

West Coast hip-hop has made a comeback of sorts lately, with established rappers like Westside Connection (Ice Cube, Mack 10 and W.C.) and 213 (Snoop Dogg, Warren G. and Nate Dogg) releasing new material.

But it's one up-and-coming rap artist in particular who garners the most recognition, both for his musical ability and his uncanny resemblance to one of hip-hop's biggest stars.

Ever since Charles Williamson first picked up a microphone, the comparisons were quick to follow.

Not only did he share the same initials as Christopher Wallace (a.k.a. the Notorious B.I.G.), he also looked and sounded like the man responsible for hits like "Juicy," "One More Chance" and "Big Poppa."

Born in Chicago, the rapper now known as Guerilla Black moved to California in the late '80s, when hip-hop began to shift from a party vibe to more of a reality-based sound. The emergence of N.W.A. and the success of subsequent solo releases by Dr. Dre, Ice Cube and Eazy-E put Los Angeles on the map with what became known as gangsta rap.

During his teen years, Black did the same things as the majority of his peers in Compton: He joined a gang, sold drugs and learned how to rhyme.

"It was like a war zone," the 27-year-old said from Los Angeles last week. "Gangsta rap came out of nowhere to expose our lifestyle and the way that we lived."

While the Notorious B.I.G. rose to superstardom on the East Coast, Black was on the grind in California.

Before he reached the age of 20, the rapper had already been shot once and managed to get out of a murder charge brought against him.

It wasn't until Ice-T, an established West Coast hip-hop artist, took notice of Black that things began to look up. As luck would have it, Black's mother worked in the same building and managed to hook up her son with a job. Black was able to score a meeting and start working with Ice-T shortly thereafter.

"He said to keep making music," said Black. "I thank him for reaching out and pulling me up when he didn't have to."

However, the loss of his wife, to spinal meningitis, and stepfather sent him on a downward

## Inside Guerilla Black

Written by GzaGenius ID447

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spiral. He shunned the record label he was working with and returned to street hustling.

"I had watched all these people die since I had gotten to Cali," he said. "You can love all those cats in the streets, but it's nothing like losing your wife or someone you cherish. When I lost her, that messed me up for real."

Eventually, his brother got Black back into a studio, and a three-song demo landed him a new deal with Virgin Records. The result is "Guerilla City," which has sold almost 150,000 copies since its release on Sept. 28. .

Along with representing his region of the country, there is one distinct message he plans to pass on to his audience.

"I just want people to know that I'm not trying to be nobody but me," he said. "Ain't no reduplication, reincarnation, carbon copy -- I'm Guerilla Black, and that's all I am;" he told the [StarBulletin](#)

. Check out Guerilla Black at

[www.guerillablack](http://www.guerillablack)