

## Transcript for Too \$hort | The Pimp Tape (Episode 660)

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/660/>

TOO \$HORT: I knew what it did to people and I knew for a fact when I never even had been in the studio. I knew that people wanted to hear what the \*\*\*\* I was doing.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm Jordan Harbinger and I'm here with producer Jason DeFillippo. On this episode we're talking with Too \$hort. That's right, he is a hip hop legend, OG from way back in the day. One of the pioneer rappers of West Coast hip hop. His rap lyrics are primarily about such charming topics such as pimping, drug use, and promiscuity. People who have heard that music might think it's an odd choice for The Art of Charm podcast, however, there is a little bit of meat on these bones.

He's a godfather of Bay Area hip hop and since 1996, all but one studio album has charted to the U.S. R&B charts and all but two charted to the Billboard Top 200 -- that is no small feat -- with six platinum and four gold albums. He's collaborated with both Tupac and Biggie during their feud and has no bullet holes to show for it. Today we'll discover why he -- and how, for that matter -- He went from middle class upbringing to an OG hip hop legend with over 30 years in the game and learn what keeps someone not only going but keeps them relevant, and we'll explore why now he's changing his tune a little bit.

He's bringing a new message to the local Oakland neighborhoods, that life's not all about sex, drugs, and money. Music did save his life, or so he says, and now he's trying to do the same for others. So enjoy this episode of AoC, here with Too \$hort.

JORDAN: By the way, when I tried to research you early on, I googled "Too \$hort," and the first thing autocompletes in Google is, "When did Too \$hort die," or "Too \$hort died," or, "How did Too \$hort die?" That's a little scary, right? Because at first I was like, "Oh, I missed the window. He's already dead."

TOO \$HORT: A lot of celebrities die in the public eye.

JORDAN: That's true, yeah.

TOO \$HORT: It's like some sort of right of passage. They think you died falsely. Some people worry about you and other people are relieved when they find out it's not true. When I died, I sold another another 1.3 million albums sold. I died, they knocked me off.

JORDAN: Do you know how that happened? Was that just a rumor? Were you like, "Tell everyone I died?"

TOO \$HORT: No, they had specific reasons. It was always that I got shot and it was always inside of a crack house and I was the actual crack head. "Too \$hort was trying to smoke crack and he got killed."

JORDAN: So you don't even have no beef, no feud, nothing? Because you made it through the Biggie Tupac thing unscathed.

TOO \$HORT: I made it through a lot of feuds because I never really hung out with a lot of rappers so my crew was never hip hop influenced and then they were the kind of guys that were like -- In a rap battle it would be the most ridiculous thing to come back around the homies and go, "I've got to battle this guy." They're like, "Battle? [00:02:47] punch him or something." It wouldn't have went well with the homies.

JORDAN: How come your crew was never hip hop/rap crew.

TOO \$HORT: Well, I have a lot of friends that are rappers --

JORDAN: Of course, yeah.

TOO \$HORT: -- a lot of producers, a lot of people that are in the industry that are really good friends over the years but my immediate hardcore crew that I always hung out was the guys that I came up around in Oakland.

No matter where I went, somehow I would involve my main guys and we just kind of kept the same core friendship all these years. I would always see rap as my job. So I've got a life over here, I'm going to go to the studio from 12 noon to 8 pmm. At 8 pm, I'm going to go hang out with these other people that I \*\*\*\* with. We're going to get some dinner and then we're going out and we're going to do, blah, blah, blah. You know what I mean? I would not separate the two unless it was like a Too \$hort show or something then the work people come around the away from work people and a lot of times they didn't click.

JORDAN: What was your crew listening to if not rap?

TOO \$HORT: No, they loved hip hop, they just didn't make it. Something that a lot of us would agree on, when you deal with creative people, there's a lot of weirdos, a lot of eclectic, eccentric behavior and people who are just down to earth, blue collar people, they're like, "Man, don't bring your weird friends around us," and stuff like that. We make music, we have to be creative. But to them they're like, "Man your boy is weird, man. He's sitting there playing on his phone and tapping on his phone," and I'm like, "He's probably making a beat, I don't know." Stuff like that.

JORDAN: So your crew wasn't as creative as some of your artist friends, then?

TOO \$HORT: A lot of guys that I made music with, they didn't like to party. They would go to the big party but I would go to all the parties. So, when I left the studio, I always want to go some restaurant or some chick date or something and something and then I'm going out. And my guys, they're in their own world, you know?

JORDAN: They go back to their wife and kids or something like that?

TOO \$HORT: Some, but other just -- you have your own castle and your own world and if you hang around with Too \$hort at work all day, and then you go hang around Too \$hort at night, you're going to Too \$hort's world. So, everybody had their own world.

JORDAN: I could understand that. It seems -- Well, when I watch movies because I don't hang out with that many rappers either, surprise, surprise. You see that it's like studio, the whole crew is there, kind of like when I walked in. This guy's outside, hanging out, looking at the equipment, talking about probably what they're going to do tonight, whatever. And you see all these guys always going out in a group, working as a group, probably live together when they're younger, for all I know. And you just kind of went, "No, I've got my job which is rap, and then I've got my career with that and then I've got these other friends that I've had forever that I'm always just going to keep."

TOO \$HORT: Yep, I'm not the only one like that but at the same time, there are a lot of guys who are together, they're in the studio, they all make music together, they leave the studio, they all go out together, they chase chicks together, they go out of town together -- There are those guys.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: I've always had different crews. I have friends who are my real friends who really -- high school. Then I have this other group of friends that I met after the stardom and they're a different breed of people that I'll be like, "Let's go to Oakland," and they're like, "No, I don't think I want to go. Catch you on the next trip, \$hort."

JORDAN: What do your high school friends think about your career? You grew up decidedly middle class so some of your high school friends must be like, "Yeah, you know, Todd, that guy we went to high school with? He's a rapper now!"

TOO \$HORT: No matter where I landed in life, my life was always a mixture of -- Elementary school, I was a really good student in private school but we didn't live in a really great neighborhood. We lived in a decent neighborhood on a good block where the drama was a few blocks over or not too far. Then I had cousins that lived all over the city and I spent a lot of time -- You know,

you always get dropped off at your cousin's' house. I did. I spent a lot of time with the cousins. So, I got it in all over the city and when I moved to Oakland I went to Fremont High and it kind of ended up in a different kind of environment where I had all these elements in L.A. of going to a really good private school in 9th grade. I went to Daniel Murphy that was a good school and living in the hood and hanging in the hood just being a really good student. So when I ended up at a school like Fremont High in East Oakland, it wasn't the best curriculum and I had the opportunity to roller skate down hill and fall back on that ass kicking I'd been getting all those years. In private school when you get in trouble and \*\*\*\*, you get your ass kicked, you know what I mean? Holding dictionaries and \*\*\*\* with your arms stretched out.

JORDAN: Oh, you went to that kind of school, where it was like you get hit with rulers or something?

TOO \$HORT: Yeah, they had you running around the damn gym or some \*\*\*\* for punishment and writing \*\*\*\* over and over again on the chalkboard, all that bull\*\*\*\*. So I get to a school where I feel like the put me in these classes that weren't really up to par and I'm just like, "Oh, I know what to do now. No homework. I'll just take the test without even studying and \*\*\*\*." Just kind of \*\*\*\* up. I got a good bling, man. Before the Too \$hort \*\*\*\* came out, I had a lot of ingredients to where people wouldn't be surprised, you know? The only people that probably were ever surprised were people that went to 9th grade with me. They were ones who would be like, "Is that \*\*\*\* Todd on the video?" Those guys.

JORDAN: Do you still hang out with some of those guys?

TOO \$HORT: I still see of them like Chris Spencer went there. He went there and he's one of the guys that knows I was on the school books -- yearbooks or some \*\*\*\* but it was a damn good school, man. Everybody who I know that went to that school is doing good in life.

JORDAN: Did you pick your own name as Too \$hort or was that a nickname you had back in the day? Because you're not that short, let's get that out of the way. You're just not that short.

TOO \$HORT: People say that a lot too. They're like, "I thought you'd be shorter." I was 5'2" the day I turned 19 years old. I was 5'2". By the time I turned 20, I was this tall. I'm about 5'8" now. In high school I got to the 10th grade and my brother had went to the school the previous year. He was in 12th grade when I was in 10th. His friends got into me immediately. It might have been one of the first days of school, that 10th grade year for me, and his friends immediately were like, "Man, ain't nobody about to call you Todd. This is not about to happen." So I'm just moving to Oakland and they were sitting around, a group of them, making jokes, trying to come up with a name for me and then some dude so I guess everybody called Shorty, came in the vicinity of me and it was noticed that Shorty was taller than me and that turned into the joke. "This mother\*\*\*\*\* is shorter that Shorty." So, somehow somebody just blurted out, "Dude, we can't even call you Shorty, you're just \*\*\*\*\* short." That was the joke.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: That was some bull\*\*\*\* and then I saw this movie not too long into the short joke and it was called Penitentiary. And the star of the movie was Too Sweet and he \*\*\*\*\* all the \*\*\*\*\* and he did everybody's ass. Somewhere during that movie, after that movie, somewhere I was like, "\*\*\*\*, that's it. Too Sweet, Too Short," and I just but a little 'Sir' in front of it. Back then, you know how you put the Sir Too Short -- I never carried the Sir Too Short into the rap career too much but you listen to some Too \$hort records and I have referenced it enough times. I went to the mall, I got me a little baseball hat, got some iron on letters that said Sir Too Short, I got the jacket to match, put the Too \$hort somewhere on the jacket or something, and I walked up to the school one day with the jacket and the hat on and then they really didn't want to accept it at first.

JORDAN: But you're like, "I already bought this jacket and this hat, man. It's not going anywhere."

TOO \$HORT: Nobody ever really called me Too \$hort by the way. Everybody calls me Short. They didn't want to accept it at first and I went to this party with my brother and his friends one night to tag along and they get to this party and they tell me I couldn't go in and this party is really close to an intersection of a main street and there's a gas station on the corner. So, I'm just hanging at the gas station. I get into this long conversation with this homeless guy which is something that I've been doing my whole life, is just having conversations with homeless people because it's just very interesting.

JORDAN: Really?

TOO \$HORT: He asked me what my name was. I told him, "My name is Too \$hort but everybody calls me Short," and then when the guys came out from the party, they were like, "Yo, let's go. We're going to jump on the bus," and the homeless dude said, "Are you short?" the way he said it was just so cool like we was his homies. They was like, "What the \*\*\*\* was that?" so they all started mimicking him and started saying, "Are you short?" Turned it into something cool and just me pushing the Too \$hort. I started rapping around the same time, my rap name was Too \$hort, I just kind of pushed it on them.

JORDAN: So with the jacket and the hat it sounds like you were good at branding somehow intuitively.

TOO \$HORT: By accident, not on purpose.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: That was the thought process. "They're going to \*\*\*\*\* know me." I didn't know there was a word branding or marketing.

JORDAN: Yeah, of course. Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: I wore that \*\*\*\*\* jacket and that hat all the time. I wore that hat until the \*\*\*\*\* gold letters probably were turning moldy green or some \*\*\*\* and I used to keep a Sharpie, like graffiti artists.

JORDAN: Yeah, sure.

TOO \$HORT: But I was more what they would call a tagger. We didn't call it that \*\*\*\*. We just called it writing your \*\*\*\*\* name on the wall. But I was on a mission that anywhere I stopped you were going to see my name. I look back on it like, when my career started jumping off, and I'm like, "That was pretty slick to go around the city selling tapes and everybody's listening to your \*\*\*\*, you're tagging up your name, and you're wearing it on your head."

JORDAN: Ubiquitous. It's everywhere. Well you sold the tapes out of the trunk of your car, right?

TOO \$HORT: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: Man, imagine if you had the Internet back then.

TOO \$HORT: Well, I think it's the same thing. The tapes out of the trunk is a luxury. That didn't really \*\*\*\*\* happen. That happened for a short period of time. I had a rap partner, his name was Freddy B. When we started selling those tapes, we either walked or we caught the bus. Later on he bought a really raggedy \*\*\*\*\* car and you could say we was selling them out of the trunk then. On foot was a lot longer time period than in the car. Where the story really comes from is when we started selling independent albums and it wasn't the street tapes. It was like we really start making money and we drive around a pickup truck or an SUV and we be dropping off boxes to the distributors and boxes to certain record stores that wanted to buy that record and we were selling \*\*\*\*\* cassettes out of the trunk, for real.

JORDAN: When you started selling tapes out of -- probably stuffed in your cargo pockets --



TOO \$HORT: Paper bag.

JORDAN: Paper bag, yeah. Grocery store bag.

TOO \$HORT: It was \*\*\*\*\* liquor store little bags just full of tapes.

JORDAN: How long was that phase of just ramping up?

TOO \$HORT: That would have been about a three year period. That was strictly our hustle, we didn't need any kind of \*\*\*\*\* job, we didn't need to sell drugs, we just had to go make those tapes and keep making new ones and keep selling them. And the only time I ever worked as a kid that was an easy way to make some money, which was being a vendor at Oakland A's games.

You just go be there about an hour before the game, if these guys who were the guys who ran all the vendors, if they thought they were a hustler or they found out that you were a hustler, if some guys was like, "This is my boy, he's going to be a real hustler," then they would pick you and you could sell Coca Cola in like a vendor up and down the aisles and \*\*\*\* and you'd probably make 50 bucks. Out of those cats who used to get out there -- some of those games are early morning games or you've got to get out there early to get picked -- some of those guys who were out there later in life became guys like me. Guys who \*\*\*\*\* made a lot of money and really had that hustle in them and really didn't mind hustling. I just look back on that as a plus too. That was randomly show up when you want to show up.

JORDAN: Sure.

TOO \$HORT: If you didn't show up for two weeks, nobody said it. I had a buddy who was the assistant manager at Jack in the Box and he had the nerve to get all his friends hired. And we were like some \*\*\*\*\* ups. We partied at Jack in the Box for about five months until I was forced to quit.

JORDAN: Really? Why did they force you to quit?

TOO \$HORT: They probably singled out the \*\*\*\* up crew and we used to work on the shift with our boy who was assistant manager and our boss who was the big boss of the store, he came to me personally and said, "I need you to come to work 6 o'clock Saturday morning," and you have to work with the boss. That's his shift. So I'm already not wanting to do this and when I got there, I knew what the \*\*\*\* was going to happen. He handed me a bristle pad with a handle --

JORDAN: Oh, no, a toilet cleaner.

TOO \$HORT: He walked me outside to the drive through, take this solution and he put it on all the oil stains and then you take this brush and you rub them out.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

TOO \$HORT: Then he gave me another chemical and a chisel. And he said, "You take this one and you put it on all the gum and you take this and you scrape it up," and I was like, "Okay, okay." As fast as he got out of my sight, I left that \*\*\*\* in the drive through. I just left.

JORDAN: He was going to basically haze you until you bounced.

TOO \$HORT: I didn't scrape one piece of gum. \*\*\*\* that. \*\*\*\* that.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: But you were such a hard worker in other ways. It's not like you were some lazy kid, you just didn't want to do that. Probably because he told you to do that.

TOO \$HORT: Jack in the Box was fun though. We really had a good time. It was like some kind of \*\*\*\* summer camp or some \*\*\*\* where you working with your homies, not being responsible, doing everything \*\*\*\* thing you can think of.

JORDAN: Do you eat there now knowing what goes on?

TOO \$HORT: Not really. I don't really eat fast food unless I need to eat really fast. That's not often. I can tell you some \*\*\*\* we were doing though. We would be generous to people we knew and people we liked or whatever. You'd order a burger and get two, whatever the \*\*\*\*, just anything. I don't know. But then anybody that was mean got treated really bad. Really bad. I suppose every restaurant does that because I saw it, like, "You're really going to say this \*\*\*\* to me and then ask me for some food?" This \*\*\*\* is real. I hang out with friends who disrespect waiters and waitresses and I say, "Remember," to the server. "Remember who's doing all the talking."

JORDAN: Yeah, remember I was polite and he was the one that was nasty. I had the salad.

TOO \$HORT: It's not a group thing.

JORDAN: Right. Running a business now and being a business now, do you look back at how you worked for that other business owner at Jack in the Box and think, "Oh, man I hope nobody's doing that to me here?"

TOO \$HORT: I just think that you've got a guy who's on french fries at Jack in the Box and you give him \*\*\*\*\* 10 years and he's the \*\*\*\*\* manager or some shit.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: Some guys who have worked their way up in the rankings of fast food have become ambitious enough to become owners.

JORDAN: Sure.

TOO \$HORT: And entrepreneurs. Some people in life are driven, man. At every point, wherever I was at, when I was literally on french fries at Jack in the Box, my mind was like, doing this \*\*\*\*. It

was very temporary. I was motivated by other reasons not by a paycheck or the fact that I wanted to be the best french fry dipper.

JORDAN: Right. Yeah, but you were such a hard worker in other ways. Did you ever think about giving up with the rap and everything? Did you ever think, "Man, I've been selling tapes on the bus, off the bus, in a paper bag, out of this damn trunk for three years --

TOO \$HORT: No that was high school. We were in high school. It was pocket money.

JORDAN: So it was really enough.

TOO \$HORT: That was the kind of money that bought a pair of shoes and new jeans and a lot of weed and a lot of beer and \*\*\*\*\* wine and \*\*\*\*, you know, those years. It was just fun money. I would literally go out and sell tapes just so that I'm like, "I kind of want to get me some new pair of jeans, some shoes, a bag of weed, and we're going to get us some drink tonight." My mission was to go earn that much profit, save the money so the next day I could buy more tapes. You're living check to check, I was living tape to tape.

JORDAN: Yeah, tape to tape early enough. Do you ever think now, "Man, if I'd been more serious about it back then, maybe I would have done something different?" Because you made it, obviously very far, still \*\*\*\*\* around in high school.

TOO \$HORT: Yeah well I could have just always been this independent guy. I don't think the guys who stays that route, in hip hop, that time, knowing who I was, and how the industry, I don't think that that guy ever becomes an international star. I don't think you blow the \*\*\*\* up because even to this day, our guy on the Internet who's hot as \*\*\*\*, you can have this guy who emerges from the ashes of the Internet and he's a mega Internet star but he's still got to partner up with somebody to become international. So I feel like I could have stayed that route and I could have been just an independent guy who just worked his reasonable

success and just milked it and \*\*\*\* but at some point, the way this game is, they're going to dangle that --

JORDAN: The carrot.

TOO \$HORT: Yeah, in your face. The appeal to me was never the money that I would make, it was always the audience I would get. That's why I went to the major labels, for the bigger audience. I knew it. I knew what I had, I knew what it did to people, and I knew for a fact when I never even had been in a studio. I knew that people wanted to hear what the \*\*\*\* I was doing. I knew it.

JORDAN: Did you ever have any doubt about it? Like, "Man, this is getting harder," or, "I've got to go with this label, I don't know if I want to do this," or "They're trying to change my music," maybe?

TOO \$HORT: I don't have a music hard luck story.

JORDAN: Nah? That's real though because I feel like it's tempting to go, "All right, let me think of this narrative where I almost gave up and then this didn't make it and then I suddenly turned around." But it's better to have a real story.

TOO \$HORT: I was watching a documentary Dying Laughing. It's big comedians talking about the journey of being a comedian and \*\*\*\* it was -- They all tell this pathetic ass story about the come up in the road and the sacrifices and the learning curve and all this \*\*\*\*. I didn't have it.

JORDAN: Didn't have that. Nope. Middle class, private school, high school, sell tapes, all the way to the top.

TOO \$HORT: All the way and both of my parents are college graduates. I knew from the start -- When I was born my mother drove a '66 convertible Mustang. My father always had a little sports car he went through. He was in a club called the Black Porches Incorporated. It was like 1972-73 or some \*\*\*\*. I just took from that because I wasn't spoiled and I wasn't living in some fat ass house or nothing. I just had parents who provided.

JORDAN: Sure.

TOO \$HORT: It was good. And they put their kids in private school so I was able to excel in private school and it always gave me that advantage. I feel like man, it's not the individual in inner city public school systems. I seen it first hand when I got to high school but I can only \*\*\*\*\* imagine what it's like in kindergarten.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: And they're just saying, "If you show up, you're going to go to the next grade." That \*\*\*\* is real. I've seen it. I've seen a mother\*\*\*\*\* get a diploma who couldn't read. He got the diploma for attendance. That's some bull\*\*\*\*.

JORDAN: Yeah, that's scary. It seems like your upbringing was pretty normal, pretty middle class. You were down in L.A. and then up to Oakland. Your mom worked for the IRS, right? That's like the most not ghetto, not thug job.

TOO \$HORT: Let me tell you something, every guy I went to school with -- elementary school, Catholic school -- they all grew up to be gang bangers. That one year I went to Daniel Murphy, that was a different kind of curriculum. There was another school in L.A. that was an all boys private school, Catholic school, it was Loyola. That was a really good school. That other \*\*\*\*, I went to a Catholic school in the hood. That's not immunity. You've still got get from Catholic school in the hood to home in the hood. L.A. was like the opposite of Disneyland, going from amusement to amusement park, you're going from situation to situation. As a kid, I'm riding my bike to the store, grown ass men are going, "Give me your \*\*\*\*\* bike." \*\*\*\*, you've got to steal your bike back.

JORDAN: So somebody would steal your bike and you'd have to find out where they live and go get it?

TOO \$HORT: I see them one day, I'm like, "Give me my \*\*\*\*\* bike back," yeah. We saw a little dude riding my bike down the street. He stole it out of Thrifty's, out of the drug store -- and I was only in that mother\*\*\*\*\* for three minutes. He must have stolen it as soon as I just blinked. I just seen him a couple days later and my auntie took him off the bike and gave him a phone number and said, "Tell your mama or whoever to call me," and they called. Like, "You took my boy's bike?" "Yeah, we're over here on 84th street, come get it." Yeah well nobody showed up.

JORDAN: That's ridiculous. That's unbelievable. And this is your whole neighborhood. So you're navigating this whole situation as a kid and this later on informed some of your music, I would expect.

TOO \$HORT: Yep, that was my only real extracurricular activity outside of selling music that I just did to be bad. I was a professional bike thief. I have a chip on my shoulder because when I was a kid, people bigger than me always kept taking my bike. So we just took it as you're supposed to take the people littler than you -- you take their bikes.

JORDAN: Oh, man, you paid it downwards, that's terrible.

TOO \$HORT: That's what I thought. That was just a ritual. L.A. was that kind of city, man, where -- I'm not even going to say L.A., it just was that kind of life, man, where you got the nerve to roam around the streets and then people who are bigger and stronger than you are going to \*\*\*\* with you and then \*\*\*\*, what are you going to do? \*\*\*\* with the mother\*\*\*\*\* too. It's just the way it is.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

TOO \$HORT: I wasn't really a violent person.

JORDAN: Yeah, not a violent person.

TOO \$HORT: So it was just trying to show the homies \*\*\*\*. Plus I really liked building bikes. I had a parts thing going. It was some guys I came across in life.

JORDAN: You had a bike chop shop?

TOO \$HORT: It was some guys I came across in life that had something similar to a chop shop and then I was just one of those guys that was like, "I'm always going to have wheels." I felt like I have that in me right now about cars.

JORDAN: Yeah? Is that your Porsche outside, the shiny one?

TOO \$HORT: Yeah. I've got to have wheels. I've got have accessories, I've got to.

JORDAN: But you bought that one outside, right?

TOO \$HORT: Yeah, my bike -- All my bikes would have accessories.

JORDAN: What, like mirrors and horns on them and stuff?

TOO \$HORT: Little \*\*\*\* and I would really think that I didn't overdo it or I didn't make it ugly. People were like, "That's a nice bike."

JORDAN: Thanks, I stole it from a kid smaller than me at a thrift store.

TOO \$HORT: Well I would never ride the bikes I stole. I would immediately break them down.

JORDAN: Oh, I see.

TOO \$HORT: You trade off \*\*\*\*. Even when I was coming up in the rap game, I might have two cassette decks and like, "Want to trade a cassette deck for that equalizer?"

JORDAN: Gadget guy from back in the day. I get it. It's funny that your mom worked for the IRS. I don't know why I find that so funny. Because you have this track, The Ghetto. It basically symbolizes



the whole genre and then your mom is like collecting taxes and doing spreadsheets.

TOO \$HORT: When I was young she was a real tax auditor but later on she was training and management. But my mother was a really good friend of mine. A lot of people know that. When I didn't live with her for many, many years, we constantly saw each other or talked a lot -- just conversations. She was like a friend. And then when she retired, I moved to Atlanta and she always stayed with me out there. Big house, have her own wing and \*\*\*\*, entertaining folks and \*\*\*\*. A lot of people know the relationship and know how it was. It was some of the best times of my life, Atlanta, Georgia. Mom was living at the house, always cooking gumbo and dinner always going down and family visiting because of her. She was the kind of person that would keep the family together versus if you take her out of the equation, we don't even call each other.

JORDAN: So you moved the center of the family into your own house.

TOO \$HORT: Exactly. She was the glue and she was the one who was big on Christmas and holidays and decorating. Everybody come down and all that stuff.

JORDAN: What did your mom think of your music? She must have had an opinion. You were close to your mom and then you go up on stage and she must be like, "What?"

TOO \$HORT: My mother would be told, "Do you know your son is a nasty ass rapper and he says really nasty stuff?" and she was like, "I heard people say that but I never heard the music." She's like, "I've never heard him curse ever."

JORDAN: She never heard the music? Never heard you curse ever?

TOO \$HORT: She heard the radio versions, whatever came on the radio.

JORDAN: Right, yeah. So, they were cleaned up. Because I feel like if your mom ever came to one of your shows, you'd be up there and you'd have to think twice before you said anything.

TOO \$HORT: She came to my show in Phoenix when she lived out in Phoenix and I knew she was going to come say hello or whatever. I don't know if I told her or if I just stayed backstage.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: And then I get ready to go on and I see her right up front. And I'm like, "If you guys don't go get her, I'm not going to do the show so you've got to figure it out."

JORDAN: Because you don't want to swear in front of your mom?

TOO \$HORT: She did not want to know and all I had to do was say, "You do not want to see what I'm about do."

JORDAN: Because I can imagine -- This is what I think it must be like. So if I'm rapping or something like that and I got one of my black friends in the car and then I know the next word is going to be the 'n' word, I'm not going to say it. And you get that feeling bubbling up in your stomach where you're like, "It's coming next and I'm just going to hum the beat and then keep going."

TOO \$HORT: Skip that line.

JORDAN: Yeah, man that's how I feel like it must be. But you can't do that because you're on stage and your mom's in the front row and you're like, "Maybe I should say riches instead."

TOO \$HORT: One time I was in about 11th grade, 12 grade maybe. I rapped for a long time before I told anybody in my family I was a rapper. I was popular in the streets and I would never come home and say, "Hey you know, I'm pretty popular." I kept it to myself. I don't know when, where, how, when, or why but one day I went to go -- One of my many notebooks I was flipping through and I found a letter from my mother. It was a long letter and she put it

right in the middle of some dirty ass raps. It was a whole letter about how I was raised and do I believe the stuff in these songs.

JORDAN: Oh, so she went through the notebook and was like, "I need to intervene here."

TOO \$HORT: Yeah but she never said anything to me.

JORDAN: Just the letter. Do you still have the letter?

TOO \$HORT: \*\*\*\* no.

JORDAN: It was just immediately --

TOO \$HORT: Hell no.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Did you have an awkward dinner conversation and like pretend you didn't see that, her pretend she didn't write it?

TOO \$HORT: She laid it all on the line in the letter. She was really saying what she said to me many more times in life. It was like, "You need to quit travelling around doing all that music and just settle down and make a family." She wanted me not to be Too \$hort so bad.

JORDAN: It didn't work out that way.

TOO \$HORT: When my mother stayed in my houses in Atlanta -- we had two different houses -- she witnessed the real player in me. I just couldn't hold it back. I just couldn't hide that from her. Both houses we had I always made it where I had a separate entrance that I could just not pass her but somehow she would just see so much and it'd just be different chicks --

JORDAN: It's mom. You can't hide anything.

TOO \$HORT: I had this retirement party and she made this \*\*\*\*\* joke about hearing me making girls moan.

JORDAN: Oh, my God. Your mom mentioned this?

TOO \$HORT: She made a joke about me being a player and then she would really be against me. I had to be careful if I left a chick alone with her because she immediately starts giving them information on how to win. She's like, "Now, you've got these other girls that come around but this is what you've got to do. You've got to do this and that." She would pick and choose the girls that she liked and then she would try to groom them to win with me.

JORDAN: Oh, man, so your mom is salting your game up.

TOO \$HORT: On one occasion she found a girlfriend for me. So she made friends with a pretty girl around the house who's very church wholesome and I don't know what conversation they had but she's trying to tell me, "Hey, she's pretty..." I'm like, "She looks boring." So then, she would pick a girlfriend that I had that might have not lasted long or whatever and somehow she links into this girl and after I'm doing other stuff, they're working on getting me back to her.

JORDAN: Oh, my gosh.

TOO \$HORT: Really working like, "You should come go with us. You should," -- I'm like, --

JORDAN: Oh, we're going to go get our nails done, you should come with us. Come to dinner with me and Charlotte.

TOO \$HORT: Her main motivation was grand kids.

JORDAN: My God. But it's kind of funny, this whole story makes perfect sense and yet if you zoom out far enough it's like, okay multiplatinum rapper lives with his mom.

TOO \$HORT: Big ass house, gave her her own wing.

JORDAN: Right.

TOO \$HORT: You know what I would do? I would actually give her the house and I would build me a wing, like some super player \*\*\*\*. Then I go up and be normal in the house.

JORDAN: Right.

TOO \$HORT: And then I go down in my wing and be like, wild ass Too \$hort.

JORDAN: Basically you moved her in and then she was like, "No, this is my house and I'm going to make sure that you get married." You got more than you bargained for there. How has your career matured with age? I heard that you recorded a song for Hanukkah. When I read that I was like, "That can't be right."

TOO \$HORT: It was some funny \*\*\*\* though. It was some dead ass serious Hanukkah. It was sort of like a challenge that TMZ called me with and I was like, "I know a lot of Jewish people. I think I can make this happen."

JORDAN: You're in show business man, you know a ton.

TOO \$HORT: But matured, man? \*\*\*\*, I just got older. You don't really want to be an older fuddy-duddy tapped out on living out kind of person, but then you can't do the wild \*\*\*\*, like super wild. I'm somewhere in the middle. I get a little wild but I'm conservative compared to the old Short Dog. But I still don't sit around and watch television shows that come on at 8 o'clock and then go to bed early. I don't do that.

JORDAN: No. If you're starting a recording session after this, how long are you going to work? Like, eight hours or something like that probably?

TOO \$HORT: I never worked past whatever time it is to go socialize. If I'm stuck in this mother\*\*\*\*\*, I'll sit here and work until 2 or 3 in

the morning but that's very rare. Most of the time it's got to be done by 9:30-10:00.

JORDAN: You go out every night?

TOO \$HORT: No but I do something.

JORDAN: Something every night.

TOO \$HORT: Something happens every night. I'm that guy that likes to do the \*\*\*\*\* restaurants and chicks and just be in the environment. It doesn't have to be a nightclub but it's got to get out. When I move around I have networking in mind and it's all about trying to run up on a deal, money, some --

JORDAN: But you don't need to work anymore. You're 30 years in the game, you got a handful of --

TOO \$HORT: There's no such thing as not working. Magic Johnson gets up and goes to work every day. Even when he wasn't the president of the Lakers, he still went to work every day. He worked.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: I think some people are hustlers and we don't have a job but we \*\*\*\*\* do \*\*\*\* all day every day. I never have enough time in the day to do what I've got to do every day.

JORDAN: Because you stay relevant even though it's been 30 years. That's tough.

TOO \$HORT: But I'm thinking people who aren't even celebrity relevant, who might have been or whatever, still have a full schedule. I never want to have nothing to do.

JORDAN: You'd go crazy?

TOO \$HORT: I know if I'd be crazy but I just -- Even if \*\*\*\* that I was working on, a project with my bare \*\*\*\*\* hands around the house --

which I would never do -- Even if it was that, I never want to have nothing to do.

JORDAN: You've always got to stay busy. Yeah, I hear you on that. I can't relax. My friend asked me how I relax and I told him basically I prepare for my show. And they're like, "No, no, no, but how do you relax? What do you do on vacation?" and I'm like, "Research people that I'm going to interview." So I feel like we have that in common. It's the same. And they're like, "No, no, no, but what would you do if you had the week left to live?"

TOO \$HORT: It's called a drive, man. It's just drive. Some people are just driven. When I was a kid I didn't have a \*\*\*\*\* job, but I get up, I'm like, "\*\*\*\*\*, my bike's got a flat. First thing I'm going to do is fix this \*\*\*\*\* flat, then I'm going to go somewhere," you just go somewhere, you just ride up to somewhere, you just have a day.

JORDAN: One of your records, one of the earlier ones, it was one of the first hip hop records to use the word \*\*\*\*\*, right? So that became one of your trademarks, it became essentially a staple in hip hop, but looking at this with 20/20 hindsight, what do you think of popularizing that word and enshrining it in hip hop culture? It's synonymous with rap, get money, get \*\*\*\*\*, it's part of the --

TOO \$HORT: Well some people jump to conclusions and say, "\*\*\*\*\*, you should trademark it and charge people every time they say it."

JORDAN: I don't know if --

TOO \$HORT: But then it wouldn't be popular, would it?

JORDAN: Right.

TOO \$HORT: It would just be mine. It wouldn't be -- You'd have to license it before you say it.

JORDAN: You'd have to check the legality on that.

TOO \$HORT: It wouldn't be fun. So, for one, I think the journey that the word took with and without me and where it ended up at is amazing to know that we started this in a bedroom or into \*\*\*\*\* all these speakers and all these ears and all these \*\*\*\*\* places all over the world. I was in \*\*\*\*\* Japan and this guy was rapping in Japanese and he ended his rap with \*\*\*\*\*!

JORDAN: Yeah. It's your ringtone. I heard it on your phone earlier.

TOO \$HORT: And then to watch a TV show or a movie or a comedian on stage or another rapper or many other rappers, just all kinds of \*\*\*\*, singers -- It's on all kinds of albums.

JORDAN: Do you think you could have done that with like any concept or any word though? Do you ever have any regret? Like, "\*\*\*\*, I should have used a different word," or, "I should have used different concept?" Because now you've been bringing a different message to local Oakland neighborhoods. Life's not all about sex and money but how do you put the toothpaste back in the tube on that one?

TOO \$HORT: You can look up the song, it's called Call Her a \*\*\*\*\*, and in that song I told myself before I wrote it, "I'm going to say the word \*\*\*\*\*, " more than anybody will ever say in a song, more than I've ever said. I think I counted 232 \*\*\*\*\* in the song.

JORDAN: Jason's right on that. He'll get on that, my producer. That'll be something, he'll be like, "Hold on, let me check."

TOO \$HORT: I even had a challenge. I wrote the \*\*\*\*\* song and I cannot memorize it because it says \*\*\*\*\* so many times that I can't make my mind learn it and I had to put a challenge up to my whole crew. I was like, "You put up \$100, I put up \$1000, 100 will get you 1000 if you can memorize the first verse." Nobody won yet.

JORDAN: I've got to come back next time and take 1000 bucks.

TOO \$HORT: You can't memorize it. You can't do it. It's impossible. It's impossible.



JORDAN: I went to law school. I memorized a lot of useless stuff.

TOO \$HORT: Hell of a challenge.

JORDAN: Hell of challenge, yeah. I'll give it a shot next time. Tell me what's going on in Oakland. Why are you so interested in the homicide rate? Tell me what's got you concerned over there.

TOO \$HORT: It's not just Oakland. It's just our cities in general. It's trickled down and like I said it starts with the improper education in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. You setting the mother\*\*\*\*\* up for failure right there on other opportunities and it's a lot more to it, man. That whole -- Just reading a book the new Jim Crow and just realizing the bigger picture of Ronald Reagan's Drug on War became and mix that with crack cocaine in the hood and just those two things and everything they did just \*\*\*\*\* up the fabric of the order of the hood, when people had inner structure that was allowing people to survive. It had order, you know?

And the crack being introduced, the laws that were applied, the after effect of people killing over all the crack money, money getting long sentences for murders and small amounts of drugs, just totally left the '80s babies with no supervision, nobody raising them. You talk to tons of them and they go, "My grandmother raised me. My mama's friend raised me. My uncle raised. I didn't have no mom. I grew up in foster homes."

Now those mother\*\*\*\*\* grew the \*\*\*\* up. They all hit about 21 and the early 2000s. Now, after that, all those babies born in '85, late '80s, early '90s on to the new millenniums, in the inner cities, it ain't getting no better, letting this whole \*\*\*\* just keep go in the same \*\*\*\*\* cycle of lock them up, let them kill each other off, to nobody's raising the \*\*\*\*\* babies, it's \*\*\*\*\* crazy. So you've got these adults who didn't get raised. They just \*\*\*\*\* raised themselves. And I grew up around people that would probably \*\*\*\*\* kill you but they'd also \*\*\*\*\* fight you or it was a thing where so and so got killed and you're like, Well it kind of had a reasoning. Something happened."

JORDAN: Right you could have seen that coming.

TOO \$HORT: But when you go, "My little brother went to the store and a mother\*\*\*\*\* just walked up and shot him. He didn't do nothing," like, "What? That mother\*\*\*\*\* was having a bad day." Just like, "I don't like the way you look. \*\*\*\* you. Why are you looking at me like that? \*\*\*\* you." \*\*\*\* that would have been like, "You've got a little aggression? You want to fight me?" and there's no fighting. The music and \*\*\*\* man, we ain't arguing man. We just shoot. It's just getting real crazy because it's all in the music now. Not the lyrics but it's in the music where you really have groups of people around the hip hop crew. Enemies and \*\*\*\*. There's \*\*\*\* going on all over the country. It ain't just the music, it's the environment. It's a very \*\*\*\*\* violent environment in our inner cities, Chicago -- I can name you all these \*\*\*\*\* cities, St. Louis, Philadelphia, whatever the \*\*\*\*. It's not getting better.

JORDAN: What would you tell a frustrated kid who thinks, "I don't have any options besides drugs and gangs."

TOO \$HORT: Personally I wouldn't tell you \*\*\*\*. I would try to show you opportunities, give you opportunities, and you've got to breed that fire, that drive. It's so easy to get it.

JORDAN: Yeah.

TOO \$HORT: But you've just got to want it. So when you don't have an opportunity, what the \*\*\*\* are you going to want? Nothing. It's what it's always been. You've got all these \*\*\*\*\* inner city programs and all this \*\*\*\* but that \*\*\*\* is another hustle. Getting the grants and \*\*\*\*. Ain't nobody really giving up \*\*\*\*\* opportunities because this world ain't set up for that for everybody. We do see people slip through the cracks, kick the mother\*\*\*\*\* wall down, kick the door in, I think that's done by being driven. I can tell you right now, if you apply yourself to something that you really care about for 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 years. Apply yourself to that \*\*\*\* and you're going to have a very good

chance of achieving those goals if you really put the \*\*\*\*\* work in. You stand there at zero and I tell you what you want to do is going to take you 10 years, you're 20 years old, you're like, "\*\*\*\* you," but in 10 years -- from 30 to \*\*\*\*\* 60, you're going to be balling. And you're going to waste those 10 years going, "I'm not doing \*\*\*\*\* that \*\*\*\* for 10 years," but it's only so many people that get it.

JORDAN: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you want to make sure that you deliver? Because, so far so good, man. I appreciate your time.

TOO \$HORT: I'm on a mission right now for longevity of hip hop and I think that a lot of people within hip hop are trying to put it in a box. You have a core group of older hip hop fans and older artists who don't like what's being made now and they're just cutting the line off like, "This is the line called real. Real is over here, fake is over there." That's not true.

Then you have a core group of younger fans who are like, "Who gives a \*\*\*\* about that old ass \*\*\*\*? \*\*\*\* up out of here." And I really feel like an older artist like me doing what I do and doing what I'm about to do, and doing what I've been doing, is blazing the trail for the next artist. When you decide to have or just happen to have a long career, and you don't have any boundaries because the line was not drawn, the age limit was not set, the opportunity's there. I know for a fact Jay-Z had a hit album when he was \*\*\*\*\* 46 years old. We know that limit, so what's next? Is it somebody 55 going to have a hit record? What's next? I don't know. There's going to be a limit one day. Somebody 87 years old is going to have a hot rap record.

JORDAN: Might be you.

TOO \$HORT: I don't know but I'm saying the limit will be set one day. It's going to be like, "Older than hit rap record, 103," I don't know is it going to stop at what age but right now, it's approaching 50.

JORDAN: So you don't think you'll ever stop doing this?

TOO \$HORT: I'll stop the day I don't make money off of it, hell yeah. It's my job. This is the hustle.

JORDAN: So you'll rap and as soon as something flops, it's over?

TOO \$HORT: The same thing that bought me tennis shoes when I was 15 is buying me tennis shoes at 51. The same exact thing. You listen to a beat, you write some words, let somebody hear it, you get paid.

JORDAN: I know that explaining hip hop lyrics is like explaining a joke and it might just ruin it but I'm going to ask anyway. What does it mean, "Blow the whistle?" I have no idea that means. I listen to that song 1000 times.

TOO \$HORT: The song was written as a sports metaphor to say that if you're doing \*\*\*\* in life that's just not in your lane, we're going to blow the whistle on you. It's a \*\*\*\*\* foul. It's a \*\*\*\*\* throw the flag, blow the whistle, end the play, stop and throw him out the game. Do whatever. It's in the song it's telling you doing too much drugs, you can't hang with the big dogs, foul, you're out the game.

JORDAN: Blow the whistle.

TOO \$HORT: But, some kids came to me one day and told me something that I didn't even know. That blow the whistle means suck my dick.

JORDAN: Oh, okay. Because I hear it in strip clubs all time and I just thought, "Okay, it's some sort of undercover reference."

TOO \$HORT: And I was like, "Damn, it does mean that." So every now and then during the show I might ask an audience member, "Do you know what blow the whistle means?" and they never get it right. But I'm like, "It means suck my dick." But it really doesn't, it's just a sports metaphor.

JORDAN: You let them think whatever they want as long as it --

TOO \$HORT: If you find another meaning, I was like, "That was dope. But blow the whistle means suck my dick." Blow the whistle? Like literally?

JORDAN: Now I get why you don't want your mom at your shows. Thanks so much, man. This has been great.

TOO \$HORT: Good \*\*\*\*.

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Too \$hort. Interesting conversation. A little off the beaten path for AoC. I'm curious what you all think and if you enjoyed this, don't forget to thank Too \$hort on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes. Tweet at me your number one takeaway from Too \$hort as well. And you can find the show notes for this episode, as always, at [theartofcharm.com/podcast](http://theartofcharm.com/podcast).

I also want to encourage you to join us in the AoC Challenge at [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or you can text in. Text 'AoC' that's A-O-C to the number 38470. The challenge is about improving your networking skills, improving your connection skills, getting out of your comfort zone, applying the things you learn on the show in your life every day, and it's free. A lot of people don't get it. It's also online, no excuses.

It's all designed to be done in your spare time. We'll also send you some of our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show, which includes some great practical stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box, on persuasion tactics, networking and influence strategies, negotiation techniques, the science of attraction, nonverbal communication and charisma, reading body language, everything that we teach here at on the show and at The Art of Charm. It'll make you a better networker, a better connector, and last but not least, a better thinker. That's [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text AoC to the number 38470.

This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor, show notes on the

website are by Robert Fogarty. Theme music by Little People, transcriptions by [TranscriptionOutsourcing.net](http://TranscriptionOutsourcing.net) -- I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. And if you can think of anyone who might benefit from the episode you've just heard, please pay AoC and myself the highest compliment you can and pay it forward by sharing this episode with that person. It only takes a moment and great ideas are meant to be shared. So, share the show with friends and enemies, stay charming, and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.



