# Twitter Thread by ■■■■■ ■■■■ ■■



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@TrungTPhan

**1/ Marcus Bullock went to prison in the mid-90s at the age of 15.**

**Today, he's the CEO of Flikshop -- the "Instagram for the Incarcerated", an alternative to the outrageously expensive phone call system.**

**This is a truly inspirational founder story ■■**




2/ In 1996, Bullock was living in Maryland. One night, he and a friend carried out an armed carjacking on a man sitting idle in a shopping mall parking lot.

It was the biggest mistake of this life.

3/ Several years prior to hit actions, there was the famed 1989 Central Park "Jogger Case", in which 5 minority youths were (falsely) accused of raping a jogger.

In the aftermath, nearly every state passed new laws that made it easier for courts to try youth as adults.




4/ For the carjacking, Bullock was charged as an adult and served 8 years in prison.

With onerous prison phone charges ($18 / 15 mins), Bullock's mother kept in touch with him by sending a photo or letter every day.

"She saved me," he says of his mom's efforts.



5/ The $1.2B+ prison phone system is dominated by 2 PE-backed firms (Global Tel Link, Securus Tech).

For the right to operate these phones lines, prisons effectively pay kickbacks to state and local government. The highest kickbacks win bids, which drive up costs.

## The sky-high cost of prison phone calls

*US instrastate phone call charges, select states*

| STATE | KICKBACK % | COST PER 15 MINUTES |
|---|---|---|
| Kentucky | 54% | $5.70 |
| Maine | 60-100% | $5.30 |
| Connecticut | 68%+ | $4.87 |
| Arkansas | 74-80% | $4.80 |
| Indiana | N/A | $3.84 |

*Note: A typical commercial rate is $0.04 per minute or $0.60 per 15 minutes*
*Data: Campaign for Prison Phone Justice*

theHUSTLE

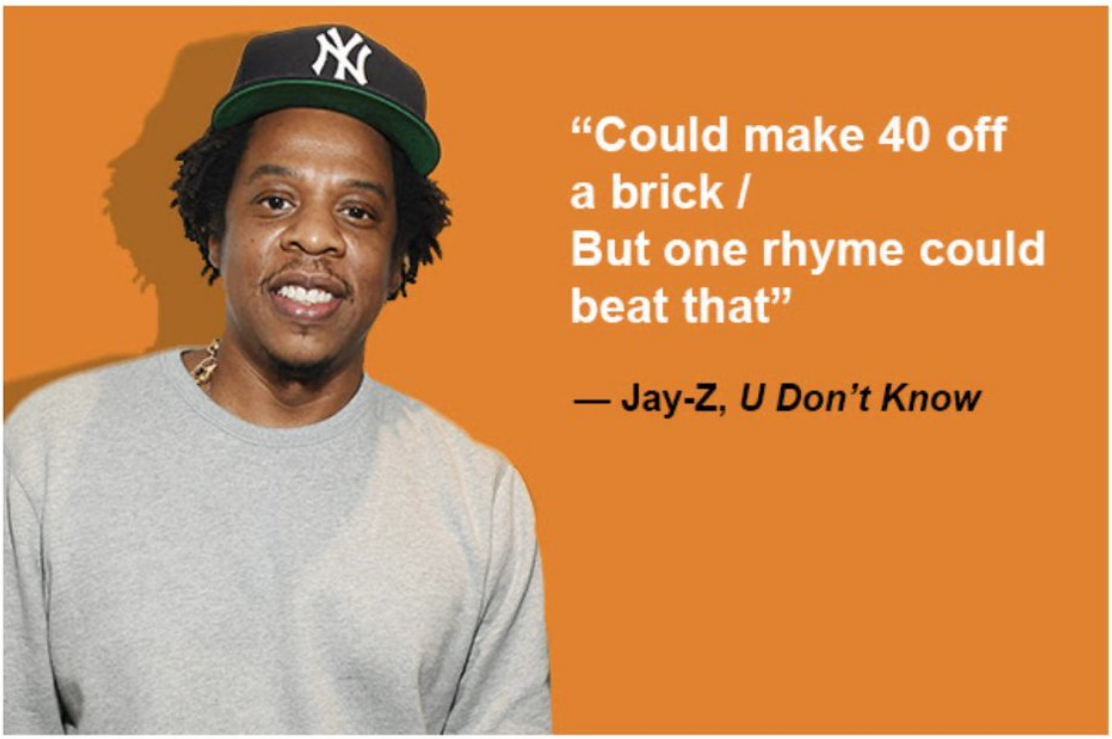
6/ After finishing his sentence, Bullock tried to find work but was rejected by 40+ jobs because of his background.

He eventually found a job in painting. He learned everything he could and launched his own contracting business, reaching 7 figures with projects like BWI Airport.



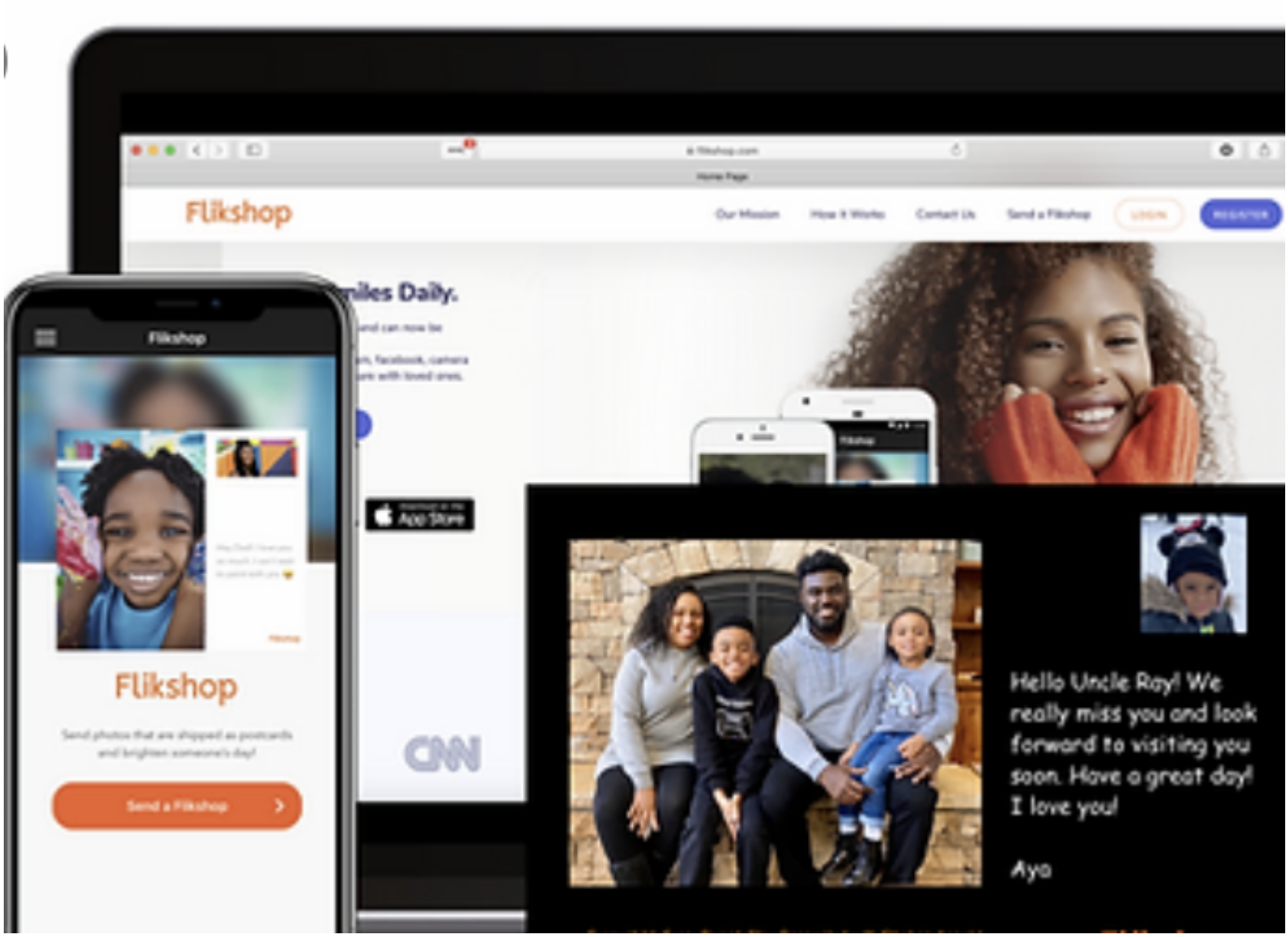
7/ One person who inspired Bullock, Jay-Z:

"He was rapping about how to be a successful businessman with a nontraditional path. He didn't go to college but became a multimillionaire. Jay-Z gave me permission to believe that I could be a successful entrepreneur."




8/ In 2012, Bullock had the experience and savings to launch Flikshop -- a platform where families can communicate with their imprisoned loved ones by sending postcards and messages.

The process is done through the click of an app and only costs $0.99 (vs. pricey phone system).




9/ Flikshop has access to 2.7k jails and prisons across America.

Over the years, Bullock visited countless prisons administrators and wardens and pitched Flikshop: by facilitating comms with loved ones, his startup could improve mental wellbeing and reduce recidivism.



10/ Flikshop has since gone through Techstars and received an investment from @johnlegend, who launched an incubator for former inmates turned founders.



11/ Today, Bullock is focussed on expanding Flikshop's enterprise offering.

NGOs and corporations can use Flikshop to communicate information to inmates (e.g., job opps and criminal justice reform).

A big enterprise biz can keep the regular Flikshop affordable for families.




12/ I was fortunate to speak with Bullock for this story and you can read the full incredible background here:

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