

Congresswoman Wants Gov Files on Late Rap Icon Tupac Opened

Written by Robert ID1943

Thursday, 29 September 2005 23:09 -

At the end of her packed-to-capacity Congressional Black Caucus Braintrust, "Countering Culture: COINTELPRO Attacks On Political Musicians"; Rep. Cynthia McKinney made a dramatic announcement. With Afeni Shakur (mother of slain hip-hop / rap icon Tupac Shakur) providing a smile of approval, the Georgia lawmaker told the audience she will be introducing legislation to open the United States government files on the life and death of Tupac Shakur.

The statement came at the end of a two-hour discussion featuring Paul Robeson, Jr., son of the legendary scholar, athlete, activist, and actor; Alex Constatsine, noted author of , "The Covert War Against Rock"; and Ms. Afeni Shakur, Tupac's Mother, former Black Panther member and head of the Tupac Amaru Shakur Center For The Arts. Mr. Robeson had already spoken of the opposition his father faced from the FBI and CIA, including the infamous MKULTRA program; Mr. Constantine had just provided little-known information regarding the surveillance and destabilization efforts of intelligence agencies aimed at Jimmy Hendrix and Bob Marley; and Ms. Shakur detailed her first-hand testimony and perspective not only as a victim of COINTELPRO and a mother of an artist murdered under suspicious circumstances, but also as one who argues that self-perpetuated weaknesses and ills in the Black community are what continue to make itself susceptible to external forces. I had the honor of moderating the discussion and public question and answer session.

Nearly 3 years ago to the day, on September 20, 2005, I wrote a BlackElectorate.com editorial, "RapCOINTELPRO X - Getting To The Top And Bottom Of The Murders Of Biggie And Tupac". The editorial was inspired in part by the September 6, 2002 Los Angeles Times article which claimed that the Notorious B.I.G. masterminded a \$1 million plot to murder Tupac. The paper even claimed that the rapper, also known as "Biggie Smalls" supplied the murder weapon. This latest version of events claiming to explain the murder of Tupac, followed elaborate arguments that Death Row Records CEO, Suge Knight, was responsible for the murder, and has been followed, as recently as two weeks ago, by the news that a federal probe has re-opened the investigation into the 1994 shooting of Tupac at Quad Studios. In regards to the constant speculation, leaks and investigation from law enforcement and media outlets revolving around 'Who Killed Tupac?', I wrote the following, "The only way to get to the top and bottom of both murders is to find out once and for all what the United States government knows about them. Since it is a fact that Death Row and Bad Boy Records and Tupac and Biggie were under FBI, ATF and IRS, NYPD, LAPD and IRS surveillance and/or investigation at the time of both murders; their exist, at this very moment files that have not been made public. Especially in the case of the government agencies involved, these files should be opened. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) allows anyone - a family member or journalist - to obtain such files. There do exist files and dossiers on both Biggie and Tupac within the federal government. Efforts should be made to obtain the de-classified and still classified files pertaining to Tupac Shakur and Christopher Wallace."

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That Tupac was under surveillance at the time of his murder and that government and other informants had infiltrated his inner circle at that time is generally accepted by those who were close to him at the time of his death. But the full reality and important details that Tupac had long been a target or subject of law enforcement's watchful, and often mischievous eye is less understood. For example, at last week's CBC Braintrust, in riveting fashion, Afeni Shakur provided an account of Tupac's arrest on rape charges, full of anecdotes about the manner in which a S.W.A.T. team was present, Atlanta police called, and Tupac asked to give himself up in certain way in the hotel, that would lead a reasonable person to wonder if the circumstances of his arrest were not also an attempt to murder him. In an interview I recently granted, I was asked the question of who killed Biggie and Tupac. I replied in part that I don't know but I do believe that the government and our worst enemies have tried to use the murders, and their lack of an arrest for either, against the Hip-Hop and Black and Latino community. I could rest my case, alone, on the 'leaks' that law enforcement agencies have given to publications over the last 9 years, accusing or suspecting various Hip-Hop artists, music industry and street figures of responsibility for Tupac's murder. If the files surrounding his life and death were opened, perhaps the light of disclosure would remove any intentional mystery surrounding this one young Black Man's death.

Yesterday, I asked Congresswoman McKinney how the legislation would look. Rep. McKinney replied, "Basically we would model the Tupac legislation on the MLK legislation which I introduced earlier this year. That legislation, in turn, is based on successful legislation that put a process in place for the public release of all files pertaining to the murder of President John Kennedy. We know that in 1999 a jury determined that there was a conspiracy to kill Dr. King that included our own government. To the extent that there are files available on the life and murder of Tupac, they, too should be released for public inspection. Maybe then, like the Tennessee jury, we'll get closer to the truth about the forces swirling around this young man that ended up taking his life."

Although it must be enormously painful for Afeni Shakur to have to relive, repeatedly, the death and painful memories of her son; her support of Congresswoman McKinney's legislation indicates her courage, strength and insight into the necessary steps that we will have to take to outthink our worst enemies and learn the lessons of history, that we may not repeat them. It also sets a beautiful example for Voletta Wallace, the mother of Christopher Wallace (the Notorious B.I.G.) to consider following. In my September 20, 2002 editorial I wrote: "Among other things, the community should also encourage, and hope and pray that Tupac's mother, Afeni Shakur and Biggie's mother, Voletta Wallace, eventually meet with Dr. King's late wife, Coretta Scott King, who can be a source of wisdom and strength to them as they navigate not only the pain and grief of loss, but also the possibilities that very powerful individuals in government and without, know more about the murders of Biggie and Tupac than has ever been reported. This may be especially helpful to Biggie's mother who is persuaded by the work

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of a White investigator that the LAPD is covering up Biggie's murder (Afeni Shakur has been clear in her statements that she does not trust the government, local police, or media where her son is concerned). This is bigger than the LAPD. The fact that Biggie and Puffy's cars, that fateful night in March of 1997, were under surveillance by the ATF, FBI and undercover NYPD; and that members of Biggie's entourage were shown pictures of cars and individuals who were near them at the time Biggie was shot provides evidence that more than an LAPD cover-up is involved. Coretta Scott King can be an invaluable resource of insight into dealing with the federal government's knowledge of what happened in September of 1996 in Las Vegas and in Los Angeles in March of 1997."

Last week we all received the wonderful news that Mrs. Coretta Scott King had left the hospital and was healing and in therapy after a serious stroke. She is even speaking a bit. Whether or not she is able to provide wise counsel to Ms. Shakur and Ms. Wallace may no longer be the point. The courageous example of her life and the pain of living under a cloud of suspicion and unanswered questions regarding a loved one murdered under suspicious and political circumstances is enough to teach us all the depth of the harm that can be caused to individuals and an entire community when the right questions are not answered and mysteries remain intentionally unsolved.