

Rissa Riss

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become a true professional, she says. "He is so influential to the life I have now. He taught me about choices and about sacrifice—how to sacrifice the life you live for the life you want to live.

"He has an awesome, awesome training in comedy... And he let me open for him."

4. Rissa was expelled from Humboldt Elementary in third grade, for dissing the school's principal. "I wrote on the bathroom wall that she was a big fat pig," Riss

Also in that class was Anthony Branch, who later took the street name Lil' Smurf and was shot dead in a parking lot in North Portland. "Some people get breaks, some don't," she says.

6. She lives in Las Vegas. It's a good place to be a comic, she says. "It has so many things all packed into this small space," she says. "It's close to LA and it's closer to Portland than Dallas, Austin or Houston. But comedy is the same no matter where you go."

7. She supports other Portland artists. Rissa has produced shows for Lady Trinity of the hip hop trio 'Rose Bent.' "She's the greatest," she says of Trinity. She admires crooner Aaron O'Bryan Smith, Black Govament, Ieasha Spinks, fellow comic 'Seeznin's The Mayor!' and

more. "OMG That's horrible for a third-grader."

Humboldt wasn't all bad for Rissa. "I was on the drill team in 1st and 2nd grade," she remembers. "We were the Humboldt Firefoxes."

5. In 4th and 5th grade, at Woodlawn Elementary, Rissa was in the same class as vocalist Nehemiah Booker. "That was the coolest class," Rissa says. Nehemiah would sing at all of our assemblies. He'd sing a Gospel song called 'Tomorrow.' We thought he was the greatest R&B singer alive."

8. She gives back. Rissa helped fellow comic, Carmen Trineece Anderson get started in comedy. Anderson is a single mom dealing with late-stage cancer, Riss says.

"This woman is on chemo yet she is still striving to live her dream. I can't complain about anything, I can't say I stubbed my toe. I have to pull a Carmen. It's the new Malcolm X: 'by any means necessary.' She inspires me. "I don't care if my mom died, my man left

me, I got my leg cut off. I have to do this show."

9. She studied African dance. "At Woodlawn everyone took African dance," she says. "That class taught us so much about our culture and about discipline. It gave us an opportunity to see our fellow students perform. It gives a person hope and the idea that you can do something. It really instills in you a confidence that may not be instilled in everyone.

"My teacher also taught us Algebra and French. She was awesome and she did not take any crap. If you misbehaved, she'd say 'I'm sending you to Africa', and you'd have to go out the door. People didn't act up because they didn't want to get sent to



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Africa."

10. She's shy. "I always hated any recognition or awards. Don't bring attention to me unless I'm on stage."

11. She's trying to clean up her act. "I just did a show where I did not use the F-Bomb, not even once," she says. That takes practice!"

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