

## Hakeem's Story

"Hakeem" was born in Durham, North Carolina in 1987. He spent his childhood in East Durham and lived with his parents in the Few Gardens public housing community. It was there that Hakeem first became involved with gangs, at the age of 12.

As his gang involvement increased, so did the chances that he would eventually be arrested. At the age of 17 Hakeem picked up his first conviction – AWDWISI, (assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury) and spent the next two years in prison. At the age of 19 Hakeem was convicted again, this time for possession of a firearm by a felon. Not long after that came a conviction for robbery with a dangerous weapon, resulting in extensive prison time. After stops at Foothills, Maury, Caledonia and Nash Correctional Institutions, Hakeem was paroled back to Durham in early 2015.

During his final couple years of incarceration, Hakeem decided to change the trajectory of his life. He enrolled in the STGMU (Security Threat Group Management Unit) at Foothills Correctional Institution, completed some vocational training and completed a couple self-paced mail-based courses through UNC – Chapel Hill.

Upon release, Hakeem learned the hard realities of returning to the community after a long period of incarceration. His daughter had started school and was accustomed to life without him. His "baby mama" had moved on to a new relationship. An individual he had previously harmed learned he was out and was "looking for" him. Independent housing was not a possibility and employment opportunities were severely limited due to his felony convictions. Because of his status as and STG/CTG (Security Threat Group/Community Threat Group) Hakeem must meet frequently with his Probation Officer, who is currently considering a monitoring bracelet for Hakeem because of some missed appointments.

Hakeem's future is uncertain. He has enrolled in programming at the Criminal Justice Resource Center, but the pull of his former lifestyle and the promise of easy money in the underground economy is strong. The odds are not with him, as eight out of ten inmates released back to Durham with the STG/CTG designation pick up new charges within two years.

Note: The story of Hakeem is true although his name has been changed. This story is based on correspondence from prison and conversations after release with Jim Stuit, Durham's Gang Reduction Strategy Manager.