

## Hip Hop Icon or Bearer of a Legacy - Happy BD Tupac Shakur

Written by Robert ID4389

Sunday, 15 June 2008 05:39 -

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June 16th is the birthday of hip hop icon Tupac Amaru Shakur. His life cut short in 1996 by senseless violence. His murder remains to this day is unsolved.

The 'testimony' of hip hop icon Tupac Shakur (2Pac) is written and there is nothing he can add to what he has left us. Tupac is dead. There will be no new oration from one of the masters of words or no new contentious tracks to make headlines. What we have from him is what we have and we must come to grips with that.

In his life Tupac touched many people. He understood the world around him and was quick to point out the flaws and the weaknesses of the government and society. He understood the power of the mic and the power the man holding that mic could brandish; not only in the hip hop culture but in all society.

Tupac has written his last poem, his last rhyme and has given his last opinion of problems in the urban community. As far as hip hop goes: Tupac is gone. But his greatest and strongest points are not those of a hip hop artist, a wild gangsta rapper associated with powerful Death Row Records and Marion 'Suge' Knight; his strongest point was that he was in a position to 'make a change' and to point out the problems; and most likely those values had something to do with his death; like many other social activist before him.

Tupac once said "I'm not saying I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world". Pac knew that the world had to change. We all know that things are not working the way they should and Tupac was quick to remind us and to point it out. He wanted to reach the children and the youth and make them aware of what was in store for them; after all he had lived a life many can not imagine.

"I'm a reflection of the community", Tupac once said and as we look back on his life we are witness to that fact. Many forget that Tupac was a young man, just 25 years old at his death. Tupac is just one of thousands of young men (and women) killed senselessly in this country every year. What set him apart were his charisma and his 'in touch' feeling with the urban community. Tupac became so well loved among the hip hop and urban community; earning praise for his musical and acting talent; almost everyone wanted to see this talented young black man excel. But he also saw condemnation at times for his explicit and violent lyrics; as many of his songs told of fights, gangs, and sex: but that is what was and is going on in the hip

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hip hop and urban community. "I don't see myself being special; I just see myself having more responsibilities than the next man. People look to me to do things for them, to have answers," Tupac said.

Today's hip hop and rap artists have forgotten that connection. Trying to 'hood wink' the community with worthless hooks and content in their tracks; this is why there will never be another Tupac Shakur. Many have proclaimed to be the next 2Pac and many have tried to be Tupac and many have failed to live up to what Pac stood for. KRS-ONE, Chuck D, Lupe, Jasiri X, Immortal Technique, Mos Def, Kanye, Dead Prez, NYOIL, Black Thought, Brother J, Common, Wise Intelligent, Pharaoh Monch and Lyfe Jennings are among some of the few artists today who try to bring the same qualities to the mic when they spit as 2Pac did.

"If we're all saying that rap is an art form then we gotta be more responsible for our lyrics. If you see everybody dying because of what you're saying, it don't matter that you didn't make them die, it just matters that you didn't save them," Tupac Shakur once said.

The social perception that Tupac Shakur was a 'thug' is just that – a false perception. Even when Tupac was on trial for alleged sexual abuse he said "This is all about my image. They buildin' me up and destroying me on the same image they perpetuated. I'm selling records, this is what I do for a livin", don't get it twisted. This is not my real life, this is not how my real life is supposed to be. I'm not supposed to have all these villains in my life."

The image they 'perpetuated' is thanks to Tupac's Black Panther bloodline; and the bout of arrests in L.A., Atlanta, East Lansing, and Manhattan; and the escape from five of those six arrests with as little as 14 days in jail. Plus there is the fact that while other rappers and hip hop 'want ta be gangsta's' talk about it, Tupac is the only known rapper who has actually put a bullet in a police officer.

Tupac said this "Let me say for the record, I am not a gangster and never have been. I'm not the thief who grabs your purse. I'm not the guy who jacks your car. I'm not down with the people who steal and hurt others. I'm just a brother who fights back."

"And the raps that I'm rappin to my community shouldn't be filled with rage? They shouldn't be filled with same atrocities that they gave me? The media they don't talk about it, so in my raps I

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have to talk about it, and it seems foreign because there's no one else talking about it."

"My music is not for everyone. It's only for the strong-willed, the (street) soldiers music. It's not like party music- I mean, you could gig to it, but it's spiritual. My music is spiritual. It's like Negro spirituals, except for the fact that I'm not saying "We shall Overcome." I'm saying that we are overcome."

"We talk a lot about Malcom X and Martin Luther King JR, but it's time to be like them, as strong as them. They were mortal men like us and every one of us can be like them. I don't want to be a role model. I just want to be someone who says, this is who I am, this is what I do. I say what's on my mind

One thing is for sure, if the legacy of Tupac Shakur is based on his hip hop persona, 2Pac will surely fade away. But if the total man Tupac Shakur is immortalized then his legacy has a chance to survive and make a difference. "When you do rap albums, you got to train yourself. You got to constantly be in character" Pac said, and that is what hip hop artists are – they portray a 'character'. There is little truth behind the persona of most of the hip hop and rap artists portray.

As we think of Tupac Shakur today we should think of the total man Tupac Shakur: The activist and poet; the real Tupac. I am not saying Tupac was a saint – far from it. But I am saying that we will never really know the potential of this young black man. We will never know what his knowledge and his willingness to speak up could have done. He was a voice for a generation, a voice that has been silenced but his message lives on.

As we remember the birth of Tupac Shakur today think about these words from Pac and just don't talk about it – be about it. And as Tupac said "Keep ya head up. Do what you gotta do. And then, inside of you, I will be reborn" – Thus keeping his true legacy alive.

"Some people say I was a thug and a gangsta. Other people remember me as a poet and a born leader. But I'm saying to you measure a man by his actions fully, through his whole life, from the beginning to the end."

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"The real tragedy is that there are some ignorant brothers out here. That's why I'm not on this all-White or all Black shit. I'm on this all-real or all fake shit with people, whatever color you are. Because niggaz will do you. I mean, there's some (foul) niggaz out there (in the streets); the same niggaz that did Malcolm X, the same niggaz that did Jesus Christ- every brother ain't a brother. They will do you. So just because it's Black, don't mean it's cool. And just because it's White don't mean it's evil."

"You gotta make a change. Its time for us as a people to start making some changes, lets change the way we eat, lets change the way we live, and lets change the way we treat each other. You see the old way wasn't working so its on US, to do what we gotta do to survive." – Tupac Shakur.

Take a second to remember Tupac on June 16<sup>th</sup> and to do all you can to preserve his legacy.

Also – the reviews are coming in on Thug Life Army's release – In The Shadow of an Icon

"This entire project is not just a true testament to the direct inspiration that Tupac provided many in our society, but also a reflection of positive hip hop culture being used as a voice for the voiceless." - Shamako Noble: President and Executive Director of The Hip Hop Congress – <http://www.hiphopcongress.com>

"The artists featured on this two-disc compilation have all been baptized at the altar of Tupac; they not only continue a mighty tradition, they take it to a higher level. All praise is due to ThugLifeArmy Records" - Dr. Uhuru Hotep / Kwame Ture Leadership Institute <http://www.ktli.org>

"In The Shadow of an Icon pays homage to the late, great Tupac Shakur. Thug Life Army Records compilation was done with taste and respect for Tupac's legacy." - Jonathan Wolfson / Wolfson Public Relations <http://www.wolfson-pr.com>

"Maybe the "In the Shadow of an Icon" CD will help us, at least imagine if only for a moment, the possibilities of not only Tupac Shakur, but the legions of young men and women who would

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follow his lead, if they politicized their lyrics and connected them with the struggling masses..." by "TRUTH Minista Paul Scott" of <http://www.NoWarningShotsFired.com>

"In the Shadow of an Icon is the rare album available today whose lyrical content, production and theme are all top-of-the line and in harmony. The spirit of "Pac - his intellect, defiance, and love - lives in this album, with enough of a roster, message, and music to carry his great legacy for another generation" – by Cedric Muhammad / Black Coffee Channel <http://www.blackcoffeechannel.com> and

Black Electorate.com  
<http://www.blackelectorate.com>

"A really solid release... I really appreciate the purpose of the project. It's not your typical thugged-out music. It's street music, but with heart, and in that way, it does a great service to the memory of "Pac. I was also pleasantly surprised by the quality of the production, the lyrical skills of the MCs and variety of artists on the CD. Well done!"...by Greg Schick / Old School G - World Hip Hop Market <http://www.worldhiphopmarket.com>

Review from StreetHop by Rahim "Judging a book by its cover never really helped anyone to begin with, and in my findings, this 29-track compilation CD is filled with up and down-beat tracks that anyone can easily be bopping their head to, not to mention that the whole vibe of the album can be described as something out of the vaults of Suge Knight's Death Row Records. The album also showcases a style of music that most 2Pac fans will recognize, while the music itself represents the same struggle in which 2Pac had fought hard for. There are a lot of talented artists on this album, and from the sound of it; I'm glad none of the artists give off too much of a mainstream feel to their music...."

Hip hop is not dead, you just have to know where to look – and that means look to the streets instead of the boardroom and you will see that Thug Life Army Records has done just that on In the Shadow of an Icon. "Hip Hop was supposed to be this new thing that had no boundaries and was so different to everyday music. As long as it has soul to it, hip hop can live on." - Tupac Shakur

The album can also be purchased at <http://www.TupacTribute.com> or <http://thuglifearmyrecords.com> for a 'Special' price. Thanks in advance for all the support.

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