

Tupac 12 On Black Icons List

Written by Westside ID246

Sunday, 24 October 2004 20:47 -

They are people whose achievements transcended mere fame. In an age characterised by synthetic celebrity, they are recalled as figures of substance and longevity.

The newspaper The New Nation reports, the individuals most worthy of iconic status are Jesus, the Rev Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. As such they have been allotted the top three places in a 100-strong list of the greatest icons ever.

The fact that all three can be said to have fought injustice only to have their contributions curtailed by untimely death seems to have enhanced their appeal.

There is also a distinctly political element to the ranking. In keeping with some academics' opinion of Jesus' likely physical appearance, the newspaper depicts him as black.

The figures placed fourth and fifth, Nelson Mandela and Muhammad Ali, are both still alive but also share the common trait of having rebelled and prevailed against overwhelming odds.

An expert panel of the publication's editors, writers and contributors selected the list, published by the newspaper today as its finale to Black History Month.

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It is almost evenly split between living and dead icons. More than three quarters of them are men and more than a third of them are entertainers.

The highest ranking British icon and woman on the list is the pioneering nurse Mary Seacole, followed by the politician Bernie Grant and the former Olympic champion Daley Thompson. There are 12 Britons in the list.

None of the current black MPs makes the list, nor do such international figures as the UN secretary general Kofi Annan, and the US secretary of state Colin Powell and security adviser Condoleezza Rice

The golfer Tiger Woods, the newscaster Sir Trevor McDonald and the comedian Lenny Henry are not there either.

But it does contain many names that might appear on such a list compiled by a cross-section of Britain's various communities - Oprah Winfrey is placed seventh and Bob Marley eighth. Pele is 11th.

But there are also inclusions which say much about sections of the black community and a particular world view.

At number 12 is Tupac Shakur, the controversial rapper and actor whose advocacy of gangster rap is reviled by mainstream America although his thoughts on black life resonated with many in black communities on both sides of the Atlantic. He was shot dead in 1996.

The next is Michael Jackson who, despite the child abuse allegations which have lowered his stock with mainstream audiences, retains much affection.

At number 14 is the Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. He is banned by the Home Office from entering Britain on the grounds that his "anti-semitic and racially divisive views" would

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"inevitably inflame tensions between the Jewish and Muslim communities and therefore pose a threat to public order".

But many black people agree with his comments about the need for more black empowerment and self-determination, and respect him.

Justin Onyeka, New Nation's deputy editor, said: "I think if you look at the top 10 there are two or three who would make it into the top 10 of a mainstream poll. The others would not.

"Although there are many things we share across the communities - particular the obsession with celebrity culture and sport - people of different races and cultures have things they are more passionate about that the mainstream would not be."

He said the figures chosen "represent a mood or an era", adding: "They are the personal embodiment of a national or indeed international sentiment. They can also provoke a collective emotion or represent something bigger than just themselves."

He said many of the paper's readers would think of Jesus as having been black. "In the Bible he is described as dark skinned. Throughout history we have been presented with him having blonde hair and blue eyes, but that idea is not commonly believed.

"He never wrote a book, never recorded a hit song, never made a movie, never sought political office, nor did he ever have his own official website - yet he remains a major figure in the world's two leading religions."

Music and politics from Prince to King

1 Jesus

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2 Martin Luther King

3 Malcolm X

4 Nelson Mandela

5 Muhammad Ali

6 Mary Seacole

7 Oprah Winfrey

8 Bob Marley

9 Marcus Garvey

10 The black inventors, including Garrett Morgan, George Washington Carver and Elijah Mccoy

11 Pele

12 Tupac

13 Michael Jackson

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Sunday, 24 October 2004 20:47 -

14 Louis Farrakhan

15 Bernie Grant

16 Mike Tyson

17 Steve Biko

18 Shaka Zulu

19 Tommie Smith and John Carlos

20 Jimmy Cliff

21 Haile Selassie

22 Kwame Nkrumah

23 Fela Kuti

24 The Black Panthers

25 James Brown

Tupac 12 On Black Icons List

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26 Jimi Hendrix

27 Sojourner Truth

28 The Williams sisters (Venus and Serena)

29 Rosa Parks

30 Louis Armstrong

31 Maya Angelou

32 Michael Jordan

33 Nefertiti

34 Kunta Kinte

35 Michael Manley

36 Josephine Baker

37 Miles Davis

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38 Angela Davis

39 Harriet Tubman

40 Daley Thompson

41 Jesse Owens

42 Stephen Lawrence

43 Chuck Berry

44 Shaft

45 Denzel Washington

46 Carl Lewis

47 Marvin Gaye

48 Sidney Poitier

49 Public Enemy

Tupac 12 On Black Icons List

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Sunday, 24 October 2004 20:47 -

50 Aretha Franklin

51 Walter Sisulu

52 James Baldwin

53 Paul Robeson

54 John Barnes

55 Prince

56 Sammy Davis Junior

57 Richard Pryor

58 Jackson Five

59 Samuel L Jackson

60 OJ Simpson

61 Samuel Coleridge Taylor

Tupac 12 On Black Icons List

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Sunday, 24 October 2004 20:47 -

62 Dennis Brown

63 Madame Walker

64 Soul II Soul

65 Jesse Jackson

66 James Meredith

67 Jackie Robinson

68 Don King

69 Naomi Campbell

70 Toussaint L'Ouverture

71 Paul Bogle

72 Viv Richards

73 Bruce Lee

Tupac 12 On Black Icons List

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Sunday, 24 October 2004 20:47 -

74 Billie Holiday

75 Diana Ross

76 Spike Lee

77 Linton Kwesi Johnson

78 Oladuah Equiano

79 Derek Walcott

80 WE DuBois

81 Gary Sobers

82 Superfly

83 Biggie Smalls

84 John Coltrane

85 Sade

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86 Reggae Boyz

87 Thierry Henry

88 Stevie Wonder

89 Little Richard

90 The Huxtables

91 Brenda Fassie

92 Rodney King

93 Flo Jo

94 Hector Petersen

95 Dr Mae Jemison

96 Halle Berry

97 Ian Wright

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98 P Diddy

99 Grace Jones

100 Harlem Globetrotters

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