The guards, standing at the door in bright yellow shirts with the word "Security" written across them in big black letters, stood as a testament to the very world Afeni Shakur urges us to change.

Shakur, the mother of rapper, artist and revolutionary Tupac, addressed a crowd of more than 500 students, families, blacks, whites and people Tuesday night in the Special Events Center, with a message of hope and inspiration.

"Lets not make racism the priority ... or gay marriage," she said. "Let's choose as our priority keeping the person next door, the person down the street alive. Let's go back to the old-time way."

She came to USF promoting Evolution of a Revolutionary, a book was written by Jasmine Guy. Guy, better known as Ms. Whitley from the popular Cosby Show spin-off A Different World, accompanied Shakur.

Describing Shakur as the embodiment of singer Beatrice Johnson, Guy sang a part of her song: "We, who believe in freedom, cannot rest."

Shakur called upon people to "Be what they are afraid to be ... Killing ourselves, and each other... We are spiritually dying," she said. "You are not called upon to emulate me or no one else. What we need today is for you to be what you are afraid to be."

Shakur, who was once depicted by her son as a "crack fiend" and a "black queen" in the song "Dear Mamma," was talking about getting involved in the community; volunteering.

"It is not simple," she said. "It requires sacrifice. Sacrifice a little time in the community."

Though helping people may not be simple, Shakur's message, which nearly brought audience members to tears, was. Don"t be ashamed of what you were or what you can be, she said.

"I have spent 57 years being against everything," Shakur said. "I stood up for it. Went to jail for it. I know about sacrifices ... but I walk through this world with clean hands, and all I had to do to get clean was share my garbage with you.

"You are not here by mistake," Shakur said. "You are here by God's divine plan. He meant it when he created you ... and he wants you to be just the way you are.

"That is what Tupac believed and that is what I am telling you," she said.

"He never allowed anyone to tell him that he was not good enough," she said speaking of Tupac. "No one knows better than you ... it don"t have to be perfect, it just has to be yours."

Shakur, who founded the production company Amaru Entertainment since her son's death, has been said to be finishing the work that her son left behind. Though this may be a popular sentiment, Shakur simply sees herself as "the joy of what we"re not supposed to be."

Shakur chose a quote by Nelson Mandela to open the evening because she said it personified the theme of the evening. She said: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measurement. It is our light not our darkness that frightens us... We are born to make manifest the glory of god that is within us, and it is not just within some of us, it is within everyone.

"I beg you to go away from this event ... understanding and embracing what Mandela was trying to say," she said. Evolution of a Revolutionary and the lecture are a reflection of "what we are and what we represent."

Source: The Oracle