

What Tupac 2Pac Means to the UK

Written by Kevin Unitt ID4410
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COMING from relative affluence, and growing up thousands of miles away from where Tupac (2Pac) was raised, It may not be my place to pass judgment, pretend to empathies, or even suggest possible errors in his ways.

But that's the thing about Tupac in my opinion - his ability to cross barriers, break down doors, force his way into the psyche of all who listened to him, and even those who refused to.

I feel like I knew him, and knew his pain, but have never even been within a thousand miles of America, never had anything remotely approaching his upbringing.

Here in the UK his message continues to resonate, nearly a dozen years after his death, whatever that message may have been. I personally still cannot work out why I feel so passionately for "Pac, and why it pains me so much that he's no longer around, but am convinced it is a message I must help keep alive, even if it is to merely play his music in front of friends, informing them that 50 Cent, Ja Rule, even Eminem, is not where Hip Hop began, and certainly not where it is at its most pure, its most "real".

Rebellion appears to be at the heart of my faith in Tupac. As teenagers hanging around at night in park car parks, we would, from time to time, be questioned, quizzed, made to feel like criminals by the local police. Tupac would be with us. His songs would play from our stereos, as if he were there shoulder to shoulder, expressing his right to be his own man, articulating his contempt for authority when it is wrongly administered.

Today I no longer hang out in those parks, but write for a living, turning words into money, "the greatest gift there can be" as "Pac once said. Now I have grown into someone who seeks to fight the system, in my own small way, from within, not attacking it from the outside. I believe 2Pac was on the road to this when he was cut down.

I turned 25 last year, and have now lived longer than he ever managed. Just starting out on my own road to where I ultimately want to be, it astonishes me just how much Tupac had achieved by this age. He'd achieved his dreams several times already, then constantly changed them as he fought to grow.

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I never knew him until after he'd left this world, yet through his music, his words, I feel I know him better than I ever did many of my friends, or many of my extended family. And while I cannot understand the actions in the final years of his life – his take on Thug Life in particular – I was also never born in prison, raised by a Black Panther, jailed for a crime I seemingly did not commit, nor endured bullets dancing through my body. I did not live as he lived. Who did.

Now, having got to know him, I like to remember the man as the activist he was, the man fighting for cause he ultimately hadn't even discovered yet. He had such passion, such energy, but appeared not to know where to channel it. That he died within months of adopting Thug Life may show just how fully he embraced that path, as all others he walked down.

My only wish is that he got to become a fully grown man, and found his ultimate calling, before it was too late. But perhaps had he not died he would not have touched so many lives, maybe not have passed on so much feeling, force and insight to so many people across the world. I hope he knows how much he is missed, and why.

RIP Tupac from the UK - One Love.

Kevin Unitt