FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Popular Musician Jabee Raps with Oklahoma Youth Academy Charter School Students

TECUMSEH, OKLAHOMA (MARCH 27, 2019)— Oklahoma Youth Academy Charter School (OYACS) students today had the opportunity to rap with an Emmy Award-winning hip-hop artist and actor from Oklahoma City.

Jabee, whose rhymes have been recognized by Chuck D of Public Enemy, talked with and answered questions from the charter school students in three separate sessions this morning at the Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center (COJC) in Tecumseh. The sessions were transmitted via Skype to charter school students at the Southwest Oklahoma Juvenile Center (SWOC) in Manitou. Students at the SWOC campus could email questions.

“Even though I’ve seen some crazy things, there are kids here who probably have seen worse than I have,” said Jabee, whose full name is Jonathan Blake Williams Jr. “Sometimes people say I’m a product of my environment; yeah, but so am I. If my sharing or encouraging can help, it’s important that I do that.”

Jabee told students how his mother struggled to support her family at times, and that he was homeless when he was 12.

“We were bouncing around a lot,” he said.

Jabee said he was involved with rap music as young as 7, but he turned to music full time in 2001 when at the age of 18 his 16-year-old brother was shot and killed.

After his brother was shot, a classmate’s pastor counseled him and told him that without vision people perish, Jabee recalled.

“I didn’t want to perish,” he said.

Jabee said he turned to music, writing a song, “One,” that dealt with the evening his brother was shot.

He told students about two kinds of people – thermometer and thermostat people:

“A thermometer just tells the temperature in a room, a thermostat can change the temperature in a room. It’s important that we if we walk into a room we’re able to be a catalyst. We don’t realize sometimes we have that influence. If we use that influence to encourage and uplift and not just join the crowd and do what everybody else is doing, then we can be pretty dynamic and influence a culture and change our friends, change our neighborhood, change our city, change our state.”

Jim Weaver, an OYACS teacher at the Tecumseh campus, became acquainted with Jabee earlier this year after meeting him at Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City. He invited Jabee to speak to the students.
“He overcame obstacles and created something meaningful,” Weaver said. “Our kids need to be introduced to other outcomes and possibilities. They’ve got to have hope.”

The school’s principal, Leticia Sanchez, agreed.

“He has a positive message and it’s good to expose our students to that,” she said. “He can give them hope that they can change their ways.”

OYACS provides teaching and learning to residents in the care of the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA). Oklahoma is one of only a few states to operate a school and educational system within juvenile secure facilities; through the OJA-sponsored charter school, each student is evaluated, and then provided an individual curriculum based on the student’s needs. OJA also provides coursework in areas such as auto-mechanic certification and graphic design coursework.

Jabee has toured with Run the Jewels (Killer Mike and El-P) and Murs, and has been featured on Sway in the Morning, MTV, XXL, Complex, The Source and Vibe. He has also performed at Kevin Durant’s celebrity basketball game and Russell Westbrook’s celebrity comedy show. He released his first full-length album, “Blood is the New Black,” in 2008, co-produced by DJ Vadim, and the next year linked with DJs Mick Boogie and Terry Urban to record a mixtape.

His album, “Black Future,” was released in August 2016 with a 4,000-seat, sold-out show at The Criterion in Oklahoma City. The album reached No. 25 on iTunes. “Monument,” a track from the album, featured Chuck D., who said Jabee “has the potential to change the world.”

In 2014, Jabee collaborated with Oklahoma City-based marketing agency Funnel Design Group to create, “What If?” a television commercial promoting Science Museum Oklahoma. The video won an Emmy for commercial writing and performance.

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Emmy Award-winning hip-hop artist and actor Jabee, of Oklahoma City, talks Wednesday to Oklahoma Youth Academy Charter School students at the Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center in Tecumseh.
About the Board of Juvenile Affairs

The Board of Juvenile Affairs is the rulemaking body of the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA). The board reviews and approves the budget requests of the office; conducts periodic reviews and planning activities related to the goals, objectives, priorities and policies of the office; and provides a public forum for receiving comments and disseminating information to the public regarding goals, objectives, priorities and policies of the office. The board has the authority to adopt nonbinding resolutions requesting action by OJA in response to comments received or upon the board’s own initiative.

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