seconds in those days. Southeast was one of the most intense environments I have ever encountered. Murder was the order of the day, along with a side order of boo-koo money. I survived by staying sharp, trusting no one outside the circle, and never allowing fear to cause hesitation.

**Rome:** I was taught to adapt to any environment or situation. Then when you give respect you get it. When I got to DC things were already established. Everybody was doing their thing. I just got in where I fit in, plus niggaz already know who I was when I got there so it made things easier, you dig.

In the summer of 1990, a stash-house allegedly ran by associates of Panama was robbed. Days later on Sept 5, the handcuffed and bullet-

riddled body of one of the suspected robbers turned up in the middle of Montello Avenue Northeast. On Christmas morning 1990, another body dropped. Antoine Rice and John Moore were arrested for the murder, both men were reputed associates of Panama and Rome. After an alleged drug deal gone bad, police said that Rice and Moore cornered the victim outside his apartment on Wheeler Road Southeast and opened fire using an AR-15 and 9mm Taurus. Months later, Rice was arrested for the murder and was later acquitted. Moore was also arrested during a raid of 4018 South Capitol Street. Police found cocaine and the 9mm Taurus used in the Christmas murder. However, Moore was not charged with the Christmas murder, police didn't know the Taurus was used in the murder. Moore was released the morning after the raid on South Capitol Street and found a week later, shot in the head execution style in Fort Greble Park.

AUSA G. Paul Howes said that Moore's murder added a deadly twist to the already murderous events that were going on and put Panama and his long time friend/mentor Julito at war. According to court records, Moore was a member of Julito's Maryland branch of La Banda, and had always been loyal to Julito, but worked with Panama's crew while Julito was in jail.

#### What led to the fall out between you and Julito?

**Panama:** Julito came home from prison with a different mentality. It was all about being on top again. He wanted to bring about a hostile takeover. Julito was very crafty one of the best in my book. The world was a chess board for him and he played the game well. His whole objective was to rule every dollar moving.

Around 3:00 AM Jan 23, 1991, the very day after Moore's body was found, 19-year old Yusuf Battle, a close associate of Panama and Rome, who had come from Philly with them, was gunned down at 4018 South Capitol Street, shot 22 times by two gunmen in a murder, detectives said was a message of some kind. Prosecutors alleged that Julito killed Yusuf for John Moore's murder. The bond of brotherhood between Panama and Julito was supposedly broken when Yusuf



Jerome "Rome" Edwards

was gunned down, according to AUSA Howes. Julito was the next body to drop.

AUSA Howes said that Panama "supplied an overdose of heroin to Julito in retaliation for the Yusuf Battle shooting." Detectives said that Julito had inhaled too much of the drug and his heart stopped. He was found on the floor of his bedroom by his daughter. A week after Julito's death, another suspect in the Jimmy Murray murder was gunned down in a hail of bullets. According to AUSA Howes, "the victim had been heard bragging about robbing Murray and then killing him, along with Tolbert." The victim and an associate were walking down Hartford Street Southeast just after midnight on March 7, 1991 when they were

ambushed by men with fully automatic weapons.

With the body count on the rise and growing out of control members of the different warring factions wanted a way out. They began to join law enforcement. At this time, as one homicide detective put it "the gang was on the verge of imploding." The killing wasn't over yet. The second suspected gunman in the Yusuf Battle shooting was found in the trunk of an Oldsmobile off of George Washington Memorial Parkway. The victim had been shot in the head twice, wrapped from head to toe in a quilt and thick plastic trash bags and tied with a rope. By the time firefighters and detectives got inside the trunk the body had been baked by the 86-degree summer heat.

#### Did you kill Julito?

**Panama:** That was all false propaganda. He died of a heroin overdose. Yeah we had our differences but I sleep good at night knowing I did not have to push the envelope that far even though things were going in that direction at one point. He brought me to this country and taught me a lot about the game and life period. Not a day goes by that I don't wish that Julito was still here. It was love in, love out with us.

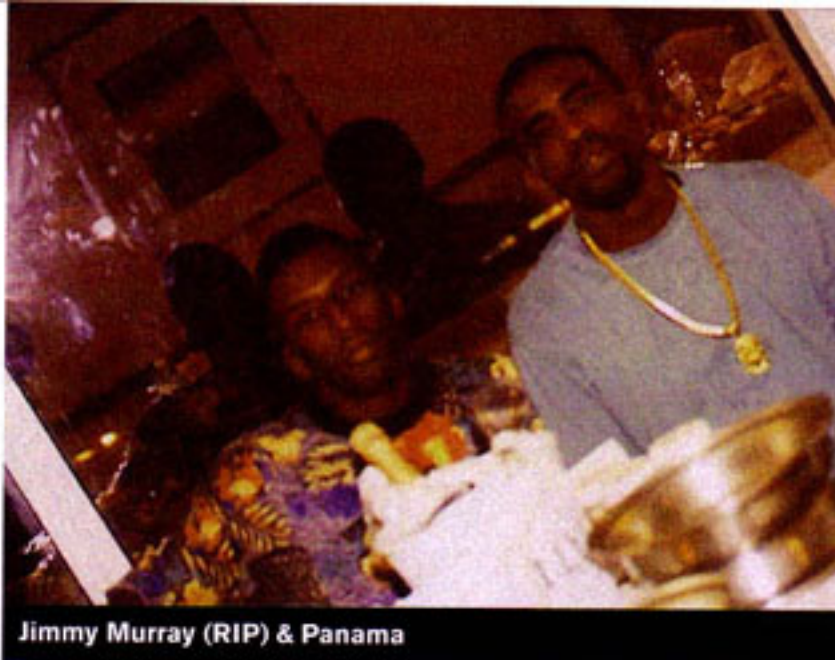
At what homicide detectives call the peak of an explosion of murders fueled by crack, bodies began to turn up all over the Washington DC area. In Oct 1990 police found the bodies of three men- two in DC and one across the line in Maryland. All three had been handcuffed, their heads wrapped in duct tape, shot multiple times in the head at close range and left in their cars. Detectives called the murders the triple duct-tape murders. Two weeks later Tolbert's body was found under the 11th Street Bridge in his Acura Legend. He too had been duct-taped with multiple headshots at close range. DC police could not hide the fact that they needed outside help to contain the outbreak of what they called crack cocaine related violence. A special task force was called in and Redrum came to town and a two-year investigation began.

#### What did you think of all the deaths during that era?

**Panama:** Losing my man Jimmy and Yusuf was a big blow to the game. Every year on their birthdays I cry real gangsta tears for my niggas. They live on in my soul forever.

**Rome:** Since we been in, a lot of bad rumors been put out in the streets about me and Panama. Don't nobody know how we did things. Panama sacrificed alot for the family and close friends. None of the people that we used to look out for looked out for us when we went through what we just went through. The most fucked up rumor is that we killed our man Yusuf, which was a fucking lie. Our brother got caught up in the war between two families. His murder had nothing to do with him or us. Those who killed Yusuf ain't around no more, that came out in trial. Other than that, I just want to say that to the end my brother Panama stayed loyal to the game and to the code of the streets. I love him and respect him more each day.

Redrum, murder spelled backwards, was a team of homicide detectives and DEA agents. The DC Redrum task force was formed in Dec 1990, a little over a month after the duct-tape murders. The task force was similar to the ones formed in New York and Miami in the mid 80's when Colombian cartels began taking over the drug distribution networks. Redrum began fol-



Jimmy Murray (RIP) & Panama

lowing leads that took them across the country and down to the Caribbean where they went undercover buying guns and drugs. They got their lead in the Panama case when Caribbean based DEA agents caught a mule smuggling cocaine from Panama through the Caribbean to DC by way of Dulles International Airport. The mule named Panama as the killer of Tolbert in order to make a deal with

the DEA. Panama was tracked down in Philly and arrested May 13, 1991. The rest of the crew was arrested over the next year. Fonda C. Moore was arrested at the 7th District police station. Overall the Redrum investigation into the Panama case led to the indictment of 13 people on charges ranging from drug distribution to murder. AUSA G Paul Howes was picked by the U.S. Attorneys office to prosecute the case because he was regarded as a seasoned, experienced prosecutor by the brass at the Justice Department. Howes had also served on the team that had successfully prosecuted Rayful Edmond and his crew.

#### How did the case come about?

**Panama:** It's a known fact that my case went from criminal to political. Anytime people in high places feel like a young black man has the potential to infiltrate their ranks, he becomes a threat to their system. Fonda Moore was one of theirs and if what those rats were saying was true then I was a force to be reckoned with and I had to be stopped. Fonda got caught up in the rapture of love, she was in love with my friend Jimmy and they made her pay a hefty price for being in love with a ghetto superstar.

By the time the trial came around in September of 1993, many of the people indicted on the case had joined forces with the prosecution. Only six defendants remained-

**Javier "Panama" Card, then 28,** who was named as the leader of the large-scale cocaine trafficking organization.

**Jerome "Rome" Edwards Jr., then 23,** who was named as a large scale cocaine distributor and chief enforcer of the gang.

**Antoine W. Rice, then 27,** who allegedly received large quantities of crack cocaine on consignment for distribution and acted as an armed lookout for the Tolbert murder.

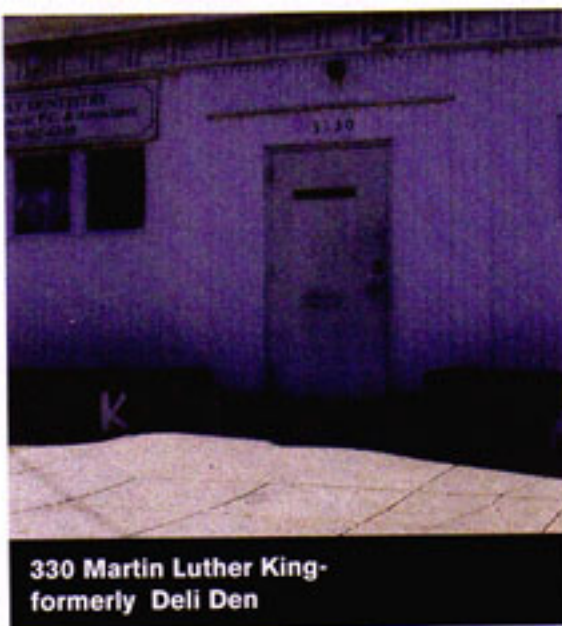
**Fonda C. Moore, then 33,** who allegedly gave Panama and Jimmy Murray confidential information about the Tolbert homicide and conspired in planning killings.

**Eunice Y. Demyers, then 48,** who was the owner of the Deli Den and Jimmy Murray's mother. She allegedly aided in the planned revenge killings, accepted thousands of dollars for allowing her deli to be used for drugs and weapons storage and for large-scale cocaine deals. **Tessie E. Thomas, then 26,** who was then Panama's girlfriend who transported weapons, cocaine, and cash, was involved in the planned killings and helped to hide evidence in the Tolbert slaying.

The prosecutions whole case was based on seven months of testimony of admitted criminals, drug lords, murderers and thieves. In AUSA Howes' opening statement, he said, "There is no other way to tell you how a conspiracy works except by striking deals with people who were involved. In street terms, they are called snitches." Forty-two witnesses testified on the behalf



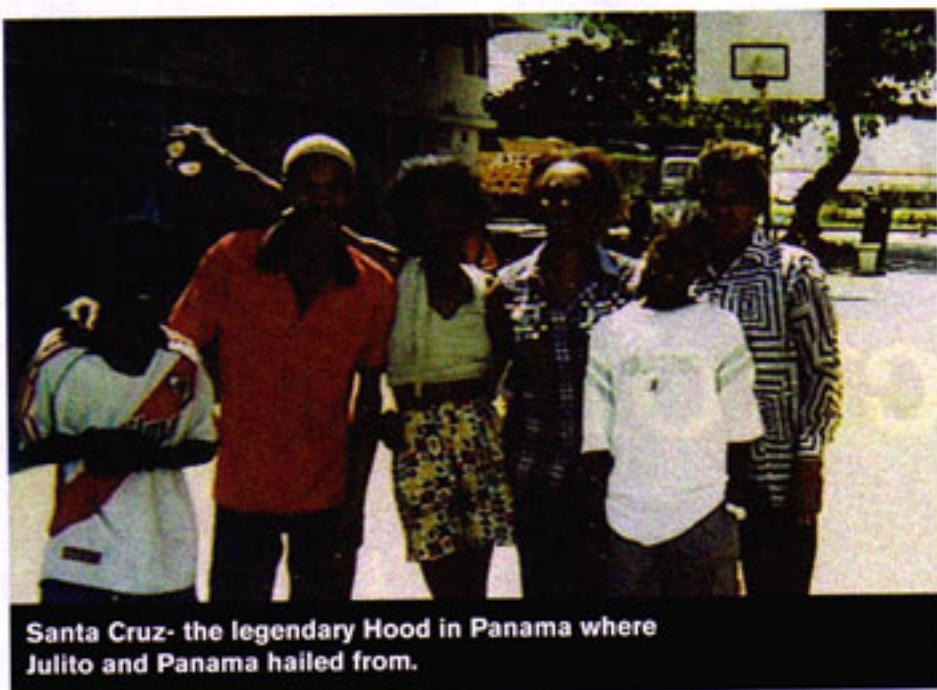
of the government. AUSA Howes used everything he could to win the case and take down Panama and his crew. He even had the Washington Post on his side who published high-profile information about the defendants that had nothing to do with the case at hand, some articles even linked them to murders that were known by homicide detectives to have been committed by others. According to defense attorneys and the motions they filed the articles alone were more than enough for a mistrial. Through the media, the defendants were found



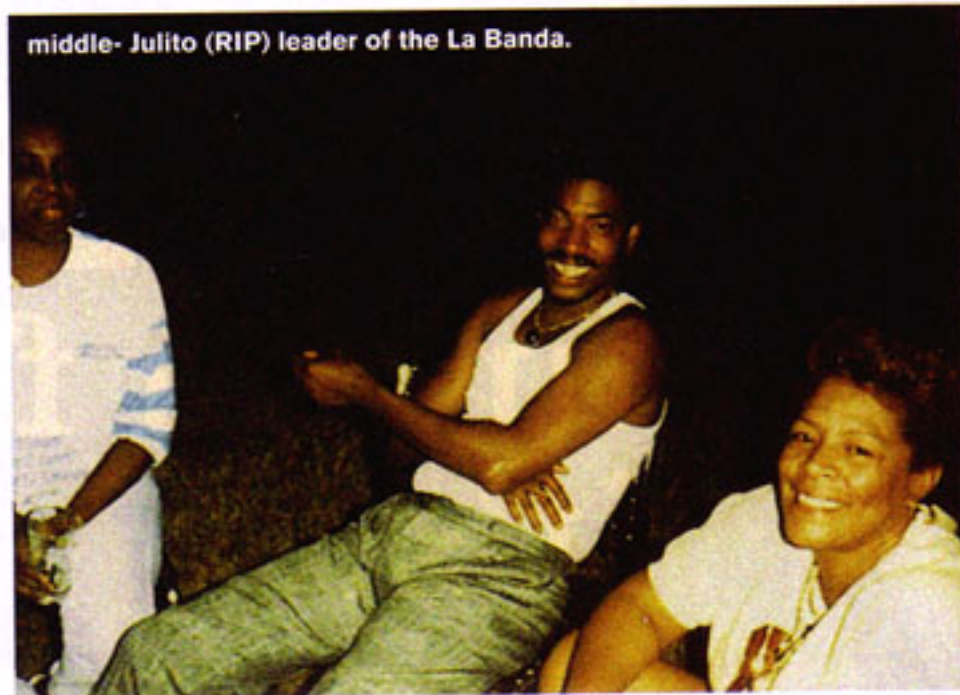
330 Martin Luther King-  
formerly Deli Den

commit murder and tampering with physical evidence. She was sentenced to up to eight years. Case closed. But the case wasn't closed. Not for Panama and Rome.

Nearly six years after being found guilty and sent off to prison for what was intended to be the rest of their lives- Panama, Rome, and Antoine Rice were still fighting for their freedom- they had vowed to never lay down. Their case finally made it before a panel of Appeals Court judges.



Santa Cruz- the legendary Hood in Panama where  
Julito and Panama hailed from.



middle- Julito (RIP) leader of the La Banda.

guilty long before the trial was over.

"There was a conspiracy but not a conspiracy between those people," said Panama's trial lawyer Billy L Ponds in his closing argument as he pointed at the defendants. "There was a conspiracy between the government and its witnesses- a conspiracy to deprive those people of a fair trial, a conspiracy to put false evidence before you." Ponds went on to describe the witnesses as "trapped criminals willing to lie under oath to spare themselves long prison terms." The jury began deliberating on April 5, 1994. The first verdict in the marathon trial came on April 11, 1994.

**What was the trial like?**

**Panama:** I totally agree with Billy Pond's description of our trial. It was a seven-month death battle. We were fighting for our freedom; we sat in that courtroom day after day. We had 15 marshals watching us at all times. Metal detectors at the doors. The attorneys were not allowed to come in the back to confer with us. We were not allowed hot meals for lunch and we were stripped searched every morning before entering the courtroom. But above all we sat and listened to those lying rats, we knew the prosecutor was doing a lot of underhanded shit but we couldn't prove it at the time. The arguments between the defense attorneys and the prosecutors were fierce.

**Panama was convicted of seven counts including:** conspiracy to commit murder, felony murder while armed, and premeditated murder while armed. He was sentenced to 88-years to life. Both Rome and Antoine Rice were convicted of several counts including kidnapping while armed and felony murder while armed. They were both sentenced to multiple 30 years to life sentences. Eunice Y. Demyers and Tessie E. Thomas were both acquitted of all charges. A mistrial was declared in the case of Fonda C. Moore, who later pleaded guilty to conspiracy to

**How did you all get back in court?**

**Rome:** Panama had a lot to do with it, meaning he put in the most work. He stayed on our backs, you feel me? We were fighting our appeal on racial and religious grounds because the DA excluded a man from the jury because of how he looked saying that the man was with the Nation of Islam and that he couldn't be a fair juror.

**Panama:** I got convicted on my DC case in April 1994. We finally got the case overturned in 2004 so it took us ten years to crack that safe. I always felt in my heart that we were going to overturn this case.

The Supreme Court prohibits prosecutors from striking jurors solely on account of their race on the assumption that black jurors, as a group will be unable impartially to consider the states case against a black defendant. Sandra K. Levick, Antoine Rice's lawyer said, "No white man in identical clothing or hairstyle would have stirred the same reaction."

Rome (standing) and Panama- United States Penitentiary Lee





Javier "Panama" Card

Panama, Rome and Antoine just knew they had light coming.

**So what happened after that?**

**Rome:** While we were waiting on our en-banc hearing to come down Antoine's lawyer was already checking into some other illegal business that Howes was under investigation for in another case. He was using witness vouchers illegally, meaning he was using money to pay off witnesses. These witnesses that he was paying never testified in our case, they were just on the list so he could pay more money to witnesses that were testifying against us.

**So the prosecutor was crooked?**

**Rome:** Yeah, we had the government right where we wanted them. Some time around July 2004, I got a letter from my attorney telling me that they found out about the prosec-

utor misconduct in our case. It had all come out after we had been locked up for almost 13 years. The DA's office had sent my lawyer a letter giving us three options- plead guilty to lesser charges, go for straight release or go for court room release. I picked plead guilty to lesser charges because I knew the government was going to put up a fight- they had already railroaded us once. We worked out a deal to give all of our life sentences back. I really got a lot of respect for Panama. Even in the end, he was still willing to sacrifice for the struggle. He told his lawyer and mine to tell the DA's office that he would do 5 more years if they just let me and Antoine go. That's real nigga shit right there. I was like, they ain't just going to let me walk out of the door like that. They had me as the number two man in the whole case. Everyone looks at the government to uphold the law but in our case and many others that's not true. The government did things in our case that was above and below the law. The DA wanted to put us away so bad that he used tricks that weren't even in the books. You feel me? He used fake witnesses, evidence, just any and everything to win.

Rome was right. In the end, he walked away with only 2 and a half more years to do. Antoine Rice went straight to the streets with time served and Panama walked away owing only one more year on his sentence. They never laid down and after nearly 15 years they finally won. Beating the government at their own game while staying true to themselves and the streets that spawned them.

**How do you want to end this?**

**Panama:** First of all I would like to give a 21-gun salute to my wife. She is my best friend, my soulmate. My wife is a one in a million. She married me against all odds and stood by me through the rain and storms. She has made so many sacrifices in the name of love.

**What do you think of the so-called game now?**

**Rome:** I feel different about the game for so many reasons not because of the system but because of the streets. Before I came in, I watched it change a lot, it wasn't like the way I came up in it, you know? There was no more loyalty. Dudes were killing niggaz they came up with. Rats and disloyalty has fucked things up. And things will never be the same. Stay tuned for Panama's Story- "Money Ain't Everything" by Eyone. 