

QUEENS NEWSDAY PROFILE

Nichelle Brown

ROLE

Rapper and lyricist; honored with a Points of Light Foundation Award on March 8 by former President George Bush in recognition of her work with young people through the All Stars Talent Show Network, a program that creates opportunities for urban youth to produce and perform in talent shows as an alternative to violence.

BIOGRAPHY

33; Brooklyn-born, has lived in Far Rockaway most of her life; works as a keyboard specialist for state Division of Parole (in Brooklyn) and as a volunteer spokeswoman for the All Stars Talent Show Network; mother of Latoya, 16.



Newsday Photo / Moises Saman

PROUD OF

"I was a welfare mom who dropped out of school to take care of my daughter. I hung out with gangs and drug dealers. Twelve years ago I got involved with the All Stars program, and it changed my life. I went from a young mother with low self-esteem to a performer with confidence. I got off welfare, got a job and became a better role model for my daughter. I am still growing as an adult."

FOCUS

"On April 8, I will be doing a rap and presenting an award to Gov. [George] Pataki at the All Stars gala at Lincoln Center. My signature song, 'Ain't I a Woman?', is based on a speech by Sojourner Truth about a young, strong, independent woman who is doing whatever it takes to survive, but still is feminine and deserves to be respected for being a woman. I hope this helps inspire other women to be strong and continue."

GOALS

"I'm in my first semester at Empire State College and studying community human services. My goal is to become a social worker or counselor in my community among youth, men and women, to offer my story and services and help them to have a better life." — **Sheila McKenna**