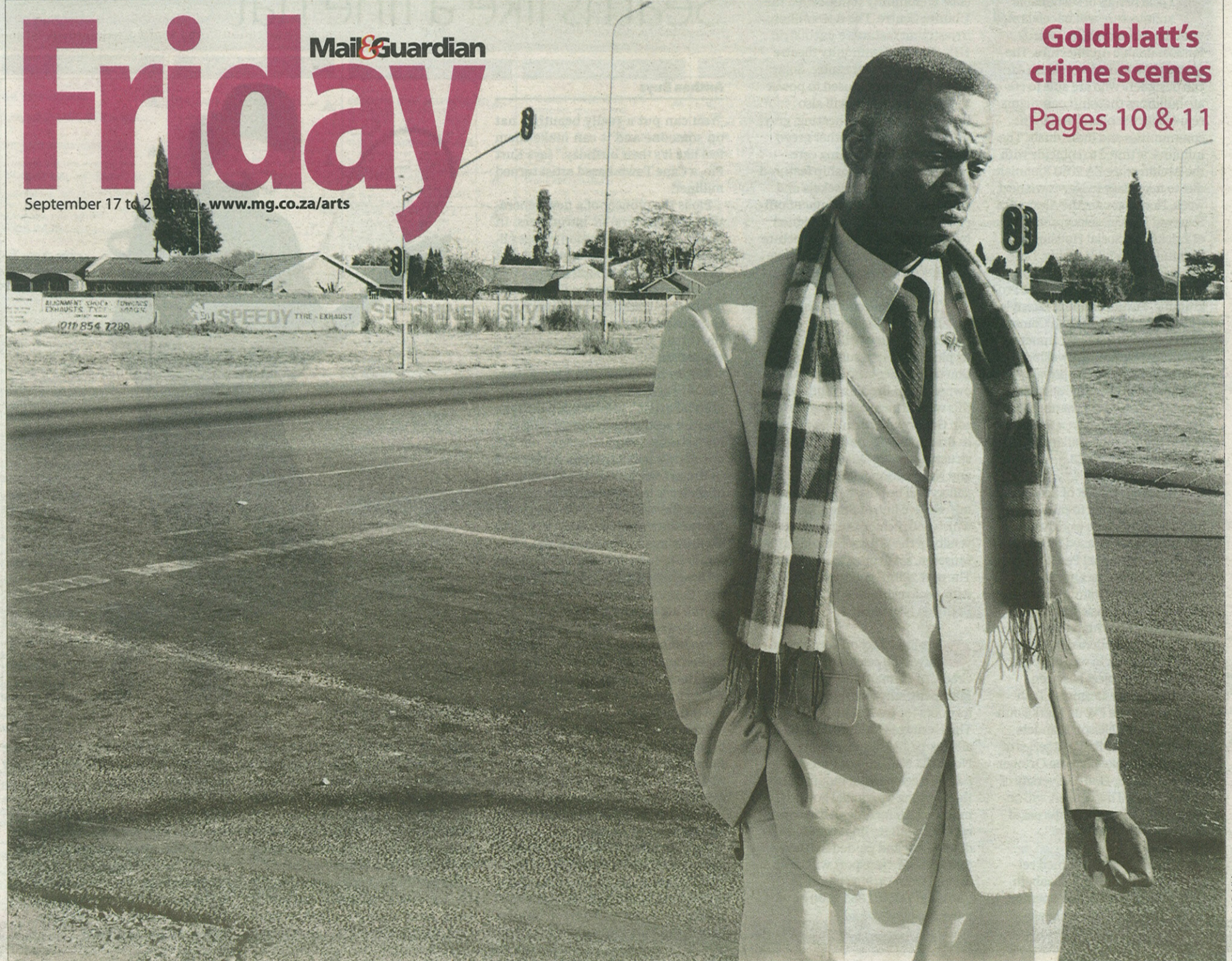




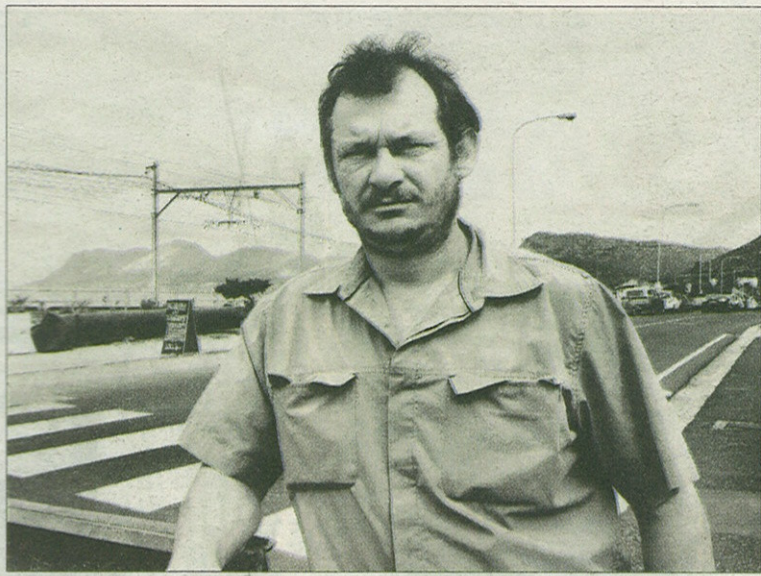
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**Goldblatt's
crime scenes**
Pages 10 & 11



Photography

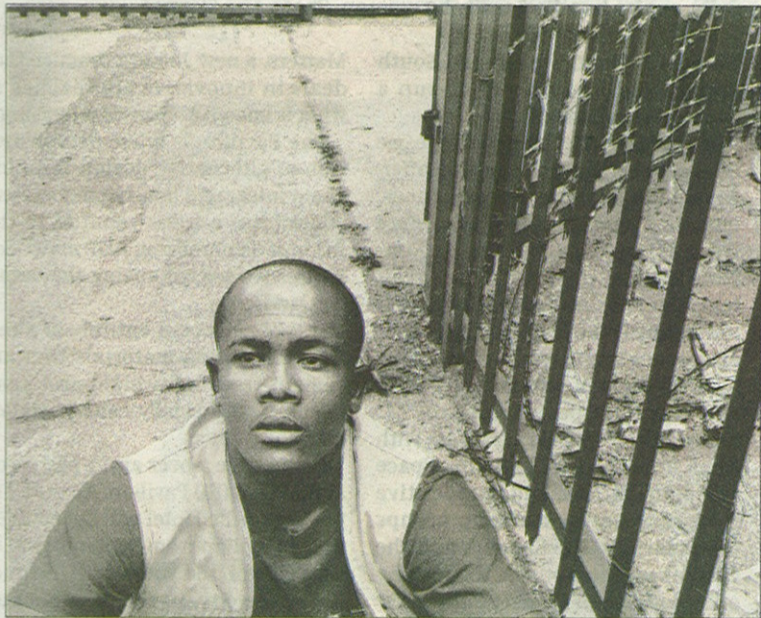


Mike MacKay at the intersection where he assaulted his wife's lover

Mike was born in 1967, in Tygervalley, one of seven children. His father was often away working on ships. Mike was eight when his uncle sent him and his brother to sell stolen copies of the *Sunday Times* in Woodstock. A young boy stabbed Mike's brother with a screwdriver and took his money. Mike pulled the screwdriver out of his brother and stabbed the assailant with it and robbed him. He then started stealing lead off the roofs of suburban houses to sell for food money. He was caught by a householder, who offered him a job as a drug runner. Mike delivered dagga on the way to school and collected money on the way home. At 10 he moved up the dealer's ladder and became a successful enforcer. At 15 he joined the army and dealt drugs to troops. Discharged at 17, he carried on drug running, driving drug-laden cars up to Beaufort West for R20 000 a trip. After a brief stint in the navy Mike took work with a pimp to stay clear of the drug dealers. He chauffeured prostitutes and took care of problem clients. He married Tracy, his son's mother. She was not faithful. Hitching home after a night out

with his brother, a driver taunted them by stopping and then driving off just as they reached his car. When Mike realised this was Tracy's lover he jumped on the car's bonnet at a traffic light, punched through the windscreen and beat up the driver. Sentenced to five years for assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, he served six months and nine months under house arrest. Peter Smith, a builder whom Mike met while selling torches door to door, gave him a job. "First person who treated me like a human being." Now 43, Mike works as a carpenter and is trying to straighten out his son, who has been in jail, steals and takes drugs.

When Mike realised this was Tracy's lover he jumped on the car's bonnet at a traffic light, punched through the windscreen and beat up the driver



Trevor Mabuela on 11th Avenue, Kew, where, in 2000, he tried to hijack a woman in a BMW

Born in Alexandra, Johannesburg, Trevor was 14 years old in 1995 "when we got our freedom and were free to go to the suburbs, where we weren't allowed before. We told ourselves that we were going to the parks and swimming pools — we didn't have pools here — to play, but that's when we started doing crime." They went to malls and stole sweets and marbles, "those stupid things kids like to play with ... We found boys our age playing with bicycles. We grabbed them. We took their bikes and brought them to the location. We became a group of bikers ... We started smoking when we started earning money from crime. Then we could afford beers and try to impress the ladies in the taverns ... From cigarettes we did zol, then drugs, then crack. That's when we became corrupt. We left school. Every time we didn't have money we did crime." Trevor was 19 when his mother gave him money to get a driver's licence. "I took that money and ate it on drink and

clothes, things like that." He couldn't go home without the money or the licence, so he called on some friends to help him raise funds and they attempted to hijack a woman reversing out of a factory in nearby Kew. His friend screamed at her to open the door and get out. She refused. His friend fired his pistol but didn't hit her. She drove off and found some police who gave chase. It was 5pm. People were pouring out of factories. His friends disappeared into the busy streets. Trevor was caught. Sent to jail for 20 years for attempted murder, his sentence was reduced to 10 years on appeal and he served five. His friends, never caught, have started families and businesses. Aged 28, Trevor hopes to complete his schooling and get a job.

"We left school. Every time we didn't have money we did crime"



Errol Seboledisho at the Soweto clothing shop where he was arrested for shoplifting in 2002

Born in Soweto in 1979, Errol was brought up by his parents and grandparents. He matriculated in 1996 and had almost completed his training as an electrician when he ran out of money. In 1999 he joined friends who were breaking into houses, shoplifting and participating in "pavement robbery". He would see a woman coming and, with knife in hand, say

to her: "Would you please laughing. In 2002 he was seeks work he is asked wh He has a son "and I'll always

Shot on the spot

David Goldblatt's new project takes criminals back to the place where they committed their offence to glean a hint of recognition in the eyes of his subjects

Shaun de Waal

Crime is the focus of David Goldblatt's latest and ongoing photographic project, the first fruits of which will be seen at the Johannesburg Goodman Gallery from October 6.

He and his wife, Goldblatt notes, "were held up twice within a month in our house". But crime in South Africa has an impact on everyone: "Crime is part of our lives. A huge part of our incomes is devoted to protecting our persons and our property. So I felt I needed to deal with crime and my way of dealing with things is to take photographs."

First, though, he had to develop an approach to the subject and to people who have committed crimes.

"I made contact with the *Mail & Guardian* and [editor] Nic Dawes and [chief photographer] Paul Botes were both very interested in what I was doing, and that led in turn to a contact in the department of correctional services and an organisation called Khulisa, which is engaged in

the rehabilitation of offenders."

He later made contact with other organisations, Phoenix and Realistic, doing the same work in other areas, and sought out subjects who would tell him their stories, who would take him to the scene of the crime for which they were convicted and agree to having their portrait taken there.

"I wanted to get to grips with the nature of the person who has committed a crime," he says. "I wanted to meet this person, as a person, face to face, at the scene of the crime. I wanted somehow not so much to confront that person as take him or her into a situation that was meaningful to him or her. That must have been a life-changing moment, that crime. Even if the person committed many crimes, that was the one that sent them to prison."

"What I hope for is that at the scene of the crime there will be a certain self-awareness in the subject that might resonate in the picture. That's the best I can hope for. Very often I go to some lengths to give a sense of place, but I don't try to

recreate the crime."

Goldblatt put a simple, blunt proposal to the offenders he met: "I'm asking them to go back to the scene of the crime, or in some cases the scene of the arrest. At the scene of the crime, my concern is to do a portrait and I hardly speak. Before I go with them to that place, I get them to sketch out the crime — I need to know what happened. Afterwards, we go to a quiet place and I give them a tape recorder and ask them just to talk." In some cases, he says, he got considerable "outpourings".

The information from the subjects will be used to caption the images, which require this addition. To look at most of the images cold, you might not see a convicted criminal and a crime scene. One image, at least, has a subject who looks precisely like what you'd expect a Cape Flats gangster of a certain generation to look like — gaunt face, slicked-back hair, a thick chain around his neck. But he is the exception.

In another, more typical image all you'd see is a plain, bearded middle-aged white man standing in a scraggy copse of trees. Without a caption you wouldn't know that he led a security-guard team that tortured and killed a suspect here. Or, in another, you'd see an



... please give me your wallet and your phone so that I will never hurt you." "Ja, I would say please," he says, and was caught shoplifting in this Soweto store and went to prison for two-and-a-half years. Now when he asks whether he has a criminal record. "Eish, that stigma. Sometimes it's what prevents us from working." Always encourage him to go to school, never do wrong, never take somebody else's property".

ordinary black man standing at the side of the road, but it was here that he used a sparkplug to shatter a car window and steal a bag. In yet another picture, the wistful look in the eyes of a young black woman might be the only thing that hints that she was convicted of stealing the television that lurks in the lower right of the frame.

For the upcoming Goodman show, to be made up of the Johannesburg-related images, Goldblatt will provide extended captions of up to 200 words. But he is also exhibiting in Paris next year "and there will be a whole room devoted to this work. For that I want to do a more substantial piece of text. This is not simply a photographic exercise. It's not an aesthetic exercise. I'm interested in conveying a sense of these people, and sometimes what they have to say is extraordinarily telling — about the individual, about the society. It really is about these people. I'm not trying to impose an artistic mould on them."

Working on these images and with these people, I wonder, did he feel he understood better why they might commit crimes?

"First, I have to say immediately, that it's ridiculous to generalise from a sample of 25. But certain things are becom-

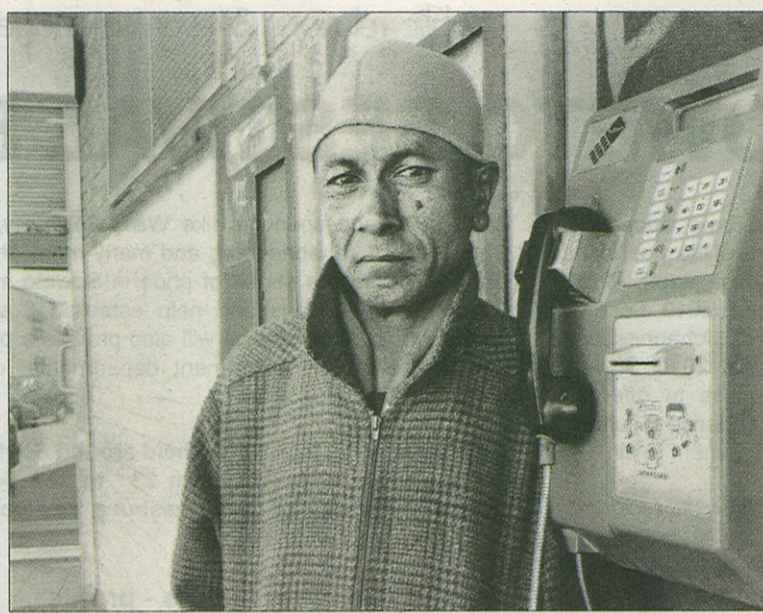
ing clear to me. There are common elements running through these stories. We have seriously damaged a whole generation of young black people. It's terrible.

"A constant that comes through in many cases is the lack of a father in the house. The father has perhaps gone to jail himself for a long period. Or he's been abusive, or there's a succession of males. It's a dysfunctional element of the family. Drink and drugs are also a common element.

"I say this with great hesitation, because it's not cut and dried. But I had a sense of young black men, in that age bracket, having no sense of upward mobility. They don't know how to get out of that place, of that situation, of being locked into the underclass. They have very poor education, so they have very little chance of finding a decent job. They are not equipped for a modern technological society.

"Most of them were born between 1979 and 1984, which means their teen years were post-apartheid, their high school years were post-apartheid. Which means we've fucked up another generation, and this is a tragedy.

"I'd hate to be a judge or a magistrate. It's very difficult to judge."



Oufie Gamielien at the Belhar Post Office, Cape Town, one of several that he robbed

Born in 1961, Oufie was top of his school class until standard three, when he was expelled for burning a child with cigarettes. Expelled from his second school after he and a friend attacked bullies with a panga and an axe, his third attempt at schooling ended when he blinded a boy with a pencil. After his father thrashed him, Oufie ran away and lived in a pigeon cage in the yard. He joined a gang, the Terminus Kids. "This was the family I needed... We understood one another." They broke into houses, stole from cars. He was 17 when he went to prison for the first time. Wanting to join the prison gang, the 26, he had to prove himself by stabbing someone. Saying a prayer, Oufie stabbed his target seven times. He was given a brutal beating and received seven months in solitary — and became a 26. Amnestied in 1988, he and fellow 26es formed a gang that sometimes committed two or three armed robberies in a day. He was arrested and sentenced to 40 years. Two years into the sentence he and a friend contacted detectives, saying they wanted to come clean. En route from the prison to a police station they escaped. Oufie carried on with armed robberies, evading the law. "I became a wanted fugitive. Dead or alive."

One evening a stranger approached him about a shipment of Mandrax coming in the next day. He and seven men robbed a druglord of a large stash of Mandrax, dagga and cash. Oufie double-crossed his accomplices, moving the stolen goods while the robbers got drunk. "Now I was wanted by the cops and the gangsters, but I didn't care. I was afraid of nothing." Eventually his wife turned him in after he crushed her hands in a vice because he had caught her stealing money. In October 2008 he was on parole. "My brother is doing well... I taught him upholstery. We had a business together. I got bored and sold him my share. Now he has two factories and he says to me: 'You could have had the same.' I say to him: 'So I made the wrong choices, but fuck you with your money. I won't come to beg.'" Oufie died of asthma in Pollsmoor Prison in early 2010.

"I was wanted by the cops and the gangsters, but I didn't care. I was afraid of nothing"



Osmond Thembu at his shack in Alex, where he accidentally killed a friend

Osmond, known as MTK, was born in Balfour, Mpumalanga, in 1975. He never knew his father, seldom saw his mother, who was a domestic worker in Pretoria, and was brought up by his grandmother and an uncle. Shortly after coming to Johannesburg at the age of 16, he went to stay with an uncle in Alexandra. He started living a "very fast lifestyle" with friends who carried guns and did crime. "Beer was cheap; drugs were cheaper." In the suburbs they robbed, burgled and hijacked. Thembu liked housebreaking

but not hijacking. In the township they indulged in extortion. One day a friend came by to show him a revolver he had acquired. They were standing here, outside Thembu's shack, when Thembu accidentally fired a shot that killed his friend. He was charged with culpable homicide and for possession of an unlicensed firearm. Sentenced to 14 years imprisonment, he served seven. While inside he studied and did courses offered by Khulisa to "silence the violence", manage anger and in Aids awareness. He takes employment wherever he can and is concerned that his son, born in 1998, has grown up without "a father's love".

● See all of David Goldblatt's photographs in this series and the full captions www.mg.co.za/goldblatt

www.mg.co.za

"Beer was cheap, drugs were cheaper"

ON THE COVER



Paul Tuge, where he hid after shooting a policeman in 2001

Born in Soweto in 1979, Paul's mother was pregnant with him when his father went to prison for 15 years for robbery. Brought up by his grandmother, who was hardly able to feed him, Paul began housebreaking at 13 and at 14 was dependent on drugs and drink. In 2001, after he and a friend broke into a house in Benoni, from which he stole a pistol, a neighbour's gardener reported them and they were arrested. With the stolen pistol Paul shot and wounded one policeman and possibly a second, after which they escaped and hid in this stormwater gully. When they heard dogs they surrendered. Paul was sentenced to 20 years for two attempted murders. On appeal he was acquitted of one charge and his sentence was reduced to 12 years, of which he served six. He underwent intensive rehabilitation in prison. He has founded a company called Dream Finders, through which he hopes to employ fellow ex-offenders "because it's hard to find a job if you have a criminal record".



Sammy Matsebula at the intersection where he hijacked a Fidelity cash-in-transit van

Sammy was the first of nine children born to what he calls a "good family" in Nelspruit in 1968. A ladies' man, musician, singer and soccer player — he even tried out for Jomo Cosmos. After matric he went to police college and became a detective at Lenasia South police station. He describes himself as "kind, loving and polite". On April 3 1996 he and seven others — three policemen and four soldiers — hijacked a Fidelity Guard cash van at this intersection in Lenasia South. Sammy and one of his police friends drove a police bakkie. The others, armed with AK-47s, 9mm rifles, an R5 and a hand grenade, followed in a Caravelle. Sammy blocked the path of the cash van here, the others attacked it, killed a guard, deliberately wounded his friend and escaped with the loot. Sammy called in the heist, pretending that he and his colleague had attempted to stop it. That night Sammy got his share, an amount upwards of R75 000. He planned to start a business in Nelspruit. But it was all over by midnight — their wounded colleague had turned informer. Sammy was sentenced to 96 years, reduced to 22, and sent to C-Max prison. "The treatment at C-Max is very bad. I've seen guys dying and raped in front of my eyes." His wife and daughter died in a car crash — a head-on collision with criminals driving a car in a police chase. "I was like a mad person... a living corpse, awaiting burial." Sammy was stabbed and his fellow robbers joined gangs. He didn't smoke or drink and was isolated. "There are two things that prison does... you either become a hardcore criminal or you become a better person." He was transferred to Zonderwater and started praying and studying — theology, music, strategic management and adult education. He became an HIV/Aids and drugs educator, coached a soccer team and trained choirs. He had affairs with several female warders, became a motivational speaker and was paroled in July 2008. He now takes schoolchildren on tours of prisons "to show them what it's like".