

GROWING UP in blue-collar Flint, Michigan, the thirteen-member Triplett family saw numerous relatives and friends—as well as a few of its own—go to prison for robbery, assault, and forgery, among other crimes. Their actions were unfortunate, a consequence of fending for themselves on the streets, the family claims.

Eventually all the Triplettts moved south, following Rufus, one of the eldest, to Powder Springs. There they are forging a new path—and reflecting on their past—by singing a cappella. In 2007, five of the Triplettts formed a musical group, Likely Suspect, and started their own label, Prison World Records. They have dedicated their music to informing the public about the growing crisis of prison reentry and issues related to the transition of former inmates from incarceration to the community. The family hopes to use its songs to raise awareness of the hundreds of thousands of ex-offenders hitting the streets with no job, training, or hope—including those who end up back in prison.

After its first single, “Back on the Street,” premiered on MySpace and YouTube, the group released its first full-length album, *The OG Collection*, last fall via the Internet and a self-published magazine, *Prison World*—making it the first postprison family act to promote a

record this way.

The all-male Likely Suspect is composed of Triplett brothers and cousins—Rufus, Lonell, Orrea, Afua, and El-Hajj Triplett—and is managed by Rufus's wife, Jenny. Most of them have always been involved with music, from singing in the high school choir to performing in bands. But it was only recently, after they reached their late thirties and early forties, that they realized the effects of prison on their community and family and decided to send a message through their music. “This is a situation that one in three African American households are dealing with,” says Jenny. “After someone is incarcerated, they don't get encouragement to reenter the community.”

Using positive songs of inspiration, the group chose to sing a cappella so listeners can “focus on the message,” says Afua. Lyrics from the group's first single center on learning to make money the right way; in four-part harmonies, the members sing about not going back to prison by “staying out of the game.”

With their album now released, the Triplettts are hoping to go into the prison system to sing and talk to the inmates. The group also reaches out to prisoners through its magazine. Prisoners can submit stories, poems, and trivia—as well as find their own voices once they are back on the streets. ■



>> To sample Likely Suspect's music, visit prisonworldrecords.com.



SCANDAL WATCH

Dating for Dummies

THE DOs AND DON'Ts OF FINDING LOVE AT THE OFFICE
GENA EVANS-STYLER

CUPID CAN STRIKE ANYWHERE—in the boardroom. At least that's the favorite conclusion drawn by Gena Evans, the Georgia Department of Transportation commissioner who's been beleaguered by conflict-of-interest allegations involving her ex or otherwise, since she was the State Financing and Investment Commission project manager in the late nineties. What can we learn from her troubles, shall we?

▶ **DO** make sure your relationship with a subordinate—or the project manager, in the case of state contractor whom you oversee—has no overlap with Evans's ex-boyfriend Chip Patrick.

▶ **DON'T** hire former boyfriends for paying jobs once you've been promoted to boss without first disclosing the relationship. (See, again, Patrick.)

▶ **DO** make sure that when your former friend's company is assigned a major project that your agency supervises, you actually “step back” from oversight. Former intern/then-lover, Gilbane Construction engineer Michael Spivey, was assigned to a state project in Athens—yet Evans continued to attend the project's meetings.

▶ **DO**, in fact, disclose all personal relationships as soon as possible, or face reprimand. (See Spivey, as well as Evans's now-former DOT chairman, Mike Evans.)

▶ **DON'T** send scandalously R-rated notes to a coworker using a professional e-mail address (or state computer system) as the ones Evans sent to Richard Evans, a coworker *not* in her chain of command.

▶ **DO** distract doubters by calling their criticism a “distraction.” Cross-reference with blame to an entity with negative connotations, such as the “good ol' boy network.”

▶ **DON'T**. No, that's it. Just don't.