

**YOUTHS, from page 4**

we lived in (Northeast 27th Avenue and Dekum Street), it was like Crips and Bloods. When we were walking to school, we would see people stab each other or shooting.

"I have three sisters and three brothers. One of them was adopted; she was my friend, and my mom took her in. The oldest two had a rare bone disease and needed special medical care, so my mom had to give them to this family that specialized in medical stuff.

"I didn't have a dad. I'm the baby of the family, but I was the only one who had a different dad.

"My oldest brother that lived with us, he's like really crazy, and he was getting into trouble.

"My brother being involved in gangs kind of made me be involved. But the stuff I went through with my brothers when I was little, I didn't really look up to them.

"I didn't really look up to anybody, because I didn't have any strong figures in my family. I didn't even look up to my mom; she was my hero, but I didn't look up to her.

"My fourth-grade teacher; something about me, she wanted to help me, I got involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, and she was like my mentor-type person. Ever since fourth grade, she was my big sister. Me and her still maintain contact."

**MARSEL  
AGE 22**

*Marsel is at Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility in Salem. He is a "Hoover," a member of Portland's Hoover Criminals, a violent street gang with origins in South Central Los Angeles.*

*Marsel grew up "in Northeast Portland, around Peninsula and the new Columbia Villa, and Irving Park as well."*

*His mother worked as a*

**M**ike Riggan is superintendent at Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility.

**"Kids need adults. They need to be loved, they need to be cared for and have loving, supportive relationships with people teaching them how to learn self control and how to be an adult."**

**"It takes a village to raise a child, but now that village is disinterested. We've become a self-centered culture, and our kids are suffering."**

*housekeeper and his father owned a janitorial business.*

"My mom and dad were split, so it was kinda hectic dealing with that. Not really a gang upbringing at all.

"If I couldn't get it from one parent, I could get it from the other parent. They supported me with everything I needed.

"My parents raised me to be basically like a NBA superstar. That's what they embedded in my life, was sports and school, sports and school, sports and school. But I wasn't really good at school, so that's how I kinda eventually ended up in this situation.

"I was just gaming – my parents would get involved, and I would just find a way to manipulate it, and just find a way to do the bare minimum just so I could get them off my back. I wasn't really learning anything.

"I just thought I couldn't do it. I didn't know how to read, so that was tough.

"Around eighth, ninth grade, I started reading about basketball and stuff like that. I started sharpening my skills, reading magazines, the newspaper, and getting on ESPN. Then I came to jail, and I started reading books out of nowhere. I read my first book coming into jail. My first full book. Now, I'm capable, but back then I wasn't interested or trying to learn. Didn't really care.

"I was good (at basketball), but I lacked discipline. I wasn't really coachable. I had skill, but coaches weren't able to develop those skills because I had an attitude problem.

"I loved basketball. I still do to this day. It's my favorite thing in the entire world is basketball."

**TROUBLE BREWING****LUIS**

*Luis said up until eighth grade, his life revolved around soccer.*

"That was the only thing my grandma did put me in when I was young. I played for a lot of traveling teams.

"I got steered into a different route, eighth grade, freshman year, hanging out with my cousins. There were different things that attracted me. Now, when I think about it, I should have stuck with soccer because I could have been playing in college and all that. I was traveling places, California, Vegas, for tournaments. I played for the Nike team. I got chosen to play for the youth USA team."

"One year I just missed (the sign-up deadline), and a lot can happen in a year. I was lost at that age."

**TREI**

*Trei said he got his introduction into gang life in Texas at age 13.*

"One of my best friends, his dad, he was like that dude, that dude that showed me the lifestyle. We was driving down the street one day and he just passed me one of them *thangs* (a revolver). It was like, 'You see that dude over there?' And I looked at him and I said, 'Which one?' He was like, 'All of them.' He was like, 'Shoot,' and ever since then, it's just been off the hip.

"I had to. It was them or me. We all called him pops. He was an older homie."

**JOSEFINA**

"I started getting into trouble around fifth grade. I started having troubles in school. Up until sixth grade I got As and Bs.

"Maybe the fact that I didn't have a father figure, my dad died before I was born, and my brothers, they were the only male figures that were there, and having them abuse me, physically, mentally, emotionally, like I think that was my biggest thing when I was younger.

"When I was 12, my cousin – she was the leader of this gang – and I hung out with them, but I wasn't really in one. But a couple months before I got locked up, I actually got jumped into my cousin's rival gang, which was kind of like a dis on her because I didn't really like her.

"The motivation was, my co-defendant (her boyfriend), he told me, 'We need a ride somewhere,' and the leader of that gang was like, 'I'm not going to give you a ride unless Tiny (her nickname) gets jumped in.' Because they had heard about me, my

reputation and stuff, and they wanted me in their clique, and they knew my cousin was the leader of their rival gang. I didn't want to, but we needed a ride, so I did what I did, which I guess is kind of a stupid reason for getting jumped into a gang."

**MARSEL**

*Marsel's infatuation with gangsters began when he was 5 years old.*

"I grew up watching cartoons and stuff, just like a normal kid, but there's this movie called 'Menace II Society,' and my mom never let me watch it, but she always had it in her room, and one day I took it, and put it in my PlayStation 2, and I watched it. One of the first scenes, dude got his head blown off, and after that I was scared. But then they were starting to hang out, and chill, and I was like, 'Oh, that's pretty tight,' and the whole movie, they had guns out, and stuff like that.

"I wanted to be a gangster. I want to be hanging out and having guns.

"I never gave my mom the movie back. I kept it until the time I came here.

"I felt like I was brainwashed. My whole life, those characters were kinda real to me, until my last two years of being in the community, and I was like, hold on: These dudes are playing in other movies, and they're like comedians and other stuff like that. I was like, they're not really thugs!

"I knew that they were actors, because it was a movie, but I thought that was more of their personality, their culture than just an entertainer.

*"I've been getting into trouble since I was a little kid, second grade. That's when things started getting documented and stuff, at school.*

"In fifth grade I had a fantasy that I wanted to get shot at one point in my life, like in my arm, to have that wound, to have that as a badge of honor, and then I wanted to go to prison. Then as I hit freshman year I was like, what the fuck? That was dumb.

"My mom would discipline me, take stuff away, spankings and shit like that, but (I'd always) have the essentials."

"The second half of my freshman year, I started skipping, and then I didn't gain any credits after the second semester of my freshman year.

"I was fascinated with guns. So like just knowing shit was going on in the streets, it just like intrigued me a little bit. When I left (an after-school program where he would hang out and sometimes study), I was like, 'OK son, now it's starting to get dark.' That's when shit like basically gets fun."

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**C**ristina Puentes, the gang conflict resolution coordinator for youth correctional facilities statewide, said many gang members see gangs as a big part of their cultural identity.

**"For a lot of these youth, what they see on the media, what they see on social media, that's who they identify with – that's who African-Americans are, or that's who Latinos are, and we teach them that it goes way beyond that, and have them see that bigger picture."**

Oregon Youth Authority has cultural programming to help youths discover more positive facets of their cultural heritage.

**"You can even watch March Madness or college football, and you see hand signs thrown left and right. You see celebrities doing it. It's almost like it's the 'in' thing, like it's become OK. ... And then you have 'Gangland,' and all those shows, which just adds a whole other layer because 'Gangland' gives our guys so many ideas."**

*Trei, a Gangster Disciple, is serving a 90-month sentence for stabbing a man in the chest during a robbery.*

PHOTO BY JOE GLODE

