In May 2008, a group of five young men were arrested in Miami for armed carjacking, burglary, sexual battery, and assault. Among them was Ronald Franklin, thirteen, who was cited by the other members of the group as their ringleader even though he was the youngest among them. Since his incarceration in June 2008, Franklin has been held awaiting trial in an eight-by-ten cell at Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center in Miami-Dade County. The following transcript is drawn from interviews Richard Ross conducted with Franklin at the prison in December 2010 and September 2011.

Richard Ross: Where were you born?

Ronald Franklin: Wooster, Massachusetts.

RR: What part of Miami did you live in?

RF: Over near Miami Gardens.
RR: Did you live at home?
RF: I was kind of living on the street or at friends’ houses.
RR: What was home like?
RF: There was never enough food. I didn’t want to be in Miami. I was ten when we moved here from Vernon, Connecticut. I had to leave all my friends and start again. I went to the wrong elementary school that didn’t have the program I needed so I had to switch after a year. I didn’t really have a bedtime. I liked to stay up and play 007 on the PlayStation. I fell asleep most days when I went to school.
RR: You don’t talk about drug use in the house. Am I misreading something?
RF: I didn’t see that much drugs in the house, but my mom would act funny sometimes. I didn’t realize until I was about twelve that my mom was using. I am not sure what she was using — crack or heroin. One day I came home and she and Junior were in the bathroom and my sister said, “What you think they doing?”
RR: What were the best times you had growing up?
RF: Playing football. I am great at that.
RR: Have you ever seen your father?
RF: He came to a game once. Picked me up and took me over and watched me. He stayed for a few days but I ain’t seen him since. My mother never came to any of my games.
RR: How is your mom? Does she ever visit you here?
RF: My mom is clean now. She got clean with religion. She comes to my court appearances but she has never visited me here. I try to stay out of trouble. I was angry when I first came here. I felt I had no one. I got in trouble when I first got here, but now I am OK, and they made me a trustee.
RR: If you could do it again or change it. What would you do?
RF: I would have my mom be there for me. I think about getting out like thirty times a day—but it’s OK. It is what it is.