

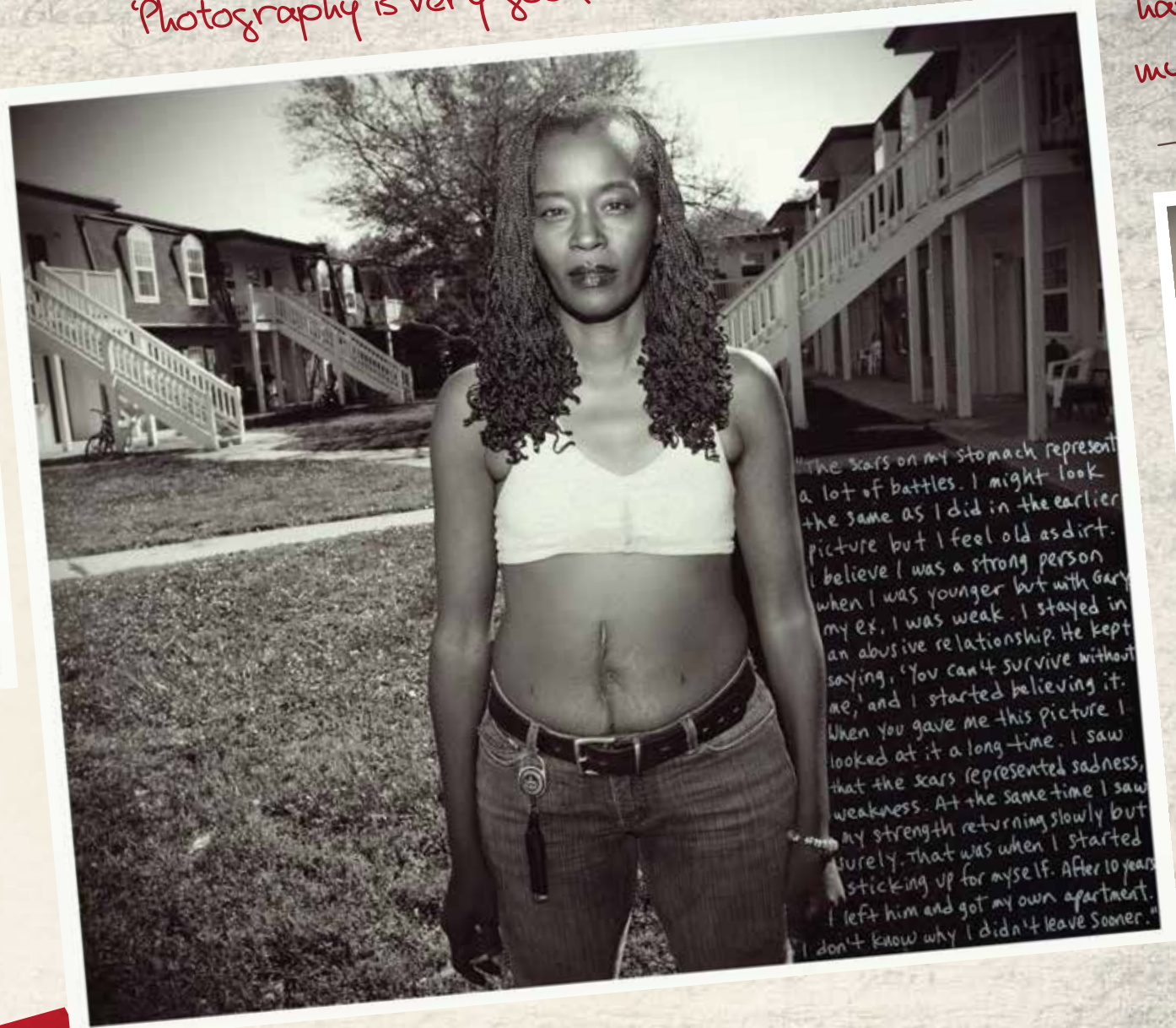
KYM THEN: "I had just gotten back from Pennsylvania where I met T-Bone, my first true love. I got back to Indiana and found out I was pregnant. I was a junior at Bloomington North High School. The whole time I was pregnant I stayed in school. I ran varsity track and was offered a college scholarship. I ran 'til I was 5 months pregnant — until it hurt."



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'Photography is very good with the here and now. But the then and now has become my trademark.'

—Jeffrey Wolin



The scars on my stomach represent a lot of battles. I might look the same as I did in the earlier picture but I feel old as dirt. I believe I was a strong person when I was younger but with Gary, my ex, I was weak. I stayed in an abusive relationship. He kept saying, 'You can't survive without me,' and I started believing it. When you gave me this picture I looked at it a long time. I saw that the scars represented sadness, weakness. At the same time I saw my strength returning slowly but surely. That was when I started sticking up for myself. After 10 years I left him and got my own apartment. I don't know why I didn't leave sooner."



Jeffrey Wolin. Courtesy photo

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# 'Pigeon Hill then & now'

PHOTOGRAPHS (AND WORDS) BY  
Jeffrey Wolin

By Mike Leonard

Jeffrey Wolin's photo essay "Pigeon Hill: Then and Now" is prominent in a concurrent three-venue exhibit in Bloomington at the Indiana University Art Museum, the Monroe County History Center, and Pictura Gallery. On April 19, Wolin will lead a tour to the three venues culminating with a reception at Pictura.

The Pigeon Hill project features pairs of photographs of residents from the low-income northwest area of town, historically known as "Pigeon Hill" or "The Hill." Wolin

shot hundreds of photographs of youths in the neighborhood, particularly at the Crestmont Apartments, from 1987-91 and returned and rephotographed "well over 100 people" from 2010-13. Six sets of those photographs are presented here.

The overall exhibition also includes photographs from projects that became the books *Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust*, *Inconvenient Stories: Vietnam War Veterans*, and *Stone Country*. The unusual three-venue exhibition commem-

orates Wolin's imminent retirement at age 64 as the Ruth N. Halls Professor of Photography at the Indiana University Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts with a broad sampling of his images.

Wolin worked the Pigeon Hill project hard for four years, then moved on to other projects after being awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.



### A distinctive style

In the early '90s, Wolin's emerging style of writing narrative text over the empty space within his prints caught the attention of photography critics and curators. "Wolin writes stories directly on his photographs, weaving narratives in and around faces, offering the viewer a more complete understanding of the person shown," reads an artist description from the Catherine Edelman Gallery in Chicago, a regular exhibitor of his work. "His skill as both a writer and photographer is unparalleled in contemporary photography — a testament to his innate capabilities and dedication."

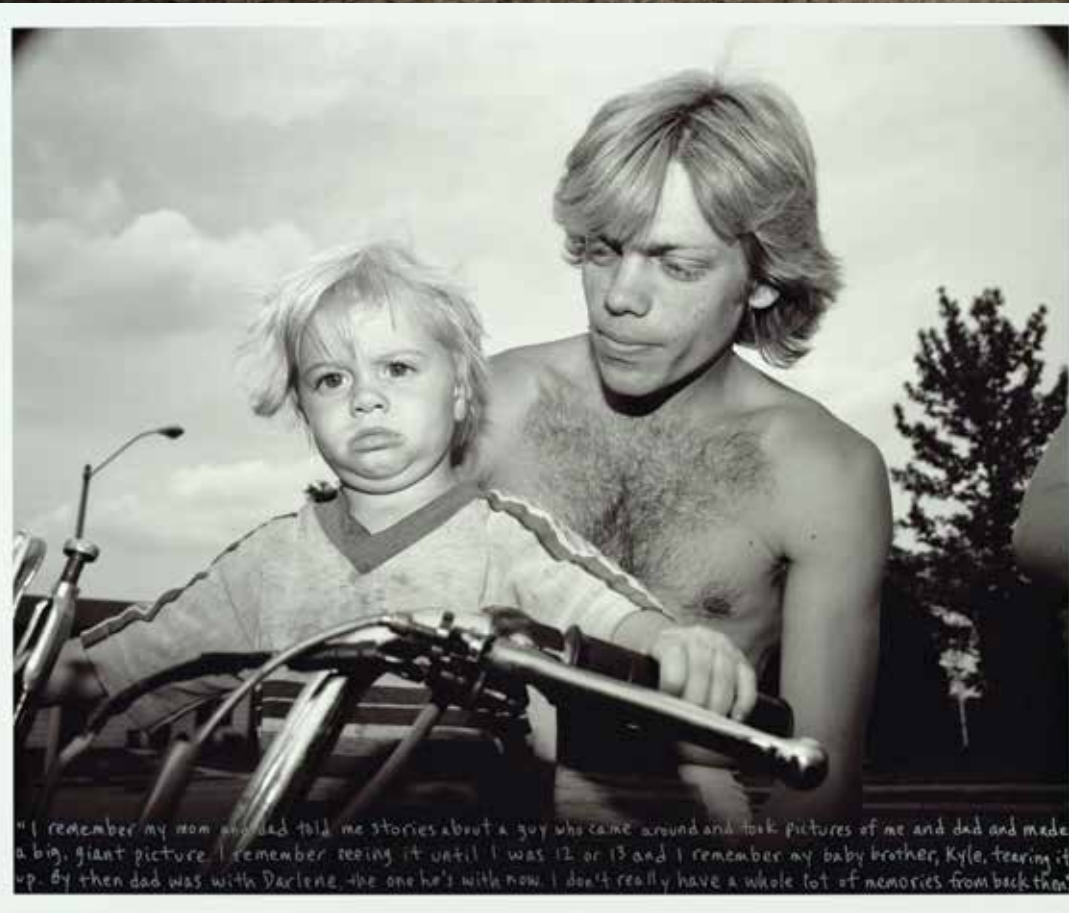
"My career really took off, with shows in New York, Chicago, and Europe," Wolin recalls. A few years later, audiences in Switzerland, Poland, France, and Spain also showed significant interest in his portraits of Holocaust survivors.

"But I always wanted to get back to the Vietnam vets," he says. A theme to his 2005 photographic essay on veterans was the post-traumatic stress disorder that had gotten little attention at that time.

### A murder brings him back to Pigeon Hill

After immersing himself for two decades in the Holocaust and Vietnam, by 2010, Wolin knew he needed a break from war. It was then that he saw a story in the newspaper about a 29-year-old Bloomington woman who had gone missing and, shortly thereafter, was found dead in what police declared a homicide. "It was Crystal Grubb, and I recognized her immediately as one of the Pigeon Hill kids I had photographed," he recalls.

Initially, it was the murder of IU graduate student Ellen Marks in 1986 that drew Wolin to Pigeon Hill. Marks had lived in a primitive lean-to, declaring that she wanted to understand how people living in poverty got by. "In politics, it was the Reagan years and poor people



"I remember my mom and dad told me stories about a guy who came around and took pictures of me and dad and made a big, giant picture. I remember seeing it until I was 12 or 13 and I remember my baby brother, Kyle, tearing it up. By then dad was with Darlene, the one he's with now. I don't really have a whole lot of memories from back then."



"I got myself in a little trouble when I was younger. I had two options: either a group home or juvenile detention and boot camp. I chose the group home. People with all kinds of issues, mental and criminal, live there. I'm into skulls. I've got one tattooed on my leg. My fiancée, Caitlyn's, name is tattooed on my back. We met through mutual friends and before long I proposed to her. Caitlyn is expecting. I'm looking for work — I had an interview last week at Walmart for the night shift."



"I was only four when I saw my first stabbing — it was a drug deal gone bad. I knew I had to be tough just to survive on the Hill. My mom was a nurse but she got into drugs and left when I was nine. Odds were I'd have a kid by the time I was fifteen, like many of my friends. But I didn't want that — I wanted to get off the Hill."

"I live out in the country with my husband, Luke, and sometimes my daughter. She has a more protected childhood than I had. I earned a degree from Indiana Vocational Tech. I'm employed as a Water Quality Engineer at the Indiana American Water Plant in Terre Haute. It's a 54.4 mile commute from home to work each way. I've taken up drag racing on the weekends in a 1973 Plymouth Scamp that Luke modified for me."

"There were good times back then. I had a great dog, Willard, my girlfriend, Tina, and a car."

"Some days you can find me up here at the 7-Eleven, visiting friends on the Hill. I get meals at the Shalom Center. When I have to, I sleep in a ditch at Twin Lakes Recreation Center."



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were being described as 'welfare queens' and 'drags on the economy,' and lots of people were rethinking the issues of poverty," Wolin says. "A generation later, another murder brought me back to The Hill and my project."

**The search to find people again**

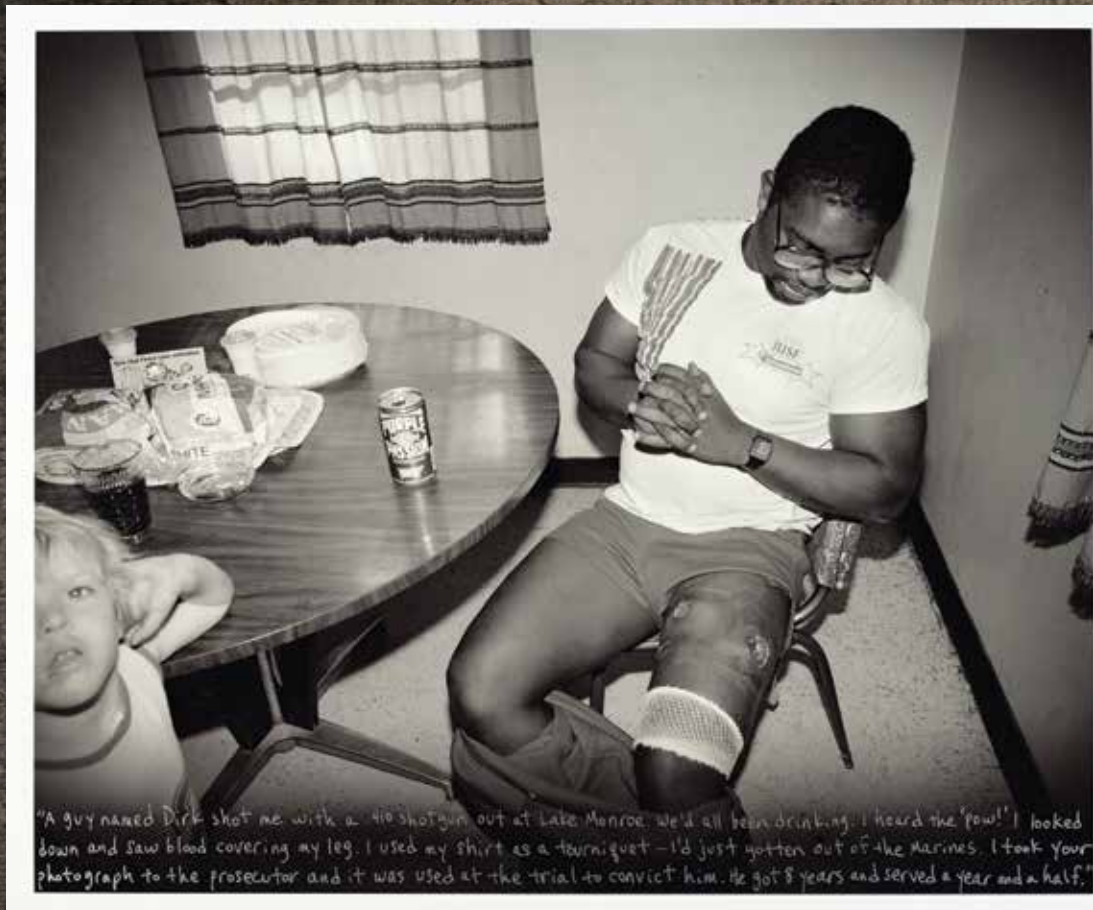
Trying to find the people he'd photographed more than two decades earlier proved a difficult task. Wolin began teaching a summer photography class in the neighborhood Boys & Girls Clubs of Bloomington's Crestmont Unit and going out into the neighborhood with a box of photographs, asking passers-by if they recognized any of the subjects.

"I had made it a practice to make prints of everyone I photographed the first time around and gave them to the people I shot. I became known as 'Picture Man,'" he recalls.

Eventually, a woman led him to one of his previous subjects, and that spawned a second connection, and soon, people began networking through various means, including Facebook, trying to help him find his original subjects.

"When I started making connections with those people again," Wolin says, "I became Picture Man again."

Wolin's exhibits will be in place through July 12 at the IU Art Museum, through May 29 at the Monroe County History Center, and through May 30 at Pictura Gallery. The history center has the largest display (11 pairs) from "Pigeon Hill: Then and Now." Pictura Gallery will have four pairs and a more comprehensive display of Wolin's work from the last 30 years. The IU Art Museum exhibit will include examples from his Stone Country, Holocaust, and Pigeon Hill projects. ✱



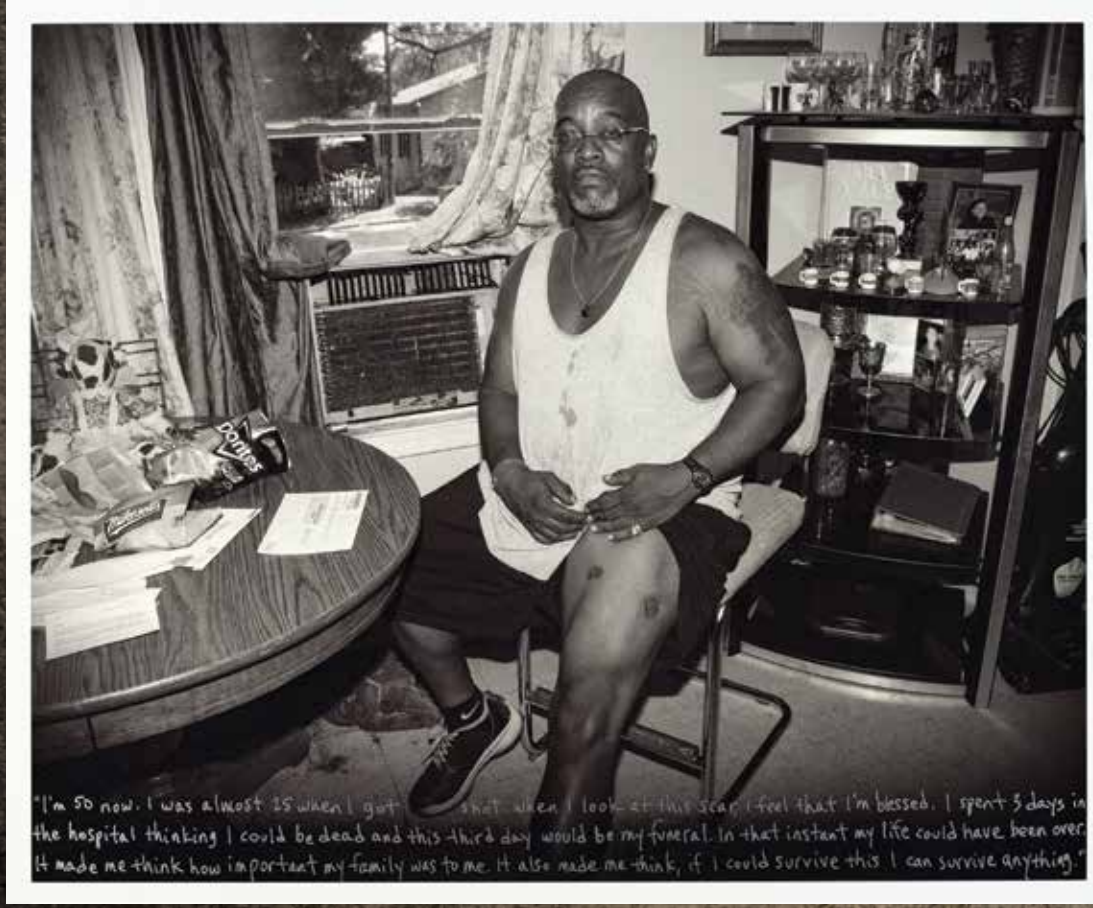
"A guy named Dirk shot me with a .410 shotgun out at Lake Monroe. We'd all been drinking. I heard the 'pow!' I looked down and saw blood covering my leg. I used my shirt as a tourniquet — I'd just gotten out of the Marines. I took your photograph to the prosecutor and it was used at the trial to convict him. He got 8 years and served a year and a half."



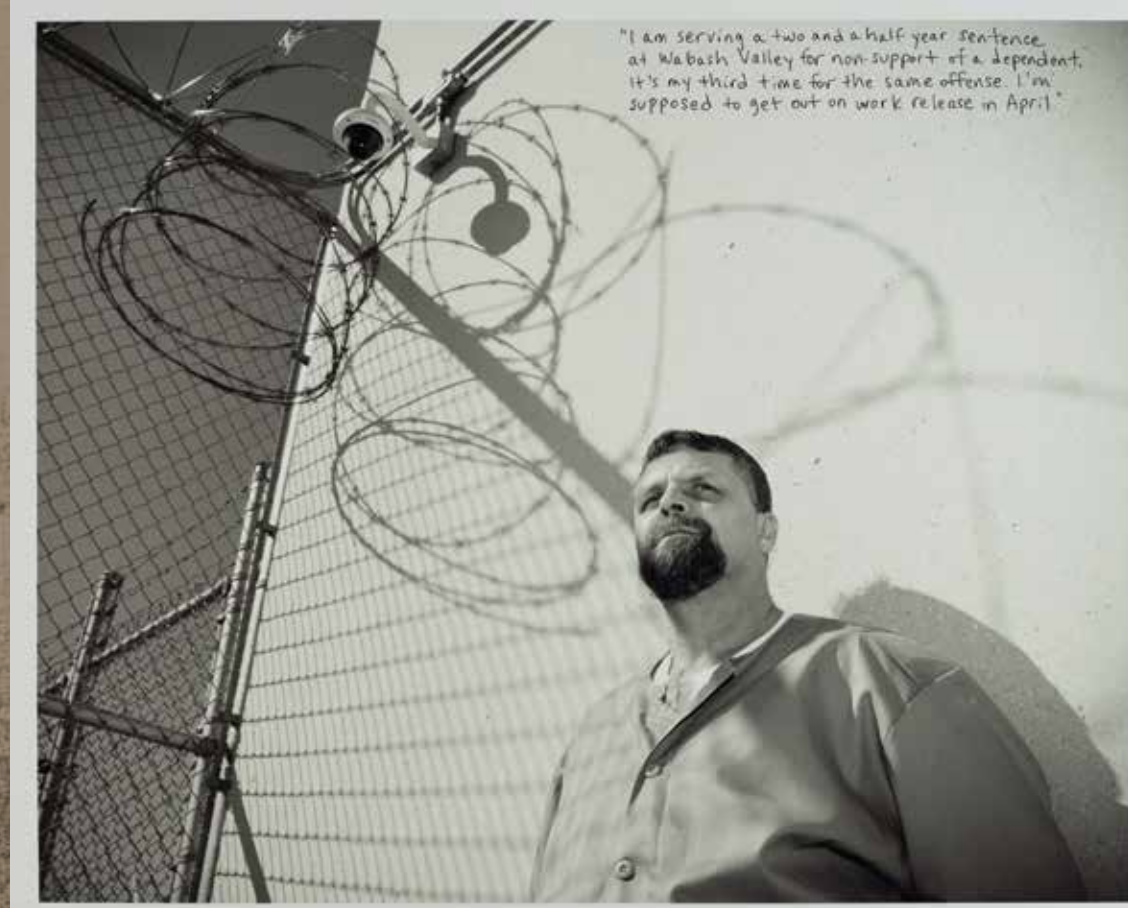
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KEVIN NOW: "I'm 50 now. I was almost 25 when I got shot. When I look at this scar, I feel that I'm blessed. I spent 3 days in the hospital thinking I could be dead and this third day would be my funeral. In that instant my life could have been over. It made me think how important my family was to me. It also made me think, if I could survive this I can survive anything."



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