

King and Shakur and Civil Rights

Written by Keith ID885

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The motivational impact of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the late hip-hop rap icon Tupac Shakur were brought to life again, as Southern University students compared the controversial civil rights and hip-hop era.

Members of the Southern University history club, along with the Student Government Association held a forum on Feb. 10 in Moore Hall auditorium to discuss the direction in which the modern generation is heading.

"The past affects us in everyday life," said Andrea Payton, president of the history club.

"If it wasn't for generations before us, opportunities would not be as great."

The forum focused on taking a look at the importance of both civil rights and hip-hop while examining the differences between the two.

"The hip-hop generation is one that tends to minimize or forget the previous generation," said Arthur Tolson, professor of history.

"That generation involved self respect and made a tremendous contribution to where we are now."

Students and faculty alike felt that as a result of not having a common goal, the modern generation has lost their fight and ultimately, lost their identity.

"The hip-hop generation doesn't take advantage of everything we have," Payton said. "We take it all for granted, and that's why we lack so much now."

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Students voiced their opinions on how they felt the wrong things tend to keep the younger generation motivated and how a lot of young people choose not to think for themselves anymore.

"You'll rarely hear Common or Mos Def on the radio, because they talk about things you don't hear in mainstream songs," said Antoine Mitchell, a student at Southern.

"The mass majority of our generation listens to the radio, which is our teacher. We listen to what's hot, when we really should pick up a book."

A large part of the forum was based on the contrast of two influential people from both eras, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and rapper Tupac Shakur.

Eva Baham, assistant professor of history, said that even though both men came from different angles, they were motivated by the same things.

Both men saw the social problems of the country they lived in and found different ways to speak out about it. While Shakur could reach people through poetry and verse, King could get through in letters and speeches.

"Most people only know the last few lines of the "I Have a Dream" speech," Baham said. "What a lot of people don't know is, the rest of the speech is a critique of economic injustice."

Baham also spoke in reference to Tupac Shakur.

"When he was little and would get in trouble, his mom would make him read the New York Times from cover to cover as punishment."

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Baham noted that she believes many of us listen to Tupac's music, but most of us are missing his message and the fact that he got through to us is because he understood human nature.

To Baham, both men were artists in their own respect and they both felt life "one beat at a time."

The main idea of the forum concerned the hip-hop generation's needed to unite for the problem of racism to be closer to extinction and the gap between the two eras to be closed.

"Until we come together, there will always be a conflict between the time of civil rights and now," said Creighton Montgomery, a former marine and a student at Southern.

The forum was the first of three black history month informational forums. Notable women in public service will be honored Wednesday Feb. 15, at 11 a.m. in the Smith-Brown Memorial Union. Omar Tyree will speak Wednesday Feb. 16, in the Smith-Brown Memorial Union at 11 a.m.

[Source](#)