

Iceberg Slim: Portrait of a Pimp Synopsis

"Iceberg Slim: Portrait of a Pimp" examines the tumultuous life of Iceberg Slim (1918-1992) and how he reinvented himself from pimp to author of 7 groundbreaking books. Born Robert Maupin, Iceberg Slim was the first black author to write about the dynamics of inner-city street life, specifically his 35+ year involvement in pimping and crime. Born into abject poverty in Chicago near the end of the First World War, Iceberg's early life was fraught with physical and mental abuse and a temptation and fascination with crime.

At the early age of 6, Slim first became enamored with street life, "My mother had a beauty shop and she catered to a colony of black hookers and pimps. I wanted to become a pimp so I could have all those beautiful clothes, diamonds and women, that's how i got street poisoned". The young Iceberg also witnessed his mother destroy their happy home when she decided to run off with a con man who physically abused Iceberg and made her an accomplice in his crimes then promptly dumped her.

At 20, while locked up for grand theft, he incessantly fantasized about being a pimp and learned as much as he could about the "art form" while incarcerated. Released at 21 years old he "cops" his first whore and moves back to Chicago to pimp.

Over the next 20 years, Iceberg pimped non stop and had many ups and downs; he became addicted to drugs and had repeated run-ins with the law that resulted in a total of 7 years of incarceration. At 29, during his second to last incarceration, Slim was able to escape. He pimped for 13 more years before being recaptured in 1960 and placed in solitary confinement at the Cook County House of Corrections. It was then that he finally decided to "square up." After his last release from jail, at the age of 42 Iceberg gave up his illicit lifestyle and moved to California to reconcile with his ailing mother. Tragically, she passed just 6 months after their reconciliation.

After his mother died, Slim began documenting his first-hand knowledge of living as a pimp and hustler through a series of 7 ground breaking books. Without the benefit of formal training or an editor, Iceberg's books are both gripping and brilliantly lyrical. Each one is different from the next and shows a unique and first hand perspective of inner city life. When published the books were the 1st of their kind and were widely popular in the black community. Holloway House, the publisher, estimates over 6 million copies have been sold to date. The books cultural impact is also impressive, before their printing there had not been any commercially creative expression of black street life. In the subsequent years after their release, hundreds of black crime books exploded onto the scene and their popularity soared. This was followed by Blaxploitation movies, and finally gangster rap, all of which could be considered the offspring of Iceberg Slim and his successors. The books also have had a tremendous impact on the creative community, as examples, Ice T adapted Iceberg's name to create his own moniker and credits Iceberg as being the father of

Gangster rap. Scores of rappers like Jay-Z reference Iceberg Slim in their lyrics and comedian Dave Chappelle, often talks about Iceberg in his stand-up routines.