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50-Year War on Drugs Imprisoned Millions of Black Americans



Alton Lucas sits on the porch of his home outside of Raleigh, N.C., on Friday, June 18, 2021. As a teenager, Alton Lucas believed basketball or music would pluck him out of North Carolina and take him around the world. In the late 1980s, he was already the right-hand man to his musically inclined best friend, Youtha Anthony Fowler, who many hip hop and R&B heads know today as DJ Nabs.

By **AARON MORRISON**
Associated Press

Landscaping was hardly his lifelong dream. As a teenager, Alton Lucas believed basketball or music would pluck him out of North Carolina and take him around the world. In the late 1980s, he was the right-hand man to his musical best friend, Youtha Anthony Fowler, who many hip hop and R&B heads know as DJ Nabs. But rather than jet-setting with Fowler, Lucas discovered drugs and the drug trade at the height of the so-called war on drugs. Addicted to crack cocaine and involved in trafficking the drug, he faced decades-long imprisonment at a time when the drug abuse and violence plaguing major cities and working class Black communities were not seen as the public health issue that opioids are today. By chance, Lucas received a rare bit of mercy. He got the kind of help that many Black and Latino Americans struggling through the crack epidemic did not: treatment, early release and what many would consider a fresh start. “I started the landscaping company, to be honest with you, because nobody would hire me because I have a felony,” said Lucas. His Sunflower Landscaping got a boost in 2019 with the help of Inmates to Entrepreneurs, a national nonprofit assisting people with criminal backgrounds by providing practical entrepreneurship education. Lucas was caught up in a system that imposes lifetime limits on most people who have served

time for drug crimes, with little thought given to their ability to rehabilitate. In addition to being denied employment, those with criminal records can be limited in their access to business and educational loans, housing, child custody rights, voting rights and gun rights. It’s a system that was born when Lucas was barely out of diapers. Fifty years ago this summer, President Richard Nixon declared a war on drugs. Today, with the U.S. mired in a deadly opioid epidemic that did not abate during the coronavirus pandemic’s worst days, it is questionable whether anyone won the war. Yet the loser is clear: Black and Latino Americans, their families and their communities. A key weapon was the imposition of mandatory minimums in prison sentencing. Decades later those harsh federal and state penalties led to an increase in the prison industrial complex that saw millions of people, primarily of color, locked up and shut out of the American dream. An Associated Press review of federal and state incarceration data shows that, between 1975 and 2019, the U.S. prison population jumped from 240,593 to 1.43 million Americans. Among them, about 1 in 5 people were incarcerated with a drug offense listed as their most serious crime. The racial disparities reveal the war’s uneven toll. Following the passage of stiffer penalties for crack cocaine and other drugs, the Black incarceration rate in America exploded from about 600 per 100,000 people in 1970 to 1,808 in 2000. In the same timespan, the

rate for the Latino population grew from 208 per 100,000 people to 615, while the white incarceration rate grew from 103 per 100,000 people to 242. Gilberto Gonzalez, a retired special agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration who worked for more than 20 years taking down drug dealers and traffickers in the U.S., Mexico and in South America, said he’ll never forget being cheered on by residents in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood near Los Angeles as he led away drug traffickers in handcuffs. “That gave me a sense of the reality of the people that live in these neighborhoods, that are powerless because they’re afraid that the drug dealers that control the street, that control the neighborhood are going to do them and their children harm,” said Gonzalez, 64, who detailed his field experiences in the recently released memoir “Narco Legenda.” “We realized then that, along with dismantling (drug trafficking) organizations, there was also a real need to clean up communities, to go to where the crime was and help people that are helpless,” he said. Still, the law enforcement approach has led to many long-lasting consequences for people who have since reformed. Lucas still wonders what would happen for him and his family if he no longer carried the weight of a drug-related

conviction on his record. Even with his sunny disposition and close to 30 years of sober living, Lucas, at age 54, cannot pass most criminal background checks. His wife, whom he’d met two decades ago at a fatherhood counseling conference, said his past had barred him from doing things as innocuous as chaperoning their children on

school field trips. “It’s almost like a life sentence,” he said.

Read the rest of this story at TheSkanner.com

City of Camas BUILDING OFFICIAL

The City of Camas is hiring a Building Official. \$7772-9309/monthly DOE. Open until filled. Go to <http://www.cityof-camas.us/jobs>

7-14,21-2021

WAITLIST OPEN

1BR Apts

REACH CDC is pleased to announce that our waitlist for one-bedroom apartments at Albina Corner will open on Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 9 am. Albina Corner is restricted for households at or below 60% of the area median income. The rent for a one-bedroom unit is \$860 per month. This opening is to add your household information to the waitlist only. Once 100 total waitlist applications are received, we will temporarily close the list. Please visit <http://reachproperties.org/wait-list/> for more information.

7-21-2021

WAITLIST OPEN

1BR & 2BR Apts

REACH CDC is pleased to announce that our newly constructed The Mary Ann Apartments in Beaverton is accepting applications for one-bedroom and two-bedroom units. These units are restricted for households with incomes at or below 50% to 60% of the Area Median Income. Rents range from \$753 to \$1,141 per month depending on unit type. If you are interested in applying, please visit <http://reachproperties.org/wait-list/>.

7-21-2021

CITY OF GASTON, OREGON INVITATION TO BID

THIRD STREET IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Bid Opening: 2:00 pm, July 29, 2021 at 116 Front Street, Gaston, Oregon, 97119.

The work includes of asphalt removal, new road base, asphalt; sidewalks, curbs, gutters, retaining walls, catch basins, storm pipe, ADA ramps, driveway aprons, vegetated filter strip plantings and irrigation.

Contractor will be required to use LCPTracker for payroll reporting. The higher of Davis Bacon or BOLI wage rates shall prevail.

Documents: Obtain from Becky.Connelly@tetrattech.com or 503.510.7375 or review at Salem Contractor’s Exchange, DJC Plan Center or SW Washington Contractor Association.

Non-Mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting: 1:00 pm, July 20, 2021 at Gaston City Hall, 116 Front Street, Gaston, Oregon 97119.

The higher of Davis Bacon wage rates or BOLI wage rates shall prevail. Questions: Brooke Harrison at Brooke.Harrison@tetrattech.com or 503.890.8108.

7-14,21-21



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7-14-2021



CAPITAL AND FACILITIES PROJECT MANAGER

Clark College is currently accepting applications for a Capital and Facilities Project Manager. Salary is \$65,720/annually. For complete position description, closing date, requirements and to apply, access our website at www.clark.edu/jobs. Clark College Human Resources, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, WA 98663 (360) 992-2105. AA/EO employer.

7-21-2021

2 POSITIONS: FISCAL SERVICES COORDINATOR PROGRAM ASSISTANT

MHCC Head Start is hiring! We are hiring for a Fiscal Services Coordinator, and Program Assistant - Bilingual Spanish/English. If you are interested in learning more about these positions or would like to apply, please visit: <https://www.schooljobs.com/careers/mhcc>. Contact Elsy Cortez with any questions: elsy.cortez@mhcc.edu

7-21-2021



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