

The Rose That Grew From Concrete

Many people reflect on their lives as they get older and regret things they did in their youth. For Leifel Jackson, his regret over his past is what keeps him going today. He has worked for Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for the past nine years, and most people have no idea this smiling, soft-spoken co-worker was a gang leader during his youth and served time in prison. Those days were some of his darkest, but it's precisely those dark days that keep Jackson focused on helping Little Rock's youth avoid the path he took. Jackson's story was spotlighted in the 1994 HBO documentary "*Gang Wars – Bangin' in Little Rock*" and the 2004 follow-up "*Banging' in The Rock Part 2.*" Those two documentaries helped show the gang violence that was prevalent in Little Rock in the 1990s and how former gang members were trying to turn the tide of violence. Now, almost 30 years after the original HBO documentary, Jackson has a new documentary titled, 'The Rose That Grew From Concrete.' "In the beginning, I didn't want to make this film," says Jackson. "I already did two documentaries that were highly rated, and I knew it was going to be hard to try to make another '*Gang Wars*' or '*Back to the Hood.*' However, Jackson eventually did make a new film because he knew the struggles of today's youth continue. In this latest documentary, the stories focus on an area of Little Rock around Wolfe Street, once one of the most violent streets in the country due to gang violence. Despite the news headlines of violence in that area, Jackson wanted to show the world another side of the community and the people that live there. *The Rose That Grew From Concrete* tells the story of people from Wolfe Street that have bettered themselves and their lives even with some bumps along the way.

There's Tim Campbell, a Central High School graduate and former all-state athlete who found his future in helping others. There are stories of Jackson's former gang associates who have also changed their lives. One of those is Sannecia Davis, who says don't let past mistakes take away your future. "I wanted to participate in the documentary not only to share my story but hope it could save a young woman or man from making some of the wrong decisions in life," Davis said. "I also hope it encourages, motivates, and inspires people. If I could do it, so can you if you believe you can." Seeing these inspirational and sometimes painful stories is why Jackson decided to make another documentary. "Violence is again on the rise in our city, our state, and the whole country," says Jackson. "The film's message that I want everyone to walk away with is hope. Hope is the message."

You can watch "The Rose That Grew From Concrete" here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/bnn7q9y2i88rmk7/CNCTD_201_2997_HD_Master.mp4?dl=0



Left: The poster for the premiere of the documentary.

Center: Mr. Jackson in a scene from the documentary.

Right: A packed house for Mr. Jackson's premiere.

