

News

NEWS COMMENTARY

In the end, another bright young flame is snuffed out by violence

Andre Mack
Guest Writer

(Editor's note: This commentary is being run unedited by request of the author.)

Rapper Tupac Shakur died on Friday, Sept. 13, 1996. He died of respiratory problems and cardio-pulmonary arrest. Although I've never met him, share no history with him, my heart and prayers go out to him and his family.

Tupac represented and lived the care-free lifestyle (as depicted by the media) that many dare not engage in but fantasize about. His lifestyle transcended race, socio-economic, and ethnic barriers, that, admitted or not, was appealing.

He seemingly lived life as a practicing hedonist. It's a shame that he no longer has the chance to develop as an individual.

But his death does more than just invoke sadness. His death makes me wonder what his critics are saying about him, particularly those of his own race.

One can only speculate on what his critics are and have said about him now that he is dead. He got what he deserved? 'Niggers' killing 'niggers' again? I didn't like him anyway?

Having been on the opposite ends of the "good-bad" spectrum, I've found that African-Americans are harsher critics (by way of words) than members of other races, when it comes to individuals of Tupac's character.

In a sense, one would expect this phenomenon, but in another sense, one would expect deeper investigation of the factors that shape the development of such a character.

Factors such as educational background, family stability, family and personal economic background, native environment, and family and personal emphasis on religion.

This process is seemingly obsolete in the African-American community when characters such as Tupac's are in question.

The tendency seems to immediately write such a person off as a hoodlum. But when characters such as those embodied by William Kennedy Smith (of the infamous Kennedy Klan, tried on an attempted rape charge) or even Tim Allen (convicted cocaine user and distributor turned sitcom star), Demi Moore (high school dropout turned actress) or Melanic Griffith (high school dropout, married at age 17 to 33-year-old actor Don Johnson) are in question, the tendency is one that is evident in high profile cases involving aristocrats and worsens as you descend the socio-economic/ethnic ladder.

I can imagine what my "brothers" and "sisters" who are reading this article are saying right now. Most likely you are agreeing with every word because it sounds sensible. But what are the reasons for such harsh criticisms of each other? Is it best described as self-hatred?

For the "sisters," does Tupac remind you of the one that broke your heart, so now you hate Tupac and all those like him?

For the "brothers," was Tupac's lifestyle (projected by the media as being filled with money and women) the life you secretly desire, so now you, too, hate him?

If you feel the need to dislike someone, dislike the "brothers" and "sisters"

who hate their color and history to the point that they exclusively date outside their race.

Intensify your dislike when you speak to "brothers" and "sisters" who are eager to embrace other cultures to the point where they won't associate, or even look at those of their own. To be more exact, dislike yourself for making fun of your disadvantaged African and Indian "brothers" and

Party. Amid the turmoil, he rose to celebrity status in the music industry. His celebrity status is largely due to the realness of his music. He was a thug and rapped about the "thug life." He even had the phrase tattooed on his midsection. He's dead now.

At least he died knowing he didn't have to kiss the a-- (i.e. - the assistant manager, the second assistant manager, or the d--- supervisor) of the a--kisser (the manager, the district manager, or the vice-president) to keep a bulls--t job for 20 years, to build a pension and gain benefits that may not be there when he's finally old enough to claim them.

He didn't have to smile on cue. He didn't have to fake a laugh or act concerned when he really wasn't for the sake of a job. At least he explored his thoughts, as illustrated through his lyrics. He talked the "thug life" talk and walked the swaggered walk that went along with it.

When he felt a "f--k you" was in order, he said it. When he felt a push or a punch was necessary (mostly to the heads and equipment operators) he did it. Publicly, he smoked, drank, cursed, exploited women in his videos, and in his publicized personal life.

He also was involved in the campaign to do away with California's affirmative action initiative, along with the other prominent artists. Only children have the same expressive freedoms Tupac indulged in.

But what about his critics and others like them? What devilish behavior did they partake in as youths? Did they peddle or use drugs of any sort? Did they shoplift, sleep around a lot, or get food stamps while in college? I'm

sure one of these deeds is applicable to every one of them as well as you and me. Only God and the individual remember those deeds.

Today, these same critics are your career politicians, professors, "A" students, housing directors, and psychologists. They are the people that are in positions of leadership and guidance. They are your bosses and even your parents.

These are your critics. Suddenly, since the passing of time has hidden their devilish deeds, they adopt pristine attitudes. Now they feel as if they can criticize and punish "you" any chance they get, with the full support of others like them who make and enforce social laws.

If you think this observation is mistaken, put someone to the test. Ask your parents, housing director, coordinator of African-American Student Development, or Career Center directors if they ever used drugs. Ask them if they were sexually promiscuous at any point in their lives. Take notice of that person's reaction. Is it one of anger or simply a smile?

If you want an honest answer, call their undergraduate universities' records departments or police departments. Usually people in these departments remember such people and even remember the deeds.

Most are eager to share the stories with you, too, as I found to be the case when I contacted the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Colgate University, and Southern Illinois University.

Either way you will be able to sense that something devilish has been done, and you might even consider being less crucial of characters like Tupac Shakur...1970-1996.

At least he died knowing that he didn't have to kiss the a-- of the a--kisser to keep a bulls--- job for 20 years.

--Andre Mack

"sisters" when they take classes with you or try to interact with you.

Dislike yourself for making fun of your "brother" or "sister" who is trying to get through college the best way he can. Dislike yourself for being close-minded to ideas such as gay marriages, owning your own business, or venturing out of your small town and small town mentality. Dislike the person who has two parents to finance his/her education and he/she still decides to drop out.

Tupac often spoke publicly of being homeless for a while, his father's absence, and his mother's absence due to involvement in the Black Panther

Resignation of public safety director to result in search for replacement

Monica Williams
Staff Writer

The director of public safety recently resigned in order to take a job at another university, according to Eric Iovacchini, vice chancellor of student affairs. Jeffrey Van Slyke took on the job of police chief at the University of Iowa at the beginning of September.

"Jeff finished his master's in public administration about a year and a half ago," said Iovacchini. "At that time, he started to look for other positions.

"He interviewed for several positions," said Iovacchini. "He found that the University of Iowa would be a good match for him."

Jeffrey Van Slyke was unavailable for comment. According to Iovacchini, a search will begin immediately for a new director of public safety. The search will involve both Iovacchini and a focus group, consisting of both students and other faculty members.

"We are going to go around and talk to UNCA students and departments about what they think is needed in the next director of public safety," said Iovacchini. "They will help us set the parameters as to what we will be looking for."

Many UNCA residents feel that it is a good idea to let the students have some input in the choice of the new director of public safety.

"I believe Dr. Iovacchini should definitely get the student input," said freshman Holly Collins. "After all, the students are the ones that everyone is here to teach. We are the reason for the school being here."

Some residents feel that Iovacchini's actions are admirable, because what he and other administrators decide will ultimately effect the resident student population.

"I feel very confident in Dr. Iovacchini's decision in getting input from the students," said Antwane Turner, a junior education major. "The students know better than anybody else what their needs are."

"We live here three-fourths of the year," said freshman Jason Graham. "This campus should revolve mostly around the

people who live here.

"Issues dealing with public safety deal with students," said Graham. "Students should definitely have some input in that."

According to Iovacchini, Van Slyke saw the opportunity in Iowa as a good career move for his future.

"It is a job where the staff and student population is about three times the size of UNCA's," said Iovacchini. "However, he will not have parking to deal with, which is another department."

"I guess that he will stay there probably three to five years," said Iovacchini, "and then move on to something else."

Iovacchini said that Van Slyke had visited Iowa throughout last year.

"He had been up there a couple of times to look for housing," said Iovacchini. "His last day was September 2."

"He needed to work a day into September in order to keep his benefits for the month," said Iovacchini, "so we worked out an

arrangement."

According to Iovacchini, Arnold Jones, the current assistant director of public safety, along with Dennis Gregory, current public safety investigator, are sharing the responsibilities of director of public safety until a replacement for Van Slyke is found.

"Arnold and Dennis are two long-time employees, who are well-known by everybody," said Iovacchini. "They will be holding down the fort."

Iovacchini also added that a new director of public safety should be named sometime after the first of next year.

Both Jones and Gregory were unavailable for comment.



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