

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1

Early Life ..... 4

## CHAPTER 2

Intro to Music ..... 16

## CHAPTER 3

Rise to Success ..... 28

## CHAPTER 4

Stardom ..... 40

## CHAPTER 5

Influences and Collaborations ..... 52

## CHAPTER 1

# EARLY LIFE

## WHO IS NICKI MINAJ?

Rapper Nicki Minaj was born on December 8, 1982. Before she was known as Nicki, she was Onika Tanya Maraj. Her family lived in Saint James. This is a district of Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago. The Caribbean country is made up of two main islands. They sit seven miles off the coast of South America.



## WHO IS CARDI B?

Belcalis Marlenis Almanzar was born almost ten years after Nicki, on October 11, 1992. People know her as the rapper Cardi B. Her parents lived in the Bronx. This is a borough in New York City. It is north of Manhattan, where her grandmother lived. Cardi B spent a lot of time at her grandmother's home in the neighborhood of Washington Heights.



## A LARGE FAMILY



Nicki's parents are Robert and Carol. Her dad is of Indo-Trinidadian descent. This means he has African and Indian heritage. Carol is of Afro-Trinidadian descent. Nicki is one-quarter Indian. In Trinidad, Carol was an accounting clerk. Later in life, she became a gospel singer. Robert worked at American Express when they moved to the United States. The family has four children. Jelani is Nicki's older brother. Micaiah and Ming are her younger brother and sister.

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago



## THE OLDEST SISTER



Like Nicki's, Cardi B's parents have a Caribbean background. Her mother is also from Trinidad and Tobago. Carlos, her dad, comes from the Dominican Republic. He worked as a taxi driver. Her mom was a cashier. Cardi B's family is smaller than Nicki's. She has one younger sister named Hennessy Carolina. The sisters have six younger half-siblings too. However, they didn't grow up with Cardi B.

### MUSIC IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Several types of music began in Trinidad and Tobago. It is the home of calypso music. This has influences from western Africa and South America. Steel pan drums were also first used in Trinidad and Tobago. One big tradition that involves music is Carnival. The huge festival happens every year. People wear elaborate costumes. They dance and sing in the streets.





Saint James, Trinidad and Tobago

## SAINT JAMES



When Nicki was three years old, her parents moved from Trinidad and Tobago to New York City. The couple wanted to provide a better life to their children. There were more opportunities in the United States. They attended school and looked for work. Nicki stayed in Saint James with her grandmother. “I thought it was going to be for a few days, it turned into two years without my mother,” she said on MTV.

## WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

Cardi B's grandmother lived in an apartment in Washington Heights. Her home was small.

It was always full of people though. The singer's aunts or some of her 36 cousins might be there at any time. As a kid, she spent a lot of time at the apartment. Even as an adult, it is one of her favorite spots. She told *Vibe* it's still her "happy place."



## CARIBBEAN MUSICIANS

Many famous musicians are from the Caribbean. Some are from the island of Jamaica, like the rapper Shaggy. Heavy D and Bob Marley were also from there. Marley was one of the first reggae singers in the United States. Sean Paul is a Jamaican reggae singer too.

Barbados is another Caribbean island. One of the first hip-hop DJs, Grandmaster Flash, grew up there. The singer Rihanna is also from Barbados.



Rihanna



## MOVING TO THE BIG CITY

Nicki was five years old when she moved to New York. Her parents had found a place to live in Queens. “A lot of times when you’re from the islands, your parents leave and then send for you,” she said on MTV. That’s what her parents did. The future star was excited to move to New York. She said, “I thought it was gonna be like a castle.” Her first memory was of how cold it was. “I had never seen snow,” she remembered.





## "GIRL FROM THE BRONX"



Cardi B spent her childhood in New York. "I am just a girl from the Bronx," she told the *New York Post*. The Bronx is not far from where Nicki grew up in Queens. Cardi B's family lived in the Highbridge neighborhood. Most of the residents there are Latino. The rapper grew up speaking Spanish. That was her first language.

Bronx, New York City

