

Ms Wallace Offers Insight on Rap Son's Legacy

Written by NiKKi ID1988

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When New York hip-hop rap legend Notorious B.I.G. was murdered in Los Angeles, in possible retaliation for the murder of his alleged "rival" west coast rap icon Tupac Shakur (2Pac), the media heightened its attention on the so-called turf war between East and West Coast rappers.

Public scrutiny of the violence surrounding the rap music industry intensified, as did the lies told about the lives of many of the artists. Now, the mother of Notorious B.I.G., Voletta Wallace, speaks out about her life, her son, and media-perpetuated falsehoods in her heartfelt new book, *Biggie: Voletta Wallace Remembers Her Son, Christopher Wallace, a.k.a. Notorious B.I.G.* written by Voletta Wallace with Tremell McKenzie featuring a foreword by recording artist Faith Evans, Notorious B.I.G.'s widow.

In this candid memoir, the rappers mother Voletta Wallace offers a more complete portrait of her son than any that has been written. "I raised Christopher to cherish life and to cherish each other every single day," Wallace writes. "Christopher was a man with a conscience and he was raised as a Christian. I think the one thing I am most proud of about Christopher was his heart condition. He was a giver to anyone who asked. He was a man of his word.

And he was loyal.

All of these things are conditions of the heart that I know I helped to develop and instill in him."

Voletta Wallace's story begins in Jamaica, where as a young girl she yearned for something more than the small island nation could offer her. At age 19, she moved to New York City and found menial work and a furnished room in a dingy, cold apartment. Determined to make something of her life, she returned to school, studied nursing, and then became a teacher. In that career, Voletta Wallace taught for over thirty years. Still a naive girl from the islands, she had an affair with a man she did not know was married, and gave birth to her only child, Christopher. Despite the hardship of single motherhood, she worked hard to give her son a positive upbringing.

From the start, Christopher was an intelligent and loving child. As a teenager, he became interested in rap, the new form of music that was sweeping the neighborhood. Voletta Wallace did not understand the world of Hip-Hop, and would have preferred that Christopher pursue a more traditional and stable profession, but she bowed to his obvious talent and supported him in every way she could. Though she appeared as herself in one of his videos, she never became

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that mink-enshrouded, bejeweled woman she portrayed for the cameras, but continued to live modestly and teach as she always had. She also waged two courageous, successful battles against breast cancer and, after some reluctance, embraced her new role as grandmother to Christopher's two children.

Notorious B.I.G.'s career was cut short prematurely that fateful day in 1997, and Voletta Wallace writes poignantly about her trip to Los Angeles to claim his body. This trip provided her first exposure to the way the media manufactures spurious stories, as false reports broadcast her alleged battle over funeral arrangements with her daughter-in-law, Faith Evans. Nothing could have been further from the truth, she remembers, and she and Evans still maintain a strong bond. Biggie's death remains unsolved, and Wallace decries the way the case has been handled by the L.A.P.D., against whom she has filed

a wrongful death suit.

In Biggie, Voletta Wallace also talks freely about her relationships with some of her son's closest friends and associates, including Sean Combs, Lil' Kim, and Lil' Cease, all of whom she says have disappointed her by exploiting Notorious B.I.G.'s legacy professionally, financially, or both. She discusses the contracts, conflicts and royalty rip-offs she has encountered as she continues to manage her son's artistic estate. She also points with pride to the Christopher Wallace Foundation she has set up to help underprivileged kids.

With its conversational tone and uncommon candor, Biggie offers a rare glimpse into the real story of a musical genius whose influence lives on despite his tragically short career, told by the one person who knew him best.

Voletta Wallace is a retired preschool teacher and founder of The Christopher Wallace Memorial Foundation, which is dedicated to educating inner city youth. In conjunction with the publication of Biggie, Voletta Wallace will team up with Academy Award Winning Director Antoine Fuqua, director of Training Day, to bring Christopher Wallace's life to the big screen and a part of the proceeds will be donated to the Christopher Wallace Foundation which raises money for and serves inner city schools. Additionally, a line of clothing inspired by Biggie as well as a CD compilation of Biggie's music will be released.

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The book will be out November 1, 2005