

The Cathedral of Shakurism

Written by Ray Davis ID1133
Thursday, 07 April 2005 23:37 -

Tupac Shakur

Tupac Shakur is the messiah of many African American males today. His music, along with his legacy as The Prince of Thug Life, has left a following of disciples that imitates the superficialities of Tupac's life without accepting the commitment, discipline and appreciation he had for the arts. While Tupac was not the ideal role model due to his overindulgence of weed, women and delinquent behavior, the disciples of Tupac insult his legacy by not following his creativity and acquiescing to his fallacies.

The consequences of this diluted celebration of Pac is that millions of African American males who celebrate thug life pay homage to their deity by realizing epidemic drop out rates, spreading A.I.D.S. in their community and crowding the prison system while having no focus, discipline or goals. They associate with peers who share their apathy towards educational, social or career pursuits and reinforce their misguided and selected interpretations of Tupac's manifesto. Lacking true commitment to their selves, they lack commitment to their communities and are co-conspirators in destroying both. As it was with Tupac and Biggie, dying is more celebrated than living, and this celebration is a pathological rites of passage to command respect from other African American males.

African American males, unaccepted by their fathers, educational institutions and communities are all welcome into the cathedral of "Shakurism" which unlike college, jobs and church allows them acceptance with few prerequisites other than the pseudo gangster or (wankster) posturing of the shallowest aspects of thug life. Most of these young African American males practice a diluted version of thug life and do not participate in hard crimes or gang behavior, they just get high, hang out with their boys and work occasionally to keep their mothers off of their backs. African American males, held hostage in a matriarchal society, are constantly reminded by their mothers that they are just like their no good fathers. Although these boys don't have viable relationships with their fathers, their mothers' criticism of their fathers hurts them and further detaches them from both their mothers and their fathers. African American males, receiving criticism from their mothers about their fathers, are forced into seeking solace and a substitute

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for their father's love in the troubled peers who share their pain. Their pain management system is alcohol, sex, weed and hyper machismo behavior and it leads them to descend into a lord of the flies' community that is marred by drugs, suicide, sexual disease and homicide.

Their mothers, who are unable to "keep daddy," are subconsciously viewed by these males as deficient and this perception is generalized onto other African American women who are viewed as disposable objects of desire. As young African American males start their premature mating rituals they emulate what they have seen their mothers receive. If momma was never treated right (they conclude) why should these other B's, Hoes, and Hoochies be treated well? They view African American women as the lowest humans on the totem pole and are involved with them only in usury excursions rarely having seen permanent commitments between African American women and African American men. Like many African American males, Tupac both celebrated and demonized African American women. Unfortunately, mass media always selects the lowest levels of art because it appeals to the unquenchable need to attract and to sell to the largest number of consumers. The demonizing of African American women by artist such as Tupac, Biggie and Jay Z have been researched, developed, marketed, packaged, and distributed to the envy of the wizards of Madison Avenue and sold as well as any product in America. All consumers have accepted this propaganda so well that even African American women participate in the chauvinistic ecology of diminishing the value, loyalty and respect they have for each other. This helps maintain the self hatred African American men and women have for each other and the abomination that 67% of African American women are without husbands, which is a greater percentage than when slavery existed.

Tupac's disciples study his life as they meditate in ancient custom and tradition listening to his music in altered states of various chemical indulgences. The attraction to Tupac, as a martyr, and Hip Hop's other dead masters is far less about the music and far more about the ever-increasing alienation of African American youth and a search for African American masculinity in America. These youth expect and seek death as they feel the hatred of America burning into their psyche and want to join their messiahs that they hold on high as dear as their Christians brethren hold Christ, anticipating the day that they will join their savior Tupac. While Christians (supposedly) celebrate life, the disciples of Tupacism celebrate death in a world that tells them that hell and heaven are indistinguishable. The Notorious Biggie Smalls captured this philosophy exquisitely in his song "Suicidal Thoughts." Biggie says, "When I die f---- it I want to go to hell, cause I'm a piece of s---- and it ain't hard to f----- tell," He goes on to later say, "Crime after crime, from drugs to extortion, I know my mother wish she had a f----- abortion." This song, a veritable African American male anthem of self hatred, alienation and pain, echoes to his disciples to worship life only for the privilege to die. Death is the only way to anesthetize the pain of their African American skin, to anesthetize the agony placed upon African American men in a world that has no desire for their existence. Ultimately, African American men service each others conscious desire for death by acting as judge, jury and executioner of their own peers to the beat of homicide as the number one cause of African American males dying.

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When the question is asked which came first Hip Hop or fatherless homes, make no mistake that it was fatherless homes that produced a music that eliminated the “L” word from music and would be a pseudo attempt to claim African American masculinity, reduce the alienation and fill the void of love not given to young African American male children. Their own fathers were destroyed by drugs, unemployment and the collective weight of a culture that at 7:00 pm every evening broadcasts that the majority of America’s problems are because of the African American man. African American youth, who are in an accelerating free fall in our society without fathers, churches, schools, recreation centers or mainstream cultural institutions to catch them, are caught just before their demise in the safety net of Hip Hop; the fathers they never had. This orthodoxy welcomes and embraces them and these African American males pay homage to the one savior that will ease all of their pain and promise them salvation and visibility in a Ralph Ellison world that does not even acknowledge that they exist, that does not even acknowledge that they are human. This is why when we criticize their music they walk away; Hip Hop is the only church that accepts them. The African American church embraces and solicits African American women aggressively without demanding from these Christian women that if you can’t bring your sons, baby fathers or husbands to church next week don’t come. So on any given Sunday; African American women sit in over representing numbers in church while their sons sit in over representing numbers in prisons.

While we examine under the collective cultural microscope the banalities of the status quo about the dangers of Hip Hop we ignore the proverbial pink elephant with wings in the room that is the real culprit. The elephant is the fatherless homes that have failed to give immunity to children who still will be exposed to the viruses of racism, apathy, broken communities, drugs, incarceration and violence. The father’s vaccination of love produces an immune system that will, build resistance from these viruses. African American males, properly immunized can then celebrate the best of Tupac Shakur’s music and life, Hip Hops monumental artistry and most of all, the best of what it means to be human. Then, the disciples of Tupac Shakur can propagate the message of Tupac and Hip Hop and become the core orthodoxy to manifest the faith of his most beautiful visions celebrating African American women, building support institutions for African American men and creating the best possibilities of African American life. Hip Hop can then create a culture that is rooted in fatherhood, social consciousness, revolution and a moral accountability system for African American life resurrecting the African American male, his family and his community. In this way, we can pay Hip Hop and Tupac tribute, in this way, we pay tribute to ourselves.

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