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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS**

SUBJECT: TUPAC SHAKUR

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

FOIPA

DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

Serial Description ~ COVER SHEET

01/03/1997

Total Deleted Page(s) ~ 28

Page 4 ~ Duplicate
Page 5 ~ Duplicate
Page 6 ~ Duplicate
Page 7 ~ Duplicate
Page 8 ~ Duplicate
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Page 35 ~ Duplicate
Page 36 ~ Duplicate
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Page 38 ~ Duplicate
Page 42 ~ b7C
Page 43 ~ b7C



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS

SUBJECT Tupac Shakur

FILE NUMBER 266A-LA-201807(HQ)

SECTION NUMBER 1



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

(12/31/1995)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 01/03/1997

To: FBI Headquarters

Attn: NSD, CT Branch, DTS, DTOU

From: Los Angeles
NSD-6

Approved By: [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED] mpbh/mms

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807-83

Title: [REDACTED] ET AL
TUPAC SHAKUR-VICTIM (DECEASED);
ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E-VICTIM (DECEASED);
AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS
OO: LOS ANGELES

b7C

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Synopsis: Status of investigation and request for extension to PI.

Previous Title: [REDACTED]

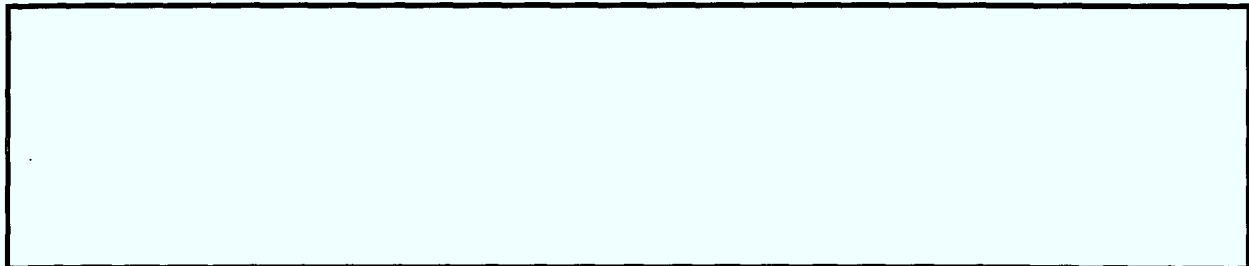
ET AL;
TUPAC SHAKUR-VICTIM (DECEASED);
EAZY-E-VICTIM (DECEASED);
AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS;
OO: LOS ANGELES

Preliminary Inquiry Initiated: 10/17/1996, set to expire 01/17/1997.

Enclosures: One original and five copies of a Letterhead Memorandum, dated 01/03/1997.

Details: Title marked changed to reflect the true name of EAZY-E.

Enclosed for the Bureau are one original and five copies of a Letterhead Memorandum, dated 01/03/1997, which contains the current status of captioned matter.



b2
b7D
b7C

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-30-99 BY 10467 NLS/EP/mKB
433289

To: FBI Headquarters From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, 01/03/1997



b7D
b7C

Several leads remain outstanding at Los Angeles regarding captioned matter. Los Angeles anticipates several interviews of witnesses and victims. Several LAFO files need to be reviewed for background information on [redacted] wherein he is referenced, to include the following files: b7C

12-61-0
26-66697
87-473
92-6836
179-914
183-1734



b3
b7C



b7C
b7D

It is requested that this Preliminary Investigation be extended thirty days as a result of pending investigation.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

envelope

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS
-HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-29-99 BY 60267 NLS/EP/MLK
#435281

(6) enclosures to FBIHQ
to go with Los Angeles report, letter
dated 01/03/1997, desc:

RE:
Los Angeles file number 266A-LA-201807
file number

366

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

TRANSMIT VIA:

☒ Teletype

DATE: 1/14/97

^PAGE 1 OF 2

PRECEDENCE:

☐ Immediate
☐ Priority
☒ Routine

CLASSIFICATION:

☐ TOP SECRET
☐ SECRET
☐ CONFIDENTIAL
☐ UNCLAS E F T O
☒ UNCLAS

FM DIRECTOR FBI

TO FBI LOS ANGELES (266A-LA-201807)/ROUTINE/

BT

b7C

UNCLAS

CITE: //D541//

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] ET AL; TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM
(DECEASED); ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E-VICTIM (DECEASED); AOT-DT-
DEATH THREATS; OO: LOS ANGELES.

REFERENCE LOS ANGELES EC DATED 1/3/97.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY (PI) INITIATED 10/17/97, TO EXPIRE ON
1/17/97, EXTENDED TO 2/16/97.

PI IS EXTENDED FOR A 30-DAY PERIOD TO ALLOW ADDITIONAL TIME
FOR LOS ANGELES TO DETERMINE WHETHER SUBJECT [REDACTED] AND OTHERS ARE
ENGAGED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN FURTHERANCE OF THEIR SOCIAL
AND/OR POLITICAL GOALS. DURING THIS INVESTIGATIVE PERIOD, LOS

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Approved By RW/KMPMRI/JUL 1513/014Transmitted 2308/Kay

JAN 14 1997

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ISN 114

b7C

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

^PAGE 2 UNCLAS

ANGELES SHOULD ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE EXTORTIONATE
ACTIVITY BEING CONDUCTED BY AND OTHERS IS TO PROVIDE
FINANCIAL BACKING FOR THEIR ORGANIZATION OR IS ONLY FOR PERSONAL
FINANCIAL GAIN. b7C

IF LOS ANGELES DESIRES FURTHER EXTENSION OF THIS PI, A
REQUEST FOR SUCH EXTENSION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE DOMESTIC
TERRORISM OPERATIONS UNIT, FBIHQ, PRIOR TO THE 2/16/97 EXPIRATION
DATE.

BT

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**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM**

PAGE 3

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE/TICKLER COUNT:

NOTE: THIS TELETYPE AUTHORIZES A 30-DAY EXTENSION OF CAPTIONED PI. THIS IS THE FIRST EXTENSION OF THIS PI.

Drafted By: PJG:tjg Room/TL #: 11741 Phone No:

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1 - MR.

b7C

APPROVED:

	Crim. Inv. _____	Laboratory _____	Off. of EEO _____
	Crim. Jus. Info. _____	Legal Counsel _____	Affairs _____
	Servs. _____	National Sec. _____	Off. of Public _____
Director _____	Finance _____	Personnel _____	& Cong. Affs. _____
	Intell. Div. _____	Training _____	
Deputy Director _____	Inspection _____		

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

TRANSMIT VIA:

☒ Teletype

DATE: 2/14/97

^PAGE 1 OF 2

PRECEDENCE:

☐ Immediate
☒ Priority
☐ Routine

CLASSIFICATION:

☐ TOP SECRET
☐ SECRET
☐ CONFIDENTIAL
☐ UNCLAS E F T O
☒ UNCLAS

FM DIRECTOR FBI

b7C

TO FBI LOS ANGELES (266A-LA-201807)/PRIORITY/

BT

UNCLAS

CITE: //0541//

SUBJECT: ET AL; TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM
(DECEASED); ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E - VICTIM (DECEASED); AOT-DT-
DEATH THREATS; OO: LOS ANGELES.

REFERENCE LOS ANGELES EC DATED 2/12/97.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY (PI) INITIATED 10/17/96, TO EXPIRE ON
2/16/97, EXTENDED TO 3/18/97.

PI IS EXTENDED FOR THIRTY DAYS TO ALLOW TIME FOR LOS ANGELES
TO RECEIVE RESPONSES TO OUTSTANDING LEADS AND TO DETERMINE
WHETHER THE EXTORTIONATE ACTIVITIES OF SUBJECT ARE IN FURTHERANCE

266A-LA-201807-117

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Approved By RWB/HypMRI/JUL 543/049Transmitted 1525Z/MS

FEB 18 1997

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DATE 9-30-99 BY 60267NLS/EP/rms

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

^PAGE 2 UNCLAS

OF THE SOCIAL AND/OR POLITICAL GOALS OF THE JEWISH DEFENSE
LEAGUE.

IF LOS ANGELES DESIRES A FURTHER EXTENSION OF THIS PI, A
REQUEST FOR SUCH EXTENSION MUST REACH THE DOMESTIC TERRORISM
OPERATIONS UNIT, FBIHQ, PRIOR TO THE 3/18/97 EXPIRATION DATE.

BT

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

PAGE 3

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE/TICKLER COUNT:

NOTE: THIS TELETYPE AUTHORIZES A 30-DAY EXTENSION OF CAPTIONED
PI. THIS IS THE SECOND EXTENSION OF THIS PI.

Drafted By: TJG:tjq Room/TL #: 11741 Phone No:

COPY DESIGNATIONS:

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1 - MR. *KJP*

1 - MR.

FBI

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PRECEDENCE:

☐ Immediate
☒ Priority
☐ Routine

CLASSIFICATION:

☐ TOP SECRET
☐ SECRET
☐ CONFIDENTIAL
☐ UNCLAS E F T O
☒ UNCLAS

Date 3/17/97143
FM FBI LOS ANGELES (266A-LA-201807) (P)

TO DIRECTOR FBI/ROUTINE/

BT

UNCLAS

b7C

CITE: //3410:NSD-6//

PASS: FBIHQ FOR NSD, CT BRANCH, DT SECTION, DTOU.

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] ET AL; TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM
(DECEASED); ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E - VICTIM (DECEASED); AOT-
MATH THREATS; OO: LOS ANGELES.

REFERENCE BUREAU TT DATED 02/18/97.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY (PI) INITIATED 10/17/96, TO EXPIRE
16/97, EXTENDED TO 3/18/97.

FOR INFORMATION OF THE BUREAU, CAPTIONED MATTER EXPIRED
ON 03/18/97. LOS ANGELES CONDUCTED NO INVESTIGATION WAS
CONDUCTED AFTER THE EXPIRATION DATE.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 7-30-97 BY 60267 dls/EA/mks

Approved: _____ Original filename: _____

Time Received: _____ Telpr: _____

MRI/JULIAN DATE: _____ V: _____

FOX DATE & TIME OF ACCEPTANCE: _____

^PAGE 2 FBILA, 266A-LA-201807, UNCLAS

LOS ANGELES REQUESTS AN EXTENSION TO THE PI DUE TO RECENT
INFORMATION CONCERNING AN ADDITIONAL VICTIM NAMED [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE ALLEGATION IMPLICATES [REDACTED] AS OPERATING ON BEHALF
OF THE JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE (JDL) WHILE EXTORTING [REDACTED]

b7C

LAFO REQUESTS PI EXTENSION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE
EXTORTIONATE ACTIVITIES OF SUBJECT ARE IN FURTHERANCE OF THE
SOCIAL AND/OR POLITICAL GOALS OF THE JDL.

BT

418

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

TRANSMIT VIA:

☒ Teletype

DATE: 4/1/97

^PAGE 1 OF 2

PRECEDENCE:

☐ Immediate☒ Priority☐ Routine

CLASSIFICATION:

☐ TOP SECRET☐ SECRET☐ CONFIDENTIAL☐ UNCLAS E F T O☒ UNCLAS

FM DIRECTOR FBI

TO FBI LOS ANGELES (266A-LA-201807)/PRIORITY/

BT

UNCLAS

CITE: //0541//

SUBJECT: ET AL; TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM
(DECEASED); ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E - VICTIM (DECEASED); AOT-DT-
DEATH THREATS; OO: LOS ANGELES.

REFERENCE LOS ANGELES EC DATED 3/17/97.

b7C

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY (PI) INITIATED 10/17/96, EXTENDED TO
4/17/97.

PI IS EXTENDED FOR THIRTY DAYS TO ALLOW TIME FOR LOS ANGELES
TO RECEIVE RESPONSES TO OUTSTANDING LEADS AND TO DETERMINE
WHETHER THE EXTORTIONATE ACTIVITIES OF SUBJECT ARE IN FURTHERANCE

266A-LA-201807-11/7

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Approved By

SL/KAB

MRI/JUL

1235/092

Transmitted

18028 CW

ISN

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APR 02 1997

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DATE 9-28-99 BY 60320/6/00

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

^PAGE 2 UNCLAS

OF THE SOCIAL AND/OR POLITICAL GOALS OF THE JEWISH DEFENSE
LEAGUE.

LOS ANGELES IS REMINDED THAT THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL
EXTENSION OF THIS PI. AT THE END OF THIS INVESTIGATIVE PERIOD,
LOS ANGELES MUST EITHER CONVERT THIS MATTER TO A FULL
INVESTIGATION (IF WARRANTED) OR CLOSE THIS INVESTIGATION.

BT

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATION MESSAGE FORM

PAGE 3

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE/TICKLER COUNT:

NOTE: THIS TELETYPE AUTHORIZES A 30-DAY EXTENSION OF CAPTIONED
PI. THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL EXTENSION OF THIS PI.

Drafted By: TJG:tja Room/TL #: 11741 Phone No:

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F1 FBI LOS ANGELES (266A-LA-201807) (P)

TJ DIRECTOR FBI/ROUTINE/

BT

UNCLAS

CITE: //3410:NSD-6//

PASS: FBIHQ FOR NSD, CT BRANCH, DT SECTION, DTOU.

SUBJECT: FT AL; TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM
(DECEASED); ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E - VICTIM (DECEASED); ADT-
DT-DEATH THREATS; OO: LOS ANGELES.

b7C

REFERENCE BUREAU TT DATED 02/18/97.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY (PI) INITIATED 10/17/96, TO EXPIRE ON
2/16/97, EXTENDED TO 3/18/97.

FOR INFORMATION OF THE BUREAU, CAPTIONED MATTER EXPIRED
ON 03/18/97. LOS ANGELES CONDUCTED NO INVESTIGATION AFTER THE
EXPIRATION DATE.

4/4

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-30-99 BY 60362 dls/ef/mks

4/4/97

PAGE TWO DE FBILA 0006 UNCLAS

LOS ANGELES REQUESTS AN EXTENSION TO THE PI DUE TO RECENT
INFORMATION CONCERNING AN ADDITIONAL VICTIM NAMED [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE ALLEGATION IMPLICATES [REDACTED] AS OPERATING ON BEHALF
OF THE JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE (JDL) WHILE EXTORTING [REDACTED]

b7C

LAFO REQUESTS PI EXTENSION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE
EXTORTIONATE ACTIVITIES OF SUBJECT ARE IN FURTHERANCE OF THE
SOCIAL AND/OR POLITICAL GOALS OF THE JDL.

BT

#0006

NNNN

(12/31/1995)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 09/22/1997

To: FBI Headquarters

Attn: NSD, CT BRANCH,
DTOU

Birmingham
Boston
Cincinnati
Dallas
Indianapolis
Las Vegas
New York
San Diego
San Francisco
Seattle

Attn: Santa Rosa RA

From: Los Angeles

NSD-6

Contact: SA [REDACTED]

Approved By: [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

mpbh *mk*

b7C

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807

Title: [REDACTED]

AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS;
OO: LOS ANGELES

Synopsis: Request for subscriber checks.

Previous Title: [REDACTED]

ET AL;
TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM (DECEASED);
Eazy-E - VICTIM (DECEASED);
AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS;
OO: LOS ANGELES

b7C

Full Field Investigation Instituted: 04/15/1997.

Details: For information of receiving offices, on October 17, 1996, a preliminary inquiry (PI) was initiated at Los Angeles Field Office to corroborate source information that [REDACTED] a known organized crime figure, along with a group of unidentified individuals were utilizing death threats in the furtherance of extortion attempts targeted towards two former prominent rap musicians from the Los Angeles area and other victims yet unidentified.

b7C

On September 11, 1996, [REDACTED]

reported that [REDACTED]

b7D

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b7C

To: FBI Headquarters From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, 09/22/1997

JDL, and others yet unidentified have been extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [redacted] and other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a "fee". Source reported that ERIC WRIGHT, also known as EAZY-E, who owned RUTHLESS RECORDS, Woodland Hills, California, was a victim of this extortion scheme prior to dying from AIDS. [redacted] had also reportedly targeted TUPAC SHAKUR prior to his recent murder in Las Vegas, Nevada. b7C

[redacted] b7C
[redacted] b7D
[redacted] b7C

On March 27, 1995, [redacted] filed a civil lawsuit against RONALD SWEENEY, Entertainment Attorney for the WRIGHT estate. This lawsuit, titled "COMPTOWN RECORDS INC, et al V. LAW OFFICES RONALD SWEENEY, et al", civil case number BC 124555 was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Los Angeles, California and pertains to property rights of RUTHLESS RECORDS. During the lawsuit, [redacted] offered as evidence two letters purportedly signed by ERIC WRIGHT, granting [redacted] part ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. The letters were deemed forged by an expert witness. [redacted] advised the results of this lawsuit were classified "confidential" and require a subpoena, which is pending. It is believed that [redacted] received approximately \$1.5 million in the court settlement. b7C

[redacted] b7C
[redacted] b7C
[redacted] b7C
[redacted]

To: FBI Headquarters From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, 09/22/1997

b7C

b7D

from the aforementioned court settlement.

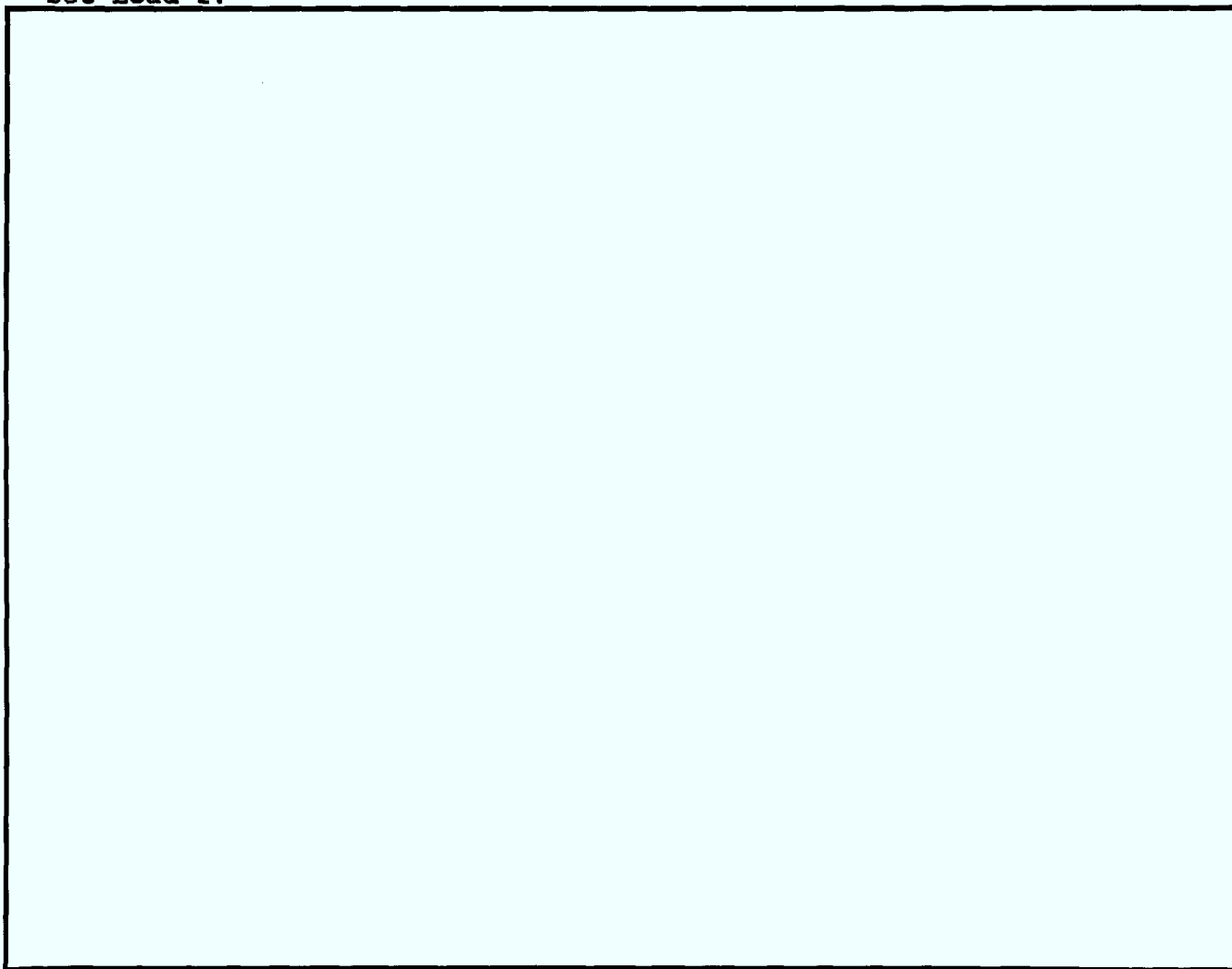


Los Angeles appreciates the assistance of receiving
offices in this matter.

b7D

LEAD (s):

Set Lead 1:



(12/31/1995)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 10/20/1997

To: NSD
Los Angeles

Attn: CT Branch DTOM
Attn: SA [REDACTED]
NSD-6

From: Sacramento

Contact: IA [REDACTED]

Approved By: [REDACTED]

b7C

Drafted By: [REDACTED] epg

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807 (Pending)

Title: [REDACTED]

ET AL;
TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM (DECEASED);
Eazy-E - VICTIM (DECEASED);
AOT - DT - DEATH THREATS
OO: LA

Synopsis: No subscriber info available for [REDACTED] without issuance of subpoena or court order to Pacific Bell.

Full Field Investigation Instituted: 04/15/1997

Reference: 266A-LA-201807 Serial 289

Details: A review of current local directories and Sacramento indices was negative for telephone [REDACTED]

b7C

It is noted that [REDACTED] is handled by Pacific Bell Telephone Company, which now requires a subpoena or court order for any published or nonpublished subscriber information, directed to Custodian of Records, Pacific Bell Telephone Company, 2150 Webster Street, Room 735A, Oakland, California 94612.

♦♦

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DATE 12-1-99 BY 60261NLS/EP/mks

UPLOADED



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS

SUBJECT Tupac Shakur

FILE NUMBER 266A-LA-201807

SECTION NUMBER 1



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 10/17/1996

To: FBIHQ

Attn: NSD, CT Branch,
DTS, DTOU

Los Angeles

From: Los Angeles

NSD-6

Contact: SA [REDACTED]

Approved By: [REDACTED]

b7C

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

mpbh

Case ID #: 266A-LA-NEW (Pending)

Title: [REDACTED]

ET AL;

TUPAC SHAKUR-VICTIM (DECEASED);

EAZY-E-VICTIM (DECEASED);

AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS;

OO: LOS ANGELES

ALL INFORMATION
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/17/05 BY 60324WACE/PL
911922 906464
904666 919689
445069 915241

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Synopsis: Request to open a 266A matter regarding death threats and extortion involving rap music stars TUPAC SHAKUR (deceased), EAZY-E (deceased), and other victims yet unidentified.

Details: On 9/11/96, writer interviewed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was contacted concerning matter captioned: "UNSUB(S); BOMBING OF THE AMERICAN-ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE (ADC) OFFICE, 1905 E. 17TH STREET, SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA, 10/11/85; ALEXANDER MICHEL ODEH-VICTIM (DECEASED); EXPLOSIVE AND INCENDIARY DEVICE; OO: LOS ANGELES (174A-3595).

During the interview, [REDACTED] advised writer that

b7C

b7D

[REDACTED] and others yet unidentified have been

266-LA-201807-1

extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [] and other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a fee. The victim and their family are taken to a "safe haven", usually a private estate, and are protected by gun-toting body guards associated with the JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE (JDL). The subjects convince the victim they have worked a "deal" out with the person(s) making the death threats and the threats cease. The victim then pays the subjects for the protection services rendered and resume their normal lifestyle with no fear of further death threats. b7C b7D

[] identified EAZY-E (deceased) who reportedly was targeted by subjects for extortion prior to dying from complications associated with AIDS. EAZY-E resided in Van Nuys, California []

In addition to the aforementioned, on 10/8/96, Det. [] (LAPD) and writer interviewed a Los Angeles source of proven reliability, concerning the ODEH bombing matter. During that interview, source corroborated the above information. According to source, [] reportedly enlists the services of one [] (not further identified at this time), whom source described as a capper or ambulance chaser, to assist with the extortion scheme. Source stated that [] used this same scheme when he would rip off drug dealers. Source stated the monetary amount being extorted is in the \$50,000 range. b7C

Writer is familiar with captioned subjects as their names have surfaced in the ODEH investigation and also a case captioned "JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE; DS/T; OO: LOS ANGELES" (100A-LA-169742-Closed).

Since two independent sources have reported captioned matter, it is recommended that a 266A matter be opened and assigned to writer with Det. [] and Dep. [] [] (LASD) as co-case agents.

♦♦

To Front Page - College Press Network

Shakur a victim of his message

Rapper cannot escape world he idealized

Tupac Shakur: One of the leading figures of gangsta rap.
1993 file photo.

By ARMANDO BONICHE
CPNet Opinion Editor

Last Friday, dozens of Tupac Shakur fans gathered outside University Medical Center in Las Vegas to mourn the death of their slain idol.

Mortally wounded during a drive-by shooting near the Vegas strip, Shakur finally met the end he so vehemently invoked in many of his songs.

But in this time of grief and mourning, what was the real impact of his message?

In a society where racial equality has yet to be reached, Shakur simply polarized the opposing sides with his message of hate and intolerance. Instead of using his talents to bring the races together, he did everything imaginable, whether intentional or not, to make peaceful co-existence impossible.

Living in a country where homicide rates are the highest in the world, Shakur blindly promoted the indiscriminate use of guns and violence to make amends. Shakur even became a victim of his own message when he was shot five times during a 1994 robbery attempt.

Although Shakur tried to convey a positive image of women and fatherhood in some of his early songs, whatever credibility he possessed quickly deteriorated when in 1995 he was arrested and sentenced to jail for sexually attacking a 21-year-old woman.

Shakur's detrimental message fueled the fires of political conservatives who called for such extremes as censorship and nation-wide imposition of what they considered to be "true" family values. Even in pronouncing his own First Amendment rights, Shakur managed to attract negative publicity to this most intrinsic right guaranteed to all Americans.

Last Sunday, the Rev. Jesse Jackson was quoted in a Los Angeles newspaper as

Oct 18 1996

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HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/17/00 BY 2906 BELL/BCE/PL
911922 915241
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saying: "This is so, so sad. Sometimes the lure of violent culture is so magnetic that even when one overcomes it with material success, it continues to call." What I would like to know is what the Rev. Jackson considers overcoming violence. As I recall, Shakur overcame violence by explicitly endorsing it. Therefore, he could never have overcome it. On the contrary, he just became another victim in a hopelessly tragic way of life he himself helped advance.

Of course, Shakur is not alone. He joins the long list of "dead heroes" who in living have done their part to propagate a perilous way of life without regard to future consequences. Just as Jerry Garcia in his promotion of drug use during the 60s and 70s, Shakur will forever be remembered for leading a generation down the road of neglect and despair.

Unfortunately in our world, all the wrong role models attract the attention of the masses. Whether they be athletes or politicians, these individuals degrade the most basic values of integrity and rectitude. To make matters worse, in shame they are still heralded by their fellow peers.

Tragically, those who seek to make a positive difference, simply go overlooked or are suppressed by the powers that be. It is disappointing that 28 years after his death, Dr. Martin Luther King's message of non-violence and assimilation can be superseded by the narrow, intolerant message professed by individuals such as white supremacists, anti-Semite and in this case, Tupac Shakur.

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Inside The Mind Of 2pac Shakur

Disclaimer: The following is an excerpt from Vibe Magazine.

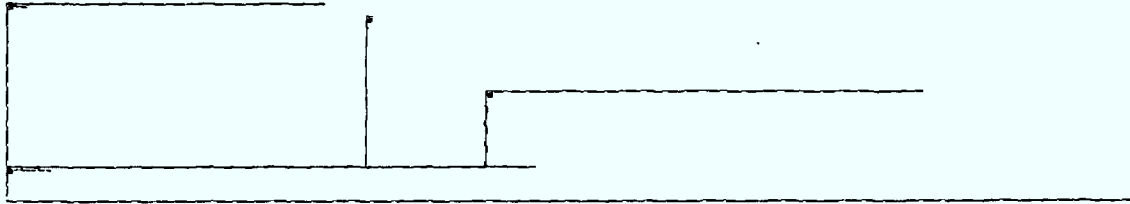
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There was never a beef, only a difference of opinion. My homeboy Suge gave me the best advice that I could ever get from anybody. When people ask him if he's beefing with Bad Boy and with Puffy, he says it's like me going to the playground to pick on little kids. That's like me being mad at my little brother cause he's getting cash now. I'm not mad at that, I'm just mad at my little brother when he don't respect me. And when you don't respect me, I'm a spank that ass. I don't give a fuck how rich you got on the block I'm your big brother. I'm a break your big ass down. That's my only point. I feel as though he wrong, he got out of hand. He got seduced by the power-not because he's an evil person, but because money is evil; if it's not handled right. If you lose your composure you could do anything. Fear got stronger than love and niggas did things that they weren't really supposed to do. They know in their hearts, that's why their in hell now. They can't sleep. That's why they're telling all the reporters and all the people "Why they doing this? They fucking up hip-hop, blah, blah, blah" cause they in hell. They can't make money, they can't go anywhere, they can't look at themselves cause they know the prodigal son has returned. I'm alive; the ghost is walking around. And I'm around talking, in jail I didn't talk. Now, everybody who thinks that I disrespected, I love my east coast fans. I'm from there. I'm eating New York Pizza, I drive New York jeeps but I'm saying let's keep it real for a second. If you're half the lover of music that you are, go back and study. Study how Party And Bullshit was me before I met Biggie. You don't hear my style in his raps. Study how after I met Biggie, Ready To Die comes out and his whole style changes study. Study why I would be mad when half of the major New York rappers or their managers, or their agents or their somebody was there when I got shot-and nobody couldn't give me no information. Just study that. Study how when Wu-Tang got their chain snatched at six-six-duece, I not only found who did it but gave them the message that if they wanted to see the niggas that

did it, they could see them. Man to Man, just you and them-no guns, no nothing if you feel like that. That's all I ask for. If you're going to act like a gangster or a "G" or a king of New York, I'm a expect that. And when you don't come through, then I'mgoing to want to crush your empire. And that's what it's time for. for thelatest on

Visit Vibe Magazine Online and check out the rest of this interview. Its pretty interesting, and definitely check out the video clips of the interview also available on Vibe Magazine Online.

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Shakur Hurt in Drive-By Shooting

Controversial Rapper Critically Injured After Tyson Fight

By Sharon Waxman
Special to The Washington Post
Monday, September 9 1996; Page D01
The Washington Post

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LOS ANGELES, Sept. 8 -- "Gangsta" rap star Tupac Shakur was in critical condition in a Las Vegas hospital today after an assailant pumped four bullets into his head and chest during a drive-by shooting Saturday night.

The 25-year-old rap star was shot as he and Marion "Suge" Knight, chairman of Death Row Records, Shakur's label, were on their way to a nightclub about 11:15 p.m. after watching the Mike Tyson-Bruce Seldon heavyweight title fight at the MGM Grand Hotel, police said.

Shakur underwent emergency surgery for multiple gunshot wounds and remained under heavy police and private guard in the trauma-intensive care unit, according to a spokesman for University Medical Center. Knight, 31, was hit in the head by shrapnel and was released from the hospital today.

The shooting was the most serious in a string of violent incidents involving the rap star, who appeared Wednesday at the MTV Video Music Awards, where he and members of his entourage got into an argument with several men in the lobby of New York's Radio City Music Hall. Police were called to break it up.

In November 1994, Shakur was shot five times in the lobby of a New York recording studio when muggers stealing his jewelry opened fire. He has spent much of the past 2 1/2 years in court or in custody on various charges.

A handsome, swaggering man with long eyelashes and a penchant for showy jewelry, Shakur has been a prominent symbol for gangsta rap music, enthusiastically followed by teenage fans and long criticized by adults for its explicitly violent and sexual images. Saturday's incident underscored the link between some rap stars -- despite their celebrity status -- and the dangerous milieu that gave rise to their music.

In the weekend shooting, Knight was driving with Shakur in a convoy of 10 cars about a quarter-mile from the glittering casino strip when a white Cadillac with four people inside pulled up alongside their black BMW and a passenger opened fire. Local media reports said dozens of witnesses looked on in horror.

Police said they had begun an investigation into the shooting but had no suspects yet. "Drive-by shootings are not unknown here, but they usually occur between rival gang members whose reasons are for retaliation for other shootings," said Las Vegas Police Lt. Marc Maston. "I can't tell you the motivation behind this."

But he said police were optimistic they would find the assailants. "This particular incident apparently had several witnesses. If they are credible, with good information, this should be solvable."

Spokesmen for Death Row Records could not be reached for comment as to possible motives for the shooting. Shakur said earlier this year that he believed the 1994 robbery-shooting was a setup, fueling speculation in the hip-hop industry that rivalry between East Coast and West Coast rap labels may have taken a violent turn.

Shakur himself has had many run-ins with the law in recent years. In June, the singer faced a 120-day sentence for probation violations stemming from offenses including assault and battery and a 1994 sexual abuse conviction in New York. He had been allowed to remain free on \$1.4 million bail -- paid by Death Row Records -- pending his appeal.

Shakur served 11 months in prison for his involvement in the attack on a 21-year-old woman in a New York hotel room. He had been convicted in Los Angeles of assault and battery on a music video producer and for carrying a loaded, concealed weapon, and was scheduled for sentencing this week on the weapons charge.

But in the world of rap, Shakur's convictions seemed only to enhance his status. His fourth solo album, "All Eyez on Me," a two-volume, 27-track recording featuring guest turns by fellow rappers Snoop Doggy Dogg, Rappin' 4-Tay and Method Man, debuted earlier this year and has sold more than 5 million copies. His previous album, "Me Against the World," had the dubious distinction of being the first album to reach No. 1 while its singer was in prison.

Shakur also starred opposite Janet Jackson in the 1993 movie "Poetic Justice" and has been working on another film, "Gridlock."

In interviews earlier this year, Shakur had said he was tired of living up to his outlaw image, one he had chronicled in a tattoo on his chest that pronounced "Thug Life."

"I lived Thug Life," he said. "It was stupid . . . it's suicidal."

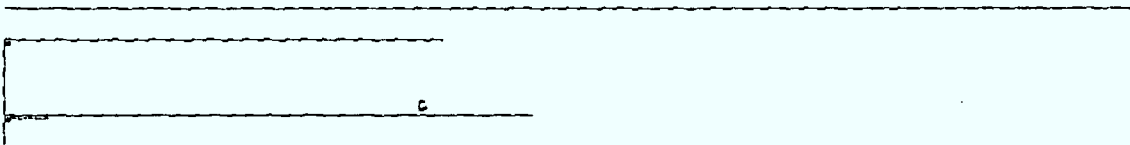
But the rapper also said that he expected he would die violently. In July, Shakur told the British newspaper the Observer: "It's going to happen. All the [black people] who change the world die in violence. They don't get to die like regular ways. [Expletives] come take their lives."

@CAPTION: Tupac Shakur in New York at the MTV Video Music Awards, three days before the attack.

@CAPTION: Rapper Tupac Shakur, shown here last week, took four bullets in the head and chest in a drive-by shooting Saturday night in Las Vegas.

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Tupac and the Fall on the Road to Calvary

By Jordan Pelaez

The first time I entered the gallery in The Prado where Raphael's *The Fall on the Road to Calvary* (ca. 1517) hangs, I simply stared at this monstrous ten foot high, eight foot wide canvas, and let the tears flow for ten minutes. If the friend I was with hadn't snapped me out of it, I might still be in Madrid.

Raphael painted a mob scene, teeming with Roman soldiers, execution spectators, horses, carts, mourners, and, way off in the distance at the end of the procession, Calvary, more a mound than a hill, where two crosses have already been erected. But at the painting's center are just two figures. Jesus, fallen with his left hand on a rock and his right still trying to support the massive weight of the cross, looks back over his left shoulder. There stands a group of five women--first and foremost among them, Mary, his mother. Mary holds her hand outstretched, willing even now to do anything she can to save her child. Her look personifies despair and alienation. The look in Jesus's eyes bespeak compassion for the trial of his mother; even in this crisis, he seems like he's trying to console her.

I knew those looks well. They were the looks, I thought that first time, that passed between my wife and my daughter as the latter lay dying of cancer. But further viewings brought me to a different understanding. My own face once bore one of those looks, and so does the face of every mother, and every child, who faces an untimely death.

So when I got the news that Tupac Shakur had died of his drive-by wounds, I thought instantly of his mother. Given the life of distress that Tupac and his mother lived, how many times had they shared such glances, held them, broken them off only because the pain of sustaining such moments of intensity is finally too much for any heart to bear?

The other day on the AOL discussion group *The Velvet Rope*, some fool mocked the idea that Tupac could be compared in any way to John Lennon. But Tupac and Lennon and Elvis at least had this in common: The first, perhaps greatest, love of their life was their mother. And this is no small thing, because all of them made some of their most important music because of it: Lennon's "Julia," the early Elvis ballads that are clearly directed at his mom (catch the end of his second film, *Loving You*), and Tupac's "Dear Mama."

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Of course, that's not the only comparison, or even necessarily the most important one that could be made between Tupac and the great rock rebels. Fools are reluctant to admit Tupac to full equality in this matter, because that would mean admitting other things. For instance, that Tupac equaled the greats in the emotional intensity and rhythmic power of his records. Or that the majority of Tupac's songs were uplifting, positive, respectful of women, and concerned with encouraging young black men not to commit crime, which he generally portrayed as a foolish and ugly thing even when it's seductive or unavoidable. It would require admitting that Tupac was sent to prison for a crime that white rock stars have committed, and continue to commit, with absolute impunity. It would require acknowledging that although Tupac did once shoot two men, it was in self-defense; they were off-duty Georgia cops who had drawn down on him in the after-midnight streets of Atlanta. It would require recognizing that Tupac is not the only rock star with unsavory associates.

But refusing to allow Tupac to enter the lists of rock's fallen greats is the least of the sins fools make when talking about them. These fools, who include just about every writer I've read on the subject, spend all their time avoiding a simple truth: Tupac was not a murderer; he got murdered. He was not the criminal this time; he was the victim of a shooting. But of course, if you tell the story that way, you can't come out and say, as the media from Newsweek to The Village Voice have done, that this thuggish young nigger got what's coming to him.

On that basis, so did Jesus, who preferred the company of whores, thieves, tax cheats (from the government end), and other miscreants. Not that Tupac was anything like Jesus. But those Bible stories exist to try to teach us not about Jesus so much as about forgiveness and compassion. What cases like Tupac's prove, over and over again, is that we live in a time and a place where the concept of forgiveness does not exist. Our society isn't about forgiveness, it's about vengeance--which, it's tempting to say, is one reason it turns out so much art like Tupac's, and so little like Raphael's.

But that wouldn't be a terribly accurate thing to say, either. In the first place, Raphael's society is our society--the hideous American cultural landscape of today grew straight up out of the culture that produced the Renaissance, and the colonialism that brought Tupac's ancestors and my own to America. And while it may be true that Raphael's world valued harmony and order far more than ours, that's mostly true of its artistic productions--for most people, who had no access to art at all, the Renaissance world was a miserably impoverished and dangerous place to dwell.

It may be true, as John Berger puts it in his new book, *Titian: Nymph and Shepherd* (Prestel, \$24.50), that "our century [is]...always searching for rage and wisdom, rather than harmony." But it is not the decline of belief in God or the holy Roman Catholic church or the clinical application of the artistic values of the Renaissance that has made it so. It is rather the way we have allowed the other side--the colonizing, predatory, "nature red in tooth and claw"

side--to dominate. In the society that worships not God or Jesus but the free market, competition and "the sanctity of the contract," compassion and forgiveness have been erased. When was the last time you offered a cold cup of water to the sick or visited the imprisoned?

But no artist is bound entirely by the prejudices of his time. Great artists transcend our everyday pettiness. There is no excuse for the Tupac lyrics that demean other people, and in portraying violence with so much explicitness that it became for some sad souls allegedly attractive, he played a dangerous game. Great art, we have been reassured, escapes the small-minded bigotry of its time. Maybe not always. If we looked at *The Fall on the Road to Calvary* the way the art of Tupac and other rap performers is usually seen, Jesus and Mary would not be the central figures. For standing just above Jesus in the picture, closer to its center and with a more directly active role in the proceedings, is a large muscular man. His head is turned to the right, where a mounted Roman officer waves papers at him; this is surely Simon the Cyrene, the man who according to the gospels was ordered to help Jesus carry the cross after he stumbled. Simon is represented here, however, in another unmistakable way: Raphael drew this Libyan Jew, alone among the company, with a huge hooked nose, which in his time was a way of saying "Hymietown." Judged the way our society judges rap--by caricature, not context--*The Fall on the Road to Calvary* is antisemitic.

According to Luke (23:28-31), the women looking on wept when Jesus stumbled, and he found the energy to speak to them. "Daughters of Jerusalem," Luke has him say, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.'"

If I do not quite believe that we have reached those days, Tupac is one of the reasons. With all my heart, I wish that he had had the time to grow in wisdom and maturity; that he could have avoided the lethal situations into which he continued to fall. But I have seen his video for "I Ain't Mad At Cha" and I know that he had come much further along the path than those who treat him as if he were the murderer.

That video has mostly been described in terms of its sensational opening moments, in which Tupac is shot in the chest and dies, "just like in reality"; and inevitably, in terms of the dead musical celebrities that Tupac then encounters in heaven. But those details have nothing to do with what the video is about, nor is it surprising that folks would rather talk about anything else, including trivia. Because the true topic of "I Ain't Mad At Cha" is precisely compassion and forgiveness.

In the video, Tupac forgives everyone--the brothers known and unknown who could not stay the course, his partners in Thug Life, the mother about whom his music often expressed such deep but conflicted emotion but who stayed beside him (that look undoubtedly upon her face) that long week in the hospital, those who condemned him from the start and along the way.

He also prays for other ghetto youth to have a better chance--and a happier result. The video's final images tell the true story. The friend who was with Tupac when he was shot dresses up, visits his friend's grave, then goes home, where he hugs mother, wife and baby girl. Fade to a black screen, on which is written: Dedicated to Mutula Shakur and Geronimo Pratt. Tupac's fathers. In the end, the son forgives his fathers, which is as close as I could imagine anyone coming in this life to reaching a kind of emotional maturity.

We will not be permitted to know what kind of grown man or mature artist Tupac Shakur might have become. Those who do not think this is a tragedy, or believe that what he had done to him is only what he had done to others, miss the point far, far more than those of us who, all along, forgave him his sins because of his talent.

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2pac Newz

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Tupac Shakur has lined up his next acting gig. The rapper will co-star opposite Tim Roth in the dark comedy "Gridlock." Actor Vondie Curtis Hall wrote the script and will direct. The movie is about two druggies who want to go straight, but can't get into any rehab centers. They are framed for the murder of a drug dealer and then the police come after them as well as the real murderers. Tupac has also completed the script for an upcoming movie called "Live to Tell", he will also be starring in this one.

Back in April 2pac was sentenced to 120 days for violating his parole, he was to start serving this sentence on June 7/96 but the judge granted him an extension until Tupac has finished production on an upcoming movie. Tupac is appealing this sentence, and the word right now is that he should win. 2pac will you please stay out of jail!!!

Last Month 2pac appeared in court to face Illegal weapon charges and instead of the Judge giving Tupac jail time, he ordered 2pac to put on a benefit concert in California for underprivileged youths.

As I had stated in last month's 2pac Pages Newsletter, 2pac has finished making two videos, "2 of America's Most Wanted", and "How Do U Want It". Well, 2pac is also making a video for his new track called "Hit 'Em Up", which is not available on his new album So, y'all be on the lookout for that.

NEW ALBUM, 2pac will be releasing a new album. The material on this new album will be similar to "Me Against the World". A release date has not been set yet.

Within the month, there will be an Official 2pac Homepage coming up on the net, I will post the address as soon as I receive it. On the Official 2pac Homepage you will be able to purchase those hard to find singles and other merchandise, as well as kept up to date with 2pac's future projects.

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The New 2pac Track

There was some concern from some of you that I was being hypocritical because I praised the 2Pac record that attacks bad boy while at the same time I've been advocating peace...I wanted to clarify a couple of points... First and foremost..I'm definitely for peace.. If there is anyway I can help facilitate that.. I would and will do that.. One of the things I would most likely not do is play the song on my radio show without a brief commentary before and after.... What I first thought about hit u up was its ferocity.. It was a straight up dis song... and in the context of throwing down and being competitive on wax..I liked it on that level.. Up until now people have been beating around the bush..by using fancy metaphors and similes and saying something but not saying nothing..ie LALA.. The 2Pac song reminded me of Tim Dog's song.. and my first thoughts were will Tim Dog come back with a response...after I printed the message..I remembered that he did..but it was weak... So really I guess I just liked the directness of the song and considering what was said some of the remarks were in line... ie Mobb Deep a week after 2Pac had been shot were down in Washington DC on stage making jokes about it.. They kept saying they knew who shot Pac...So they got stepped too...Because if it's a Biggie/2pac thing..why is Mobb Deep entering the arena..? Chino..who I like a lot, also spoke.. In one of his rhymes he spoke about getting bent over in jail like 2Pac.. There was a rumor going around that said he got pumped in jail..Again why jump in?...So Pac called them out on record.. Now at this juncture in the game one of two things will happen..either this dissing on wax will continue..or fools will sit down and talk and work it all out..or they'll do like Luke and Dre did make dis records so they all make money.. I will admit..Pac went a bit too far by talking about Biggie's wife..But as a straight up dis record which we have always had in hip hop..I found the song funny... I think at this point in time.. the wars will cease..... and soon these records will retire and be viewed the way we look at Mc Shan and KRS-One...old battle records.. And if folks recall there was an awful lot of tension between BDP and the Juice Crew back then..

Davey D

<http://www.daveyd.com>

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What are your comments, do you think 2pac is justified in making this track? And for all of y'all that have heard this track "Hit 'Em Up", What do you think? Is it on point?

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Sunrise 1963

Sunset 1995

This page is dedicated in the memory of Eric "Eazy-E" Wright (R.I.P)

Eric "Eazy-E" Wright got the whole U.S.A plus the rest of the world to wake up when it came to the blacks situation in the American community in the middle of the 80's. Under his alias, Eazy-E, he started a record company, -Ruthless Records-, with help of money that he had collected as a small thief and drug-dealer, and created the gangsta-rap, a part of hip hop that had millions of head lines world wide. 31 years old, he died, only 2 months after that he found out that he had AIDS.

He was born in Compton in a middle-class family in 1963, he lost his grip in the teenagers and became a criminal, the life as a small gangsta didn't have the plans for the future that Eazy-E were dreaming of, so after completed the school, he started in the music business.

Together with Ice-Cube, Dr.Dre, MC Ren and DJ Yella, he 1986 putted together one of the most controversial rap group ever, N.W.A (Niggaz With Attitudes). When their "Boyz n' the Hood" started to conquer the lists in USA, they putted Compton and Los Angeles on the rap-map. With fat bases and heavy funk, **Boyz n' the Hood** soon became the national-song of hip hop. Everybody that were living in the so called "projects" suddenly had something that was their, a song with lyrics that showed the hard reality that got the "white America" to tripp.

That was just the beginning. With N.W.A, Ruthless Records got a dream start and 1989 the album **Straight outta Compton**, that was a real classic were out. The fans celebrated. With songs like **Fuck the Police** and **Gangsta**, **Gangsta** made the FBI and the LAPD to shake teeth and the politicians started to show interests in hip hop but not in a positive way. The gangsta rap also splitted into two camps between those who thought N.W.A just descrined things as they were and those who thought that hip-hop had a responsibility to take and no encourage and glorify that violence that was about to strangle the Latin Americans and the black people.

In the middle of that Eazy saw how his life work was falling apart. Ice-Cube left first, then to be followed by Dr.Dre that started **Deth Row Records** together with Suge Knight, with artists like **Snoop Doggy Dogg**, **Tha Dogg Pound** among others. It was hard for Eazy-E when Dr. Dre left Ruthless Records. Dr. Dre were the inventor of the West Coast sound and Eazy, that actually didn't do so much on the records suddenly became a second-part-figure on the rap-stage. Plus that the old members sue each other, and if that wasn't enough, they came out with solo albums were they didn't back for anything just to diss eachother, Eazy-E even publicat pictures of Dr. Dre in eye-liner and lipstick on his second solo album, **It's on (Dr.Dre) 187um Killa** 1993. Even though it wasn't easy, Eazy-E continue on his way, hard-headed he stuck to his visions and his gangsta mentality. His records wasn't sellin' as

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good anymore, but 1994, he got into contact with the group **Bone Thugs n' Harmony** from Cleveland. Eazy-E had nose for talents, and Ruthless once again had a group that could sell millions of records.

Just then, fate stroke with all it's power. Eazy-E's self burying lifestyle demanded it's tribute. A cold showed up to be a inflammation of the lungs, may seems like a piece of cake, but not in this case. AIDS the doctors confirmed and two months later he was dead. After 11 523 days on the earth, Eric Wright died the 26th Mars 1995, in a hospital bed, with only his family at his side. The gangsta pionee Eazy-E didn't became no victim of a bullet, it was AIDS, a much bigger threat to the humanity than the gangstas.

R.I.P | PERSONS HAS SHOWED THAT YOU ARN'T FOROGTEN!

This page might be good, but it ain't the official, so check [Out The Real One Out!](#)

Some Lyrics

Just Tah Let Ya know (Str8 off tha streetz of muthaphukkin' Compton) Wut would U do
(Str8 off tha streetz of muthaphukkin' Compton) Exxttra special thankz (Its on (Dr.Dre)
187um killa) 4 tha E (video verision) (Yella - One moe nigga to go)

Phat Link

[Eazy-E Homepage](#)

[Eazy-E Memorial Page](#)

[Ruthless Records Official Site](#)

[Official Eazy-E Homepage](#)

[Bone Thugs n' Harmony](#)

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Easy-E (Eric Wright) 1963-1995

Eric Wright was born in Compton, California to a middle-class family in 1963. As a teenager, Eric had trouble with the law, but he found that life as a small-time gangsta didn't give him much hope for the future. Eric finished school and in 1986 became Eazy-E as he teamed with Ice-Cube, Dr. Dre, MC Ren and DJ Yella, forming one of the most controversial rap groups in history, *N.W.A. N.W.A.* put gangsta rap on the map with their hit album *Boyz n' the Hood*, and gave Los Angeles/Compton rap credibility in the rap scene.

Eazy-E's *Ruthless Records*, started with money he collected as a small-time thief and drug dealer, found its first hit with *Boyz n' the Hood*, but that was just the beginning. *Straight Outta Compton* was *Ruthless Records* next release, and it proved as big a hit as *Boyz* and just as controversial. Songs like *Fuck the Police* and *Gangsta*, *Gangsta* rubbed police and politicians the wrong way and gave rap a bad name in non-rap circles. This only proved a challenge to Eazy, who thought that hip-hop had a responsibility to shed light on the violence that Latin and African Americans were living with every day.

At this time, *N.W.A.* started to fall apart. Ice-Cube was the first to leave, planning a solo-career, and Dr. Dre wasn't far behind. Dre went on to start *Death Row Records*, and the animosity between Eazy's *Ruthless Records* and Dre's *Death Row* had begun. Lawsuits between *N.W.A.*'s members and public battles between the now estranged rappers made more headlines than the artists themselves. Eazy-E's second solo album *It's on (Dr. Dre) 187um Killa*, released in 1993, was a direct attack on Dr. Dre and the public lost interest as the original vision of Eazy's work was lost.

Eazy got back on track when, in 1994, *Ruthless Records* signed Cleveland rap artists *Bone Thugs n' Harmony*. As Eazy was climbing back onto his feet, he was diagnosed with the AIDS virus. Two months later, on March 26, 1995, Eric Wright, better known as Eazy-E, was dead.

Eazy-E biography edited from the [Easy-E: The Hip-Hop Thugster](#) page.

With special thanks to [Nils Hagmark](#)

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Fresh Out Of Jail

Street Heat representatives met up with **Tupac Shakur** in Las Vegas during November 1995. Pac and tha **Dogg Pound** performed after the **Holyfield-Bowe** fight at Club 662. Everybody was there...including ,Rappin' 4-Tay, Tha Alkaholiks, Pepa, and the posse down with Pac and tha Dogg Pound. On the day of the show we caught up with Pac and kicked it for awhile.

We were in the back of the club in owner **Suge Knight's** office. Suge, you may know, is the owner of **Death Row Records**. Suge and Death Row now handle Pac's career and Pac spent the month of November in the studio runnin' through the final touches of his double album.

So, Pac, a lot of people want to know, since **Death Row Records** put up your bail money, is that why you left **Interscope**?

"It didn't have nothing to do with the money," said Pac. "It had nothing to do with the bail. I was already, um, I hollered at Suge before the bail situation when I was still an inmate in the correctional facility and I was looking at like serving three years, I called Suge and said, 'yo, I want to be with the Row. I want you to manage me because I'm in jail--and no one is handling my bizniz while I'm in jail, nobody's putting it down like I want to put it down.' I knew he's a man that would put things down. I trust him, his word, you know, um. I really couldn't trust nobody in bizniz no more, so I chose him, you know?"

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Wasn't it during the time that **Interscope** was rumored to be leaving **Warners** and all that?

"Yeah, that was another factor," replied Tupac. "Because I was like, 'Dang, they don't care about us.' I mean, it's not **Interscope's** fault, but they really don't owe us anything and at any minute we could be you know, alone without a contract after you put all your heart on the line, your music on the line, you went out there and gave all your talent up and all of a sudden, it's not good enough any more and they'll kick you off. So I was like, by going to **Death Row**, it's like two superpowers joining up. You know, it would be similar to the **US** and **England** teamin' up against anybody, you know what I mean? So I felt it was like joining two super powers. And if rap music was going to have to fight for its right to be uncensored, then this was the team for me to get on, to wage that battle."

Did jail change your perspective on the world?

"Yeah...Doing eleven months of maximum security penitentiary time for a crime you didn't

commit would definitely make you a little bitter," said Tupac. "But I'm trying not to be bitter. I'm trying to let that be my ambition. Now I'm very ambitious. This year will mark a new ground for Tupac where I'm relentless. There's no boundaries. I'm not looking at no stop signs. I'm going full speed ahead. I'm planning on touching everything with my name on it, and there's a lot of stuff with my name on it, so I'm out there. So I got with the Row, that's move number one, I wrote a movie, that's move number two. Did the double album -- that's never been done before -- that's move number three. Got the divorce, that's move number four. And now it's just about standing by my grind, stay up on my music, stay out of trouble."

Tupac has often said that the media have misrepresented him. What is the real Tupac Shakur like?

"He's a human being with all sides," replied Pac. "Multi-faceted, ups and downs. Goods and bads. Mistakes. Everything, you know. All they want to show is one side, which is distorted. That's a distorted view. So what I said was true. If they would show the good things and the bad things, I would have no complaints, and it would even make them look better. When you just show me doing all this bad stuff, then people gonna just start thinking like 'wait a minute, this dude can't be doing all this bad stuff.' I mean, come on. They don't show nothing else. So it's really helpin' me, cause it's making it look one-sided and untrue. But the thing that bothers me is that it's just not across the board. They do this to rappers or young black males -- inner city people. You know, they do that to us but they don't do that for everybody else. But that bothers me, but I'm not gonna harp on everything that's unfair, 'cause life is unfair. Nobody said it's gonna be easy or fair. I'm not even gonna trip off it. I'm just gonna push forward. When I stop, I stop. When the wheels fall off, the wheels fall off. But until then I'm gonna put the foot to the metal."

Tupac has already starred in a number of movies including "Above the Rim" and "Poetic Justice." So we asked what his future acting projects are.

"I just wrote a movie called "Live To Tell." We talking about doing a movie now, me and Snoop, that Pooh is working on, and everything else is before me. I haven't even started looking into that, but it's going down."

Tupac talked about his upcoming double album, the first by a hip-hop star.

"The last album was one side of Tupac," he said. "And it's the other side, you know what I mean? I did what I had to do with "Me Against the World" as far as lettin' people know that rappers think and we feel and we care. I did that. Now it's time for me to just get into the music. This album is more like about unrestricted. I'm not rying to tell a message. I'm just getting a lot of frustrations out from being in jail for eleven months. And just speaking my mind, talking about things that I see and just groovin', having fun. They like more upbeat tracks than this. My last album was kinda sad and down. This one is like way high. There's

only two slow songs on there."

Street Heat gives props George Pryce and Greg Howard of Death Row Records for getting us with Tupac.

Street Heat Homepage

This Page is Webmastered by Gurjeet Litt yu108654@yorku.ca

TROUBLE

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Rap star Tupac Shakur is gunned down again—this time in Las Vegas

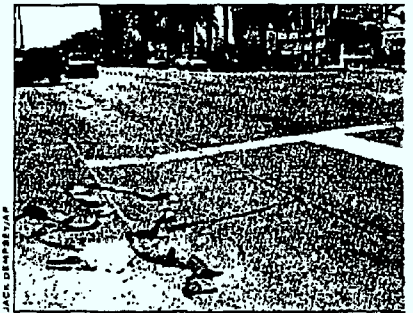


Though Shakur renounced the "thug life" in 1995, violence caught up with the rapper and producer Knight (above left, in Las Vegas last January) near the Vegas Strip (right).

NO ONE CAN SAY THAT TUPAC Shakur hasn't experienced firsthand the gangsta life he raps about. Two years ago, while awaiting the verdict and his eventual imprisonment on rape charges, he was beaten, robbed and shot five times outside a Manhattan recording studio. Shakur, now 25, survived the attack—and even bragged about it on his latest album, this year's *All Eyez on Me* ("five shots and they still couldn't kill me"). Last week in Las Vegas, after he attended a Mike Tyson fight, danger came calling again. At 11:15 p.m. on Sept. 7, Shakur and Marion "Suge" (pronounced Shoog) Knight, the head of Shakur's Death

Row Records label, stopped for a light near the Strip while riding in Knight's black BMW 750. A late-model white Cadillac pulled up alongside them, and someone unleashed a hail of bullets into the passenger side of Knight's car before speeding away.

The 31-year-old record executive suffered only minor injuries, but Shakur was severely wounded in his chest, pelvis and hands. He was taken to Las Vegas's University Medical Center, where doctors performed three emergency surgeries to repair internal injuries and to remove his right lung. Four days later, Shakur was still bleeding internally as doctors searched frantically for the source.



At midweek he remained in critical condition, and his prognosis was guarded. But there was no doubt about the support the singer, whose *All Eyez* has sold more than 5 million copies, was receiving from other black celebrities, his family and friends. In

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TROUBLE

► "It seems to be an image he has to keep up to sell records," says a friend about Shakur's gangsta pose. But at the Sept. 4 MTV Awards, Shakur (right, with Snoop Doggy Dogg) nearly came to blows with fellow rapper Nas.

Y "He's not the bad person everyone thinks he is," says ex-wife Keisha Morris, who stood by Shakur as he recovered from a 1994 shooting (below, in New York City).



Y "This tragedy just breaks your heart," says movie producer Brad Krevoy of Shakur (on *Saturday Night Live* in February).



STEVE TRUMP/GETTY IMAGES



JASON BRESNAN/PHOTOS

addition to his mother, Afeni Shakur, a founding member of the Black Panthers, the unconscious Shakur was visited by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, rapper Hammer and actress Jasmine Guy, who would say only that "Tupac's family is grateful for the public's support." No one else close to Shakur would comment on the shooting, but one friend,

artist manager Joan Hyler, stresses that the singer was not to blame for the shooting. "Just because he's had problems in the past, is it fair to condemn him?" Hyler asks. "He's extremely talented and bright. I just hope he can distance himself from his past." Shakur's ex-wife Keisha Morris, with whom he remains on good terms, says, "He's an entertainer, not a gangster. As a person, Tupac is very misunderstood."

In fact the shooting itself seems equally difficult to fathom. Las Vegas police, who say they have no leads, complained that they were receiving little cooperation from anyone in Shakur's camp, even though there were about 10 cars full of bodyguards and friends with Knight. "They're telling us they didn't see anything and don't know anything," says Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Sgt. Kevin Manning. He adds that police have concluded the shootings are not related to a shouting match Shakur got into with an unidentified man during the Tyson fight. The flashy-dressing, 315-lb. Knight, who reportedly boasted that rivals had contracts out on his life, was still dodging police days after the incident. Although his company has amassed a fortune estimated at over \$100 million, the Compton, Calif., na-

tive is reputed to have ties to the Bloods street gang.

For Shakur, who once studied theater at the Baltimore School for the Arts and drew praise for his sensitivity and social consciousness, the shooting comes at a time when he is free on \$1.4 million bail (posted by Knight), while appealing his rape conviction and making a concerted effort to keep two careers on track. Shakur, who starred in 1992's *Juice* and with Janet Jackson in 1993's *Poetic Justice*, recently returned to making movies. His latest, *Gridlock*, a dark comedy costarring *Pulp Fiction*'s Tim Roth, is due out in February. And just the week before he was shot, Shakur wrapped *Gang Related*, in which he plays a corrupt cop. "He was a great spirit on the set, positive and uplifting," says *Gang* producer Brad Krevoy. "Considering what you heard about him, that was all in his past."

What effect the shooting might have on Shakur's future as a performer remains to be seen. The question last week was, Would he survive? While he continues to battle for his life, those close to the rapper remain hopeful as they keep up their vigil. "My prayers are with him," says ex-wife Morris. "He's a survivor, and I know he will pull through."

■ CALVIN BAKER

■ KAREN BRAILSFORD in Las Vegas,
TON CUNNEF in Los Angeles and
BROOKE STACHYRA in New York City

Tupac's death: A gangsta omen?

By Bruce Haring
USA TODAY

A record from slain rapper Tupac Shakur, *The Don Killuminati — The 7-Day Theory*, is out today, but record executives, managers and artists say the gangsta rap style he helped popularize is no longer the force that it once was.

The major players in the feud that has divided the gangsta rap world for most of the past year — Marion "Suge" Knight, head of Shakur's record company, Death Row, and Bad Boy Entertainment head Sean "Puffy" Combs — were already expanding their artistic scope before Shakur died of gunshot wounds Sept. 13, seeking new horizons beyond gritty tales of urban mayhem.

But an industry that has already made millions from gangsta rap isn't exactly racing away from the style, with huge sales still expected from the 2Pac album and an upcoming one from Snoop Doggy Dogg.

"I think the record company that 2Pac's on is probably eating it up because now he's probably even selling more records," says rocker Tairrie B. of Manhole, a former rapper for Eazy-E's Ruthless Records. "It's a sad thing to say. But it's like when Kurt Cobain died."

Knight has said little about Death Row's future in the wake of the Shakur slaying. A Death Row spokesman declined requests for interviews, as did Death Row's distributors, MCA Music Entertainment and Interscope Records.

Heavy D, the rapper turned head of Uptown Entertainment, also says there won't be a wholesale rush away from the genre. "At the end of the day, from a business standpoint, it's all about money."

Sales of gangsta rap albums have declined from their early '90s peak — a trend mirrored by the overall flat sales in the music industry. Still, 2Pac's *All Eyez on Me*, which topped the *Billboard* 200 earlier this year, was still No. 20 after 36 weeks.



Shakur: Record producers are wondering what effect, if any, his death will have on the future of gangsta rap.

Knight, who was with Shakur when he was shot, is currently under arrest for parole violations. The 31-year-old has been accused in a federal racketeering suit of visiting Ruthless Records with baseball bats to settle a business dispute.

But Death Row made its first foray beyond gangsta rap this summer with R&B artist Danny Boy, who quickly dropped off the charts, and soon plans to release an album by pop rapper Hammer. Such safe material may become more commonplace in the future, some executives predict.

Steve Rifkind, president of Loud Records, a label whose acts include Wu-Tang

Clan, says caution will be the rap watchword for large record distributors, most of them publicly traded. They "will censor it a little more — from album artwork to whatever they say lyrically just to avoid pressure from the outside," he says.

But ultimately, the genre is unlikely ever to vanish completely.

"I honestly wish that it would change. For the better, that is," Heavy D says. "I'm hoping maybe people will think twice about the types of lyrics that they're choosing to use now. But to say it's going to change, especially overnight, I would have to say no."

Chris Lighty, manager for LL Cool J and head of Violator Records, admits corporate doors may be closing, if only to newcomers.

"I think it will make it harder if you're the new-up-and-coming gangsta rap label and you're trying to break in the door right now, you're going to meet resistance."

Russell Simmons, whose Def Jam Records is one of rap's leading labels, says no one should expect much change because of Shakur.

"Jimmi Hendrix died of an O.D. Did the rock 'n' roll world forget its preoccupation with drugs?" Simmons asks. "Real life inspires art. It reflects the reality that (people) live, saw or that they internalize. They spit it back out through their music or painting or plays or poetry."

Chuck D of Public Enemy says if any change comes post-Shakur, record companies — particularly black music divisions — need to take greater interest in directing young artists, much as the National Basketball Association offers its rookies counseling.

"You could say whatever you want to say in a song, but when it comes down to whether or not you get thrown out of a hotel, fight backstage, or get arrested in other states, that needs to be checked," he says, "because what it does is it sheds a bad light and a shadow on the art form."

Bad Boy's Combs denies feuding with Death Row

Sean "Puffy" Combs wants to clear the air between his Bad Boy Entertainment, leaders of the East Coast school of rap, and the West Coast's Death Row Records.

"I think people have a misconception that first of all we were in a feud," he says. "I don't think you can be in a feud with somebody if there's not two people arguing. I mean, I've never had a prob-

lem with Tupac or a problem with Suge Knight or problem with Death Row, a problem with anybody in the industry, for that matter.

"The only thing I've heard is the records that you've heard. I've never been approached on any other level besides that. So it was more hype than anything."

Combs is branching out in a big way. He has just signed

a lucrative joint venture with Arista Records; he's opening his own restaurant in Manhattan, Justin's, devoted to soul and Caribbean food; and his debut album as an artist is due out in January, with contributions from most of his Bad Boy roster.

Reflecting on his fortunes, Combs agrees that some gangsta rap — particularly that made by imitators of the

original stylists — is passing from the scene.

"I think there are different types of hard-core rap or gangsta rap," he says. "There are the things that are real, affecting people's lives, and then people that are just saying anything that sounds hard-core or sounds dark and dismal — I think some of those things may be on their way out."

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LA Computerized Record Request Form



TO: TELETYPE ROOM

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Driver's License
☐ Data (L1)

Driver's License
☐ Photograph

Registered
☐ Vehicle Data

Los Angeles
☐ County Wants

CA State NCIC
☐ Wants

CA State Criminal
☐ History (CII)*

NCIC Criminal
☐ History (III)*

10-28/Vehicle
☐ Registration

☒ EVENT INDEX

Name of Subject: SHAKUR, TUPAC (10)

Alias(es): _____

Address: _____

Previous Address: _____

Driver's License Number: _____

Date of Birth (or approximate age): _____

Vehicle License Number and State: _____

Sex: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Social Security Number: _____

Height/Weight/Hair/Eyes: _____

Other Identifying Information (Specify): _____

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Comments: RUN NAME THROUGH "EVENT INDEX"

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EI10 - EVENT NAME SEARCH - JDS

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NAME: SHAKUR / TUPAC / _____ / _____ SEX M RACE _ DOB-YR _

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REQUEST FOR EXACT MATCH Y

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NOTE: ENTER 'Y' FOR EXACT MATCH - LAST NAME / FIRST NAME / SEX REQUIRED

EI10-PARTIAL EVENT NAME INQUIRY - JDS

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OUTPUT MSG 045, PAGE 01 OF 03, FROM JD10 11/05/9

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NAME: SHAKUR / TUPAC / _____ / _____ SEX M RACE _ DOB-YR _

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SHAKUR	TUPAC <i>ROBBERY</i>	M	S	0400	121695	121695	420622	050648425	100	
SHAKUR	TUPAC <i>RAPE BY FORCE</i>	M	S	0021	072093	072093	000999	930643009	100	
SHAKUR	TUPAC <i>ADW</i>	M	S	0053	030296		000333	960294403	100	
SHAKUR	TUPAC <i>NON-CRIME</i>	A	M	A	4400	031193	031193	420182	030108031	100
SHAKUR	TUPAC <i>FEL. ASSAULT</i>	A	M	A	0500	031393	031393	420668	030611340	100
SHAKUR	TUPAC <i>ROBBERY</i>	A	M	S	0300	072093	072093	420979	030930671	100

JD5000 NO MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR INQUIRY.

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NAME: SHAKUR / TUPAC / _____ / ____ SEX M RACE _ DOB-YR _

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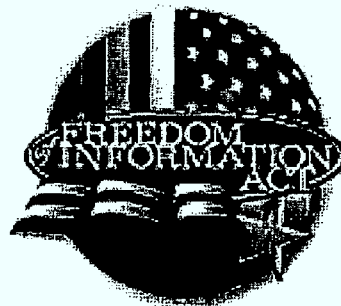


FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS

SUBJECT Tupac Shakur

FILE NUMBER 266A-LA-201807

SECTION NUMBER 2



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

U.S. Department of Justice



Federal Bureau of Investigation

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

11000 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90024

January 3, 1997

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[REDACTED] ET AL
TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM (DECEASED);
ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E - VICTIM (DECEASED);
ACT OF TERRORISM
DOMESTIC TERRORISM - DEATH THREATS
OFFICE OF ORIGIN: LOS ANGELES

b7C

All informants mentioned herein have provided reliable information in the past.

Date Investigative Summary Prepared: January 3, 1997.

On October 17, 1996, a preliminary inquiry (PI) was initiated at Los Angeles Field Office to corroborate source information that [REDACTED] a known organized crime figure, along with a group of unidentified individuals are utilizing death threats in the furtherance of extortion attempts targeted towards two former prominent rap musicians from the Los Angeles area and other victims yet unidentified.

b7C

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and others yet unidentified have been extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [REDACTED] and other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a "fee" [REDACTED] reported that ERIC WRIGHT, also known as EAZY-E, who owned RUTHLESS RECORDS, Woodland Hills, California, was a victim of this extortion scheme prior to dying from AIDS. [REDACTED] had also reportedly targeted TUPAC SHAKUR prior to his recent murder in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Following ERIC WRIGHT's death, [redacted] sued for 50% ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. [redacted] would be able to provide further details regarding [redacted] but that she was not available for interview until mid-January, 1997. b7C

On March 27, 1995, [redacted] filed a civil lawsuit against RONALD SWEENEY, Entertainment Attorney for the WRIGHT estate. This lawsuit is titled "COMPTOWN RECORDS INC, et al V. LAW OFFICES RONALD SWEENEY, et al", civil case number BC 124555 was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Los Angeles, California b7C pertains to property rights of RUTHLESS RECORDS. During the lawsuit, [redacted] offered as evidence two letters purportedly signed by ERIC WRIGHT, granting [redacted] part ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. The letters were deemed forged by an expert witness. [redacted] advised the results of this lawsuit were classified "confidential" and require a subpoena, which is pending.

[redacted] filed a lawsuit against [redacted] in early 1996 alleging that [redacted] made telephonic death threats to her and her family after ERIC WRIGHT died. These records have not yet been reviewed at Los Angeles. b7C

[redacted] b7C

Los Angeles Field Office is currently compiling the court transcripts and related documents mentioned in the above court cases for review prior to the interview of [redacted]

[redacted] Investigators are awaiting the results of several records checks and anticipate several interviews of witnesses and victims in this matter. In addition, investigators continue to review FBI files as they relate to [redacted] including the copyright matter.

Investigation continuing at Los Angeles.

b7C

COMPANY TOWN

THE BIZ / CHUCK PHILIPS and ALAN ABRAHAMSON

Rapper Leaves Tangled Financial, Legal Legacy

12/24/96

12

Slain rap star Tupac Shakur sold more than \$60 million worth of albums this year alone, making him one of the top-selling domestic artists. Yet, at the time of his death, the rapper owed his record company \$4.9 million, Shakur's attorney says.

Shakur's mother—who last week won a court battle forcing Death Row Records and two other companies to stop selling unauthorized Tupac merchandise—believes Death Row shortchanged her son out of royalty payments and has hired an auditor to conduct an independent accounting of the rap label's books.

The allegations stem from an unusual handwritten three-page contract drafted and signed while Shakur was in prison in 1995.

The dispute illustrates how recording artists' contracts are skewed in favor of record companies. Even if Shakur had recorded additional albums, he would likely have remained in debt for years to come, sources said.

"Tupac was one of the most successful artists in the music business—and yet somehow, on the day he died, he had absolutely nothing to show for it," said New York attorney Richard Fischbein, who along with Afeni Shakur is co-administrator of the rap star's estate. "We believe that Death Row withheld royalty payments from Tupac and failed to deliver many of the advances promised under his contract."

Please see THE BIZ, D7

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THE BIZ: Rapper Shakur's Tangled Legacy

Continued from D1

A representative for Death Row denied that the company has mishandled Shakur's account, blaming the rapper's debts on his own extravagant spending habits.

In the year preceding his slaying, Death Row had advanced Shakur large sums of cash to buy several cars for himself and a house for his mother—funds that the rapper was required to pay back, Death Row sources said. Shakur also charged to the company lease payments for three residences as well as a slew of lavish bills, including a \$300,000 tab at the Peninsula Hotel and hundreds of thousands of dollars in invoices for jewelry, furniture, security and limo service, sources said.

In addition, Shakur ran up more than \$2 million in advances for recording and video costs—which, according to standard industry practice, must be recouped by the record company before his account can turn a profit, Death Row sources said.

Nevertheless, when Shakur's mother threatened in October to sue Death Row and bar the release of her son's posthumous "Makaveli: The Don Killuminati" album, Death Row's distributor Interscope Records worked out a deal to pay an immediate \$3-million "nonrefundable" advance to Shakur's es-

'Tupac was one of the most successful artists in the music business—and yet somehow, on the day he died, he had absolutely nothing to show for it. . . .

We believe that Death Row withheld royalty payments from Tupac and failed to deliver many of the advances promised under his contract.'

RICHARD FISCHBEIN

Attorney and co-administrator of the rap star's estate

tate, Fischbein said.

The papers were drawn up at a Nov. 1 meeting between Shakur's mother, Fischbein, Interscope co-founder Jimmy Iovine and a group of attorneys. Death Row owner Marion "Suge" Knight was in jail at the time on a probation violation and could not attend the meeting. Death Row attorney David Kenner was also not present.

During the meeting, Interscope's attorneys also pledged an additional \$2 million in advances to be paid before April and helped negotiate an upgrade in the royalty rate (from 12% to 18%) paid to her son for past releases.

Fischbein insists that Interscope attorneys forgave about 50% of the \$4.9-million debt—a point with which Death Row adamantly dis-

agrees.

"It was Jimmy Iovine who took the lead in getting the ball rolling to straighten this mess out," Fischbein said. "Nothing would have happened if it wasn't for him. Death Row never even came to the table to have a discussion."

Shakur's mother has also cast doubt on the validity of the recording contract that Death Row struck with her son on Sept. 16, 1995.

Unlike a standard recording agreement, typically thick and laced with dozens of complicated terms and conditions, Shakur's pact with Death Row is handwritten and just three pages long. Shakur signed the agreement, Fischbein suggests, because he was unhappy and had been incarcerated for months on a sex abuse

charge before Knight showed up with a promise to bail him out.

"This contract is not like any other agreement I've ever seen in my life," Fischbein said. "It's nothing but toilet paper."

The agreement, which grants Death Row the right to release as many as four albums, spells out a series of advance payments promised to Shakur—many of which Fischbein alleges the rapper never received.

Fischbein also complains that Shakur did not have proper representation when he signed the agreement. According to Fischbein, the rapper appears to have been represented by Kenner, who also was the attorney for Knight and Death Row at the time.

Fischbein accuses of Kenner of having a conflict of interest when he drafted the contract and gave advice to Shakur about signing it. Kenner—who was fired by Shakur about three weeks before the rapper died—denied any conflict of interest, insisting that Shakur was represented at the time by attorney Charles Ogletree. Ogletree could not be reached for comment Monday.

It's unclear whether Shakur's mother would seek to have the handwritten contract disavowed. But Fischbein said Death Row has yet to provide the necessary books that would allow the estate to conduct an independent audit.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/16/00 BY 39063ewj/cep/

445069

THE BIZ: Rapper Shakur's Tangled Legacy

Continued from D1

A representative for Death Row denied that the company has mishandled Shakur's account, blaming the rapper's debts on his own extravagant spending habits.

In the year preceding his slaying, Death Row had advanced Shakur large sums of cash to buy several cars for himself and a house for his mother—funds that the rapper was required to pay back, Death Row sources said. Shakur also charged to the company lease-payments for three residences as well as a slew of lavish bills, including a \$300,000 tab at the Peninsula Hotel and hundreds of thousands of dollars in invoices for jewelry, furniture, security and limo service, sources said.

In addition, Shakur ran up more than \$2 million in advances for recording and video costs—which, according to standard industry practice, must be recouped by the record company before his account can turn a profit, Death Row sources said.

Nevertheless, when Shakur's mother threatened in October to sue Death Row and bar the release of her son's posthumous "Makaveli: The Don Killuminati" album, Death Row's distributor Interscope Records worked out a deal to pay an immediate \$3-million "nonrefundable" advance to Shakur's es-

'Tupac was one of the most successful artists in the music business—and yet somehow, on the day he died, he had absolutely nothing to show for it.'

We believe that Death Row withheld royalty payments from Tupac and failed to deliver many of the advances promised under his contract.'

RICHARD FISCHBEIN

Attorney and co-administrator of the rap star's estate

tate, Fischbein said.

The papers were drawn up at a Nov. 1 meeting between Shakur's mother, Fischbein, Interscope co-founder Jimmy Iovine and a group of attorneys. Death Row owner Marion "Suge" Knight was in jail at the time on a probation violation and could not attend the meeting. Death Row attorney David Kenner was also not present.

During the meeting, Interscope's attorneys also pledged an additional \$2 million in advances to be paid before April and helped negotiate an upgrade in the royalty rate (from 12% to 18%) paid to her son for past releases.

Fischbein insists that Interscope attorneys forgave about 50% of the \$4.9-million debt—a point with which Death Row adamantly dis-

agrees.

"It was Jimmy Iovine who took the lead in getting the ball rolling to straighten this mess out," Fischbein said. "Nothing would have happened if it wasn't for him. Death Row never even came to the table to have a discussion."

Shakur's mother has also cast doubt on the validity of the recording contract that Death Row struck with her son on Sept. 16, 1995.

Unlike a standard recording agreement, typically thick and laced with dozens of complicated terms and conditions, Shakur's pact with Death Row is handwritten and just three pages long. Shakur signed the agreement, Fischbein suggests, because he was unhappy and had been incarcerated for months on a sex abuse

charge before Knight showed up with a promise to bail him out.

"This contract is not like any other agreement I've ever seen in my life," Fischbein said. "It's nothing but toilet paper."

The agreement, which grants Death Row the right to release as many as four albums, spells out a series of advance payments promised to Shakur—many of which Fischbein alleges the rapper never received.

Fischbein also complains that Shakur did not have proper representation when he signed the agreement. According to Fischbein, the rapper appears to have been represented by Kenner, who also was the attorney for Knight and Death Row at the time.

Fischbein accuses of Kenner of having a conflict of interest when he drafted the contract and gave advice to Shakur about signing it. Kenner—who was fired by Shakur about three weeks before the rapper died—denied any conflict of interest, insisting that Shakur was represented at the time by attorney Charles Ogletree. Ogletree could not be reached for comment Monday.

It's unclear whether Shakur's mother would seek to have the handwritten contract disavowed. But Fischbein said Death Row has yet to provide the necessary books that would allow the estate to conduct an independent audit.

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

THE BIZ / CHUCK PHILIPS and ALAN ABRAHAMSON

Rapper Leaves Tangled Financial, Legal Legacy

Slain rap star Tupac Shakur sold more than \$60 million worth of albums this year alone, making him one of the top-selling domestic artists. Yet, at the time of his death, the rapper owed his record company \$4.9 million, Shakur's attorney says.

Shakur's mother—who last week won a court battle forcing Death Row Records and two other companies to stop selling unauthorized Tupac merchandise—believes Death Row shortchanged her son out of royalty payments and has hired an auditor to conduct an independent accounting of the rap label's books.

The allegations stem from an unusual handwritten three-page contract drafted and signed while Shakur was in prison in 1995.

The dispute illustrates how recording artists' contracts are skewed in favor of record companies. Even if Shakur had recorded additional albums, he would likely have remained in debt for years to come, sources said.

"Tupac was one of the most successful artists in the music business—and yet somehow, on the day he died, he had absolutely nothing to show for it," said New York attorney Richard Fischbein, who along with Afeni Shakur is co-administrator of the rap star's estate. "We believe that Death Row withheld royalty payments from Tupac and failed to deliver many of the advances promised under his contract."

Please see THE BIZ, D7

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.) **LOS ANGELES TIMES**

PAGE **D1** **LOS ANGELES, CA**

Date: **12-24-96**
Edition:

Title:

Character:

or

Classification:

Submitting Office:

LOS ANGELES

Indexing:

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/1/00 BY 58063 ELL/BCE/PU
445069

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 02/12/1997

To: FBI Headquarters

Attn: NSD, CT Branch, DTS, DTOU

From: Los Angeles
NSD-6

Approved By: [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

mpbh MB

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807

Title: [REDACTED]

ET AL

TUPAC SHAKUR-VICTIM (DECEASED);
ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E-VICTIM (DECEASED);
AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS
OO: LOS ANGELES

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED b7C
DATE 10/1/00 BY 30132/UCR/ML

445069 915241
906464 911922
919689 964666

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Synopsis: Status of investigation and request for extension of PI.

Preliminary Inquiry Initiated: 10/17/1996, extended to expire 02/16/1997.

Enclosures: One original and five copies of a Letterhead Memorandum, dated 02/05/1997.

Enclosed for the Bureau are one original and five copies of a Letterhead Memorandum, dated 02/05/1997, which contains the current status of captioned matter.

b2
b7D
b7C

Several leads remain outstanding at Los Angeles regarding captioned matter. [REDACTED]

b7D

[REDACTED] which may assist in identifying [REDACTED] associates. The civil case file has not been located at the Superior Court, Los Angeles. In addition, the LAFO copyright matter which was closed in 1995 has not been located for review purposes. Searches are on for both case files.

b7C

On 01/17/1997, Case Agent met with Detective [REDACTED] LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT, Administrative Vice Unit, who has an informant who knows [REDACTED]

b7C

[REDACTED] The informant has agreed to meet with Case Agent in the next two weeks concerning [REDACTED]

266A-LA-201807-116

SEARCHED

INDEXED

SERIALIZED

FILED

5/1
5/1

To: FBI Headquarters From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807

It is anticipated that investigation during the next thirty days will resolve the issue of whether the extortionate activity being conducted by [REDACTED] others is to provide financial backing for their organization or is only for personal financial gain. b7C

It is requested that this Preliminary Investigation be extended another thirty days as a result of outstanding leads.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

11000 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90024

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 10/16/00 BY SP10CEW/KSE/PA February 12, 1997

448669

[REDACTED] ET AL
TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM (DECEASED);
ERIC WRIGHT, AKA EAZY-E - VICTIM (DECEASED);
ACT OF TERRORISM
DOMESTIC TERRORISM - DEATH THREATS
OFFICE OF ORIGIN: LOS ANGELES

b7C

b7C

All informants mentioned herein have provided reliable information in the past.

Date Investigative Summary Prepared: February 5, 1997.

On October 17, 1996, a preliminary inquiry (PI) was initiated at Los Angeles Field Office to corroborate source information that [REDACTED] a known organized crime figure, along with a group of unidentified individuals are utilizing death threats in the furtherance of extortion attempts targeted towards two former prominent rap musicians from the Los Angeles area and other victims yet unidentified.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and others yet unidentified have been extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [REDACTED] and other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a "fee". [REDACTED] reported that ERIC WRIGHT, also known as EAZY-E, who owned RUTHLESS RECORDS, Woodland Hills, California, was a victim of this extortion scheme prior to dying from AIDS. [REDACTED] had also reportedly targeted TUPAC SHAKUR prior to his recent murder in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Following ERIC WRIGHT's death, [redacted] sued for 50% ownership of b7C RUTHLESS RECORDS. [redacted] would be able to provide further details regarding [redacted] but that she was not available for interview until mid-January, 1997.

On March 27, 1995, [redacted] filed a civil lawsuit against RONALD SWEENEY, Entertainment Attorney for the WRIGHT estate. This lawsuit is titled "COMPTOWN RECORDS INC, et al V. LAW OFFICES RONALD SWEENEY, et al", civil case number BC 124555 was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Los Angeles, California and b7C pertains to property rights of RUTHLESS RECORDS. During the lawsuit, [redacted] offered as evidence two letters purportedly signed by ERIC WRIGHT, granting [redacted] part ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. The letters were deemed forged by an expert witness. [redacted] advised the results of this lawsuit were classified "confidential" and require a subpoena, which is pending.

[redacted] filed a lawsuit against [redacted] in b7C early 1996 alleging that [redacted] made telephonic death threats to her and her family after ERIC WRIGHT died. These records have not yet been reviewed at Los Angeles as they have reportedly been misfiled at the Superior Court, Los Angeles.

[redacted] b7C

Los Angeles Field Office is currently compiling the court transcripts and related documents mentioned in the above court cases for review prior to the interview of [redacted] b7C [redacted] investigators are awaiting the results of several records checks.

[redacted] b7C b7D

Investigation continuing at Los Angeles.



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS

SUBJECT Tupac Shakur

FILE NUMBER 266A-LA-201807

SECTION NUMBER 4



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 04/15/1997

To: FBIHQ

Attn: NSD, CT Branch,
DTS, DTOU

~~Los Angeles~~

From: Los Angeles
NSD-6

Approved By: [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

mpbh

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807 (Pending)

Title: [REDACTED]

ET AL;
TUPAC SHAKUR-VICTIM (DECEASED);
Eazy-E-VICTIM (DECEASED);
AOT-DT-DEATH THREATS;
OO: LOS ANGELES

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 10/16/00 BY 8906

b7C

445069

906464

911922

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904666

915241

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Synopsis: Request Field SSA authorization to open a Full Field Investigation.

Details: Reference Los Angeles EC, dated 04/03/1997 which contains criminal history and criminal associates of

b7C

On 10/17/1996, a Preliminary Inquiry (PI) was initiated at Los Angeles Field Office to corroborate source information that [REDACTED] a known organized crime figure, along with a group of unidentified individuals are utilizing death threats in the furtherance of extortionate activity targeted towards two former prominent rap musicians from the Los Angeles area and other victims yet unidentified.

b7C

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266A-LA-201807-170

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
APR 22 1997	
FBI - LOS ANGELES	

To: FBIHQ From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, April 15, 1997

[redacted] and others yet unidentified have been extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [redacted] other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a "fee". ERIC WRIGHT, also known as EAZY-E, who owned RUTHLESS RECORDS, Woodland Hills, California, was a victim of this extortion scheme prior to dying from AIDS. [redacted] also reportedly targeted TUPAC SHAKUR prior to SHAKUR's recent murder in Las Vegas, Nevada. b7C

[redacted] b7C
[redacted] b7D
[redacted] [redacted]

On March 27, 1995, [redacted] filed a civil lawsuit against RONALD SWEENEY, Entertainment Attorney for the WRIGHT estate. This lawsuit is titled "COMPTOWN RECORDS INC, et al vs. LAW OFFICES RONALD SWEENEY, et al", civil case number BC 124555. This case was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Los Angeles, California and pertains to property rights of RUTHLESS RECORDS. During the lawsuit, [redacted] offered as evidence two letters purportedly signed by ERIC WRIGHT, granting [redacted] part ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. The letters were deemed forged by an expert witness. [redacted] advised the case was settled out of court and the results of were classified "confidential" by the judge. b7C

[redacted] later filed a lawsuit against [redacted] in early 1996 alleging that [redacted] made telephonic death threats to her and her family after ERIC WRIGHT died. b7C

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] b7C

To: FBIHQ From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, April 15, 1997

[REDACTED] b7C
[REDACTED] b7C
[REDACTED] b7C

[REDACTED] b7C
[REDACTED]

On 04/11/1997, investigators were provided a copy of a civil court complaint, dated 03/11/1996, entitled [REDACTED] an individual, WATERSIDE CANTINA, INC., a California Corporation, MISSION BAY RESTAURANT and CLUB, INC., a California Corporation, Plaintiffs, vs. [REDACTED] b7C

[REDACTED] individuals; R.M.L. REALTY, INC.; PHASE ONE DEVELOPMENT, INC., California corporations, BELMONT PARK ASSOCIATES, a limited partnership, and Does 1 through 50, inclusive, Defendants". [REDACTED] is believed to be the [REDACTED]

The civil complaint alleges that on Friday, 07/28/1995, at approximately 10:00 p.m., several individuals forcibly entered a business [REDACTED]. These individuals were identified as [REDACTED] and two unidentified subjects referred to as UNSUB #1, and UNSUB #2. UNSUB #1 is believed to be [REDACTED] who claimed to represent [REDACTED]. During the incident, UNSUB #1 brandished a concealed weapon at [REDACTED]. UNSUB #2 stated he represented [REDACTED] and RUTHLESS RECORDS. After physical and psychological intimidation, [REDACTED] considered the threat to his patrons and left the business he occupied. The complaint further alleges that [REDACTED] had committed and caused to be committed the same acts against RUTHLESS RECORDS. Following the takeover of [REDACTED] nightclub on 07/28/1995, [REDACTED] reportedly asked [REDACTED] "Don't you know who I am? I'm with the JDL". b7C

To: FBIHQ From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, April 15, 1997

b7C

It has since been learned that [] dropped the lawsuit against [] and the other defendants based on fear and intimidation.

FBI records checks of the defendants in [] civil lawsuit reveal the following: b7C

[] FOIMS references
[] in the following files:

b7C

HQ 192-1866	(Hobbs Act - Commercial Institutions)
LA 192B-290	(Hobbs Act - Commercial Institutions)
NK 100A-57409	(Domestic Security - JDL related case)
NK 174A-2760-1	(JDL related case)
NY 183G-3546	(RICO)

[] FOIMS references [] in the following files:

b7C

NY 281A-192451 (OC/DI)
NY 281A-201963

[] FOIMS references
[] in the following case:

b7C

SA 245C-34965-H1 (OCDE)

[]
which FOIMS references in the following case:

LA 179B-914 (ECT)

[] which
FOIMS references in the following case:

LA 281A-102832 (OC/DI)

b7C

[]

To: FBIHQ From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, April 15, 1997

b7C

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in FOIMS, unknown if identical.

Further checks regarding the above individuals will be necessary to fully identify them.

Investigators are currently compiling the court transcripts and related documents mentioned in the above court cases for review and analysis for lead potential. Investigators are awaiting the results of several records checks to include [REDACTED] b7C b7D

Based on the extortionate activity presented herein, and other criminal activity yet unidentified, it is recommended that a Full Field Investigation be initiated in this matter. There appears to be a "reasonable indication" that [REDACTED] has been conducting extortionate/criminal activity for some time and will continue to do so as long as he is successful and not held criminally liable. Los Angeles sources believe [REDACTED] to be acting in concert with or on behalf of the JDL and its associates. b7C

It is anticipated a Full Field Investigation will identify whether the extortionate activity is being perpetrated on behalf of [REDACTED] et al, for personal gain and/or on behalf of the JDL.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

b7C

◆◆

(12/31/1995)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 04/21/1997

To: Los Angeles

From: Los Angeles
NSD-6

b7C

Approved By: [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

mpbh

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807
LA 66-598 SUB A-178

Title: [REDACTED] ET AL

ET AL;
TUPAC SHAKUR - VICTIM (DECEASED)
Eazy-E - VICTIM (DECEASED)
AOT - DT - DEATH THREATS
OO: LOS ANGELES

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Synopsis: Request for authorization of mail cover.

Full Field Investigation Instituted: 04/15/1997.

Details: On October 17, 1996, a preliminary inquiry (PI) was initiated at Los Angeles Field Office to corroborate source information that [REDACTED] a known organized crime figure, along with a group of unidentified individuals are utilizing death threats in the furtherance of extortion attempts targeted towards two former prominent rap musicians from the Los Angeles area and other victims yet unidentified.

b7C

b7D

[REDACTED] and others yet unidentified have been extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [REDACTED] and other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a "fee". [REDACTED] reported that ERIC WRIGHT, also known as Eazy-E, who owned RUTHLESS RECORDS, Woodland Hills, California, was a victim of this extortion scheme prior to dying from AIDS. [REDACTED] had also reportedly targeted TUPAC SHAKUR prior to his recent murder in Las Vegas, Nevada.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 11/12/02 BY 3008WPC/PL

911922 445069
904666 919689
906666 915241

266A-LA-201807-207

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
JUN 10 1997	
FBI - LOS ANGELES	

b7C

that

b7D

b7D

Following ERIC WRIGHT'S death, [redacted] sued for 50% ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. The civil lawsuit is titled "COMPTOWN RECORDS INC, et al V. LAW OFFICES RONALD SWEENEY, et al", civil case number BC 124555 and was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Los Angeles, California. During the lawsuit, [redacted] offered as evidence two letters purportedly signed by ERIC WRIGHT, granting [redacted] part ownership of RUTHLESS RECORDS. The letters were deemed forged by an expert witness. [redacted] could produce no original letters. [redacted] advised the results of this lawsuit were classified "confidential" and require a subpoena, which is pending.

b7C

In addition, [redacted] filed a lawsuit against [redacted] in early 1996 alleging that [redacted] made telephonic death threats to her and her family after ERIC WRIGHT died.

b7C

On 04/11/1997, investigators were provided a copy of a civil court complaint, dated 03/11/1996, entitled [redacted] an individual, WATERSIDE CANTINA, INC., a California Corporation, MISSION BAY RESTAURANT and CLUB, INC., a California Corporation. Plaintiffs, vs. [redacted]

b7C

[redacted] individuals; R.M.L. REALTY, INC.; PHASE ONE DEVELOPMENT, INC., California corporations, BELMONT PARK ASSOCIATES, a limited partnership, and Does 1 through 50, inclusive, Defendants". [redacted]

The civil complaint alleges that on Friday, 07/28/1995, at approximately 10:00 p.m., several individuals forcibly entered a business owned and operated [redacted] These individuals were identified [redacted] and two unidentified subjects referred to as UNSUB #1, and UNSUB #2. UNSUB #1 is believed to be [redacted] who claimed to represent [redacted] During the incident, UNSUB #1 brandished a concealed weapon [redacted] UNSUB #2 stated he represented [redacted] RUTHLESS RECORDS. After physical and psychological intimidation, [redacted] considered the threat to his patrons and left the business he occupied. The complaint further alleges [redacted] had committed and caused to be committed the same acts against RUTHLESS RECORDS. Following the takeover of [redacted] nightclub on 07/28/1995 [redacted]

b7C

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

b7C

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

b7C

The focus of the requested mail cover includes the following individuals:

[Redacted]

It is requested the mail cover include first and second class mail and last for a period of thirty days commencing on the date the request is received by the District Postal Inspector in Charge, located in Pasadena, California.

To the best of my knowledge, the name and address of an attorney who represents the mail cover subject is unknown. If, during the period of the mail cover, the name and address of an attorney retained by the mail cover subject becomes known to the case agent, such information will be promptly furnished.

Mail cover subject is allegedly in violation of the following U.S. laws:


- 1) Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1951
Punishable by fine or imprisonment not more than twenty years or both; and
- 2) Title 21, U.S. Code, Section 841 and 846.
Punishable depending on quantity and type of narcotics.

No subject of this mail cover is presently under indictment or formally charged with any violation of criminal law. Should any subject be indicted or formally charged during the period of the mail cover, the postal inspector will be

promptly advised so the mail cover may be immediately canceled.

It is understood the results of the mail cover, PS Form 2009, are the property of the U.S. Postal Service and its use is limited to law enforcement agencies. The results can be retained in the case agent's office as an investigative tool for a period of 60 days and then returned to the following address:

b7C


Postal Inspector
ISOSG
Mail Cover Section
P.O. Box 9000
South San Francisco, CA 94083-900

It is recommended that a mail cover request be authorized to enhance captioned investigation.

Investigation continuing at Los Angeles.

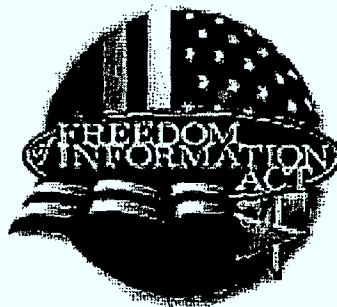


FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS

SUBJECT Tupac Shakur

FILE NUMBER 266A-LA-201807

SECTION NUMBER 6



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

Date: 9-10-97
Edition: LA Times

Title:

Character:
or
Classification:
Submitting Office: LA

Indexing:

266A-LA-201807-313

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/17/00 BY SP2000JRE/PC
911922 906464
904666 919689
445069 915241

Man Named as Suspect in Death of Shakur Sues the Rapper's Estate

■ **Courts:** Orlando Anderson says he was assaulted by the star and others in a Las Vegas hotel hours before fatal shooting.

By CHUCK PHILIPS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

A reputed Los Angeles gang member once named by police as a suspect in the murder of Tupac Shakur has filed a lawsuit against the slain rap star's estate—a year and a day after Shakur was gunned down.

Orlando Anderson's lawsuit contends that he was assaulted by the rapper and several Death Row Records employees in the lobby of the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas just hours before Shakur was gunned down. No arrests have been made.

It is unusual for gang disputes to end up in civil lawsuits, but Anderson's action is particularly surprising because it could subject him to renewed scrutiny in connection with Shakur's death.

Shakur, one of the brightest stars in rap and a budding actor, was fatally wounded just off the Las Vegas Strip by gunfire while riding in a car driven by Death Row founder Marion "Suge" Knight. Ever since, there has been widespread speculation about the relationship between the killing and the MGM altercation.

The suit, filed late Monday in Los Angeles Superior Court, also names Death Row and Knight as defendants, and alleges that Anderson suffered physical injuries and severe emotional and mental distress.

Representatives for Shakur's estate and Death Row declined comment Tuesday.

Please see SHAKUR, B3



Los Angeles Times

Rapper Tupac Shakur was gunned down in Las Vegas in September 1996.

9/10/97 LATIMES

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Date:
Edition:

SHAKUR

Continued from B1

Renee L. Campbell, who represents Anderson, acknowledged that her client was told last fall that he was a suspect in Shakur's killing, but denied that he had anything to do with the shooting.

"It is clear that if there is any victim, my client is the victim," Campbell said.

Knight was sent to prison in February for a probation violation stemming from his role in the assault on Anderson, which was captured on a hotel surveillance videotape. At a hearing last fall, Anderson testified that Knight did not participate in the beating but tried to help stop the attack.

When asked whether Anderson, who is listed in police files as a member of the Southside Crips gang in Compton, had perjured himself on the stand in November, Campbell said her client "testified the way he did out of fear for his safety."

On the evening of Sept. 7, 1996,

Shakur and Knight had gone to the Mike Tyson-Bruce Seldon heavy-weight fight at the MGM. On the way out, Shakur, Knight and several Death Row employees kicked, punched and struck Anderson in the lobby, the lawsuit states.

About three hours later, Shakur and Knight were sitting in Knight's 750 BMW at a red light when gunfire erupted from a white late-model Cadillac—carrying four men—that had pulled up in the next lane. Shakur died six days later in a Las Vegas hospital.

Before Shakur died, detectives in Las Vegas and Compton were inundated with a flurry of tips from informants contending that Anderson—a Lakewood resident who goes by such gang monikers as "Lando" and "Lane"—was responsible for the rapper's shooting, according to a Compton police affidavit prepared Sept. 25 to obtain search warrants for a pending gang raid.

According to the affidavit, the ruckus in the MGM lobby was the result of gang rivalry between

Death Row-affiliated members of the Mob Piru Bloods and the Southside Crips, of which Anderson and several of his relatives are allegedly members. Anderson was attacked, the affidavit said, because he had allegedly stolen a gold chain from one of the Death Row employees during a gang scuffle a month earlier at a Lakewood mall.

According to the affidavit, Anderson was seen several days after the shooting with a Glock .40-caliber handgun—the same kind of weapon used in the homicide—and his cousin was seen driving a white late-model Cadillac into an auto shop in Compton. That same week, Las Vegas detectives examined a box of .40-caliber rounds confiscated by Compton police from a residence where Anderson's cousin was living. They also confiscated weapons from a Compton residence of Anderson's uncle, Dwayne Keith "Keeffee D" Davis, who sources said is listed in police files as a member of the Southside Crips.

During an Oct. 2 gang raid

red by shootings after Shakur's death, Anderson was taken into custody on an outstanding warrant stemming from a slaying in Compton unrelated to Shakur's death.

A Las Vegas detective who participated in the raid told Anderson that he was a suspect in the shooting, according to Anderson's former attorney, Ed Faal.

Anderson was released Oct. 4. Los Angeles prosecutors declined to file charges against him in the Compton slaying. In February, Las Vegas police told The Associated Press that Anderson was still listed as a suspect in Shakur's killing. But the investigation stalled.

The allegations against my client in the affidavit are totally unfounded," Campbell said.

Campbell said they had no subsequent contact with Anderson. But the death of his uncle, Davis, resurfaced months later during the investigation of the killing of Shakur's musical rival, Christopher Wallace, New York rap star known as

Notorious B.I.G. who was gunned down March 9 outside of the Petersen Automotive Museum in the Mid-Wilshire district.

In May, Los Angeles investigators seized Davis' Chevy Impala from his girlfriend's house in Compton. The two-door sedan matched the description of the car used in Wallace's shooting.

Police have not returned the vehicle. Sources say investigators interviewed Davis in June but told him that he is not a suspect in Wallace's murder. No arrests have been made in the case.

Investigators have been focusing on the idea that Wallace's shooting stemmed from a personal dispute with a Compton gang member—possibly the result of an unpaid security bill, sources said. Police sources said that Wallace and his record company chairman, Sean "Puffy" Combs, often employed members of the Southside Crips as security—an allegation Combs adamantly denies.

During an interview in June with police, Davis told investiga-

tors that he met Wallace nearly two years before the rapper was slain, sources said. The two were introduced by a mutual friend after a concert in Anaheim.

The friend, a drug dealer from Harlem, brought Davis to Wallace's hotel after the show and told the rapper that he could provide protection in Los Angeles for Wallace's entourage should he ever need it, sources said. Wallace turned down the offer, explaining that his record company had already hired bodyguards, sources said.

Davis told police that he also attended the March music industry party at the Petersen Museum and spoke with Wallace and several members of his entourage less than an hour before the rapper was shot, sources said.

Davis could not be reached for comment. Attorney Faal denied the suggestion that Davis had anything to do with Wallace's murder.

Law enforcement sources say investigators have not uncovered any evidence that Wallace's murder was connected to the Shakur slaying.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

FOIPA

DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

Serial Description ~ COVER SHEET

02/05/1998

Total Deleted Page(s) ~ 1

Page 3 ~ b7C, b7D



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AND
PRIVACY ACTS

SUBJECT Tupac Shakur

FILE NUMBER 266A-LA-201807

SECTION NUMBER 7



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

(12/31/1993)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 02/05/1998

To: Los Angeles ✓

Attn: SA [REDACTED]

From: Los Angeles ✓

NSD-6

Contact: [REDACTED]

b7C

Approved By: [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

Case ID #: 266A-LA-201807 (Pending) ✓

Title: [REDACTED] ETAL;

AOT - DT - DEATH THREATS

OO: LOS ANGELES

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
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DATE 10/10/00 BY 39063ewjere/pw

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Synopsis: Requesting approval to interview [REDACTED]
a reporter for THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE.

Details: For your information, on October 17, 1996, a preliminary inquiry (PI) was initiated at Los Angeles Field Office to corroborate source information that [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] a known organized crime figure, along with a group of unidentified individuals were utilizing death threats in the furtherance of extortion attempts targeting two former prominent rap musicians from the Los Angeles area and other victims yet unidentified.

[REDACTED] and others yet unidentified have been extorting money from various rap music stars via death threats. The scheme involves [REDACTED] and the other subjects making telephonic death threats to the rap star. Subjects then intercede by contacting the victim and offering protection for a fee. Source reported ERIC WRIGHT, also known as EAZY-E and then owner of RUTHLESS RECORDS in Woodland Hills, California, was a victim of this extortion scheme, prior to dying from AIDS. [REDACTED] had also reportedly targeted TUPAC SHAKUR before his recent murder in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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attached
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266A-LA-201807-368

To: Los Angeles From: Los Angeles
Re: 266A-LA-201807, 02/05/1998

LEAD (s):

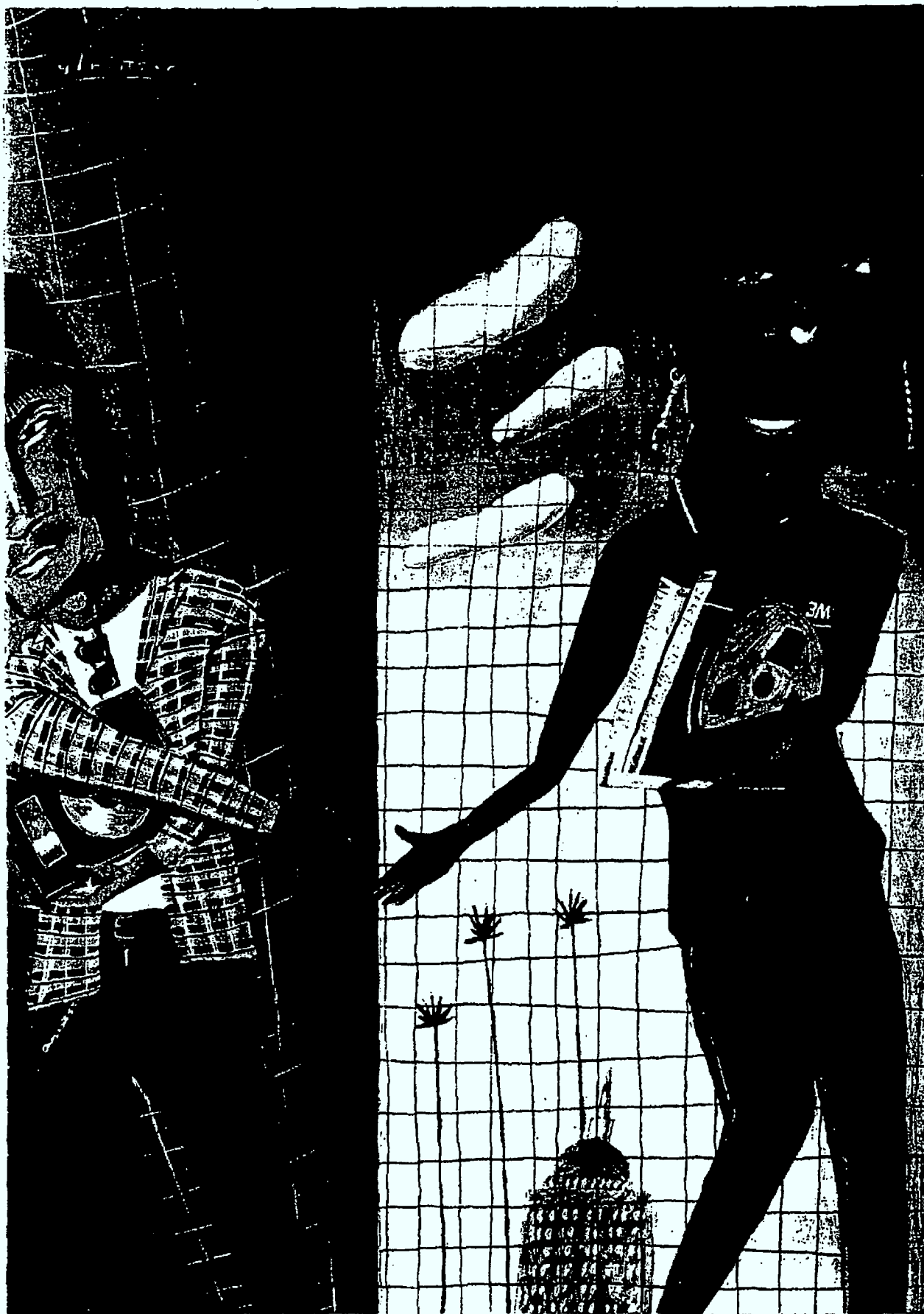
Set Lead 1:

LOS ANGELES

AT AT LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Field Office is requesting permission to interview reporter [REDACTED] from THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE, telephone number (212) 536-5400 or 840-3800 via telephone or by sending a lead to New York Field Office and have that office conduct same regarding the above mentioned information. Research revealed [REDACTED] wrote an article on TUPAC SHAKUR for THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE in the July 7, 1997, issue.

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Jimmy Iovine (left), the head of Interscope, is brokering a settlement in a suit brought by Shakur's mother, Afeni, against Death Row.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE TAKEDOWN OF TUPAC

Tupac Shakur was one of gangsta rap's biggest stars. But he got caught in a collision of cultures when inner-city gangs met up with the multibillion-dollar record industry.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

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DATE 10/19/00 BY 60322/UC/CE/PS

BY CONNIE BRUCK

WHEN twenty-five-year-old Tupac Shakur was shot and killed in Las Vegas last fall, he was riding in the passenger seat of a B.M.W. 750 sedan driven by Marion (Suge) Knight, the head of Death Row Records. Death Row, the leading purveyor of West Coast "gangsta rap," is a music-business phenomenon. The company earned seventy-five million dollars in revenues last year. The first album Tupac made for Death Row, "All Eyez on Me," which was released in early 1996, sold over five million units. Tupac had made three earlier albums, but they had never reached the stratosphere of "quintuple platinum." Still, the days preceding his murder were anything but halcyon for him. It had become increasingly clear that there was a steep penalty to pay for having thrown in with Suge Knight.

Even for the rough-edged music industry, which has historically been prone to excess and to connections with criminal elements, Death Row was a remarkable place. It was nothing for Knight to hand over a stack of hundred-dollar bills to Tupac for a weekend's expenses. Knight's office in Los Angeles was decorated in red, the color of the Bloods, one of the city's principal gangs. A guard holding a metal detector stood at the front door of the Death Row studio. "I have not been to one other studio to this day where you have to be searched before you get in," a veteran of the L.A. music business who worked with Tupac told me. "They have a checklist of people who can go in with guns. So you have to figure, These guys have guns, and it's a long run to the front door, and there's security at the front door that may try to stop you, even if you get there. . . . Some of the security guys . . .

were gangsters just out of the penitentiary. They would look at you, staring right through you. No words would have to be said."

Intimidation was Suge Knight's stock-in-trade. It is said that he forced a black music executive at a rival company to strip in the men's room and then made him walk naked through his company's offices. A mammoth, three-hundred-and-fifteen-pound man, Knight has a substantial criminal record, replete with violent acts. Even when he was on his best behavior—say, dealing with a white executive at one of the major entertainment companies—menace hung heavy in the air. One man told me about a negotiation he had in the apparent safety of his own office. Knight was attended by a bodyguard, and when they reached a difficult point in the deal, the bodyguard ostentatiously leaned forward and let his gun, which was worn in a holster under his jacket, slip into full view.

For a time, the aura of violence served Knight well. It granted him enormous license in small things (like keeping other executives waiting for hours, without a murmur of objection) and in larger ones. Music and video producers who claimed that Death Row owed them money were too frightened to demand it, or to sue. The potential for violence was also a powerful disincentive to anyone who might have considered talking to law-enforcement authorities about questionable practices. Moreover, it did not keep him from doing business with two of the entertainment industry's corporate giants. Death Row has been funded since its inception by its distributor, Interscope, which for years was partially owned by Time Warner, and which Universal has had a fifty-per-cent interest in since early last year.

After Tupac's murder, however, things began to unravel for Knight. In the summer of 1992, he had pulled a gun on two rappers, George and Stanley Lynwood, for using a phone at the studio. After beating one of them with the gun, he ordered them both down on their knees, threatened to kill them, and forced them to take off their pants. He was convicted on assault charges and put on probation. But four years later, just before Tupac was killed, Knight took part in the beating of a man in Las Vegas, and this put him in violation of his probation. In February of this year he began serving a nine-year sentence and is now in San Luis Obispo state prison. In addition, hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of suits have now been filed against Death Row (the largest being that of Tupac's estate, charging that he was defrauded of over fifty million dollars, and seeking damages of a hundred and fifty million). And there may be more to come. A team of agencies, including the F.B.I., the D.E.A., and the I.R.S., are investigating allegations of money laundering, links to street gangs, drug trafficking, and organized crime at Death Row.

"I think, Tupac, you brought down one of the most evil empires of my time," one of his friends, who grew up in the music business, says. He did not intend to romanticize Tupac; this friend, like many others, acknowledges that Tupac was famously split between what he himself referred to as his "good" and his "evil" sides, and that it was his darker side that seemed to have gained dominion during much of his tenure at Death Row. Nonetheless, these friends insist, that was not the *real* Tupac. The real Tupac was gifted, sympathetic, intent on articulating the pain of young blacks in the in-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ULRICKSEN

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One of Tupac's songs was about "a character, somewhat like myself. . . . He's, in his mind, a dynamo. He's Rudolph Valentino and Frank Sinatra."

ner cities. And the real Tupac was trying to leave Death Row when he was killed.

UNFAIRLY or not, Tupac Shakur's name has become synonymous with violent rap lyrics and "thug life" (a phrase Tupac had tattooed across his midriff). While he was alive, he was censured by politicians and, like other rappers, was kept from performing in some concert arenas because promoters could not insure the events against the threat of mayhem from fans. At the same time, however, he was suspected by many in his core ghetto audience of not being cold-blooded enough to measure up to his status as the archetypal gangsta rapper.

These conflicting views of Tupac reflect, to a degree, racial and social chasms. Rap fans insist that performers be authentic representatives of ghetto life: that they live the life they rap about; that life conform to art, so to speak. Rap's critics, on the other hand, are terrified that life *will* conform to art, that the behavior—the drug dealing and the violence—described by rappers will seep into the mainstream culture. The majority of ardent fans and consumers of rap are, in fact, middle-class white youths. (Seventy per cent of those who buy rap records are white.) It is the fear of a violent, marginalized culture's influence on susceptible young people that fuels much of the political debate, and this fear is exacerbated by the widespread adoption of hip-hop style.

Controversy, of course, has never hurt sales. To the contrary. Tupac understood this very well, as did the record-company executives who stood to profit from his talents, and his notoriety. The more trouble Tupac got into with the law, the more credibility he gained on the street—and the more viable a rap star he became. The huge commercial success of gangsta rap created a peculiarly volatile nexus between the worlds of inner-city gangs and the multibillion-dollar record industry. Tupac sometimes said that he thought of his songs as parables, and now it is his own life—his journey into those two worlds, and his immolation at the point at which they converged—that seems almost allegorical.

THE world of Suge Knight and South Central Los Angeles is at a far remove from the one in which Tupac Shakur grew up, though each, in its own way, romanticized violence. Afeni Sha-

kur, Tupac's mother, was a member of the Black Panther Party. Early in 1971, while she was pregnant with Tupac, she was on trial for conspiring to blow up several New York department stores. She and her codefendants—the Panther 21—were acquitted just a month before Tupac was born. He was named for "the last Inca chief to be tortured, brutalized, and murdered by Spanish conquistadores . . . a warrior," Afeni says. His surname, Shakur, is a kind of clan name taken by a loose group of black nationalists in New York.

The phrase "Black Power" had been "like a lullaby when I was a kid," Tupac recalled in a deposition he gave in 1995 (in a civil suit in which it was charged that some of Tupac's lyrics had influenced a young man who murdered a Texas state trooper). He remembered that when he was a teen-ager, living in Baltimore, "we didn't have any lights. I used to sit outside by the street lights and read the autobiography of Malcolm X. And it made it so real to me, that I didn't have any lights at home and I was sitting outside on the benches reading this book. And it changed me, it moved me. And then of course my mother had books by people like . . . Patrice Lumumba and Stokely Carmichael, 'Seize the Time' by Bobby Seale and 'Soledad Brother' by George Jackson. And she would tell these stories of things that she did or she saw or she was involved with and it made me feel a part of something. She always raised me to think that I was the Black Prince of the revolution."

Tupac had indeed become a Black Prince by the time he was killed, but not along the lines laid out by the political activists of the sixties. Afeni and her friends were involved in what they perceived as revolutionary activity for the good of their community. Tupac and his fellow gangsta rappers sported

diamond-encrusted gold jewelry, drove Rolls-Royce Corniches, and vied with one another in displays of gargantuan excess. Nevertheless, Tupac did not forget who his forebears were. "In my family every black male with the last name of Shakur that ever passed the age of fifteen has either been killed or put in jail," Tupac said in his deposition. "There are no Shakurs, black male Shakurs, out right now, free, breathing, without

bullet holes in them or cuffs on his hands. None."

The leaders of the black nationalist movement to which the other Shakurs belonged had been virtually eliminated, largely through the efforts of the F.B.I. In 1988, Tupac's stepfather, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, who had received a degree in acupuncture in Canada and used his skills to develop drug-abuse-treatment programs, was sentenced to sixty years in prison for conspiring to commit armed robbery and murder. The crimes he was accused of included the attempted robbery of a Brink's armored car in 1981, in which two police officers and a guard were killed (and for which the Weather Underground leader Kathy Boudin was also convicted). Mutulu was also found guilty of conspiring to break Tupac's "aunt," Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard), out of prison. She had been convicted in 1977 of murdering a New Jersey state trooper, but escaped two years later and fled to Cuba. Tupac's godfather, Elmer (Geronimo) Pratt, is a former Black Panther Party leader who was convicted of killing a schoolteacher during a robbery in Santa Monica in 1968. He was imprisoned for twenty-seven years. His conviction was reversed a few weeks ago on the ground that the government suppressed evidence favorable to him at his trial (most significantly that the principal witness against him was a paid police informant).

It was a haunting lineage, and Tupac would frequently invoke the names of Mutulu, Geronimo, and other "political prisoners" in his lyrics. "It was like their words with my voice," he said. "I just continued where they left off. I tried to add spark to it, I tried to be the new breed, the new generation. I tried to make them proud of me." But, at the same time, he did not want to *be* them. Their revolution, and in most cases their lives, too, were ashes.

IN the Panther 21 trial, Tupac's mother defended herself with a withering cross-examination of a key prosecution witness, who turned out to be an undercover government agent; after her acquittal, this unschooled but intellectually powerful woman was lionized in liberal circles, invited to speak at Harvard and Yale, and subsidized in an apartment on New York's Riverside Drive. Tupac and his sister Sekyiwa, who was born in



1975, became small Panther celebrities on the radical-chic circuit. "Then everything changed, the political tide changed over," Tupac said in his deposition. "We went on welfare, we lived in the ghettos of the Bronx, Harlem, Manhattan." He estimated that he'd lived in "like eighteen different places" when he started junior high school.

In his deposition, Tupac says that by the time he was twelve or thirteen years old Afeni had developed serious drug and alcohol problems. (Afeni disagrees. She says he was seventeen.) Tupac did not know who his father was, but he was close to Mutulu, who was the father of Sekyiwa and lived with them for a number of years. Then Mutulu, too, left him, going underground when Tupac was ten, after the Brink's holdup. While their contact was not altogether broken ("When I would feel he needed me, I'd do whatever I had to get there, even if it was just so that he could see me—and he'd wave, so happy," Mutulu recalled), the connections came at some cost to Tupac. "He had to keep secrets," Mutulu said. F.B.I. agents would approach Tupac at school to ask if he had seen his stepfather. (Mutulu was on the F.B.I.'s "Ten Most Wanted" list until he was captured, in 1986.)

The family moved to Baltimore, and when Tupac was fourteen he was admitted to a performing-arts school there. "For a kid from the ghetto, the Baltimore School for the Arts is heaven," Tupac said in his deposition. "I learned ballet, poetry, jazz, music, everything, Shakespeare, acting, everything as well as academics." Asked by his attorney whether he'd been in any gangs at that time, Tupac responded, "Shakespeare gangs. I was the mouse king in the Nutcracker. . . . There was no gangs. I was an artist." He had started writing poetry when he was in grammar school in New York, and it was only a short step from writing poetry to rapping. He wrote his lyrics with great speed and ease, and was soon performing at benefits for Geronimo Pratt and other prisoners.



"Do you have any references besides Batman?"

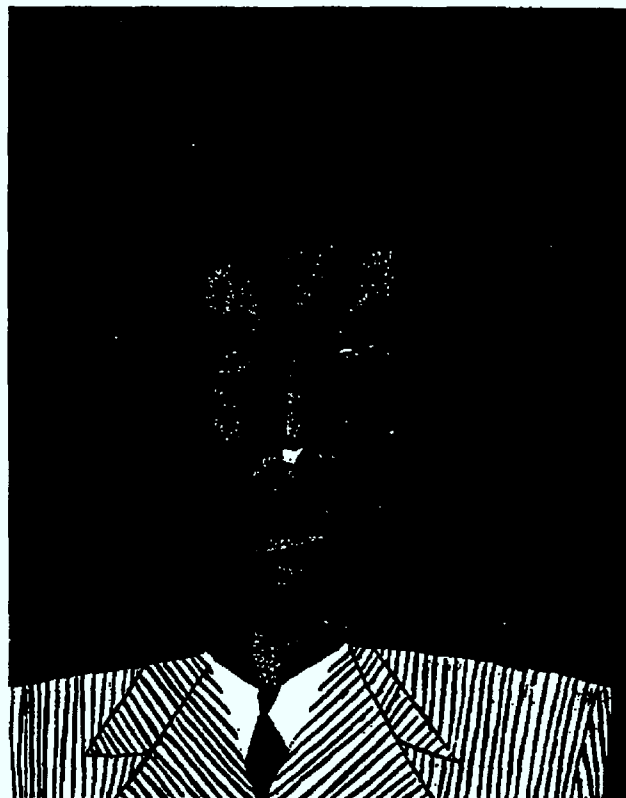
Tupac spent two years at the Baltimore School for the Arts. When he first came in, Donald Hicken, a former teacher, recalls, "he was a truly gifted actor, with a wonderful mimetic instinct and an ability to transform a character. . . . His work was always original, never imitative, never off the rack. Even in this talented group of kids, he stood out." One of his schoolmates, Avra Warsofsky, told me that there was no suggestion of the belligerent, confrontational side of Tupac that would later come to dominate his public image. "He was a dear, sweet person," Warsofsky said. "There were inner-city kids at the school who were tough, who stole—but he was not that, not one bit."

This idyll ended when Tupac's life at home became intolerable. As he described it in his deposition, he had no money for food or clothes; for a time he stayed at the home of a wealthy classmate and wore *his* clothes. That didn't last, though. "So I had to go back home. . . . But my mother was pregnant, on dope, dope crack. She had a boyfriend that was violent toward her. We weren't staying in our own spot, we were staying in someone else's spot. We never could pay the rent. She always had to

sweet-talk this old white man that was the landlord into letting us [stay] for another month. And he was making passes at my mom. So I didn't want to be there anymore. So I sacrificed my future at the School for the Arts to get on a bus to go cross-country to California with no money." He was not quite seventeen.

Tupac stayed for a time with Linda Pratt, the wife of the incarcerated Geronimo Pratt, in Marin City, a poor community north of San Francisco, and then with his mother, who also moved to California. But school in California did not provide a haven for him. "I didn't fit in. I was the outsider. . . . I dressed like a hippie, they teased me all the time. I couldn't play basketball, I didn't know who basketball players were. . . . I was the target for . . . the street gangs. They used to jump me, things like that. . . . I thought I was weird because I was writing the poetry and I hated myself, I used to keep it a secret. . . . I was really a nerd."

TUPAC's mother was at once a mythic figure to him and fallen, and his identification with his radical heritage was profoundly ambivalent. "At times he resented being the nineties' voice of the



A violent rivalry emerged between East Coast rappers like Biggie Smalls (left) and L.A.-based stars like Snoop Doggy Dogg.

Black Panther Party," Karen Lee, one of his publicists, told me, "and at times he wanted to be." Lee said that he was furious that his mother's former comrades made no move to try to rescue her and her children when she became addicted to drugs. Indeed, when he was living in Marin City—destitute, with no place to stay (his mother and he had fought bitterly, and he accused her of lying to him about her drug use)—it was mainly street people who tried to help him. Man Man (Charles Fuller), a friend who would later become his road manager, provided him with a bed, and kept him from becoming a full-fledged drug dealer.

His fortunes began to brighten slightly in 1990 when he got a job with the rap group Digital Underground, as a road manager and dancer. But his real break came the following year, when he was picked up by Interscope—a small company that had just been founded by the record producer Jimmy Iovine and the entertainment magnate Ted Field (an heir to the Marshall Field fortune) as a joint venture with Time Warner. Tom Whalley, who signed Tupac at Interscope, had brought in a demo tape Tupac had made, and Ted Field

gave it to his teen-age daughter. She told her father how much she liked it. Whalley recalls being struck as much by Tupac's looks and by his "presence" as by his talent. He remembers saying to his assistant, "Have you ever seen eyes like that?"

Interscope had positioned itself as something of a maverick in the music business, producing mostly "alternative" rock and gangsta rap, which drew on the culture of the gangs of South Central Los Angeles for its material. Rap was originally an East Coast phenomenon, an element of the hip-hop culture of the nineteen-seventies, which also included graffiti and break dancing. Although hip-hop music broke into the mainstream in 1979 with the international hit "Rapper's Delight," it was not until the late eighties, with the emergence of gangsta rap, that it showed signs of becoming hugely commercial—especially when it gained a wide audience of white youths, much as blues, jazz, and early rock and roll had. In 1991, Interscope released Tupac's first album, "2pacalypse Now," which was replete with militant lyrics depicting violence between young black men and the police. This was the al-

bum that Vice-President Dan Quayle said had "no place in our society."

IN the deposition Tupac gave in 1995, when he was asked to interpret several of the songs on "2pacalypse Now," he explained that it was his practice to introduce a central character through whom he could develop a narrative, because he believed that "before you can understand what I mean, you have to know how I lived or how the people I'm talking to live. . . . You don't have to agree with me, but just to understand what I'm talking about. Compassion, to show compassion." He also said that he was not advocating violence against the police but was simply telling stories that described reality for young black men—and cautionary stories at that, in which violence against the police often leads to death or imprisonment. On one track he says, "They claim that I'm violent just cuz I refuse to be silent." The song on the album that proved to be the most popular was entitled "Brenda's Got a Baby." Tupac said that he had written the song after reading a newspaper story about a twelve-year-old girl who became impregnated by her cousin and threw her newborn baby down an in-



David Kenner (left) wound up at the top of one of the hottest black labels, Death Row, which was cofounded by Dr. Dre.

cinerator. Asked by his lawyer whether he considered the song a political statement, Tupac said, "Yes. . . . When this song came out, no male rappers at all anywhere were talking about problems that females were having, number one. Number two, it talked about sexual abuse, it talked about child molestation, it talked about families taking advantage of families, it talked about the effects of poverty, it talked about how one person's problems can affect a whole community of people. It talked about how the innocent are the ones that get hurt. It talked about drugs, the abuse of drugs, broken families . . . how she couldn't leave the baby, you know, the bond that a mother has with her baby and how . . . women need to be able to make a choice."

Rap music is notorious for having lyrics that are degrading to women, and—much as Tupac would appear to be an advocate for women in "Brenda's Got a Baby," and also, even more, in a later song, "Keep Ya Head Up"—he wrote lyrics that were misogynistic as well. In "Tha' Lunatic," another song on "2pacalypse Now," he boasted, "This is the life, new bitch every night." In the deposition, when asked how he

could reconcile the conflicting sentiments, he says, "I wrote this when I was seventeen. . . . It's about a character, somewhat like myself, who just got into the rap business, went from having no girls to now there's girls all the time and he's just getting so much sexual attention and he's, in his mind, a dynamo. He's Rudolph Valentino and Frank Sinatra, he's everybody. . . . He can get anybody he wanted. . . . I'm an actor and I was a poet. So I felt like . . . I have to tell the multifaceted nature of a human being. . . . A man can be sexist and compassionate to women at the same time. I was. Look at 'Tha' Lunatic' and look at 'Brenda's Got a Baby.'"

TUPAC moved to Los Angeles early in 1992, and the stories he told in his music began to reflect more specifically his fascination with gang life. "Each gang element wanted to claim him," his stepbrother, Maurice Harding, a rapper known as Mopreme, says. "The cover of 'Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.'"—Tupac's second solo album—"was red, so everybody thought at first he was a Blood." But though he hung out with Bloods and, more often, their rival Crips, Tupac

did not join either gang. He was at bottom an observer and chronicler, profoundly utilitarian in his approach to experience and, some thought, people as well. And South Central L.A.—which is almost like a foreign country within a city, so singular and baroque are the gang customs, culture, and laws that govern it—was the richest territory he'd ever seen.

"He could be with this poet, this pimp, this thug—he could suck everything from each of them and that would be part of him," said Man Man, the friend who moved with him from Northern California to L.A. and became his road manager. "He started hanging around thugs. He would suck it up out of them and then use that, in his music and his acting. People would be saying, 'Fred just got killed' . . . next thing you know, it's in his song. . . . He was saying, 'If you don't know what's going on in the ghetto, this is what's going on.'"

Tupac was particularly vulnerable, however, to the charge that he had not paid his dues, that he was not a "real" gangster. For all the swaggering machismo that would come to dominate his public image as a gangsta rapper, he was



"So this is infidelity."

considered within that world to be a novitiate. When he moved to L.A., Tupac said in his deposition, he "didn't have a slingshot, I didn't have a knife, I didn't even have sharp nails." But soon he had bought a gun and was practicing shooting it on firing ranges. He muscled his slight, lithe dancer's body with weight training and began to cover his torso with tattoos. Even so, his countenance, when caught in repose—delicate, fey, androgynous, a face with long-lashed, limpid eyes—tended to betray him. But he was adamantly tough. "It irked him when they said, 'Fake gangsta rapper,'" Mopreme told me. "He was saying, 'I'm from the dirt! Y'all should be applauding me! I made it through the ghetto. I made it through school with no lights. I'm real. We the same person!'"

By 1993, Tupac seemed to have become obsessed with gang life. He was spinning from one altercation and arrest to the next. He got involved in a fight with a limo driver in Hollywood, tried to hit a local rapper with a baseball bat during a concert in Michigan, and col-

lected criminal charges and civil suits. According to Man Man and others, many of these incidents were a consequence of someone challenging Tupac's right to rap hard lyrics. "People would test him," Man Man explains. "And Pac felt, I have to prove that I'm hard. I would say to him, 'Most gangsters are people who wish they didn't have to be hard.'"

At Tupac's instigation, he, Man Man, and another friend had all got a "50 NIGGAZ" tattoo (symbolizing a black confederation among the fifty states). "Nigga," in Tupac's lexicon, stood for "Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished." In "Words of Wisdom," he raps, "Niggas, what are we going to do? Walk blind into a lie or fight. Fight and die if we must. Die like niggas." "I never could have had that word tattooed on me before," Man Man told me. "But Pac said, 'We're going to take that word that they used and turn it around on them... to make it positive.'"

When Tupac got his "thug life" tattoo, his manager, Watani Tyehimba, a former Black Panther who had been

close to Tupac since he was a small boy, was apoplectic. "I said, 'What have you done?'" Tyehimba recalled. "We talked about it, and it became clear that he did it to make sure he never forgot the dispossessed, never forgot where he came from. He was straddling two worlds. And he saw that we never make it as black people unless we sell out. He was saying he never would." Tupac collaborated with four other rappers on the album "Thug Life, Vol. 1" (which grew out of an earlier project called "Underground Railroad"). The idea was that the album would enable gang members to escape street life by becoming musicians. There were to be subsequent volumes of "Thug Life," with a new group of gang-member rappers each time. Some of the songs that Tupac and his fellow-artists wanted to include were rejected by Interscope. Tupac acknowledged that he "wouldn't play 'Thug Life' to kids. Not that it's anything that would make them go crazy or anything, but I wouldn't." Still, he knew that it was the harder lyrics that sold the best, and were perceived by the audience to most closely mirror life in the ghetto.

"Pac became the spokesperson for the ghetto. He rapped our pain," Syke (Tyuss Himes), a West Coast rapper who appeared on the "Thug Life" album, told me. "In the L.A. ghetto, four or five people get killed every week. You don't hear about it. Only their families know." Through Syke and others, Tupac was now experiencing that life directly. In several of his songs, Tupac says, "Remember Kato." "Big Kato was like my brother," Syke said. "He got killed for my car. It had Dayton rims—they cost twenty-five hundred dollars. They killed him for it." Mental Illness, another rapper with whom Tupac became friendly through Syke, was also killed; and Syke's brother killed himself. ("I guess from the stress," Syke said.)

"If you're rapping this hard stuff, you have to live it," Syke declared. "Otherwise people check your résumé and say, 'You don't look like you're hard from your résumé, let's see if you are.' Pac always felt he had to prove something to his homeboys." He points to the "rags," or bandannas, Tupac wore. "He started wearing red around Crips, and blue around Bloods—so that when he was around Crips, Bloods wouldn't think he was a Crip, and blue around Bloods, so

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Crips wouldn't think he was a Blood. His behavior was not right; he was on the edge. But they just figured he was Tupac the Rapper."

Mopreme recalled an incident that was emblematic. "There was a fight at the Comedy Store, and some gang members were after him. So he put on his [bullet-proof] vest and all his guns, and he went to their place. He said, 'Y'all looking for me? Here I am!'" After that, Mopreme added, the gang, duly impressed, didn't bother him. Legendary as such an exploit became, the reality was rather more complicated. Watani Tyehimba told me that it was the "Rolling Sixties" set of the Crips that Tupac had gotten in trouble with and that he and Mutulu Shakur each contacted their leadership. "I did it from the street, Mutulu did it from prison, and together we got it under control. Then he went to the Crips' place. After that they were under orders not to harm him." Regarding Tupac's dramatic gesture, Tyehimba said, "It was machismo."

OF all Tupac's much publicized, violent confrontations in the tempestuous year 1993, none better illustrated the degree to which he had become the exemplar of the gangsta-rap mandate than his arrest for shooting two off-duty police officers in Atlanta. The officers, he would later say, had been harassing a black motorist. The charges were dropped when it emerged that the policemen had been drinking and had initiated the incident, and when the prosecution's own witness testified that the gun one of the officers threatened Tupac with had been seized in a drug bust and then stolen from an evidence locker.

The shooting in Atlanta made Tupac a hero to some, a demon to others. "They were acting as bullies, and they drew their guns first," Mutulu Shakur says of the officers. Tupac's response "scaled him as not only a rapper but a person who was true to the game. That made him, to the people who were his audience, real—and if not liked, respected." However, to the law-enforcement community and the political conservatives who were rap's most vocal critics Tupac was not only propagating insurrectionist rhetoric in his lyrics but acting it out as well. Gangsta rap had been provoking concern among law-enforcement authorities in this country since at least 1989, when an F.B.I. public-affairs

officer wrote a letter to Ruthless/Priority Records, which distributed records by the group N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude). The F.B.I. was concerned, specifically, with the song "Fuck tha Police." "Advocating violence and assault is wrong, and we in the law enforcement community take exception to such action," the F.B.I. officer wrote. In 1992, police groups and their allies—most visibly Vice-President Quayle—denounced Time Warner for having put out the song "Cop Killer," by Ice-T. The following year, Time Warner released Ice-T from his contract, citing creative differences.

Officer Gregory White, of the L.A.P.D., who works in a special gang unit, explains that gangsta rap is a legitimate concern of law-enforcement agencies because it often involves criminal activity. "Rap is a way to launder dirty drug money," he says. According to White, some record companies provide fronts for the gangs. But he adds that it is rap music's virulently antipolice rhetoric

that is considered particularly pernicious.

Charles Ogletree, Jr., a black attorney who is a professor at Harvard Law School and who represented Tupac on a number of cases in the last year of his life, notes that "people in law enforcement not only disliked Tupac but despised him. This wasn't just a person talking, but someone who had generated a following among those who had problems with the police, and who spoke to them. He was saying, 'I understand your pain, I know the source of it, and I can tell you what to do about it.' Police officers knew him by name, Bob Dole mentioned him by name."

Mutulu Shakur believes that his own relationship to Tupac was a source of continuing concern to law-enforcement authorities. Mutulu, who wears long dreadlocks and is revered within the black-nationalist community, had been a target of the F.B.I. and other police agencies for years before the Brink's robbery. During his trial, the federal district court judge confirmed that "the rights of



"Please welcome Big Alcohol."

Dr. Shakur... were violated by the COINTELPRO program." (COINTELPRO was initiated by the F.B.I. to neutralize black-activist leaders as well as certain right-wing extremists.) Recently, in a development not unlike that in the case of Geronimo Pratt, Mutulu was granted permission to file a motion for a new trial on the ground that evidence was discovered indicating that the government withheld information that would have been favorable to his defense.

In the spring of 1994, about six months after Tupac shot the police officers in Atlanta, Mutulu was moved from the penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, to the super-maximum-security federal prison in Marion, Illinois, and from there to the country's most maximum-security institution, in Florence, Colorado. In a memorandum written in February, 1994, the warden of Lewisburg argued that Mutulu needed "the controls of Marion," in part because of his "outside contacts and influence over the younger black element."

Mutulu is convinced that Tupac became a lightning rod after he shot the policemen in Atlanta. "These disenfranchised—the young blacks who are poor and hopeless—have no leader," Mutulu said. "Their heroes are cultural and sports heroes. No one—not Jesse Jackson, not Ben Chavis, not Louis Farrakhan—has as much influence with this segment as rappers. So when Tupac stands up to a white cop, shoots it out, wins the battle, gets cut free, and continues to say the things he's been saying—the decision to destroy his credibility is clear."

WHETHER by happenstance or not, about two weeks after the Atlanta shooting something occurred that could not have been better designed to remove Tupac from circulation—and that would ultimately lead to his undoing. While in New York for the filming of the movie "Above the Rim," Tupac had been socializing with a Haitian-born music promoter, Jacques Agnant. Tupac was playing the part of a gangster named Birdie in the movie, and he told friends that spending time with Agnant helped him in his portrayal of Birdie—much as hanging out with the gangs in South Central provided him with material for his lyrics. "He said that he was studying Jacques—that Jacques was Birdie," Watani Tyehimba recalls. But

Tyehimba was alarmed by the relationship, and warned Tupac to keep his distance. "I told Tupac the first time I met him, Charles Fuller told Tupac, everyone told him he should stay away from Jacques."

Tupac ignored the warnings. "Jacques had all this gold and diamond jewelry," Man Man says. "He had money. He had a nice B.M.W. He could get you in any club. Pac was just starting to be known then, and he couldn't get in all the clubs. Jacques spent about four or five thousand dollars on Tupac in the beginning—he just overwhelmed him." According to someone else who knew Agnant, Madonna (with whom Tupac would become close) was one of Agnant's celebrity friends.

On November 14, 1993, Jacques Agnant and Tupac went to Nell's, the downtown New York club. A friend of Agnant's, identified only as "Tim," introduced Tupac to a nineteen-year-old woman named Ayanna Jackson. She expressed her interest in him; they danced together, and she performed oral sex in a corner of the dance floor. They went to his hotel, where they had intercourse. The next day, she called and left many messages on his voice mail, saying, among other things, how much she'd enjoyed his prowess. Four days later, on November 18th, she returned to his hotel suite. There, she found Tupac, Man Man, Agnant, and an unidentified friend of Agnant's. They all watched television in the living room, and then she and Tupac went into the bedroom; later, the three other men entered the room. What ensued is disputed; Jackson claims that she was forced to perform oral sex on Tupac while Agnant partly undressed her and grabbed her from behind, and that they then made her perform oral sex on Agnant's friend while Tupac held her. (Man Man, she acknowledged, did not touch her.) Tupac claimed that he left the room when the other men entered and did not witness whatever happened. In any

case, Jackson testified that she left the suite in tears and that Agnant told her to calm down, saying that he "would hate to see what happened to Mike [Tyson] happen to Tupac": that is, a woman charging him with sexual assault, which is what Jackson promptly did. She summoned the hotel's security officers, who called the police. Tupac, Man Man, and Agnant were arrested. (Agnant's friend left.)

Indictments were handed down on sex-

abuse, sodomy, and also weapons charges (two guns were found in the hotel room), and Agnant's lawyer, Paul Brenner, who had represented the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association for many years, moved that his client's case be severed from his two codefendants', on the ground that only Tupac and Man Man had been charged with the weapons offenses, and that therefore the indictment was improperly joined. The prosecutor did not oppose the motion—something that Tupac's lawyers say is highly unusual—and the judge granted it.

It was apparently after Agnant's case was severed that Tupac became convinced that Agnant was a government informer and had set him up. Tupac's suspicions were, inevitably, shaped by the experience of his extended family; "Jacques didn't smell right to me," says Watani Tyehimba, who considers himself particularly attuned to the presence of undercover agents because of his long history with the Panthers and what he learned from COINTELPRO files obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

One night in November, 1994, during the trial of Tupac and Man Man, Tupac was at a club with the actor Mickey Rourke and a friend of Rourke's, A. J. Benza, a reporter for the *Daily News*. Tupac told Benza that he believed that Agnant had set him up. A couple of days later Benza wrote an account of the conversation, recalling that Tupac had told him that Mike Tyson had called him up from prison to warn him that Agnant was "bad news." On the night of November 30th, while the jury was deliberating, Tupac went to a Times Square music studio to rap for an artist, Little Shawn, who, according to Man Man, had ties to Agnant. When Tupac and his entourage entered the lobby of the studio, three black men followed them, drew guns, and ordered them to lie down. Tupac reached for his own gun, which he usually wore in his waistband, cocked. The men then shot Tupac five times, grabbed his gold jewelry, and fled.

Convinced that the shooting had also been a setup, and that the shooters would return to finish the job, Tupac checked himself out of the hospital a few hours after surgery, and moved secretly to the house of the actress Jasmine Guy to recuperate. When he returned to the courtroom, bandaged and in a wheelchair, he was acquitted of the three sodomy counts and the weapons charges but, in an ap-



parent compromise verdict, convicted of two counts of sexual abuse—specifically, forcibly touching Ayanna Jackson's buttocks. Bail was set at three million dollars, and Tupac turned himself in and was incarcerated. On February 7, 1995, he was sentenced to a term of not less than one and a half to not more than four and a half years in prison.

A few months after Tupac was sentenced, Jacques Agnant's indictment was dismissed, and he pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors. When I asked Melissa Mourges, the assistant district attorney who had tried the case against Tupac, why Agnant had been dealt with in such a favorable way, she said that Ayanna Jackson was "reluctant to go through the case again." Jackson had, however, brought a civil suit against Tupac following the trial. (The suit was subsequently settled.)

Agnant's lawyer, Paul Brenner, believes that Tupac should never have been convicted. "It was a *very* weak case," he says. "A lot went on" at Nell's. Brenner suspects that the police planted the gun they found in the hotel room. "I worked for the P.B.A. for ten years, I *know* the police. . . . The police are friends of mine," he says. "But Tupac had no friends in the police. I couldn't find a policeman who had a good word to say about Tupac."

Tupac's conviction that Agnant had set him up seemed only to deepen with time. He went public with it on his last album, "The Don Killuminati":

I hope my true mutha-fuckas know
This be the realest shit I ever wrote. . . .
Listen while I take you back
and lay this rap
A real live tale
About a snitch named Haitian Jack
Knew he was working for the feds. . . .
Set me up
Wet me up
Nigga stuck me up.

Agnant has filed a suit for libel against Tupac's estate, Death Row, Interscope, the producer and the engineer of the song, and the publishing company. Ayanna Jackson has always maintained that she was not involved in any setup.

What role Agnant, the police, or any other governmental entity may have played in the sexual-assault case against Tupac is conjectural. But this much is plain: once the gears of the criminal-justice system were set in motion, Tupac was penalized more for who he was—a charismatic gangsta rapper with a political background—than for what he had done.



"I imagine serenity's pretty much the same, one season to the next?"

Melissa Mourges seemed to share the animus many police officers felt for Tupac; Charles Ogletree argued in his appeal that her conduct was so prejudicial (she railed against Tupac as a "thug," among other things) that a new trial was warranted on that ground alone. The setting of bail at three million dollars, Ogletree commented, was "inhumane," and the sentence was "out of line with the conviction." Tupac was sent to the Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora, New York, a maximum-security prison. "The entire case," Ogletree said, "reeked of impropriety."

IN the very beginning, prison granted Tupac a sort of grace, extricating him from the manic, overcharged existence he had created for himself. Outside, he drank heavily and smoked marijuana constantly. Now his mind was clear. And in Dannemora he was liberated from the demands

of his music. His gangsta-rapping had been a pose, he said. He had been required to maintain the pose and he did not regret doing so, but it was a pose nonetheless, and one he was abdicating. He had laid down the tracks of a new album, "Me Against the World," before he was incarcerated and, having finished that, he told *Vibe* magazine, "I can be free. When you do rap albums, you got to train yourself. You got to constantly be in character. You used to see rappers talking all that hard shit, and then you see them in suits and shit at the American Music Awards. I didn't want to be that type of nigga. I wanted to keep it real, and that's what I thought I was doing. But . . . let somebody else represent it. I represented it too much. I *was* thug life."

With the opportunity to reflect, sober, on the events that led to his incarceration, he said he realized that, "even though I'm innocent of the charge they



"Sam is very focussed."

gave me, I'm not innocent in terms of the way I was acting. . . . I'm just as guilty for not doing nothing as I am for doing things." He accepted blame for not having intervened on behalf of Ayanna Jackson. "I know I feel ashamed—because I wanted to be accepted and because I didn't want no harm done to me, I didn't say nothing."

In April of 1995, while he was still in prison, he married Keisha Morris, whom he'd been dating for about six months before he was put in jail. Eminently responsible and levelheaded, she was going to school and holding down a job; she didn't smoke marijuana; and she didn't immediately have sex with him. Morris told me that on their first date they saw a movie, and then Tupac prevailed on her to stay in his hotel room. When she insisted on going to bed fully dressed, he protested only that "you *could* take off your sneakers." In the deposition he gave in the civil case brought against him by the family of the young man who had murdered the Texas state trooper, Tupac described his new wife: "She's twenty-two, she's a Scorpio, she . . . just graduated from John Jay College with a degree in criminal science, and she's taken a year off, she's going to go to law

school . . . she's nice, she's quiet, she's a square, she's a good girl. She's my first and only girlfriend I ever had in my entire life and now she's my wife."

Tupac and Morris talked about moving to Arizona, and what they would name their kids. He started to organize his finances, and attempted to settle the numerous lawsuits pending against him across the country. But in the forbidding, almost feudal backdrop of the Clinton Correctional Facility, his efforts seemed increasingly irrelevant. His lawyers were filing appeals in his case, and under those circumstances he could have been allowed to post bail, but the district attorney's office was fighting his right to do so, and the proceedings dragged on, month after month. What he had spoken of initially when he was at Rikers Island as prison's "gift"—of respite and introspection—now had been overshadowed by the nightmare of incarceration.

"Dannemora was a hellhole—he had a one-to-four-year sentence, and they put him in a maximum-security prison!" one of his lawyers, Stewart Levy, says. Levy recalls that while he was visiting Tupac one day, "Tupac had a rectal search when he came in"—to the visiting area. "Then we spent six hours there

in full view of the guards. Then the guards started saying 'Tupac! Tupac!' in this falsetto voice, putting up their fingers with these plastic gloves, waving them—'It's time! It's time!' Why a second rectal search, when he'd been sitting there in plain view with his lawyer, why, except to humiliate him?" Yaasmyn Fula, who had known him since he was a baby, and who visited him often in prison, recalls, "It was a terrible experience for him—to be captive, in a horrific situation, with guards threatening to kill him, inmates threatening to kill him. . . . He said, 'I have never had people demean me and disgrace me as they have in this jail.'"

Other factors weighing on Tupac contributed to his anxiety about being in prison. He was the breadwinner for a large extended family—his mother, his sister, her baby, his aunt and her family, and more. Iris Crews, one of his attorneys in

the sex-abuse case—who had been leery of representing Tupac but became beguiled and devoted ("Had he been this foulmouthed, woman-hating kid, I wouldn't have done it")—recalled that one day as he sat in court with a bunch of young children climbing all over him during a recess he had remarked to her, "If I don't work, these kids don't eat." "He'd been deprived of his childhood, and then, at twenty, he had twenty people to support," she said. Beyond that, he had enormous legal fees for cases all over the country. After nearly six months in prison, despite the money being advanced by Interscope, Tupac's funds were depleted.

DEATH ROW RECORDS offered to solve all Tupac's financial problems. Death Row had been started by Suge Knight and the rap producer Dr. Dre in 1992. Knight was a former University of Nevada football star who had grown up in Compton in South Central L.A. In the late eighties, he had worked as a bodyguard in the burgeoning L.A. rap scene, eventually developing a friendship with Dre, who was then a member of the group N.W.A. Knight persuaded Dre that he was getting

cheated by his record company and that he should leave. Knight is alleged to have threatened Dre's producer with baseball bats and pipes in order to break his contract.

The release of Dre's album "The Chronic" shortly after Death Row was founded helped establish the company as a major force. By the summer of 1995, it was one of the top record companies in the rap-music world. "Suge and Dre really were a magical combination," a black entertainment executive who was then at one of the big music companies told me. They were trusted on the streets. "White or black executives, no matter what their thinking, were not going to be trusted. We're square to them." And Knight was formidable manager. "He never really seemed to sleep. He had an instinct with people about what he thought their marketability could be. He could motivate Dre to finish what he started. And he didn't take no for an answer. Dre had essentially all the ideas, and Suge the management muscle to get it done."

Death Row owed its start to Interscope. Jimmy Iovine and Ted Field had decided to fund Death Row and distribute its products in 1992, when other companies had shied away. One executive at a major studio who had turned down the prospective Death Row venture told me that he and his colleagues felt that "life is too short" to assume the risk that they believed an association with Knight might pose. "Jimmy is comfortable with gangsters, he can deal with them, it doesn't bother him," the executive said. "He's a street guy himself." Iovine—the son of a Brooklyn longshoreman, who, many say, aspired to be the next David Geffen—wanted to make his mark fast, and he was impatient with the progress of his new business at first. So he gambled, and reaped the payoff: gangsta rap turned out to be a gold mine.

But the disadvantage of being involved with Death Row was continuing reproaches from social critics and incensed shareholders. Time Warner had succumbed to pressure of that nature when it disengaged itself from Ice-T in 1993. By early 1995, however, the profitability of gangsta rap seemed to be tipping the scales of greed and fear. When Time Warner was discussing raising its stake in Interscope from twenty-five per cent to fifty per cent, they sought assurances that the relationship with Death

Row would continue. Then, in the late spring of 1995, Time Warner again came under attack for its involvement in gangsta rap, this time by the joined forces of William Bennett and C. DeLores Tucker, the chairwoman of the National Political Congress of Black Women. Tucker, pointing to Tupac, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and Dr. Dre (the latter two at Death Row), all of whom had problems with the law, declared that "Interscope is a company Time Warner needs to get out of business with immediately."

Tupac was too promising an artist for Interscope to consider jettisoning, but there was a compromise solution that might make it appear that Interscope was insulated from him, and the solution apparently made sense to everyone involved—except Tupac.

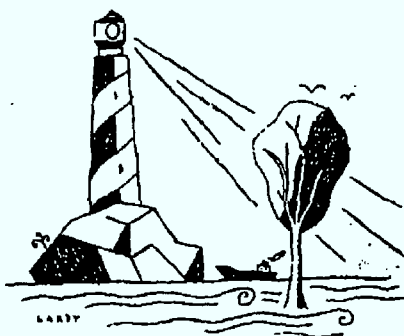
Suge Knight had wanted Tupac at Death Row for some time, although he had not been a Tupac supporter at first. "He was not into the Tupac-artist thing," a producer who knows Suge says. "But then came his thug notoriety—being called a rapist, getting in brawls. . . . With his problems, he became more attractive to Suge." Knight had been making overtures to Tupac with Interscope's blessing. A music executive who worked with Interscope recalls Iovine saying to Knight, "Take this kid, take him *please*. He's out of control. You can control him. *Take him*." Watani Tyehimba remembers a meeting in 1993 attended by Tupac, Knight, Iovine, and himself, at which Iovine, saying it made sense for Tupac to work with Dr. Dre, argued strongly that he should sign with Death Row. Tyehimba was surprised, but Iovine explained that Interscope and Death Row had a "unique relationship"—suggesting that Death Row's gain of Tupac would not mean Interscope's significant loss.

The exact nature of that "unique relationship" may be of more than academic interest to federal authorities in-

vestigating possible criminal activities at Death Row. Suge Knight has always been at pains to portray himself as an independent operator. For example, he boasted that Death Row, unlike other small companies, owns its masters (the original recordings of the albums). Since the long-term value of rap recordings is only speculative at this point, the ownership of the masters is a matter of ego more than economics, a music executive explained to me, and in the case of Death Row "it was important for the image to say they were black-owned." But in fact Death Row's masters are heavily mortgaged, and have been used as security against loans and advances from Interscope. Indeed, Death Row has been financially dependent on Interscope from the beginning.

While Knight clearly had a great deal of autonomy, he and Iovine worked together closely. "It was Jimmy and Suge, Jimmy and Suge," someone who knew them both well told me. Since no one wanted to tell Knight anything that "set his fuse," he said, it was Iovine who dealt with Knight. The relationship was very hands-on. Promotions and marketing for Death Row were handled by an Interscope employee. If a production company was making a video for Death Row, its contract might well be with Interscope. The closeness between the two companies was underscored by their physical proximity. Until last year they were located just across the hall from each other in an office building in Westwood.

ON a business flowchart, it may have meant just shifting Tupac from one box to another, but for Tupac to go from Interscope to Death Row, only a hallway apart, was to enter a different, and far more sinister, world. It was widely believed that one of the major investors in Death Row was a drug dealer named Michael (Harry-O) Harris, who was serving time for attempted murder as well as drug convictions. He was said to have provided the seed money for Death Row. Knight and Harris's lawyer, David Kenner, who had also become the lawyer for Death Row, were supposed to be guarding Harris's interests. There were even rumors that the company was being used to launder drug money on a continuing basis. Moreover, it was said that there were contracts out on Knight, and that Harris was unhappy



with Knight's business practices. How many of these stories had reached Iovine is not clear. He did, of course, know of Knight's criminal record and propensity for brutality when he first made the deal with Death Row, and as time went on he became aware of the continuing climate of violence that enveloped the company. A lawsuit against Death Row and Interscope was filed on behalf of a man stomped to death at a Death Row party in early 1995.

As for Michael Harris's bankrolling of Death Row, Iovine told federal investigators that he had heard a rumor about it in 1994 or 1995, but it was not until December, 1995, when Harris threatened to sue the company, claiming that he owned half of it, that Iovine took the rumor seriously. If this was true, then Iovine was strangely insulated, for in L.A. music circles Harris's role was widely gossiped about. Indeed, in the summer of 1995, months before Harris wrote to Iovine about his intentions to sue, the head of the Time Warner music division, Michael Fuchs, made an overture to arrange a prison meeting with Harris. He was trying to decide whether the company should yield to the political pressure about gangsta rap and sell its interest in Interscope, and he believed that it might well be Harris, not Knight, who could speak with authority to Time Warner about the future direction of Death Row. The meeting never took place, because Time Warner executives and the board of directors quickly decided that the company should shed its troublesome investment by selling its fifty-per-cent stake back to Interscope. Interscope was able to exploit that rebuff by turning around and selling the fifty-per-cent stake to MCA Music Entertainment Group (now known as Universal), for a profit of roughly a hundred million dollars.

TEMPTING as Knight's offers were (Death Row was the premier rap label, putting out one multi-platinum record after another), Tupac had consistently declined to leave Interscope. But in the summer of 1995, when it seemed as though his incarceration might continue indefinitely—for years even, if he was not allowed to post bail—he was more desperate than he'd ever been. It was in this bleak moment that Knight—and, apparently, Iovine as well—saw the opportunity to arrange things the way

they wanted to. It had become not only attractive but vital to Death Row that Tupac join the label. One of the company's biggest stars, Snoop Doggy Dogg, was facing a murder trial, and it was rumored on the street that Dr. Dre was leaving. (Dre would indeed leave by early 1996.) Death Row could not afford to lose both artists. And Knight surely knew that Tupac would be more popular than ever after his prison term, more "real" to his audience than he had been before.

Even though Interscope advanced Tupac six hundred thousand dollars during the nine months he was in prison, he was broke and frustrated. To Tyehimba, there seemed to be an unmistakable synchrony at work. Interscope would not or could not provide enough funds for Tupac. And as Knight became a more and more importunate suitor, Interscope "was squeezing us to get us to go to Death Row," Tyehimba says. Knight—accompanied by Death Row's lawyer, David Kenner, who had come to play a major role in the company, far exceeding specific legal tasks—made repeated trips to Dannemora to visit Tupac. Knight promised to solve Tupac's most intractable problems. According to several people close to Tupac, Knight claimed that Kenner could cure the legal logjam and win permission to post bail. Knight further promised that he would put up some portion of the bail and, more important, make Death Row the corporate guarantor for the entirety. Knight swore he would make Tupac a superstar, much bigger than he'd been with Interscope. And he would solve Tupac's financial worries. He would even buy Afeni a house.

It was a dazzling hand. What was probably Knight's trump card, however, was the thing that he, and he alone, could offer Tupac—the aura of gangster power. Even though Tupac had claimed that he had outgrown the gangster pose, his stay in Dannemora had made him feel more vulnerable than ever before. "He wanted to get out of jail, and he needed a label that could back him," a friend who visited him in prison that summer says. "The street shit had to be dealt with, and Suge had power on the street." Tupac brooded about being shot in the Times Square recording studio and about what he believed was the setup by Jacques Agnant. He also suspected people who were there in the studio that night: Andre Harrell, now the head of Mo-

town; Bad Boy Entertainment C.E.O. Sean (Puffy) Combs; the rapper Christopher Wallace, known both as Biggie Smalls and as the Notorious B.I.G.; and others. (They all denied any involvement.) At first, Man Man said, Tupac did not believe that Biggie, who had been a good friend of his, and who had come to visit him when he was recuperating from his wounds, had been involved in any way. "But when Tupac was in jail he was getting letters from people saying Biggie had something to do with it, he started thinking about it, it got so out of hand, it *grew*—and once it got that big, publicly, you had to go with it."

Watani Tyehimba, Stewart Levy, and Charles Ogletree all say they argued vigorously with Tupac about his decision to go to Death Row. "Tupac told us, 'The trouble with all of you is, you're too nice,'" Levy recalls. Tyehimba told me that at his last meeting with Tupac at the prison, Tupac hugged him, wept, and said, "I know I'm selling my soul to the devil." Kenner drafted a handwritten, three-page agreement for Tupac to sign. Within a week, in a stunning coincidence, the New York Court of Appeals granted him leave to post bail. (The money was provided by Interscope and a division of Time Warner, although Tupac always gave Suge full credit.)

Knight and Kenner arrived in a private plane and white stretch limousine to pick Tupac up. Underscoring the degree of porousness between Interscope and Death Row, Tupac was, according to someone familiar with the negotiation, given a "verbal release" from his Interscope contract. As for Kenner's handwritten document, Ogletree, who would not see it until much later, says, "It wasn't a legal contract. . . . It was absurd that anyone with an opportunity to reflect would agree to those terms. It was only because he was in prison that he signed it. Tupac was saying, 'My freedom is everything. If you can get me my freedom, you can have access to my artistic product.'"

IN ways large and small, in both art and life, Tupac Shakur instinctively pushed past customary boundaries, and when he came out of prison and joined Death Row that impulse was heightened. He would work the longest hours (nineteen-hour stretches, despite the consumption of enormous amounts of alcohol and marijuana), he would be-

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Tupac with Suge Knight, the head of Death Row. "Suge would get him all stirred up," a friend says. "And he'd try to behave like a gangster."

come the biggest star, he would become a "superpower" within the Death Row-dominated world of gangsta rap. Just nine months earlier, he had said, "Thug life to me is dead." Now he embraced it. "Pac was like a chameleon," Syke says, echoing a common view among Tupac's friends. "Whatever he was around, that's what he turned into. And when he got around Death Row, he tried to be that."

While Tupac had transgressed many social limits, he had also drawn to him people who tried, with varying degrees of success, to moderate his behavior. But when he set out for the province of Death Row, he left behind virtually all of these putative guardians—among them, Watani Tyehimba, Karen Lee, Man Man, even his wife, Keisha. (Their marriage was later annulled.) Yaasmyn Fula, who was one of the few old friends who remained close to Tupac, says that he was "out of his element. It was a completely different soldier mentality. He was fascinated by it because of the absence of a male figure who could say, 'Leave it alone.'"

"He was always looking for a father," Watani Tyehimba says, "in me some, in Mutulu some. But what he missed was one father with the good and the bad, not a composite." By the time Tupac met the man who said he was his father (a former Black Panther named Billy Garland, who materialized at Tupac's

hospital bedside in New York after Tupac was shot in the Times Square lobby), the encounter failed to satisfy him. It was in Suge Knight, many thought, especially when they saw the two together—the slender, lithe youth shadowed by the other's massive bulk, the one all animation, the other exuding authority—that he found that connection. Tupac and Knight seemed almost inseparable in the months after Tupac's release from prison; they worked together long hours in the studio, and socialized when they were through. One of Tupac's friends remembers watching them sing a song from the soundtrack of "Gridlock'd": "You Ain't Never Had a Friend Like Me."

The combination of Tupac and Knight seems to have been combustible, with each activating the most explosive elements in the other. Someone who has known Knight well for years points out that it was after Tupac arrived at Death Row that its signature excess became even more pronounced—fancy clothes, gold and diamond jewelry (especially heavy medallions, laden with diamonds and rubies, bearing the Death Row symbol of a hooded figure in an electric chair), Rolls-Royces (four were purchased to celebrate Snoop Doggy Dogg's acquittal on murder charges), and lots of women. Before Tupac, a knowledgeable insider pointed out, "Death Row had not

had a real star. They had Snoop and Dre—they're entertainers. Snoop could be sitting quietly over there in a corner—he gestured to one end of the restaurant we were sitting in—but if Tupac were here he would create such a ruckus. People would be saying, 'That's Tupac!' He had star aura. Suge saw that, and he liked that. All of a sudden, there were all these pictures of Suge, together with Tupac, feeding off each other."

ONCE Tupac came out of prison and joined Death Row, he probably did more to stoke the flames of a much publicized feud between East and West Coast rappers than anyone. For all the posturing and the displays of bravado and the aspersions cast on everyone's integrity, this was primarily a feud about money. Rap had originated in the East, but, starting in the late eighties, the gangsta rappers from Los Angeles were more successful. Then Puffy Combs's Bad Boy Records, which was based in New York, began putting out its own version of gangsta rap—which the West insisted was merely derivative. Watani Tyehimba told me that much of Tupac's anger at Biggie Smalls, Puffy's most successful rapper, was based on professional jealousy: Tupac was in jail, and Biggie's single "One More Chance" was No. 1 on the charts. In an interview in *The Source* in March, 1996, Tupac claimed he'd been

sleeping with Biggie's wife, the singer Faith Evans, and he went so far as to taunt Biggie about it in a song: "I fucked your bitch, you fat motherfucker."

Some of those close to Tupac were appalled at the Faith Evans imbroglio. (She denies that such an encounter with Tupac ever took place.) "The trouble with what Pac was doing, with this East Coast-West Coast thing, was it was just something that got out of hand, a publicity thing, but brothers in the street think something is really going on, and they're gonna die for it," Syke contended. "Pac was like a person starting a fire, and it got out of control."

When the East Coast-West Coast war was simply

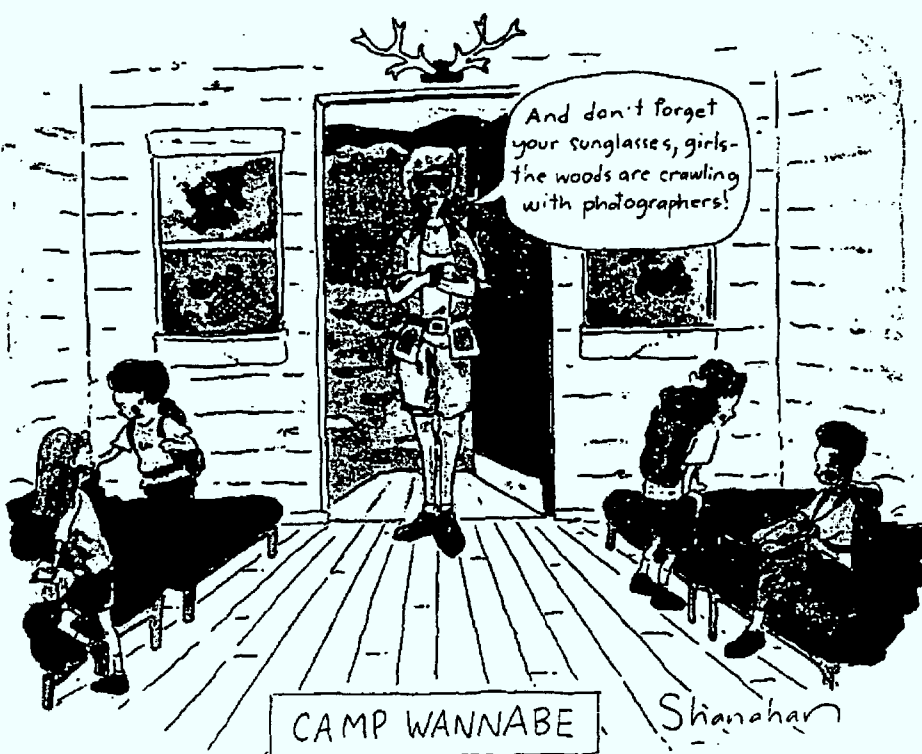


"Still, he might be remembered as the 'no cloning' President."

verbal, it was useful for its marketing possibilities. But it may also have played into a real, not hyped, desire for vengeance on Knight's part, since he is said to have blamed Puffy for a close friend's murder. The feud moved to a new plane at a Christmas bash in 1995, hosted by Death Row at the Château Le Blanc mansion, in the Hollywood Hills. A record promoter from New York, Mark Anthony Bell, who is an associate of Puffy Combs, is said to have been lured upstairs to a room where Knight, Tupac, and their entourage had been drinking. Bell was allegedly tied to a chair, interrogated about the killing of Suge's friend, and hounded for the address of Puffy and Puffy's mother. He is alleged to have been beaten with broken champagne bottles, and Knight is said to have urinated into a jar and told Bell to drink from it.

Bell received an estimated six-hundred-thousand-dollar settlement from Death Row, and he declined to press charges. But a friend of Bell's told me that he had reached him in Jamaica about a month after the incident, and Bell had said to him, "I'm here till I heal. They busted me up bad!" People who were with Tupac the last year of his life are not surprised that he would be involved in something like this. "When Tupac was with Suge," one friend says, "Suge would get him all stirred up, and he'd try to behave like a gangster." He recalled another incident, in the spring of 1996, when a producer said that he wanted to leave Death Row with Dr. Dre. "He came out all bloodied up," Tupac's friend said. "And Tupac was a part of that. He had to show Suge what he was made of."

TUPAC always wanted to be a leader, not a follower," Preston Holmes, the president of Def Pictures, who had worked with Tupac in the movies "Juice" and "Gridlock'd," says. "And in order to be on top in that world, he had to act a certain way—screwing the most women, stomping the most guys, talking the most shit. But I had conversations with him in this period, when he would say, 'Gangsta rap is dead.' I think he was trying to extricate himself."



In February, Tupac had decided to start his own production company, called Euphania, and he asked his old friend Yaasmyn Fula to come to L.A. to run it. Fula began trying to organize Tupac's business affairs. "We weren't getting copies of the financial accountings," she said. "We'd ask for them, and they'd send a present"—like a car. "I felt like there was this dark cloud over us. I knew so much was wrong—but Pac would say, 'Yas, you can't keep telling me things, I know what I am doing.'" Fula felt that Afeni, from whom she was becoming estranged, had been influenced by Knight's attentions and largesse. Tupac's signing with Death Row had transformed the lives of his extended family, even more than his contract with Interscope had. "They had lived lives of scarcity, worrying about the next meal, worrying about how to pay the rent," Fula says, but now they stayed at the elegant Westwood Marquis hotel for several months, racking up an "astronomical" bill. "Pac felt he was cursed with this dysfunctional family," Fula says, "although he loved them. And as his success grew, especially in the last year, this presence grew. They were always there."

Afeni Shakur says that "Death Row in the beginning treated us much better

than Interscope had." But she suggests that she was not oblivious of the dark side of Knight and Death Row. She told me that Tupac had not allowed either Syke or Tupac's young cousins—the Outlawz, who travelled with him and whom he supported (and one of whom, Yafeu Fula, Yaasmyn's son, was shot and killed two months after Tupac's murder)—to sign with Death Row, because he "didn't want any of them to live in bondage." She also told me that when Tupac encouraged her to go out socially with Knight's mother, she believed that he was doing that in order to protect her. "Suge's mother was very nice," Afeni said, "but I never gave her my phone number. We both understood it was the rules of war."

The document that Kenner had drafted and Tupac had signed in prison stipulated not only that he would become an artist for Death Row but also that Knight would become his manager and Kenner his lawyer. For Kenner, Death Row's lawyer, also to represent Tupac was at best bad judgment and at worst a clear case of conflict of interest. And if Kenner possessed an ownership interest in Death Row as well, something which has long been rumored in Los Angeles music-industry circles but



which Kenner has consistently denied, the conflict would be even more patent. It also might explain how he—a white criminal-defense lawyer who in the eighties handled some of L.A.'s most high-profile drug, racketeering, and murder cases but had virtually no experience in entertainment law—could have emerged at the top of one of the hottest black-music record labels.

Kenner's entrée, it now seems plain, came through Michael Harris. Paul Palladino, a private investigator who has worked closely with Kenner for years, told me that back in 1991 or so "David was representing Michael Harris on his appeal, and Harris introduced him to Suge." In his unfiled complaint against Death Row and Interscope, Harris alleged that he had had a prison meeting in September, 1991, with Kenner and Knight, to discuss the terms of his investment in what would become Death Row. Harris and Knight were to be equal partners, he alleged, and Kenner was to set up the corporation and help Knight manage it. (Knight and Kenner deny this.) In its first couple of years, other lawyers who were retained by Death Row told me, Kenner was doing its criminal-defense work, and he did not appear to have a broader role. But by

1995 he was, some thought, the proverbial power behind the throne. To many of Tupac's friends, the relationship between Knight and Kenner fit a familiar pattern: a black gangster who has access to the streets works in consort with a white player who is connected to levers of power in the world at large. Knight might wear a ring with the initials "M.O.B."—"Member of Bloods"—but in their eyes Kenner was the real thing.

DAVID KENNER began to represent Tupac as his entertainment lawyer and as his lawyer for civil and criminal cases in California, but Tupac asked Charles Ogletree to continue to represent him as well. Ogletree told me that he repeatedly wrote letters to Death Row, asking to see the contract Tupac had signed with Death Row in prison and to negotiate a formal contract under more conscionable circumstances; but all his efforts, he said, were "met with silence, diversions, and outright misrepresentations."

Ogletree was also handicapped in his efforts to carry out Tupac's instructions to settle some of his numerous civil lawsuits. "Tupac came out of jail with no money. He would say, 'I want to take care of this case.' I would negotiate a settlement; he would say, 'Good, Death

Row has my money, tell them to send the check.'" When the check didn't come, Ogletree continued, "I would call Kenner. He would say, 'It's in the mail.' Then, when it never arrived, he would say he was sending it FedEx. Then, when it didn't arrive, he would say he'd wire it." Ogletree added, "We should have been able to close the deal, but it was never possible. We had to go through the record company. It was as though he had no life except that given to him by Death Row."

By the late spring, Ogletree says, Tupac was carefully plotting his escape. "He had Euphania, he had the Outlawz, he had his movie deals—he was building something that was all to be part of one entity. . . . He had a strategy—the idea was to maintain a friendly relationship with Suge but to separate his business." The precedent of Dr. Dre's departure from Death Row did not seem especially encouraging. A music-business executive who was friendly with Dre says that Dre left because he was uncomfortable with Knight's "business practices." Dre abandoned his interest in the company in return for a relatively modest financial settlement, and Interscope facilitated the divorce by giving him a lucrative new contract. "Look at Dre," Ogletree says. "Such a brilliant, creative musician. He started Death Row, and in order to get out he had to give up almost everything. . . . Now, what would it take for Tupac, the hottest star around, whose success was only growing?" From a legal standpoint, Ogletree said, it was not so difficult; the contract signed in prison could be challenged. "But you have to live after that. . . . It was a question of how to walk away with your limbs attached and bodily functions operating."

"I remember seeing him just before his twenty-fifth birthday," Ogletree continued. "He felt it was a glorious day. He never imagined he'd live to be twenty-five—but there was a sadness in his eyes, because he still had these chains binding him. This was not where he wanted to be. I said, 'You can be anything you want to be.' He said, 'Can I be a lawyer?' I said, 'You'd be a damn good lawyer!' I sent him a Harvard Law School sweatshirt."

Through most of the summer, Tupac was on the set of "Gang Related," a film in which he was costarring with Jim

Belushi. The night it wrapped, Tupac celebrated by taking one of his lawyers, Shawn Chapman, to dinner at the Peninsula Hotel in Beverly Hills. He had been seeing a lot of Kidada Jones, Quincy Jones's daughter, but that didn't deter him from flirting with Chapman. She remembers him driving away from the Peninsula in his midnight-blue Rolls-Royce with the top down, playing Sinatra's "Fly Me to the Moon." It was a romantic and lighthearted interlude—and a stark contrast to the grave business Tupac was transacting.

Just a few days earlier, on August 27th, Tupac had severed a critical tie to Death Row. "He had been on the set all day, and in the studio all night," Fula recalls. "He sent us to the studio to get cassettes of what he'd done the night before—he wanted to listen to it. They said no, that Kenner wouldn't allow it. Pac went *crazy!* He fired Kenner . . . I typed the letter . . . and he gave me permission to hire another lawyer."

"Tupac waited far longer than I wanted him to," Ogletree says. But, to Tupac's more streetwise friends, firing Kenner seems impossibly rash. Syke didn't know that had happened until I told him, and when I did he looked at me for a long moment, as if he was having difficulty processing what I had said. Then he murmured—repeatedly—"He fired Kenner?"

"Tupac was brilliant, but he wasn't smart," another friend says. "He didn't realize, or he refused to accept, what anyone from the street would have known—that you *can't* fire Kenner, you don't leave Death Row." Suge Knight is said now to maintain that Tupac's differences were with Kenner, not with him.

KNIGHT had planned a big party at his Las Vegas club, 662 (on a phone pad the numbers spell "M.O.B."), on September 7th, following the heavyweight-boxing-title fight between Mike Tyson and Bruce Seldon. Tupac was supposed to attend with the Death Row contingent. He had just got back to L.A. from New York that morning, and he decided he was not going to Las Vegas; he told Fula he was going to Atlanta to settle problems with some relatives there, instead. But just a few hours later she learned that he had changed his plans; Knight had persuaded him to go to Las Vegas after all.

After the almost nonexistent fight—Tyson knocked Seldon out in less than two minutes—Knight, Tupac, and their entourage were on the way out of the M.G.M. Grand when they came upon Orlando Anderson, a reputed member of the Southside Crips, the Bloods' longstanding enemies. According to an affidavit that would later be filed by a detective with the Compton Police Department, some Crips had robbed a member of Death Row of his company medallion a month or so earlier; now, in the hotel, the victim is said to have whispered to Tupac that Anderson was the thief. Tupac, predictably, took off after Anderson, followed by Knight and the rest of the Death Row entourage; they set upon him, beating and kicking him, until hotel security guards arrived and broke up the melee.

Tupac went to his hotel briefly, then rejoined the others; about two hours after the fight, they were on their way to Knight's club, in a long convoy of cars. Afeni Shakur says that Kidada Jones, who was in Las Vegas that night, told her that Tupac had wanted to drive his Hummer, which is akin to a combat vehicle; but Knight, insisting that they had things to discuss, had prevailed upon Tupac to ride with him. Knight drove his black B.M.W., and Tupac rode in the front passenger seat, with his window down. A former Death Row bodyguard told me that the situation was aberrant; ordinarily, an armed bodyguard would have been riding with them, and additional armed bodyguards would follow in the car behind. This night, however, Knight and Tupac rode alone. The Outlawz were in the car behind them, with a bodyguard who was unarmed.

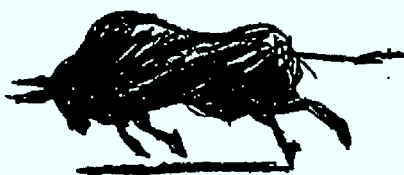
A white Cadillac pulled up alongside Knight's B.M.W. and a black man who was riding in it fired about thirteen shots from a .40-calibre Glock pistol into the passenger side, hitting Tupac, who struggled to get into the back seat. Knight (by his own account in a subsequent police interview) pulled him down. Tupac was hit four times; Knight's forehead was

grazed. (He would later maintain he had a bullet lodged in his head.) At the hospital, Tupac went into emergency surgery, where doctors removed one shattered lung, and he was listed in critical condition. According to his mother and others who saw him over the next several days, he was first unconscious and then, because he was so agitated, he was heavily sedated. Knight, interviewed several weeks later by *Time* magazine, claimed that when he was sitting on Tupac's bed, Tupac "called out to me and said he loved me."

Tupac died on the afternoon of September 13th. Afeni says that doctors tried to resuscitate him several times, and that she then told them not to try again. She later told me that when he was thrashing about she surmised that he was trying to tell one of his cousins that he wanted him to "pull the plug." She also said repeatedly that "Tupac would not have wanted to live as an invalid."

ON March 9th, six months after Tupac was murdered in Las Vegas, Biggie Smalls, who had been singled out by Tupac as a traitor and mortal enemy, was shot in his car as he left a music-industry party in Los Angeles. No arrests have been made in either Tupac's or Biggie's murder. While the Las Vegas police would appear to have been almost lackadaisical in their approach to Tupac's murder (they made only a perfunctory attempt to question Tupac's cousins, who were riding in the car behind Knight's, for example), it is also true that in that group of witnesses—and among their peers—giving information to the police is taboo. When Knight was interviewed on "Primetime Live," he said that even if he knew who had shot Tupac, he would not say. "I don't get paid to solve homicides," he declared.

There have been many theories about who killed Tupac; one of the most prevalent rumors, which began to circulate shortly after Tupac was shot and has persisted to this day, is that Knight himself had something to do with Tupac's murder. In mid-March he gave an interview from jail to "America's Most Wanted" and said that he had not been involved. But many of those who were close to Tupac continue to suspect—based only on circumstantial evidence and their understanding of the street—that it was his



attempt to leave Death Row that led to his death. Dre had managed to do it, but only by relinquishing any claim on Death Row. A music-business veteran who is close to Dre told me that "if Tupac had left Death Row . . . it would have been worse than devastating—it's an insult. It's a public slap in the face. It is not tolerable. 'I've made you and you're going to leave me? And six months after Dre did it?' In another culture," he concluded, "people sue you."

In the last few months, Knight has been buffeted by one damaging revelation after another. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in October that he had given a recording contract to the daughter of the deputy district attorney Lawrence Longo, who had helped strike his probation deal in the assault case, and also that David Kenner had rented a nineteen-thousand-dollar-a-month Malibu Colony house from the Longo family and that Knight had stayed in it. (Longo denies any wrongdoing.) Then, in December, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Steve Cantrock, Death Row's accountant and a principal in the L.A. office of Gelfand, Rennert & Feldman, a division of Coopers & Lybrand, had signed a document saying that he stole four and a half million dollars from Death Row. Cantrock was said to have told federal investigators that he had been invited to a San Fernando Valley house where Knight, Kenner, and others were gathered, that he had been forced to his knees and, fearing for his life, signed the handwritten confession that Kenner had drafted on the spot. (Knight says that no force was involved. Cantrock denies stealing the money.) Cantrock, who is in hiding, has since been forced out by his firm. He has also been reported to have been an intermediary between Knight and alleged organized-crime figures; federal investigators have reportedly been examining possible links between Death Row and organized-crime families in New York and Chicago. When federal grand jury subpoenas were sent out last February, they focussed not only on Knight's role but on Kenner's as well.

In mid-April, Afeni Shakur filed a racketeering suit against Death Row, Suge Knight, and David Kenner, alleging that they were engaged in a conspiracy to steal from Tupac. The suit included a claim against Kenner for

malpractice and breach of fiduciary duty, charging that his "purported representation of Tupac was in hopeless conflict" with his own interests—inasmuch as Kenner, the suit alleges, was both an attorney for Death Row and an owner of it. Several people close to the situation say that the suit is on the verge of being settled, and that Interscope has helped to make that possible.

Since Tupac's death, Interscope has repeatedly sought to mollify Afeni. In October, when she found Knight and Kenner unresponsive and she was threatening to block the release of Tupac's last album unless she got an accounting of the money due to him, it was Jimmy Iovine who met with Afeni and her lawyer, Richard Fischbein, and agreed that Interscope would pay her an immediate three million dollars with more to come. And it was Interscope, not Death Row, that underwrote a memorial service for Tupac in Atlanta in November.

Interscope has, in a way, been a model of corporate responsibility. Indeed, in a strictly corporate sense it has done more than was required. Tupac was not officially Interscope's artist, after all. But Interscope executives may feel a level of responsibility for having pushed Tupac into Suge's arms. And there is also a compelling business rationale for Interscope to do everything possible to quell the skirmishing between Tupac's estate and Death Row. As one lawyer close to the situation points out, if Afeni didn't get what she wanted from Death Row she would surely sue not only Death Row but Interscope as well, on the theory that the companies were so closely related as to have shared exposure. Being subject to a legal process of discovery on this issue could hardly have been an attractive prospect for Interscope—particularly in light of the ongoing criminal probe of Death Row.

IF Interscope escapes unscathed in the federal probe, Suge Knight's undoing could well prove a boon. "Joint ventures are only as successful as the operators are frugal," an executive close to Interscope points out, and at Death Row the spending was "obscene." "If they can shift the Death Row assets within Interscope, they'll come out

smelling like roses—and not have the wild card of Suge and Kenner." A couple of months ago, it was reported that Seagram, the parent of Universal, is considering buying, for three hundred and fifty million dollars, the half of Interscope that Universal does not already own. This would mean a colossal profit for Iovine and Field.

To many blacks in the music business, the lack of congruency in this particular morality tale is bitterly familiar. Suge Knight has retained Milton Grimes, who defended Rodney King, to represent him in the federal investigation. Grimes argues that Death Row did not operate in a vacuum. "Their money came from Interscope, and from MCA, and they"—Interscope—"were hands-on. So if there are going to be indictments, let them take on the industry—not just this one black business."

That Interscope is widely regarded as the most successful new label since Geffen Records cannot be attributed solely to its affiliation with Death Row. Interscope has hugely successful rock groups, including Nine Inch Nails, Bush, and the Wallflowers, and the pop groups No Doubt and God's Property. But it was Death Row that rescued them from their early doldrums and that delivered one multi-platinum album after another. And the legacy of Death Row to Interscope is a rich one. "Death Row served an amazing purpose for Interscope," an entertainment executive told me. "It helped put them in the black-music business. Today, no matter what happens, they *have* that. People in that community feel that they gave a black man power. They gave a black man autonomy. They gave a black man money."

Iovine and Field did bet on Suge Knight and Dre when other companies would not. They have justified what they did by alluding to the First Amendment, and to their belief in giving a chance to black artists and entrepreneurs from the street. But Death Row was no enterprise zone. And anyone who got near it could have predicted that there would be a price to pay for its cultivation of gangsterism—in lyrics, in social conduct, and perhaps in business practices as well.

Tupac, of course, paid the heaviest price of all. ♦