

Mac Dre Day Held For Slain Hip-Hop Rap Artist

Written by NiKKi ID1622
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About 200 young hip-hop and rap enthusiasts gathered at "Mac Dre Day" behind the John F. Kennedy Library in Vallejo, and hopefully learned they don't need drugs, alcohol or violence, said one of the event's speakers.

"We need to respect one another, live in peace, and get along with each other," said Everett Robinson, 44, a born-and-raised Vallejoan. "We need to encourage people to really honor one another and build some wholesome relationships as opposed to building tension with one another."

Under the banner "Silence the Violence," the day was a salute to late rap artist Andre Hicks, a.k.a. Mac Dre, the 34-year-old rapper shot and killed Nov. 1, 2004, after a concert in Kansas City, Kan.

A talent show, including pre-teen kids dancing to the late rapper Mac Dre tunes, complemented speeches honoring the slain rapper.

Allen Hicks, Mac Dre's father, said the tribute was a step in a "positive direction" for Vallejo's youth.

"We have to have this as a healing experience," Hicks said. "It's going to take a lot of input to reduce the violence that's a never-ending battle. We're trying to make my son's death into something positive."

Saturday was chosen as the first of what co-organizer Betty Landers believes will be an annual event because Mac Dre would have turned 35 on July 5.

"I think this is wonderful," said Landers. "It's a wonderful thing to do."

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Landers knew Mac Dre well. The rapper was her granddaughter's father.

"I loved him," Landers said. "He was like a son to me. He was very giving, very funny. He's really missed."

Landers, who is a member of the Andre Hicks Scholarship Fund committee, said anyone in town who wanted to "come out and pay tribute to Dre's work" was invited to the free event.

"Everything's calm and quiet," Landers said. "What we're striving for is that we want Vallejo and other communities to pull together. We hope this goes on year after year."

Robinson said violence will be reduced only if "people respect each other" and not turn to drugs "which ends up leading to more violence."

"If you can run away from trouble, run away from it," Robinson said.

Robinson, 44, was raised in the Country Club Crest in North Vallejo.

"It's changed a whole lot," he said. "I was raised around the Christian people, Black Panthers and Black Muslims and we all got along. Drugs started to infiltrate the community and we started having theft, robberies, stabbings that led to death."

"It's going to take a community to unite and stand up against violence," Robinson said. "No matter what race, creed or religion, we all can make a difference."

Robinson was encouraged by the young people involved in Mac Dre Day.

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"I'd rather have them here than somewhere doing drugs or out there doing premarital sex," said. "This is a wholesome environment that's fun and safe. It encourages people to be around something like this."

Rap artist Mac Dre, a Sacramento resident the last few years, was killed when another vehicle pulled up to the driver's side of the van he was riding in and began shooting. The van swerved across the highway median, across the southbound lanes and down a steep embankment.

Mac Dre was thrown from the van, but police said he died from gunshot wounds. The driver crawled from the wreckage and ran for help. No suspects have been arrested.

"They still haven't found who killed him and I don't feel good about that," said Dre's father. "Eventually, somebody will pay the price. It's in God's hands as far as I'm concerned."

When Allen Hicks hears a young person singing one of Mac Dre's songs, "it gets to me," he said. "I'm very emotional. And to see this beautiful turnout, it's touched me a couple times and almost brought tears. But I've got to be strong about it."

Mac Dre recorded more than a 20 albums since 1989. He started his rap career with The Strictly Family and Young Black Brother Records. He later founded Romp Records and turned it into Thizz Entertainment.

Dre started the "thizzle dance," which was his own style imitated by many of his fans.