

CLINARDANCE

Newsletter feature!

Interview with Clinard Dance's artistic collaborator, rapper King Moosa

Interviewed by Magdalena Rodriguez



Brian Harrington at age one. His granny gave him the name Moosa.

There is a flamenco form called Carceleras, songs about the experience of being in prison. How powerful that you can relate to Carceleras through your own experience in prison and that you found a way to express your story through rap. Tell me how you met Wendy Clinard and got involved in the Flamenco Project?

Me and Wendy have a mutual friend, Renaldo Hudson. He does many of the same things I do regarding telling our stories for a cause. Wendy was telling him about her flamenco project, and he said, oh, I have the perfect person. So we got on a call, and our souls fell in love, to say the least. Wendy is so dope. So I said, let's go. I'm with it. We started practicing; we put on five shows across the city last year, which was major.

She is dope.

I'm so blessed to have met her.

That's how I feel about her too.

How did King Moosa become your artistic name?

My granny, who passed away when I was two, gave me that name. She started calling me Moosa, which is Moses in English. The whole family started calling me Moosa. It's a childhood name. Later, I discovered there was once an African King named Mansa Musa. But the King part of my name was given to me by Jessica Helsinger. She was my girlfriend during my incarceration. She wrote me a poem for my birthday called King Moosa. From the poem, we started the King Moosa Project and because of that, I kept running with the name King Moosa.

Can you tell me about the King Moosa Project?

So, I'm also a portrait artist, I tell my story through rap and portrait drawing. Jessica Helsinger is from Miami, where they had a community of grassroots movements against human injustices. Jessica organized performances for me over the phone; she held the phone to a mic so I could participate in these events with poetry and rap. And my art was displayed in galleries. This was happening while I was in Dixon. While I was there, I created a program to help other brothers. We started writing plays. I was also an art instructor. Now I was helping other people. By then, I had exhausted all remedies in the court except for clemency. So for my clemency, I filed a petition with 3,000 signatures in 2019. Then COVID hit, and the governor was like, how can I depopulate as fast as possible? Who can I release? First, he was just releasing the elderly and low-level risk. I had no fights for thirteen years. So when the governor's committee looked at my case, I was released. At least COVID allowed them the time to look at their jobs.

Since I've been home, I've been doing the same thing, telling my story, at a larger scale, through hip-hop. Now I'm part of the [Fully Free Campaign](#), fighting so that people don't have to be treated like second-class citizens because of a mistake they made like I did as a kid. Cause I can't get certain jobs because I have a felony. The Constitution says that your citizenship should be restored after you pay your debt. I paid my debt. Why do I have to register as a violent offender? I have no violence in my history for fifteen years. But I must register as a violent offender for the rest of my life.

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King Moosa, currently age thirty.



Click Image to Listen to King Moosa Rap to Buleria

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