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Tupac's Panther Shadow: The Political Targeting of Tupac



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Assata Shakur

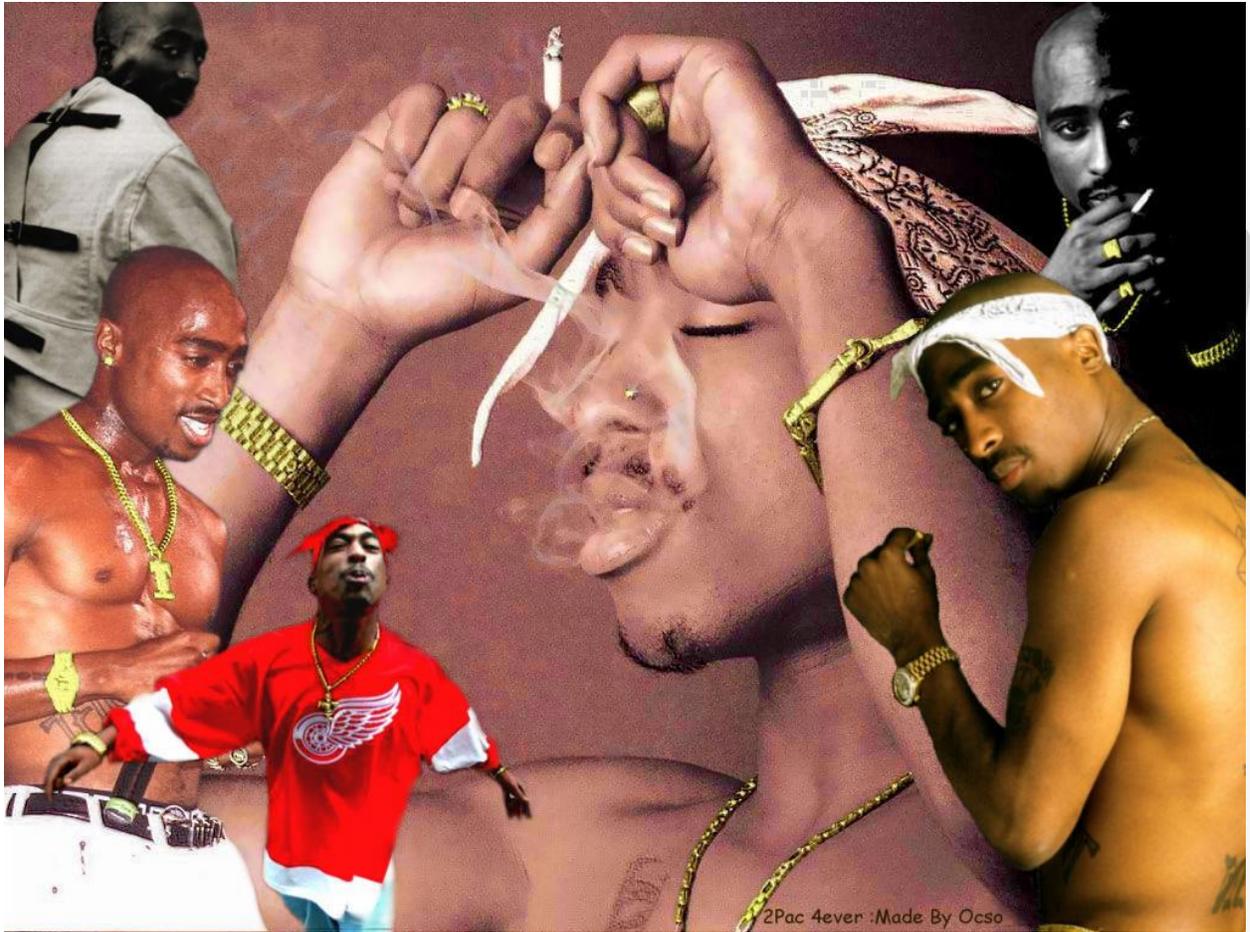
Mutulu Shakur

Sundiata Acoli

Sekou Odinga

Jalil Muntaqim

FREE ALL
POLITICAL PRISONERS



Assata Shakur



Mutulu Shakur



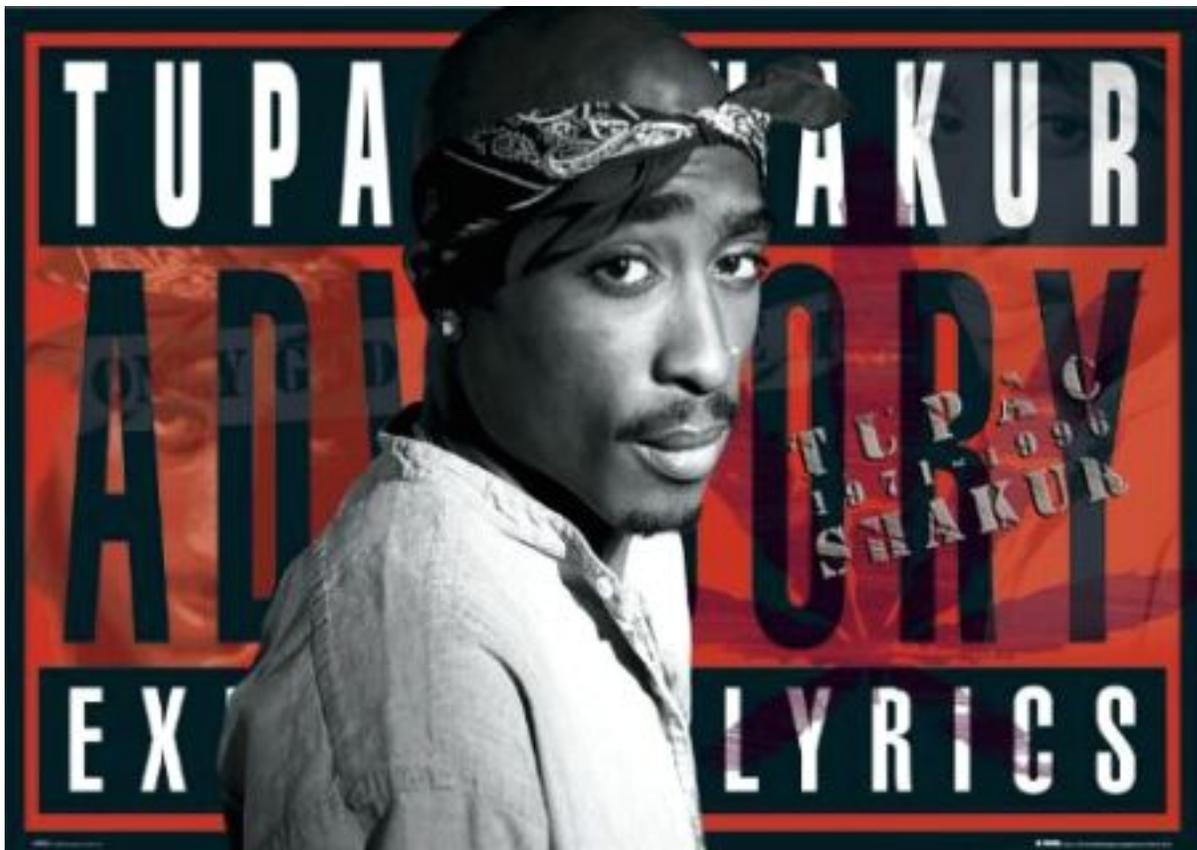
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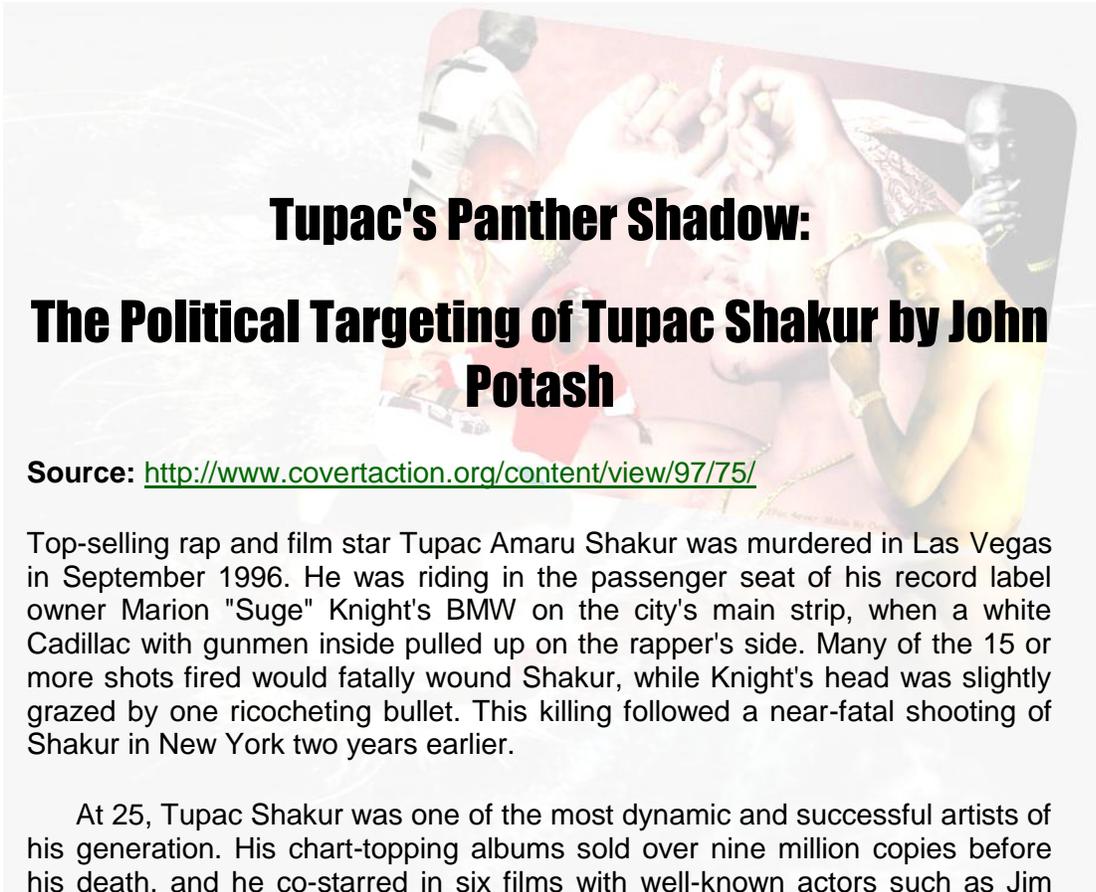
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Tupac's Panther Shadow: The Political Targeting of Tupac Shakur by John Potash

Source: <http://www.covertaction.org/content/view/97/75/>

Top-selling rap and film star Tupac Amaru Shakur was murdered in Las Vegas in September 1996. He was riding in the passenger seat of his record label owner Marion "Suge" Knight's BMW on the city's main strip, when a white Cadillac with gunmen inside pulled up on the rapper's side. Many of the 15 or more shots fired would fatally wound Shakur, while Knight's head was slightly grazed by one ricocheting bullet. This killing followed a near-fatal shooting of Shakur in New York two years earlier.

At 25, Tupac Shakur was one of the most dynamic and successful artists of his generation. His chart-topping albums sold over nine million copies before his death, and he co-starred in six films with well-known actors such as Jim Belushi, Tim Roth, and his friend Mickey Rourke.¹ The brutal end of so promising a career attracted widespread attention, but fundamental questions about the case remain unanswered. They concern vicious police actions and harassment against Shakur by law enforcement authorities.

One less publicized aspect of Shakur's high-profile life was that his mother and extended family were leading Black Panther figures of the 1960s and 1970s. Research on FBI monitoring of Shakur from his early adolescence, reflects patterns of police surveillance, evidence of government ties to some of his associates, suspicious deaths of people connected to him, and mainstream media's misinformation about Shakur's political activism. All these factors mirror Tupac Shakur's Black Panther heritage.

Shakur's Death

While numerous media accounts portray the rap world as extremely violent, a product of the rough ghetto gang life some rap lyrics dramatize, most of the murders in that world began with the apparent targeting of Tupac, and continued after his death.

The Las Vegas Police Department murder "investigation" failed to come to any conclusion. Award-winning Las Vegas Sun police reporter Cathy Scott wrote a page-long "list of questionable decisions in the Tupac Shakur homicide investigation,"² suggesting no conclusions were actually ever sought.

The Las Vegas Police claimed that no witnesses to the murder came forward. But Shakur's backup singer, his cousin Yafeu Fula, immediately told police that he thought he could identify the killer in a line-up. They failed to follow usual procedures and did not detain Fula as a witness. Two months later, in New Jersey, Fula was murdered in his girlfriend's apartment stairwell. The local police reported the death as drug-related, later admitting there was no substantiation for this claim.³

In another unusual police action on the night of Shakur's murder, the two Las Vegas motorcycle officers who heard the shots failed to split up-one to secure the crime scene and gather witnesses and evidence, the other to pursue the fleeing vehicles-standard procedure.

A Panther Legacy

While police acted suspiciously in the events surrounding Shakur's murder, their behavior long before his death is even more telling. As part of the FBI's well-documented Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) against radical activists,⁴ in 1969, New York police arrested Shakur's mother, New York Black Panther member Afeni Shakur. As one of the Black Panther 21, she was charged with 30 counts amounting to "an overall plan to harass and destroy elements of society."⁵ Despite little formal education, Afeni successfully defended herself in court and was acquitted with the other Panther members.

Afeni had developed a relationship with fellow Panther 21 revolutionary Mutulu Shakur who later became Tupac's surrogate father. In addition to being charged in the 1979 jailbreak of New York Panther Assata Shakur, in 1981 Mutulu was sought, along with a coalition of revolutionaries, for the robbery of a Brinks armored truck.⁶ Until Mutulu's capture in 1986 by New York's Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF), the FBI periodically entered Tupac's schools to question him regarding the whereabouts of his fugitive surrogate father.⁷

Tupac was heir to a militant family. Afeni named Los Angeles Panther leader Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt her son's godfather. COINTELPRO's targeting of Pratt was an example of how the FBI cooperated with local police intelligence to target Panther chapters in dozens of cities.



Police meddled in the lives of many Black Panthers through false arrests leading to beatings, attempted murder, and murder. These well-documented cases include evidence (i.e., partial admissions by police and FBI) that, in 1969 an undercover agent drugged Illinois Panther leader Fred Hampton so that the police could murder him in his sleep.⁸ Shortly before the Chicago raid, Hampton had flown to L.A. to meet with local Panther leader Pratt. Soon after the Chicago raid, L.A. Panther headquarters was also raided and Pratt's bed shot at, though he was luckily sleeping on the floor.

Pratt was later convicted of a Los Angeles robbery and murder in 1972. The massive police and prosecutorial misconduct, including the use of a police informant as the witness to his alleged confession, convinced a judge to rule in 1997-after 25 years-that Pratt should be released from prison. Defense lawyers eventually forced the FBI's release of phone taps of a Panther meeting in Oakland which Pratt was attending at the time of the murder in L.A. The FBI admitted that the specific sections of the tape which would have had Pratt on it were "accidentally lost or destroyed."⁹

FBI actions against Pratt, in conjunction with the state's Criminal Intelligence and Investigation unit and Los Angeles Police Department's Criminal Conspiracy Section,¹⁰ suggest similar police tactics as part of continued COINTELPRO interest by law enforcement agencies in Panther families that would be echoed throughout Shakur's life.

Despite the Black Panthers' wildfire spread to dozens of cities by the early 1970s, the FBI and police departments' COINTELPRO activities all but extinguished the group by the end of the decade. The Black Panthers, and the radical Black nationalist movement more generally, had been effectively destroyed. But the underlying problem of racism that had given rise to the movement remained.

COINTELPRO Continues

Although COINTELPRO formally ended in 1971, at least one ex-FBI agent stated that the FBI informally continued the same program by framing it in different terms.¹¹ Particular evidence of COINTELPRO's informal continuance has come out in class action suits in New York City.

In a landmark case challenging COINTELPRO activities in New York City, "[Police] Commissioner Murphy conceded that the Police Department was engaged in the vast bulk of activities described in [the class action] complaint, including surreptitious surveillance and undercover infiltration of the political activities of individuals and groups."¹² The class action suit, brought by a coalition of activists, also exposed the activities of "physical and verbal coercion...provocation of violence, and recruitment to act as police informers," against New Yorkers involved in lawful political and social activities.¹³ One Panther historian noted that "at least five BOSS [Bureau of Special Services] agents were planted inside the Panther Party almost from its inception, beginning at once to worm their way into positions of power."¹⁴

The settlement of this case led to a court order in 1985 stipulating specific "Guidelines" for future police activity.¹⁵ Police admitted there was a special unit called "The Black Desk" to monitor Black New Yorkers. BOSS illegal police surveillance on the Black Liberation Movement in the 1980s, which included Tupac Shakur's lawyer, Michael Warren, was found to have



violated the Guidelines in a 1989 opinion.¹⁶ Statewide, the JTTF, an FBI-police amalgam, had hunted down Mutulu Shakur, among other "terrorists," and harassed their supporters.¹⁷

The question remains whether the COINTELPRO activities carried out by BOSS under the auspices of The Black Desk, and JTTF, were continued under a different police unit name in the 1990s. Often described as the special elite police unit with an almost completely white racial make-up, New York City's select Street Crime Unit would be the most likely candidate.¹⁸

New evidence detailed below suggests that COINTELPRO tactics against Blacks in particular may have been behind the first near-fatal shooting of Shakur in New York in 1994.

Fame and Politics

By the end of the Reagan/Bush era, Shakur's auspicious musical debut, including lyrics discussing his Black Panther family, coupled with leading movie roles, threatened to bring the Panthers back into vogue.

Thus it is no coincidence that Shakur attracted police attention in direct proportion to his fame and success. In line with Shakur's quote, "I never had a record until I made a record," shortly after his successful solo debut, Oakland police ticketed him for jaywalking, then arrested and beat him in custody.¹⁹ Shakur's first record, 2Pacalypse Now, railed against the FBI, the CIA, and President Bush. In 1992, a year after that album's release, Vice President Dan Quayle, and later Senator Bob Dole, singled him out as responsible for police deaths.

With the FBI watching Shakur since he was a teen, and his leadership in the New Afrikan Panthers, a group dedicated to replicating the Black Panthers,²⁰ police involvement in his life deserves more scrutiny.

While Shakur's lyrics often dramatized inner-city life, including what some might view as negative images, glorifying gang life and denigrating women, they also included many positive political messages: ideas about Malcolm X and various Black Panthers.²¹ As a youth, Shakur performed benefits for Black Panther prisoners. By nineteen, he sang with the Grammy-nominated band Digital Underground. Besides his stint as a Panther Chairman and his Underground Railroad/Thug Life Movement, Shakur participated in a Stop the Violence program, helped with a home for at-risk youth, sponsored a "Celebrity Youth League," joined Central American solidarity benefits, and regularly spoke at rallies for voter registration and progressive activist groups.²²

The nature of the beneficiaries of Shakur's ever-increasing success must have set off alarms in the intelligence world. Some of Shakur's enormous wealth (the estimated worth of his 200 unreleased recordings alone was over \$100 million) was donated to programs and causes his Panther family supported, including Afeni Shakur's research efforts, with her imprisoned partner Mutulu, which eventually contributed to the release of Pratt in 1997.²³

Shakur was also achieving a new-found maturity in his mid-twenties. His engagement to Kidada Jones, daughter of music mogul and Vibe magazine owner, jazz composer Quincy Jones must have worried police and intelligence officials, because of the vast wealth and



influence of the elder Jones, and concern that Shakur's activist projects, such as his "Thug Life Movement" to turn drug dealers into lawful singers,²⁴ and his last interview statements of going back to his family's ways, would mark a return to his earlier radical activism.

The Setup

The finding of continued COINTELPRO-type activities adds weight to evidence that Shakur's associate Jacques Agnant (a/k/a Ricardo Brown, a/k/a Nigel) was an undercover agent who infiltrated his life and contributed to his legal problems. In 1993, after befriendng Shakur, Agnant introduced Shakur to Ayanna Jackson the night she had consensual sex with the singer, first on a dance floor and then in his hotel room.²⁵ In a second visit to Shakur's hotel room several days later, set up again by Agnant, Jackson charged Shakur, Agnant, and two others with sexual assault.

Events around the trial point to Agnant's government connections. Agnant's trial lawyer, Paul Brenner, had represented the Policemen's Benevolent Association for many years.²⁶ In addition, Agnant's case was severed from that of the other defendants without protest from the prosecutors. And, after Shakur's trial, Agnant's felony indictment was dismissed, and he simply pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors.²⁷

Shakur was convicted of three of the nine charges, relating only to non-consensual touching of Jackson's buttocks (typically reported only as "sexual abuse"), and sentenced to one-and-a-half to four-and-a-half years, an extremely harsh sentence.²⁸ (In 1994, New York City police admitted "accidentally erasing" a tape Shakur and companions had of Jackson that supported Shakur's defense. His lawyer, Michael Warren, successfully argued that the police also planted guns in the hotel suite where the supposed assault occurred.²⁹

Jacques Agnant was also connected to Shakur's near-fatal mugging in late November 1994. Toward the end of Shakur's sexual assault trial, Agnant was seen several times secretly following Shakur.³⁰ Several days later, "Booker," a man Agnant had introduced to Shakur, paged the singer and asked him come to a studio in Times Square to record with a new rapper. Booker called Shakur insistently that night, lied to him about who would be there, and offered \$7,000 cash from his pocket to get Shakur to the building. When Shakur arrived with three companions, two men held him at gunpoint in the lobby and stripped him of his gold jewelry, although they left his diamond-encrusted Rolex, which Agnant had bought for him. Then they shot him in the groin and twice in the head, while he was face-down on the floor.³¹

Los Angeles

Some suspicious aspects of the event were noted by editors of the Amsterdam News.³² Shakur and a companion both said they saw a police car outside the lobby doors on Broadway, immediately after the assailants fled, guns in hand. The New York Police reported this as a random mugging, yet the assailants picked an extremely well-lit Times Square area for a robbery.

In what the Washington Post described as "one of the many strange twists in the case,"³³ three of the same cops who first appeared a year earlier at Tupac's hotel in the sexual assault arrest were the first to arrive at this near-fatal "mugging."³⁴ And at least one has been



identified as a member of New York's now infamous Street Crime Unit.

A History of Provocations

There are many examples of police and intelligence provocations against Panthers, including infiltrators, fake letters, fabricated rivalries, etc.³⁵

After Shakur's imprisonment for the sexual abuse conviction, jailmate "informants" and anonymous letters he received led the singer to believe that his fellow rapper friend Biggie Smalls (a/k/a Christopher Wallace) had set up the shooting, even though Smalls lacked a motive for doing so.

Biggie Smalls was killed in Los Angeles in 1997, seven months after Shakur's murder. The L.A. Times reported that New York police officers were near the murder scene when it occurred, supposedly taking part in a federal investigation into Smalls's record label.³⁶ His death helped "substantiate" the East/West rap war that the authorities were trying to foster, and directed suspicions toward Brooklyn-based Smalls for California-based Shakur's death.

Political writer Christian Parenti suggests that the East/West rap music feud, as well as Shakur's sexual assault charge, may have been a latter-day COINTELPRO against rap artists.³⁷

A Desperate Agreement

After rejecting two previous offers from Death Row Records owner/producer Marion "Suge" Knight, an imprisoned Tupac Shakur was finally forced to sign a contract that included his bail money.³⁸ But people close to Shakur knew he wanted to leave Death Row and start his own label. Ten days before his murder, Shakur fired Death Row lawyer Dave Kenner, who had been assigned to him by Knight. Friends of Shakur reported that this move was very dangerous because of Kenner's power in Death Row Records and Knight's violent business practices.³⁹

LAPD intelligence operations suggest Knight's connection to a government program.⁴⁰ Los Angeles was the site of the largest western FBI/police intelligence collaboration against Black activists in the 1960s and 1970s, as described above in the targeting of Geronimo Pratt. L.A. was also the site of the CIA-Contra connection to crack cocaine in the 1980s, and there is evidence that Knight was involved in drug dealing at that time.⁴¹ Crack cocaine infiltrated into South Central L.A., created millionaires, some of whom worked with the authorities, particularly the notorious government collaborator "Freeway" Ricky Ross.⁴²

One of L.A.'s two top cocaine dealers who came on the scene at the same time as Ross and reportedly "ended up buying from him... and... learning from him," was Michael Harris.⁴³ Harris, who ended up in jail, was represented by David Kenner, who convinced him to put up the first million dollars to start Death Row Records. Kenner made himself president of Death Row Records and later completely cut Harris out of the company. Harris is currently suing Kenner.



Suge's Role

It was Suge Knight who was driving the car in Las Vegas the night of Tupac's murder. Kidada Jones, Tupac's fiancée, reported that Tupac wanted to drive his own car that night, but Knight convinced the rapper to ride with him in an open-windowed BMW. According to an ex-bodyguard of Knight's, the murder scene was "aberrant" because there were no armed bodyguards in Knight's car nor in the accompanying car behind them.⁴⁴ Although Knight had lived in Las Vegas for several years, and knew the area well, he made a curious U-turn away from a nearby hospital as Shakur lay dying next to him. Weeks later, Knight stated that he wouldn't give anyone information about the killers because "it's not my job."⁴⁵ Knight was arrested and jailed for violating his probation a few days after Shakur's death. He has continued to run Death Row Records from his jail cell. (In early April, Knight was named as a suspect in Biggie Smalls's murder, which the authorities claim he masterminded from jail.)

After Tupac's death, Afeni Shakur was told that her son owed Death Row money, even though his albums for the company had grossed over \$150 million in sales (70 percent of rap albums are bought by white youth) . While Afeni won the legal right to obtain all of her son's unreleased recordings, she only received a portion of them from Death Row. And their more than \$100 million estimated dollar value would soon decrease. With very little financial motive for the only suspect, Death Row, government pressure probably led Knight to let 13 illegal bootleg discs hit the streets and massively devalue Afeni Shakur's inherited estate.⁴⁶

In his last interviews, Shakur espoused radical political ideas and plans. He spoke of religion as social control, of returning to his family's ways but "with a more militant philosophy," of plans to start an interracial "lost-tribe" political party, and to devote future album proceeds to start community centers. He also explained that his trademark "W" hand sign, which had indicated the West Coast, would now mean "War." He said, "West Coast and East Coast together [to gain] power" for "Black America."⁴⁷

Shakur's incredible fan devotion and societal influence were likely thorns in the side of the intelligence community. After his death, Shakur received tributes by leading intellectuals and was memorialized in mass assemblies at Black colleges. His legacy sparked courses devoted to his work at prestigious universities, including the University of California at Berkeley.⁴⁸

While unsubstantiated versions of the story behind Tupac Shakur's death are frequently asserted, there has been no real independent investigation of government involvement. Shakur's political-activist life and radical heritage call for such an inquiry.

Endnotes:

John Potash is the founding editor and publisher of Social Justice Action Quarterly-a national social work school newspaper. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, and is currently writing a book on Tupac Shakur's life and times with the perspective of this article.



1. Vibe Editors, *Tupac Shakur* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1997), pp. 140-41. Upon release, Shakur's double album, *All Eyez On Me*, sold more in its first week than any other album except *The Beatles Anthology* the year before. Ronin Ro, *Have Gun Will Travel: The Spectacular Rise and Violent Fall of Death Row Records* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 281.

2. Cathy Scott, *The Killing of Tupac Shakur* (Las Vegas: Huntington Press, 1997), p. 59.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-15.

4. The existence of COINTELPRO first became known when activists broke into an FBI office in Media, Penna., on Mar. 8, 1971, and took thousands of documents from classified files. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), p. 39. Much of the information on the Black Panthers herein came from the FBI's own documents.

5. Michael Newton, *Bitter Grain: Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party* (Los Angeles: Holloway House, 1991), p. 184.

6. *Op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 464. This coalition, calling itself the Revolutionary Armed Task Force (RATF), included Kathy Boudin, David Gilbert, Susan Rosenberg, Timothy Blunk, Silvia Baraldini, and Linda Evans, along with former Panther 21 defendants Sekou Odinga (formerly Nathaniel Burns) and Edward Joseph, among others. The group was using the money from heists to fund an acupuncture clinic and underwrite health care for the slum community of the South Bronx. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

7. *Op. cit.*, n. 2, p. 65.

8. Partial admissions such as that by FBI agent Marlin Johnson, *op. cit.*, n. 4, pp. 68-73; and Police Sgt. Stanley Robinson, *op. cit.*, n. 5, pp. 152-53.

9. *Op. cit.*, n. 4, pp. 82-84. Julius Butler, an undercover FBI agent who infiltrated the L.A. Panthers and helped convict Panther leader Pratt in the early seventies, pleaded guilty to four felony charges yet was somehow allowed to complete law school and enter the California Bar in the years following his trial. *Op. cit.*, n. 5, p. 168. *Op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 53. *Op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 91.

10. *Op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 79.

11. Ward Churchill, "The FBI Targets Judi Bari," *CovertAction Quarterly*, No. 47, Winter 1993-94, p. 54. This well-documented article argues that the FBI paralyzed environmental leader Judi Bari with a car bomb in 1989, a proposition given some credence in a 1997 federal suit against the government.

12. *Handschu, et al. vs. Special Services Division, a/k/a Bureau of Special Services; Patrick Murphy, et al. U.S. District Court, S.D.N.Y., 71 Civ. 2203 (CSH), Memorandum Opinion and Order, Mar. 7, 1985, p. 26.*

13. *Ibid.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, May 24, 1979, p. 3.



14. Op. cit., n. 5, p. 174.

15. Op. cit., n. 13, Appendix A. Stipulation and settlement-"General Policy" (referred to as "Guidelines").

16. Handschu, et al. vs. Special Services Division, Rev. Calvin Butts, Michael Warren et al. Intervenors, 71 Civ. 2203 (CSH), Memorandum Opinion and Order, July 18, 1989; Black Desk, p. 13; Guidelines violation, p. 34.

17. Op. cit., n. 4, pp. 364-65, 465.

18. Sergeant Delacy Davis, a 14-year veteran New Jersey police officer and anti-police brutality activist, reported that NYC's Street Crime Unit is "virtually all white." Richard Goldstein, "The R-Word," Village Voice, Apr. 6, 1999, p. 43. Also described as an "overwhelmingly white plainclothes unit," Robert McFadden, "Elite Police Unit in Diallo Slaying Gets Overhauled," New York Times, Mar. 27, 1999, p. A1.

19. Vibe's Editor-at-large Danyel Smith reported seeing Shakur's battered face and dented head the next day. Shakur sued police for \$10 million. Vibe Editors, op. cit., n. 1, p. 17.

20. Armond White, Rebel for the Hell of It (Los Angeles: Thundermouth Press, 1997), p. 38.

21. Some might label Shakur sexist and, thus, indefensible. Yet, the primary example of sexism-the sexual assault-is, as shown above, suspect. That Shakur's lyrics use such slang as "bitches" and "ho's" for certain women, albeit regrettable, might better be understood in its cultural context. Critics such as Vibe editor Danyel Smith described early Shakur songs about women as "uplifting, pro-choice and anti-abuse." Seven months after Shakur's sexual assault trial and first shooting, noted feminist political writer bell hooks defended Shakur by deriding other "young Black men who want to go out and destroy this talented young Black man." Vibe Editors, op. cit., n. 1, pp. 17, 43.

22. Op. cit., n. 20.

23. Personal interview with former Black Panther Watani Tyehimba, who was also Shakur's business manager, Nov. 3, 1998.

24. First begun as the Underground Railroad in 1990, Thug Life Volume 1 became a gold record. Shakur's cousin Billy Lesane said Shakur's Thug Life Movement was intended to establish an ethical code in the ghettos. Personal interview, Mar. 26, 1999.

25. From court testimony, People of the State of New York v. Tupac Shakur, Indictment No. 11578/93. Access provided by legal assistant Mike Turner and law firm, Stillman and Friedman.

26. Connie Bruck, "The Takedown of Tupac Shakur," The New Yorker, July 7, 1997, p. 54.

27. Ibid., pp. 54-55.





28. A jury of nine women and three men found Shakur guilty of only three of the nine counts. The judge gave Shakur a 1½ to 4½ year prison sentence for three "counts of sexual abuse—specifically, forcibly touching Jackson's buttocks." Ibid. The New York Times described it as a felony sexual abuse charge for "groping...the woman's buttocks." Dec. 1, 1996, p. A1. Despite reports to the contrary, the jury found no one guilty of "sodomy by forcible compulsion." The jury found Shakur not guilty of six counts, including forced sodomy, attempted sodomy, and weapons possession. The judge set Shakur's bail at \$3 million and refused the \$1.4 million bail, mostly offered by Atlantic Records, until forced to on appeal six months later.

29. From court testimony.

30. Billy Lesane, personal interview, Mar. 26, 1999.

31. Vibe Editors, op. cit., n. 1, pp. 50-51, 69-70. Deposition of Barbara Justice, MD, New York v. Tupac Shakur, Dec. 21, 1994.

32. Editorial, "Thoughts and Notes on Tupac," Amsterdam News, Dec. 17, 1994, p. 24.

33. Malcolm Gladwell, "Shakur Guilty of Sex Abuse," Washington Post, Dec. 2, 1994, pp. F1, F2.

34. Vibe Editors, op. cit., n. 1, p. 41.

35. Manufacturing murderous rivalries was a modus operandi of the FBI's COINTELPRO. See Congress's The FBI's Covert Action Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party, under the heading "The Effort to Promote Violence Between the Black Panther Party and Other Well-Armed, Potentially Violent Organizations." One example is undercover Los Angeles Agent Louis Tackwood. Tackwood's confessions were recorded (he passed a polygraph test), and various parts of his information were corroborated by other informers. Ibid., pp. 410-11. He said that the FBI paid and supplied guns to Ron Karenga, leader of the Black Nationalist "United Slaves (U.S.)," to wage warfare on the Black Panthers, which led to their carrying out the unprovoked murder of several Panthers. Undercover prison and Panther agent "informants" also framed Black Panthers, trying to fuel a rivalry with the United Slaves, and using fake FBI-fabricated "informative" letters for such purpose. Ibid., p. 42. For example, George Sams, a paid FBI informer in the New York Panthers, tortured and killed a New York Panther candidate, Alex Rackley, claiming that he was an FBI informant. The FBI had given Sams a fake letter attesting to the charge. New Haven Panther Captain Lonnie McClucas received a 12-year jail sentence as an accessory while Sams "ultimately took a plea bargain which resulted in his doing light time" for his direct involvement in Rackley's murder. Op. cit., n. 4, p. 43.

36. Op. cit., n. 2, p. 123.

37. Christian Parenti, "Interview with Assata Shakur," Z Magazine, May 1998.

38. Ro, op. cit., n. 1, pp. 152, 162, 249-50.

39. Op. cit., n. 21, p. 63. For many examples of Knight's violence, see Ro, op. cit., n. 1.

40. For how long and in what manner Knight might have been an intelligence collaborator is unknown. It is possible that Knight was an unknowing collaborator as some of the U.S. members might have been when they carried out the killing of several Black Panthers in California.

41. Ro, op. cit., n. 1, pp. 20, 76.

42. Gary Webb, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras, and the Crack Cocaine Explosion* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998). It has been suggested that the CIA used the Crips and the Bloods, two L.A. gangs, to distribute crack cocaine in Black neighborhoods throughout the country.

43. Ibid., p. 146.

44. It was odd that armed bodyguards were supposed to be in some of the other six to fifteen cars following Knight and Shakur, but there is no evidence that any of them fired at the shooters. Further, Knight reported to police that he pulled Shakur back down as the entertainer was trying to get in the back seat and, of the fifteen or more shots, only one bullet grazed Knight. Op. cit., n. 25, p. 326. Knight may have been forced to admit this as another witness stated seeing Shakur trying to escape to the back seat.

45. Ro, op. cit., n. 1, p. 326.

46. Veronica Lodge, "The Raping of Tupac," *Rap Pages*, Sept. 1998, pp. 64-71.

47. Vibe Editors, op. cit., n. 1, pp. 97, 98, 126.

48. Interview with Harvard professor Cornel West, after his introductory tribute to Shakur at an AFL-CIO teach-in in New York City, Oct. 10, 1996.

Rappers harassed by new york city cops

A possible motive for police intelligence units may have been to make young Black rap millionaires look murderous to cover up their own dirty work against those Peter Noel called "raptivists," or rap activists.¹ Consider the police assault on a member of Grammy-nominated rap group, Wu Tang Clan. After his group toured with top radical activist group, Rage Against the Machine, Wu Tang Clan's lead singer Russel Jones (a/k/a ODB) was pulled over by two plainclothes New York cops who claimed he was driving with his headlights off. The two cops then shot at the unarmed rapper and his cousin without any evidence of provocation, according to a recent grand jury ruling. A law enforcement source told the New York Daily News that Jones's headlights were on.²

Jones's lawyer, Peter Frankel, is filing a lawsuit against the City, claiming the police targeted the singer for no constitutional reason.³ Other incidents in Jones's life also parallel police targeting of Shakur. Police in several cities canceled Shakur's shows as security risks. They also attempted this when Jones's band toured with Rage Against the Machine. In July 1998, Jones was shot by a robber in his home. He was also arrested and held on \$115,000 bail for wearing a bulletproof vest (after the grand jury ruling against the police).⁴

