



MAKE ME

PROUD

Biggie left two kids behind with his untimely passing. Their mamas, **Jan Jackson** and **Faith Evans**, have spent the past 15 years keeping his memory alive for his children.

WORDS SHAHEEM REID

THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G. TOUCHED MILLIONS OF LIVES WITH HIS THOUGHT-PROVOKING RHYMES AND HIS "BIG POPPA" PERSONAL STORY OF ASHY-TO-CLASSY GRACE. FANS SHARED IN THE BROOKLYN MC'S UPS AND DOWNS AND RELIVED HIS LIFE EVENTS through his witty wordplay. When Big died in 1997, he left behind a catalog of two albums' worth of released music (1994's *Ready to Die* and 1997's double-disc *Life After Death*) and enough left over for two more posthumous projects (1999's *Born Again* and 2005's *Duets: The Final Chapter*) and then some.

As important as the music Big left behind is, his real legacy is in his two children, T'yanna Wallace, 18, and Christopher "C.J." Wallace, 15. And the protectors of that lineage are their mothers, Jan Jackson and Faith Evans, respectively. Jan, Big's girlfriend of four years during his days before the music, and R&B songstress Faith, Big's estranged wife, have spent the past 15 years raising T'yanna and C.J. as a close brother-and-sister pair while the two women became friends themselves. Today, Jan, 41, spends a chunk of her time working with The Christopher Wallace Foundation and lives in the Poconos next door to Voletta Wallace, Big's mom. Faith, 38, is currently unsigned, living in Los Angeles and raising C.J. and her three other children, Chyna, 19; Joshua, 13; and Ryder, 4.

XXL caught up with the two ladies of Big's life responsible for raising his seeds to discuss the past 15 years without him.

FAITH EVANS

We are at the 15th anniversary of B.I.G.'s death. Reflecting on his legacy, what do you see his influence is on music today?

He could definitely be explicit and tote it pretty real. So I would say that non-fear factor, for lack of a better word; MCs [are not afraid to] put a sticker on it. And the melodic flow. Although Big didn't sing a lot in his rhymes, I always told him he could sing. I used to clown him. On "Playa Hater" he was clowning. I would be like, "You know you could sing?" The melodic part of his flow, a lot of people are embracing that, if not going ahead and singing, like your Drakes. Not to say Drake's singing came from Big, but the whole putting melodies in your rhymes without a singer being present in the song.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RON GALELLA/WIREIMAGE; MICHAEL ROSENBERG/WIREIMAGE; COURTESY OF JAN JACKSON; CHRISTIAN LANTRY



Clockwise from top left: Faith and C.J. work the red carpet at the 1997 MTV Video Music Awards and the 2005 VH1 Hip Hop Honors; Jan and T'Yanna in 1997 and posing in their Poconos home for a 2004 XXL shoot.

C.J. was just a few months old when Big died. What are some of your memories of the two together?

We were separated; I was living in [Manhattan.] He would come by the apartment before or after the studio, then we started doing this thing when he [would] come over on Fridays to spend time with C.J. He'd spend the whole day with him. When Big was in Cali he'd called me—he was asking me to come out there, and I said I was coming out there, so I decided that I would bring C.J.

Now that C.J. is older, what characteristics do you see that parallel his pop's?

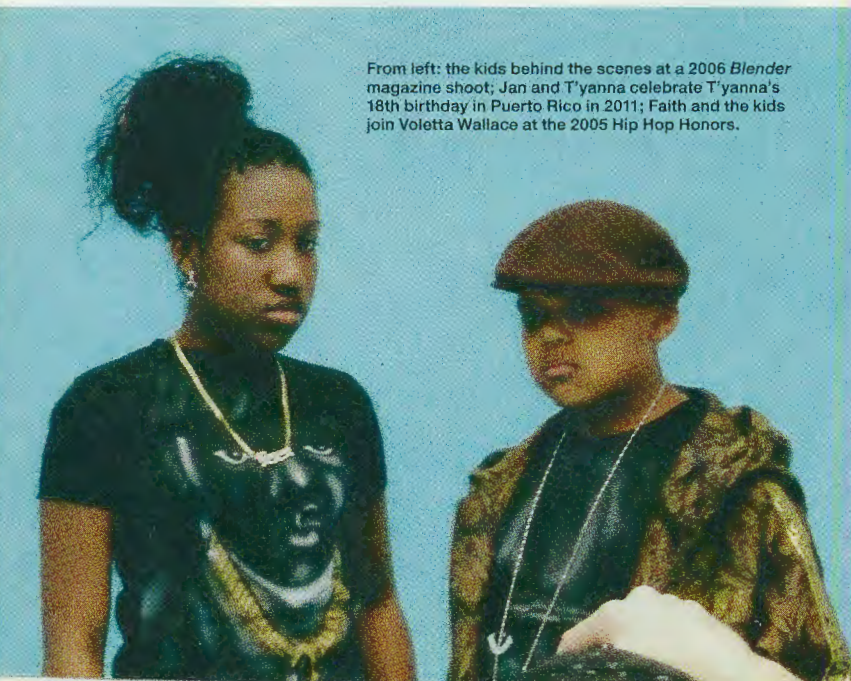
Sarcastic. He's very sarcastic. He has his sense of humor. Big was laid-back, but he was a little more outspoken than C.J. But I guess it was among the crew; [Junior M.A.F.I.A.] definitely stay joking on each other. C.J.'s jokes come a little more slyly, but definitely the humor and sarcasm. Unfortunately, he inherited his father's asthma and his bronchial issues and rubbing his nose all day and flicking his toes together. I know he never saw his father do it, but it's so weird to me how he flicks the same two toes together just like Big used to do. He was dabbling in rapping.

Kim and I have never had that type of relationship, obviously. But I keep in touch with Cease and Nino, Chico, Damion [D-Roc]. I'm trying to develop a reality show with them. Not with all of them, but with a few of them, trying to get it all together. That's like my family.

You and Jan met for the first time when she came to L.A. with Ms. Wallace the day after Big's murder.

Ms. Wallace brought her because she was an important person in his life, and Ms. Wallace's as well. To me that was the defining moment of our relationship. If it wasn't already there, we developed an immense amount of respect for one another, and being strong and pulling everything together. That was definitely a big part of it. Before the funeral, we stayed in a hotel in the city. All of us—me, Jan, Ms. Wallace, Junior M.A.F.I.A. We were just talking about stuff we definitely hadn't talked about before, but probably would have been a little more comfortable if it had happened before that time. We were joking on certain things. I was like, "I remember the first time I saw you out the rearview mirror and I thought you were gonna come to the side of the car and try to fight me." Because I had never met her,

From left: the kids behind the scenes at a 2006 *Blender* magazine shoot; Jan and T'yanna celebrate T'yanna's 18th birthday in Puerto Rico in 2011; Faith and the kids join Voletta Wallace at the 2005 Hip Hop Honors.



Not that he wanted to be a rapper, but one of the guys from Junior M.A.F.I.A., their son, him and C.J. were kinda like going back and forth, e-mailing each other music and putting verses on it and going back and forth. I was like, What, are you guys a group? He was like, No, it's just for fun. But he hasn't been doing that for a while.

C.J. is a cool young cat. It was good talking to him.

I bet there's something C.J. didn't tell you: He got in trouble during the first semester of school when we got his progress report. C.J. got a D in English and an A in Spanish. I was like, If this ain't some bullshit? [Laughs] I had to call D-Roc, I had to call [Lil'] Cease, I called Nino [Brown]. I was like, "Can I just tell you..." They was like, "Why you sound like your father? What is that? How you gonna get an A in Spanish and a D in the language you speak every day?" [Laughs] He must got him a little *chica* that he's feeling.

So you're still in contact with Junior M.A.F.I.A.?

I talk to them all them time. I speak to everybody but Kim. But

and I didn't know nothing about how they broke up. I was like, Oh, that's his baby mother. She might wanna come and try and fight me. [Laughs] But Jan is really cool. She's not about the drama. I found out the full story. There's different things I wondered about them and her fighting this one over him, XYZ. Was that true? I got to find out if my stories that I heard were true or false. But more importantly, to try and make—it's kind of unimaginable that they wouldn't—but make sure our kids always have that bond: Chyna and T'yanna, C.J. and T'yanna, so on and so forth. It's to the point that if I was up there and I needed her to keep the kids for me, I think I can get that.

JAN JACKSON

It's wonderful that you and Faith have kept T'yanna and C.J. so close growing up.

To keep them apart would not have been what's right. Since everything happened, Faith and I have had a decent relationship. We've never had any altercation or arguments. Along the way we

became friends. I like her as a person. She's a cool person. She's a down-to-earth and real person. I'd never met her before [Big] passed. I think it was better that way. I think had we had a prior relationship before everything happened, maybe we wouldn't have been able to get where we are.

How did the two of you meet?

When [Biggie] passed away and his mother went to California, I went with her. So those five days they had his body in California, I was with Ms. Wallace and Faith. [Faith] was familiar with that area. She took me under her wing, basically. She made sure I was taken care of. She made sure I was comfortable. I appreciated that; I felt grateful. She didn't have to do that. It could have went so many different ways. She could have been a whole different person.

When it comes to the murder investigation, do you think the case will ever be solved?

I don't think it will be solved, and I don't think about it anymore. At this point, that case being solved will do nothing but uproot and cause turmoil in my life. We all know if it wasn't solved in however many months [after], it wasn't gonna get solved. If you

his going-home day. When his birthday comes, I take flowers next door [to Voletta's house]. We set them up. But March 9 is bittersweet. If I could, I would like to not acknowledge that day, but that's not possible.

When and how did you introduce T'Yanna to Big's music? Fans love him for so many reasons, but he wasn't the most kid-friendly artist.

Well, I'm a young mother. I consider myself a young mother. I was 23 when T'Yanna was born. I never censored her music. I taught my child that what you hear is not what you repeat. You know right from wrong. So if you listen to this music, you're not to go back and repeat it because you know it's not appropriate. So she listened to it. That's not to mean she understood everything she listened to. I've never censored her Biggie music. She's always listened to the straight raw and uncut version. I'm sorry if someone feels that's bad parenting. Other people who she listened to, I would censor it. At one point she liked Pretty Ricky, and they were pretty raunchy. She wanted to get the album—okay, you have to get the edited version.

What's your favorite memory of the two of them together?



look at the whole incident, everybody who they said had anything [to do] with the Tupac murder is dead. Everybody who they insinuated had anything to do with the Biggie murder is either dead or in jail. People know what they're doing: They're covering up their tracks. It's like Lee Harvey Oswald. We'll be dead before we know what happened. The FBI knows what happened, obviously—they were following him. They just don't feel the need to share. We're not privy to that information. I would love to have the closure of knowing, but I also know that closure is going to bring turmoil. Who, what, when, where, why? I don't know any of those things.

What do you do on March 9 every year?

I wouldn't say celebrate. Usually, the last three or four years, I've been trying to network for the foundation. Whatever events are going on, if they need someone there from the foundation, I'm there. But other than that, I usually don't do anything. It's kinda bittersweet... It's a very hard time for me. But I'm celebrating his life. I celebrate his birthday as well as

When she was 10 months old. It was the first time I ever left her with him. It was a disaster. [Laughs] It was a debacle! At that time, cell phones weren't really in. So I didn't have a cell phone. When I came back, there were so many stories people would tell me. Her godfather told me, "You probably weren't on the train yet when he called me like, 'She won't stop crying. I'ma need you to come over and help.'" Then an hour after that, he called his mom and said, "I'ma need you to come home from work because I can't do this." He was so intimidated. By the time his mom came home, he was like, "Oh, please. I went and got her a bag of Cheez Doodles. She's fine."

It's crazy to picture Big in an apartment with the baby and a bunch of Pampers all around the house.

Exactly. Then his mom was reprimanding me [laughs]: "Why would you leave my grandchild with him?" I was like, "That's her father." She said, "I don't care. He had her eating Cheez Doodles when I came home. I took her back with me. Don't ever leave her alone with him again." [Laughs] He's hilarious. ♣