

Death Is Big Business

Written by Adisa Banjoko ID966
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Since America was first created, much of it's wealth has been rooted in Black death. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade, made this nation stronger than it could have ever imagined and is the base of all the economic success it achieved since 1865 (when slavery was abolished). For several hundred years Black men and women were raped, hung, tortured at the whim of their owners and discarded at the bottom of creeks and rivers throughout the south. All the while their free labor was setting the economic foundation for the earth we walk on today in North America. When Black blood soaks into American soil, money sprouts up.

During the Jim Crow, Civil Rights and Black Power struggles we saw it again. The murders of Malcolm X, MLK Jr., Medgar Evers, Lil Bobby Hutton, Fred Hampton and Emmitt Till were a source of income yet again. The media made a lot of money capturing footage of the struggle for African Americans to be recognized as equal citizens of this nation. They sell us back the footage in documentaries and t-shirts. Black America buys it's own death right back in any form it can - accept books.

Now we see it again with Hip Hop. Black death is big business. We can only speculate how much Interscope Records has made from the death of Tupac Shakur. Surely they made more than when Pac was alive. We can only wonder how much Arista made after the death of Notorious B.I.G. Virtually every rap mag makes sure they can rake in the profits with an annual Pac and B.I.G. issue. Nevermind the fact that most of these mags are a CORE REASON these men died. It was in many respects the irresponsible Hip Hop press that threw gasoline on the deadly rap flame. Now there's all kinds of merchandise, t-shirts, hats, cell phone cases etc. that generate untold millions.

Looking forward, we see blood on the horizon for Game and 50 Cent. As we sit in the quiet before the storm, I can only speculate which T-shirt companies have their new "RIP Game" and "RIP 50" shirts already designed. I imagine many of the Hip Hop press outlets are putting the final touches on their memorial covers. Anybody with old footage of Game and 50 (pre or post fame) is making sure the sound is tight and the clarity of the picture is all in order. DJ's are making their super duper memorial mixtapes. Radio keeps pushing idle talk and unfounded rumors about who said what, did what and when. The feast is being prepared and Game and 50 are the main course...The money vultures circle this "beef" looking for their cut. Whether you are a thug, or just want to look like one, there is a way you can get your money outta this feud if you play your cards right.

Often what we miss in America but in Hip Hop specifically, is that these are real men. The hype

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can be blinding at times. But these are men!! Men with families and histories. They love people, and people love them back. Hip Hop is just a happenstance of their journey as Black men on this earth, in this day that we live. Rap music can no longer be the excuse we use as to why Black men die in the street. Hip Hop has gone from a non-violent reaction to racism, economic and cultural oppression to being a key factor in why Black women lose their sons. The leaders of the white corporate run Rap industry are the core culprits in the shift of the non-violent dynamic to the murderous one we see today. They have turned their backs to life affirming rap and chose to promote much of what we see today on MTV, BET and on the radio outlets across the planet. Even if Black people were making all the money- the mindstate is still disgusting.

I have no idea to what degree Game and 50 are furious at one another. I don't have a clue as to the real reason they have issues right now. But trust me when I tell you that there are TV outlets, magazines, t-shirt companies, cell phone ringtone and film companies are LITTERALLY BANKING ON THEIR DEATH TO MAKE MONEY. Blood money is the new cash cow of the rap industry. I hope these brothers wake up. I hope they can squash it it and just keep it on wax. Because if they don't, Rap industry vultures will feast on the carcasses of these Black men- yet again.

Adisa Banjoko is author to the highly controversial book "Lyrical Swords Vol. 1: Hip Hop and Politics in the Mix". Buy one today at www.lyricalswords.com

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