

# MY UNCLE J. (JULIUS)

*Raymond Wilford*

**M**y uncle J. (Julius) was my role model. He was how an uncle was supposed to be. You know, the person who lets you get away with the things that your parents won't, like if you slip and say a curse word, he would tell you that you shouldn't curse. But he understood that boys will be boys and the only way boys will learn is by experiencing things like girls, school, and trying to be a man even when you are not ready for the responsibilities that men have to deal with. Take bills, for example: How can you be a man if you don't pay your own bills? He was the type of man who would have told you about it, but he would also let you experience life yourself. I really miss my uncle. He was killed in 1998. I was eight years old. It didn't hit me that he was really gone until his funeral. I seen my whole family crying, and then it hit me: My uncle is really gone,

and he's not coming back.

My uncle J. was a thug. That's how I would describe him. I mean, he wasn't the pope or nothing. Uncle J. did what was going to make the money to feed his kids and keep them in decent clothes. From what I know, he did what he had to, even if that meant selling drugs and robbing people who were basically showing off all their money, like buying fancy cars, rims, expensive jewels and clothes. Where I'm from, we call them stunners, and if someone's stomach is growling, a stunner will get robbed, and a robber won't hesitate to kill you if you don't give everything willingly.

Uncle J. did his wrongs and his rights, but he was still a good person, because he cared about family. If you asked him for something, he would try his best to get it for you. My uncle also helped his friends, and friends are the ones who killed him in the end. When his friends were in trouble, he was always the first to step up. He had a hard time getting a job, because of an auto theft when he was only eighteen years old. That changed his life forever. In fact, stealing that car ended his life in a way, now that I think about it. He had a girlfriend and two kids. He had just asked his girlfriend to marry him right before he was killed. I liked his kids, Julius and Jayontay. I love them to this day, because they're all that's left of him and I'd do anything for them if they asked me to, just because they're my uncle's family. Both of his kids were little when he left, and they didn't really understand that Daddy was gone and not coming back. From what I remember, his son didn't cry. I think that was because my uncle always used to tell him to stop crying, so he just didn't cry. His daughter, on the other hand, did end up crying, but I think that was because her mother was crying and holding both of them real close. So my guess is that she was sad because her mother was sad. His daughter has long soft looking hair, and she's a beautiful light brown color. She got her skin from her mom, who was also beautiful like that, and Jayontay was shy last time I saw her. His son has short curly hair, which he got from his mom, and he was more my uncle's color, who was on the dark side of brown

Even though my uncle did illegal things, he kept his kids in school, making good grades, and they never knew what he was

doing. My uncle had them wanting to be successful in life, so they didn't know anything about drugs or anything like that. My uncle J. would be real nice and loving like to his daughter, but the way boys are raised in my family is rough. If you get mad because you lost a game, you get beat up, but it's always love. If you don't get beat up, then it means Uncle J., Uncle Steven, and any other uncle or cousins don't like you. If you get beat up, that means you are loved and cared for. I think that's what you call tough love.

Uncle J. taught me things my dad would have thought twice about. Like if you saw him drinking and he saw you looking, he would let you have some, but he'd only do it once. He told me that he'd rather me experience drinking with him than have me go into the streets and have something happen to me. So instead of him arguing with me, he'd just say "OK." I learned a lot of things from him. He taught me how to shoot a gun and how to aim. He taught me how to never back down from nobody; all of my uncles taught me that, actually. I was raised like that, and my uncle Julius was a big part of raising me. He also taught me that you should always watch your surroundings, like the people and the area. He didn't actually tell me that, but it became clear when his friends turned on him.

How he died was not peaceful. There were three people involved. They called him at home, because he was friends with them. They told him to meet them at the corner store. Then it seems that they took him to a wooded area, and that's where they shot him in the head, burned his body, and put him under a dumpster. I guess they didn't think anyone would find him there.

My uncle made some bad decisions in his life, but he never was a bad person or a bad parent. He loved his whole family, did good by his kids, his girlfriend, and all the rest of the big family. And he definitely did good by me, his nephew. He taught me a lesson in life: You can't trust everybody who's acting like your friend, so watch everybody you know.

"Keep your family close but enemies closer."

IT'S NOT ALWAYS...



*Solid. That is how seventeen-year-old **Raymond Wilford** would describe himself. He likes the way that he was raised and is inspired by his uncles. You can find him playing football or video games, and after he graduates from high school he would like to attend college and get a degree in “something that’s helpful.”*