On the Cover

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William “Billy” Dickerson
Interviewed at Rivington House, a long-term-care facility in New York City where he’s lived for ten years.

You wear a suit every day, why?
People who dress nicely every day love themselves, and they take care of themselves. I don’t think I’m better than anybody. But I gotta take care of me.

Where does your determination come from?
I was born in Charleston, South Carolina. I’ve had a hard life. I’ve had to fight myself to get well. I’ve been in and out of hospitals and institutions for 30 years. I come from an alcoholic family, and I’d been drinking for most of my life. In 1996, I was homeless and living in a subway station, and my nurse got me off the street and helped me get to Rivington. I’ve been dry for ten years now. I try to live for today because tomorrow is not promised. Sometimes it’s hard, but I get through it. I also rely on worship. I’ve learned that bad things will happen, but I have no regrets, and I just take it one day at a time.

So what’s your daily routine?
I jump up, take a shower and put on my suit. I take my medications in the morning. I take 18 types of pills every day. Sometimes, I read--I’ve always liked to read. I read psychiatry books, American history and my bible. I’ve never had a day of college. I had to build up my mind on my own and educate myself. And I like listening to music. I really like Prince. He’s a ladies’ man, and he’s always dressed nice. He’s my idol.

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