American Icon Tupac Amaru Shakur

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Historical Paper

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“You know it's funny when it rains it pours they got money for wars, but can't feed the poor.” (Tupac Shakur, 1993). What was so great about Tupac's story? Why am I choosing to write about this so called “gangster”? Tupac was furthering his message about how people needed to stand up and start making a revolution for black equality. He did this through his music, through interviews, speaking to the public and in countless other ways. Unfortunately, he was killed in a drive-by shooting at the young age of 25. He never had the opportunity to fully push this message across. He never was truly able to turn his life around and finish motivating minority groups.

Tupac was born June 16, 1971 to a mother who was a part of the Black Panther liberation group who fought for black equality in the 60’s. Tupac and his mother didn’t have the best relationship. He said in an interview with Ed Gordon from BET. “I wish I could’ve been a better son to my mother,” (Tupac Shakur, 1994). Tupac also didn’t have a father figure in his life until he became famous. His mom was a crack addict and obviously wasn’t the greatest influence.

Tupac’s generation brought them back but in a nonviolent way. I believe the reason Tupac tried to help revamp the panthers was because in his words, “Cowards die a thousand deaths, a soldier dies but once,” (Tupac Shakur, 1995). I feel like some people really take this quote as a life philosophy because he’s pushing to follow your dreams, and for kids that grow up like him that could really mean a lot. Tupac didn’t grow up in the greatest home, he grew up without a dad and a crack addicted mom. Stating in an interview with BET’s Ed Gordon. “I always hate when I tell this story because white people love to hear it, but I feel like if I
would’ve grown up with a father figure and all that but I feel like I was better off without growing up with a father. I didn’t need him,” (Tupac Shakur, 1993). I think one of the reasons he decided to go into music is because his father was a musician by the name of Billy Garland. His mother was a Black Panther, which makes me think that’s why he tried to change the way African Americans were being treated. His mother's generation did not finish their mission, but he was trying to finish his. I believe that this didn't sit well with the real “gangsters” that were pushing the message with violence like The Notorious B.I.G. The reason I believe people wanted Tupac out of the rap game is because he was so successful and smart. He was wise and he knew at such a young age that the way people like him were treated was very wrong. He had nine siblings but only four were blood and when he was a kid he had very little contact with his father. His father was a musician which makes me believe that is why he went into that field.

The good thing about Tupac’s story is he was fighting for black equality through his music, he was fighting for kids that grew up like he did. When he used to hold concerts he would let middle schoolers who had at least a C average, get in free. I really think he was trying to change his character after he realized jail wasn’t cool like all those rappers said. But I think he knew jail wasn’t cool but because he was famous he would get accused because people didn’t want to see him win. Like he said in his interview while in Clinton Correctional facility “all these rappers talk about how jail inspires them to write more music but it really doesn’t. It just brings you further down. I don’t want to write music in here” (Tupac Shakur, 1995) I believe that made some of his more impressionable fans think “wow, jail isn’t cool I don’t want to go there. Jail isn’t someplace I want to sit for the rest of my life.” One of the conspiracies of why he was killed
was because he could see the truth, he could see behind the mask or as some people say “he was woke”. With that success I think he would’ve changed the whole game behind blacks, and Hispanics getting treated like garbage, he had a knack for seeing maybe 25 years into the future and he was a prodigy as some people would say. I believe if Tupac was still alive, many of the things occurring in society, wouldn’t be the same. For example: African Americans in the NFL like Colin Kaepernick kneeling for the National Anthem. Tupac was a different type of person after his allegations resulted in him being shot. He wanted to change his life and the lives of others. stating “I know I said in interviews before that I didn't care if I died, but now I have a whole new perception on this. I don't want to die with people thinking I’m a rapist. That isn't a name I want to die with.” (Tupac Shakur, 1993) “Before I die I need people to know the real side of the story not just one persons.” (Tupac Shakur, 1993)

Tupac’s story has resulted in a tragedy. He died while attempting to speak the truth. Many people did not like this. The lyrics that Tupac chose to use were straight from the heart, they were real unlike most other artists from his time. He chose to rap about things other than just money and drugs. Instead he focused on what’s going on in his life rather than just what’s going on in the street. He rapped about why he went to to jail, where he got shot and when he got shot. While in his interview with BET, Tupac stated: “When we walk out of our 80 person packed houses in the projects, yes-we are ‘strapped up’ because this is the same hood police are walking around with riot helmets, riot jackets, double vests, 9 millimeter glocks with extra bullets, mace, and tear gas. Who do you think they are using that against? Dogs? No, its us.” (Tupac Shakur, 1993). In that interview he also said “These are the same projects they are
sending all the rapists and murderers to, but just because we're black they think we get along but we don't.” (Tupac Shakur, 1993) It’s tragic that he got shot he was killed in a drive by shooting with the head of Death Row Records Suge Knight, Suge Knight didn’t die but he was grazed by a bullet that almost hit him in the head. Tupac died at the University Medical Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. The writer of revolt.tv said, “They say at least 13 rounds were fired into a 1996 BMW 750 Sedan.” (Ralph Bristout, 2017) The rap game is still feeling the impact even two and a half decades into his death.

Tupac Shakur attended the Bruce Seldon vs. Mike Tyson boxing match with Suge Knight, the head of Death Row Records, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. After leaving the match, one of Suge Knight's associates, Travon Lane (A blood) spotted Orlando Anderson, a Crips gang member, from Compton, California, in the MGM Grand lobby. Earlier that year, in May 1996, Anderson and a group of Southside Crips had robbed Lane in a Foot Locker store. Lane told Tupac, and Shakur attacked Orlando Anderson. Shakur asked him if he was from the "South" (South Side Compton Crips), and punched him in the face, knocking Anderson to the ground. Shakur and Knight's entourage, some known as a Bloods gang members, assisted in assaulting Anderson. The fight was captured on the hotel's video surveillance. It was broken up by hotel security. But one of my conspiracies about Tupac is that The Notorious B.I.G another crip sent out a hitman to kill tupac and maybe suge knight who was also in the car with him when he was shot. Biggie was one of Tupac's friends growing up but as they hit young adults they joined different sides of the gang. As Suge Knight once said “Even if I do know who killed Tupac I still wouldn’t tell any of you because I’m not a snitch.” Obviously means we will never
find out because people even think Notorious B.I.G did it but he was also killed some months later. Which means I don’t think that we will ever find out who killed Tupac which I think isn’t right because that isn’t serving him the justice he deserves.

That is the reason I think this why more people should know Tupac’s story; he wasn’t just some gangster rapper. He spoke the truth and this is why I am pushing this topic so hard. I feel like he was an American icon and I hope the people that read this look into him more as a human and not a gangster that went around and killed people. I do really believe that if Tupac didn't die in the shooting America wouldn't be the same. I think that with what Tupac was doing for America we wouldn't have people in the NFL kneeling for the National Anthem. My hope now that you have read this you also find his life to be more interesting and the real impact he made on everybody. Even for someone who didn’t like his music I think we can all understand what he was doing for the people or minorities. I really hope people do what Tupac was trying to accomplish and that is helping the young minority communities.
National History Day Bibliography

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