

biggest drug dealers in detroit history

Biggest Drug Dealers in Detroit History: A Deep Dive into the City's Notorious Figures

biggest drug dealers in detroit history have left an indelible mark on the city's social and economic landscape. Detroit, known for its rich automotive legacy and complex urban history, has also been a battleground for drug-related activity for decades. Understanding the key players behind Detroit's illicit drug trade offers a glimpse into the city's struggles and resilience, as well as the broader dynamics of crime and law enforcement in urban America.

In this article, we'll explore some of the most notorious drug dealers who shaped Detroit's underground economy, the impact of their operations on communities, and how law enforcement efforts have evolved over time. Whether you're curious about the historical roots of drug trafficking in the Motor City or interested in the socio-economic factors that fueled this underground market, this deep dive sheds light on a significant chapter of Detroit's history.

The Roots of Detroit's Drug Trade

To understand the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history, it's important to first grasp how the city's drug market developed. Detroit's geographical location as a border city near Canada made it a prime hub for smuggling operations, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. The decline of the automotive industry and economic hardships created fertile ground for illicit markets to flourish, with drugs becoming a lucrative business for many.

The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s hit Detroit hard, transforming neighborhoods and impacting families. The surge in demand led to the rise of powerful drug dealers who controlled large territories and amassed significant wealth and influence. These dealers often operated within complex networks, sometimes linked to larger organized crime groups.

Notorious Figures: The Biggest Drug Dealers in Detroit History

Detroit's history includes several infamous drug dealers whose names became synonymous with the city's struggle against narcotics. While some operated independently, others were part of larger criminal organizations. Here are some of the most well-known figures:

1. Jeff Fort and the Black P. Stones

Although originally from Chicago, Jeff Fort's Black P. Stones gang had significant influence in Detroit during the 1970s and 1980s. They were heavily involved in drug trafficking, including cocaine and heroin distribution. Fort's organization was notorious for its militaristic structure and ties to other criminal enterprises, making them a formidable force in Detroit's drug scene.

2. The Jones Gang

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Jones Gang emerged as one of Detroit's most powerful drug trafficking groups. Led by a figure known as "Big Jake" Jones, this gang controlled large portions of the city's drug trade. Their operations were marked by violence, territorial disputes, and sophisticated distribution networks. The Jones Gang's influence extended beyond Detroit, connecting with dealers in other cities.

3. Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson's Early Affiliations

Before rising to fame as a rapper, Curtis Jackson, better known as 50 Cent, was involved in Detroit's drug scene during his teenage years. While not necessarily one of the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history, his story highlights the environment many young people faced. His eventual pivot to music and entrepreneurship is an example of how individuals can break free from cycles of crime.

4. The Diggs Family

The Diggs family was infamous in Detroit for their involvement in heroin trafficking during the 1980s. Their operations were deeply embedded in certain neighborhoods, and their influence persisted for years. Law enforcement efforts eventually dismantled much of their network, but their legacy remains a stark reminder of heroin's impact on Detroit communities.

Impact of Drug Dealing on Detroit Communities

The biggest drug dealers in Detroit history did more than just traffic narcotics—they shaped the social fabric of neighborhoods. Drug-related violence led to increased crime rates, while addiction strained community resources and public health systems. Families were torn apart, and economic development was hampered in many areas.

In addition to violence, drug dealing often came with corruption and distrust of law enforcement. However, in some cases, drug lords also acted as local power brokers, providing money or support in impoverished neighborhoods where government assistance was lacking. This dual role complicated efforts to address the drug crisis.

Law Enforcement and the Fight Against Drug Trafficking

Detroit's law enforcement agencies have long battled the city's drug epidemic. Over the decades, strategies evolved from aggressive crackdowns and raids to more nuanced approaches that include community policing and rehabilitation programs.

High-Profile Arrests and Sentencing

Many of the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history were eventually caught and sentenced to long prison terms. These arrests often involved multi-agency collaborations, including the FBI, DEA, and local police. The takedowns of organizations like the Jones Gang disrupted major drug networks, though the market often adapted quickly.

Community Initiatives and Prevention

Recognizing that enforcement alone cannot solve the drug problem, Detroit has seen the rise of community-based programs focused on education, prevention, and support for those battling addiction. These initiatives aim to reduce demand, provide alternatives, and rebuild neighborhoods affected by decades of drug-related hardship.

Lessons from Detroit's Drug Trade History

Studying the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between crime, poverty, and urban development. It underscores the importance of addressing root causes such as economic inequality, lack of education, and limited opportunities to prevent future drug epidemics.

Detroit's experience also highlights the need for balanced approaches combining law enforcement with social services. While removing dangerous dealers from the streets is crucial, supporting affected communities and offering rehabilitation can create more sustainable change.

Looking Forward: Detroit's Ongoing Transformation

Today, Detroit is undergoing significant revitalization efforts, with new investments in infrastructure, business, and culture. While challenges remain, the city's commitment to overcoming its past includes tackling drug-related issues with innovative solutions.

The legacy of the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history serves as both a cautionary tale and a motivator for continued progress. By learning from the past, Detroit's residents, leaders, and law enforcement can work together towards a safer, healthier future for all.

Detroit's story is one of resilience and hope, proving that even in the face of deep-seated challenges, communities can rebuild and thrive.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was considered the biggest drug dealer in Detroit's history?

One of the most notorious drug dealers in Detroit's history was Jeff Fort, leader of the Black P. Stones gang, who was involved in extensive drug trafficking during the 1970s and 1980s.

What impact did Detroit's biggest drug dealers have on the city?

Detroit's biggest drug dealers contributed to high crime rates, increased violence, and social challenges within communities, exacerbating poverty and straining law enforcement resources.

How did law enforcement tackle major drug dealers in Detroit historically?

Law enforcement agencies used undercover operations, surveillance, and collaboration with federal agencies to dismantle drug trafficking networks led by major dealers in Detroit.

Are there any famous cases involving Detroit's largest drug dealers?

Yes, one notable case is the conviction of Jeff Fort in the 1980s for drug trafficking and conspiracy, which significantly impacted Detroit's drug trade landscape.

How has the legacy of Detroit's biggest drug dealers influenced current drug policies?

The legacy has led to increased focus on community policing, drug prevention programs, and criminal justice reform aimed at addressing the root causes of drug trafficking and its effects on Detroit communities.

Additional Resources

Biggest Drug Dealers in Detroit History: An Investigative Review

biggest drug dealers in detroit history have left an indelible mark on the city's socio-economic fabric, influencing crime rates, law enforcement strategies, and community dynamics for decades. Detroit, once synonymous with automotive prowess, has also been notorious for its complex drug trade networks, which have shaped both the underground economy and public policy. This article delves into the historical context and profiles some of the most notorious figures who dominated the illicit drug scene in Detroit, offering a comprehensive, analytical perspective on their operations and impact.

Understanding Detroit's Drug Trade Landscape

Detroit's geographical position as a border city near Canada, combined with its sprawling urban areas and economic challenges, created a fertile ground for drug trafficking activities. Over the years, the city has experienced fluctuating waves of drug epidemics, ranging from heroin in the mid-20th century to crack cocaine in the 1980s and more recently, synthetic opioids.

The biggest drug dealers in Detroit history were not merely street-level operators but often masterminds of extensive criminal enterprises. These figures controlled large swaths of neighborhoods and influenced local politics and law enforcement, making their activities both lucrative and difficult to dismantle.

Historical Context: The Rise of Drug Empires in Detroit

During the 1960s and 1970s, Detroit underwent significant social and economic transformations, including deindustrialization and population decline. These factors contributed to the emergence of drug markets as alternative economies for many disenfranchised communities. The influx of heroin and later cocaine saw the rise of powerful dealers who capitalized on the demand.

The crack epidemic of the 1980s marked a turning point, with drug dealers leveraging new distribution methods and violent tactics to consolidate control. This era is often cited as the most volatile period in Detroit's drug history, with increased police crackdowns and community activism pushing back against these criminal networks.

Profiles of the Biggest Drug Dealers in Detroit History

Below are some of the most notorious individuals and groups who shaped Detroit's drug landscape, illustrating the varying scales and methods of their operations.

1. Jeff Fort and the Black P. Stones

Though originally from Chicago, Jeff Fort's Black P. Stones had a significant presence in Detroit during the 1970s and 1980s. The gang's involvement in drug trafficking, particularly heroin and cocaine, established a trans-regional network that linked Detroit to other Midwestern cities. Fort's notoriety came from his ability to combine street-level control with political and religious influence, creating a complex organization that transcended typical drug operations.

2. Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson (Early Years)

Before achieving fame as a rapper, Curtis Jackson was involved in Detroit's underground drug scene during his youth. While not among the largest dealers in the city's history, his early experiences highlight the pervasive reach of drug culture and the city's role in shaping future generations, both within and outside the criminal world.

3. The "Eastside" Drug Lords

Detroit's Eastside has historically been a hotspot for drug trafficking. During the 1980s and 1990s, several dealers rose to prominence by controlling cocaine and crack distribution. These figures operated with extreme violence and ruthlessness, often engaging in turf wars that led to spikes in homicide rates. While many of these dealers remain unnamed in public records, their impact is documented through crime statistics and law enforcement reports.

4. The Rivera Drug Organization

One of the most well-known drug trafficking organizations in Detroit's recent history, the Rivera group managed a sophisticated operation involving the distribution of heroin and fentanyl. Their network extended beyond Detroit, connecting to international supply chains. The group's eventual takedown in the early 2010s was a significant victory for the Detroit Police Department and federal agencies, highlighting the ongoing battle against drug trafficking.

Factors Contributing to the Rise of Detroit's Biggest Drug Dealers

Several socio-economic and structural factors facilitated the emergence of dominant drug dealers in Detroit:

- **Economic Decline:** The collapse of the automotive industry resulted in widespread

unemployment and poverty, pushing many toward the drug trade as an alternative income source.

- **Urban Decay:** Abandoned neighborhoods and deteriorating infrastructure created environments where drug markets could flourish with minimal oversight.
- **Geographic Proximity:** Detroit's location near the Canadian border and major highways facilitated the smuggling and distribution of narcotics.
- **Weak Law Enforcement Resources:** Underfunded police departments and corruption issues often hampered effective drug interdiction efforts.

Comparative Analysis: Detroit vs. Other Major Drug Hubs

When compared to cities like New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago, Detroit's drug trade has unique characteristics. While it never reached the same scale in population, the intensity of violence and economic impact in Detroit's drug markets was disproportionately high. The city's decline created a vacuum that allowed smaller yet highly organized groups to gain control, contrasting with larger national syndicates operating in other urban centers.

Law Enforcement and Community Responses

The presence of some of the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history prompted multifaceted responses. Law enforcement agencies employed a combination of undercover operations, asset seizures, and federal collaboration to dismantle drug rings. Notably, the use of the DEA and FBI alongside local police proved instrumental in high-profile arrests.

Community organizations also played a crucial role in addressing the root causes of drug abuse and trafficking. Programs focusing on youth outreach, education, and economic development aimed to reduce the allure of the drug trade for vulnerable populations.

Impact on Detroit's Social Fabric

The dominance of major drug dealers shaped Detroit's neighborhoods in profound ways. The proliferation of drugs contributed to increased crime rates, family disruptions, and public health crises such as the opioid epidemic. However, the resilience of communities and ongoing revitalization efforts are slowly changing the narrative, with many neighborhoods reclaiming public spaces and fostering safer environments.

Legacy and Continuing Challenges

The stories of Detroit's biggest drug dealers serve as cautionary tales of the consequences of economic deprivation and systemic neglect. While many of these figures have been incarcerated or eliminated, drug trafficking remains a persistent challenge. The rise of synthetic drugs like fentanyl poses new threats that require adaptive strategies.

Understanding the historical context and operations of these notorious dealers provides valuable insights for policymakers, law enforcement, and community advocates striving to create sustainable solutions. The lessons learned from Detroit's experience underscore the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities alongside traditional crime-fighting measures.

In examining the biggest drug dealers in Detroit history, one uncovers a complex web of factors that fueled their rise and shaped the city's ongoing struggle with narcotics. This legacy continues to influence Detroit's efforts toward recovery and resilience.

Biggest Drug Dealers In Detroit History

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A book about coming from a hard beginning in Detroit a city plagued by violence, drugs and murder. Sean tells his life about getting through all the problems of life. But along the way he is guided by a spirit that protects him on his road to success in music, TV and film. This is a must read book.

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The vast and mysterious world of criminals, from ancient times through the 21st century, is vividly captured in The Great Pictorial History of World Crime. This unique and staggering reference work chronicles every major criminal act from every era. A definitive reference source to worldwide crime, this unparalleled survey is organized into sixteen chapters: Assassination Bigamy Burglary Cannibalism Celebrity Slayings Drugs Fraud Gangs, Gangsters, and Organized Crime Kidnapping Mass Murder Piracy Robbery Secret Criminal Societies Serial Killers Terrorism Unsolved Homicides Each chapter begins with an essay that introduces the topic and provides a concise overview of the historical, social, and political significance of the crime. Subjects are further developed crime by crime through descriptive entries covering the criminal acts, modus operandi, criminal background information, and motives, along with insightful anecdotes. In addition to being a being a vital and informative historical and sociological reference work, The Great Pictorial History of World Crime features more than 2,500 illustrations. More than a chronicle of chilling events, these two volumes provide gripping reading for anyone interested in true crime, law enforcement, criminology, and criminal justice.

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Covering a period of about four centuries, this book demonstrates the economic and political components of the opium problem. As a mass product, opium was introduced in India and Indonesia by the Dutch in the 17th century. China suffered the most, but was also the first to get rid of the opium problem around 1950.

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In the early 1990s,

Demetrius Big Meech Flenory and his brother, Terry Southwest T, rose up from the slums of Detroit to build one of the largest cocaine empires in American history: the Black Mafia Family. After a decade in the drug game, the Flenorys had it all—a fleet of Maybachs, Bentleys and Ferraris, a 500-man workforce operating in six states, and an estimated quarter of a billion in drug sales. They socialized with music mogul Sean Diddy Combs, did business with New York's king of bling Jacob The Jeweler Arabo, and built allegiances with rap superstars Young Jeezy and Fabolous. Yet even as BMF was attracting celebrity attention, its crew members created a cult of violence that struck fear in a city and threatened to spill beyond the boundaries of the drug underworld. Ruthlessness fueled BMF's rise to incredible power; greed and that same ruthlessness led to their downfall. When the brothers began clashing in 2003, the flashy and beloved Big Meech risked it all on a shot at legitimacy in the music industry. At the same time, a team of investigators who had pursued BMF for years began to prey on the organization's weaknesses. Utilizing a high-stakes wiretap operation, the feds inched toward their goal of destroying the Flenory's empire and ending the reign of a crew suspected in the sale of thousands of kilos of cocaine — and a half-dozen unsolved murders.

biggest drug dealers in detroit history: The 21 KEYS Of Success Kolie Crutcher, Rick Ross, Award-winning, internationally-published and best-selling author Kolie Crutcher, provides never-before granted access to the unfiltered success principles of America's most infamous cocaine kingpin--Freeway Ricky Ross. In *Ridin' With Rick: The 21 Keys of Success*, Crutcher (also an electrical engineer) masterfully breaks down the 21 success principles he personally witnessed the former kingpin use, as they rode around L.A. to conduct business with Hollywood's elite executives, sports figures and celebrities. After Ross' release from federal prison, Crutcher spent six months ridin' with, studying and documenting the practices of the ex-drug lord--who often made \$2-3 million daily from the sale of crack cocaine in the 1980s. The 21 Keys uniquely reveals how the same principles that made millions of dollars in illegal cocaine money can be used to make millions of dollars legally in Hollywood and legitimate business! By way of chapters (keys) such as Don't Front What You Can't Lose, Make Your Name Carry Weight and Cocaine Love, Crutcher takes you along for the ride with Freeway Rick--as no one else can. So whether you are a street hustler on the corner, or a legit businessperson in the corner office, the 21 Keys work universally for all striving to overcome life's adversities and live the life you want. After *Ridin' With Rick*, you will understand how to turn failure into fame, poverty into plenty, and setbacks into success!

biggest drug dealers in detroit history: Getting Ghost Luke Bergmann, 2010-09-22 [Bergmann] chronicles the drug trading, the risks and rewards, and the demarcations between the city and suburbs even as he witnessed suburbanites come into the city to buy drugs. ---Booklist Not just illustrative and emotive, this pummeling, immersive social text is grounded in street-level reportage and seeded with wisdom. ---Kirkus Reviews In prose that is equally eloquent and enlightening, Luke Bergmann brings to the surface the lives of two young men living in a place that is regarded by too many people as a forgotten city. --- Alford A. Young, Jr., Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Associate Professor, Sociology and Afroamerican and African Studies, University of Michigan Luke Bergmann sometimes risks life and limb to bring us firsthand the lives of young people who mainstream media and academic research have ignored---except for the occasional crime story or impersonal policy brief. *Getting Ghost* is a journey worth taking . . . It sets a new standard for documentary reportage. --- Sudhir Venkatesh, author of *Gang Leader for a Day* and *Off the Books* Postapocalyptic Detroit---infamous for its abandoned buildings, empty lots, and blighted streets---may be the only American city to have earned such an epithet. As a teenager who frequently visited Detroit with his father, Luke Bergmann saw the devastation caused by the collapse of the automobile industry. Years later, he returned to the city as an anthropologist to study the incarceration of inner-city youth, and his research connected him with two teenaged drug dealers, Dude Freeman and Rodney Phelps. For nearly three years Bergmann lived on the city's West Side, hanging out with Dude and Rodney, driving around, hearing their stories and dreams, and witnessing the intricacies of Detroit's urban drug trade. Bergmann is soon more than an observer, as he intervenes with Dude's probation officer when he misses a hearing and becomes Rodney's only

contact when he flees the city to escape criminal charges. Through it all, he strives to understand their lives, their families, and the neighborhoods they call home. In an effort to break through the conventional wisdom about who sells drugs and why, Bergmann chronicles the unsettling alchemy of choice, force of habit, structural inequality, and political neglect that combine to restrict the horizons of too many young people in America's cities. As Rodney and Dude spin through the revolving door of juvenile detention, getting ghost becomes a rich metaphor---for leaving a scene; for quitting the trade; and, ultimately, for mortality. With stunning insight, courage, and even humor, *Getting Ghost* illuminates complex inner lives that are too often diminished by empty stereotypes as it reveals the common yearnings in all of our American dreams. Luke Bergmann is a research director at the Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion and an adjunct faculty associate at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Cover photo © Simon Wheatley, Magnum Photos

biggest drug dealers in detroit history: Big Red's Mercy Mark Hertsgaard, 2024-05-07 The moving story of a New Orleans woman who fought for justice and her community even amidst one of the city's darkest moments. Mark Hertsgaard and Deborah Cotton were strangers to one another, united only by a love of jazz and New Orleans's distinctive Second Line tradition. And then, during a Mother's Day parade, they were thrown together when two gunmen fired into the crowd... Deborah Cotton---known to all as Big Red---was among the most grievously injured. She is the driving force of this deeply reported parable of two of America's most deeply rooted issues. A racial justice activist in her forties who was born to a Black father and a white mother, Cotton was one of twenty people---including the author---shot in the biggest mass shooting in the modern history of New Orleans. Once one of the largest slave ports, the city has long been a vortex of violence and racism. From her apparent deathbed, Big Red shocked observers by urging mercy for two young Black men accused of the attack. "Racism can kill Black people even when a Black finger pulls the trigger," she tells Hertsgaard, who, she later said, is "called" to investigate what actually happened, and why. Charismatic, complicated, and struck down in her prime, Big Red and her heroic life will captivate readers. In the wake of the shooting, she never stopped fighting as she sought to get to the core of this uniquely American maelstrom. *Big Red's Mercy* is an illuminating narrative that provides a human and unflinching look at modern America.

biggest drug dealers in detroit history: Where the Water Goes Around Bill Wylie-Kellermann, 2017-05-30 *Where the Water Goes Around* is a biblical and political reading of Detroit over the course of three decades by an activist pastor. Detroit is a place where one can take the temperature of the world. Think on the rise of Fordism and auto-love, the Arsenal of Democracy, the practice of the sit-down strike, or the invention of the expressway and suburban mall. Consider more recently the rebellion of 1967, the deindustrialization of a union town, the assault on democracy in this black-majority city, the structural adjustments of municipal bankruptcy, and now a struggle for water as a human right. Bill Wylie-Kellermann tells the story of working out his place-based vocation with a simultaneous commitment to gospel nonviolence. He evokes the place Anishinabe peoples tread lightly the banks of Wawiatanong, where the waters go round. One narrative thread walks a procession through the streets, a contemporary stations of the cross, to the locations of crucifixion today. It names the occupying principalities and their outposts on the ground. Another tells the story of resurrection in struggle and human community. Herein are public disruptions, liturgical direct actions, and courtroom trials. In resistance and risk, this book proclaims gospel in context.

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connection, breaking all the rules in the process, and uncovering the Establishment's ties to organized crime. Targeted by the FBI and the CIA, the case-makers were, ironically, victims of their own fabulous success in hunting down society's predators. An incredible, never-before-told story, *The Strength of the Wolf* provides a new, exciting, and revealing look at an important chapter in American history. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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included and examined. Organized A-Z, topics include: notorious riots like the Tulsa Riots of 1921, the Los Angeles Riots of 1965 and 1992; the African-American community's preparedness and responses to this odious form of mass violence; federal responses to rioting; an examination of the underlying causes of rioting; the reactions of prominent figures such as H. Rap Brown and Martin Luther King, Jr to rioting; and much more. Many of the entries describe and analyze particular riots and violent racial incidents, including the following: Belleville, Illinois, Riot of 1903 Harlem, New York, Riot of 1943 Howard Beach Incident, 1986 Jackson State University Incident, 1970 Los Angeles, California, Riot of 1992 Memphis, Tennessee, Riot of 1866 Red Summer Race Riots of 1919 Southwest Missouri Riots 1894-1906 Texas Southern University Riot of 1967 Entries covering the victims and opponents of race violence, include the following: Black Soldiers, Lynching of Black Women, Lynching of Diallo, Amadou Hawkins, Yusef King, Rodney Randolph, A. Philip Roosevelt, Eleanor Till, Emmett, Lynching of Turner, Mary, Lynching of Wells-Barnett, Ida B. Many entries also cover legislation that has addressed racial violence and inequality, as well as groups and organizations that have either fought or promoted racial violence, including the following: Anti-Lynching League Civil Rights Act of 1957 Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 Ku Klux Klan National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Nation of Islam Vigilante Organizations White League Other entries focus on relevant concepts, trends, themes, and publications. Besides almost 300 cross-referenced entries, most of which conclude with lists of additional readings, the encyclopedia also offers a timeline of racial violence in the United States, an extensive bibliography of print and electronic resources, a selection of important primary documents, numerous illustrations, and a detailed subject index.

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biggest drug dealers in detroit history: *The Gospel of Thomas* Thomas Marshall Wilkerson, 2010-03-22 It's been said that next to God's Love, a parent's Love is the most important there is. I believe it is that type of Love that is responsible for my survival through some of the toughest times

in my life. That's because I had a praying Mother. Read how I went from being an admirer of the works of Nicky Barnes, to an admirer of the works of Nicky Cruz. One a Harlem Drug Dealer, the other a minister of the Gospel. And how the two Nicky's impacted my life. In "The Gospel of Thomas" are my true confessions and testimonies from my journey through life. They chronicle a few and I mean a few of my experiences from the mean streets of Harlem as a former Gang Leader and Black Mafia Associate. Through my College/University, military, political, business, entertainment and Law Enforcement years. And ultimately my Christian and Spiritual conversion. These confessions and testimonies also tell how I became a true believer in a higher power, a power greater than man, the power of God. And becoming this way while struggling with the negative forces, that's part of this world's system. And at times when these forces have tried to steal, kill and destroy me. But because I had a mother that loved me enough to pray for me, I survived and was saved from the harsh punishment of this life and the life to come.

biggest drug dealers in detroit history: *The Pharmaceutical Era* , 1907

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What is the difference between "largest" and "biggest"? Compare this to 'the biggest lake'. To my mind, the largest is the one with the greatest surface area, the biggest may have a smaller surface area but be deeper and therefore contain more

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