



Captain Condom strikes again: Dan Thigpen and Nate Finley promote AIDS awareness.

SAMUEL BLEY STEPHENS

## Lover of people, Afeni Shakur

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She is 55 years old, she speaks in a strong, thick voice. She was once a Black Panther, and she gave life to Tupac Amaru Shakur.

Afeni Shakur was introduced by Neena Robertson (Guilford senior, and president of the African American Cultural Society) as an "activist, mother, woman." Neena wrote a poem called "A Dedication" for Afeni, and read it to a rapt audience in Dana Auditorium on Sunday night.

Tupac was one the most captivating and profound performers of his time, yet his music transgressed racial boundaries and has become timeless.

Since Tupac was murdered on Sept. 13, 1996, Afeni has carried on the legacy of her son through heartfelt speeches, the release of several CD's (previously unreleased material), the

creation of a Tupac Shakur art center in Georgia, and an upcoming MTV documentary, Shakur said Sun. night.

Afeni's speech was sincere as she spoke with pride, love, and dignity. She made it clear from the beginning that she was "not the only woman who has lost a child," and stated, "I am very fragile in my pride." She went on to describe her difficult upbringing in Lumberton, NC: "we have been dirt poor farmers." Her ancestors were kidnapped slaves. She described her younger self as "arrogant" and "angry."

Afeni also admitted her drug abuse. "I am a recovering addict," she said. In fact, she was in prison for much of her pregnancy with Tupac. She addressed her difficulty in coming to terms with her habit, and how the experience was humbling in a way. "I was a run-of-the-mill, garden variety, dope fiend."

Her long struggle with addiction hurt Tupac, and he ad-

ressed his pain in his song, "Dear Mama." Afeni offered insight to the broader effects of drug abuse: "our actions as drug addicts affect other peoples lives ... and we pretend it doesn't."

Whereas addiction was Afeni's curse, Tupac was her blessing. "God blessed me," she said. She spoke about her "spectacular son" with more than just motherly adoration. Although he only lived 25 years, Afeni believed he lived a full life. "I always believed Tupac had a beginning, middle, and end." She also said, "he did more in 25 years than most of us can do in three lifetimes."

Afeni openly discussed her son's death, talking about the

tragedy matter-of-factly. "One individual person made a choice that day, and that day, that choice was to take another person's life," she said in a somber yet honest way. She cut through any trivial ideas that could be lingering in Dana when she said "things are as bad as you think; now that you know they are that bad, do something about it."

Afeni was thankful that she was drug-free for the five years before Tupac's death and ever since. "I'm grateful that when he took his last breath, I was clean and sober."

See Shakur, p. 10

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