



This one is an interesting time capsule. Growing up on the east coast, I always saw Tupac from a distance as this enigmatic personality with raw and powerful musical gifts, but never was aware of his relevance to his own immediate community. Think of Pac what you will, many respected artists who have tried to strike a balance between aesthetics, truthful storytell-

ing, pop, and politics have fallen far short of Tupacs accomplishments in this regard. And at the end of the day, he had a whole coast on his shoulders and still managed to speak to so many people with so much feeling. To paraphrase another of rap's more aphoristic mind's: One can't knock the proverbial hustle. And Tupac was said hustle in flesh. - AHTT





**E**arlier this year..Friday April 19 1996, Tupac Shakur graced the airwaves of KMEL Radio's Westside Radio program in San Francisco. Here, in an historic interview he let the entire Bay Area know exactly what he was feeling and thinking at that point in time.

*For those who weren't up on the*

*backdrop at the time that interview aired, 2Pac had not spoken to anyone extensively since joining Death Row. His album, 'All Eyes On Me' was the album of choice for more than a few headz especially here in the Bay Area. The Bad Boy/ Death Row conflict was at an all time high... No one from the Death Row camp had spoken on co-founder Dr Dre's departure. More importantly, 2Pac had not been through the Bay in what seemd like years...My boy Sway of The Wake Up Show was the person asking the questions.*

**First of all 2Pac congratulations on your success...Most people from the Bay Area couldn't be there by your side..**

**but we felt like with every episode you went through we were there..we saw you through the media and we were right there. Brothers gotta a lotta love for you here in the Bay Area and we wanna know when you're planning on coming back?**

**Tupac Shakur:** I'm comin' back for sure..and I love the Bay. Everywhere I go..and every episode I've been through, I always felt like I was sharing it..both the good times and the bad times with the Bay Area. I felt like whatever I am the Bay Area had something to do with making me. So if I'm bad they had something to do with making me and if I'm good they had something to do with making me. Between

the east coast, the Bay Area and LA and Baltimore, those places made me....I owe them everything. It's not like I just got love for one block. I got love for those communities.. I got love for those areas because everything about those areas made me who I am... From the crack heads to biggest ballers to the teachers to the principals in schools to the police that pulled me by the arm to the mammas on the block. To everybody who help raise me and I appreciate it...With all my fans I got a family again.

When I started rappin' I was talkin' about broken homes and now everybody is alright again just because of my fans being behind me..they made it more than just an artist thing..instead it was

like them saying 'hey that's our homeboy and we support him. I appreciate that... I went to jail and they made me number one.. I appreciate them stickin' up for me when everyone was kickin me when I was down... That's love and I'll never trade that.. so for the Bay and Philly and all those areas and all those ghettos and towns..I love y'all..don't let this east coast west coast thing get to you... I love you with all my heart with everything. I do this for y'all....

**It seems like every time you come up something happens to bring you back down.. When you're caught up like that what is it that goes through your mind when you got millions of**

**fans wondering about you?**

**TS:** It hurts me in one way because they be lookin' at me saying 'Damn you got everything why are you doing this?' In my heart I'll be saying 'Damn you know I don't wanna go to jail.. I'm trying to live.' On the other hand, I can't really take it personal because I'm a reflection of the community... All young Black males are going through that..It's happening with a lot of young Black females also young white males... A lot of minorities are going through that where they try to come up and get pulled back five steps...

To me it's not personal because they're all going through it. The only thing that makes it different and original with me is

that people get to watch it from beginning to end like it's a soap opera. You get to watch mine and with everyone else they get to hide and go to their homes and get over it. With me you see me dealing with my greatest pains. You see me get over things.

**What went through your head when you got shot in New York and that whole complication?**

**TS:** I can't front. It slowed me down. What went through my mind was 'like damn I'm shot'. I used to believe I could never be touched. So now I'm more careful. Some people may say I'm disrespectful..but I'm more cautious because I have been shot. I know what that feels like. I'm not trying to be in that predica-

ment. I know we all have choices to make and my choices have already been made even if I wanna change it.

What I learned in jail is that I can't change. I can't live a different lifestyle..this is it. This is the life that they gave and this is the life that I made. You know how they say 'you made your bed now lay in it? I tried to move... can't move into some other bed. This is it. Not for the courts. Not for the parole board. Not for nobody. All I'm trying to do is survive and make good out of the dirty, nasty, unbelievable lifestyle that they gave me. I'm just trying to make something good out of that. It's like if you try and plant something in the concrete..if it grows and the rose pedals got all kind

of scratches and marks, your not gonna say 'Damn look at all the scratches on the rose that grew from the concrete'. Your gonna say..Damn! A rose grew from the concrete? Well that's the same thing with me.. Folks should be sayin' 'Damn! he grew out of all that?.. That's what they should see.

**Brother you must be truly blessed to go through all these trials and tribulations you've been through and you're still maintaining. Even now they're still comin' after you. You got these demons and obstacles that keep comin down harder and harder. It seems like every-time you turn around, you got somebody knockin' on your**

**door trying to take something from you.**

**TS:** They come harder and harder. It's like everytime I think this is it and I go all out to beat that and I win or I lose...I come into the next one and it's worse. It's like the twilight zone. It's like some evil, unstoppable shit that won't let me go. It's got it's hands on me and it wants to see me fail. In my mind sometimes when I'm drunk or I'm just laying down.. I keep thing to myself, 'Damn is this true?.. Am I gonna fail? Am I supposed to fail? Should I just stop trying and give up? But then I'm like 'Naw, hold up hold on.. that's exactly what they're waiting on me to do'... They're waiting for me to give up. So now this is just a fun little game that

I cry at sometime..that I laugh at sometime..that I smile at and have good times and bad times.. But it's a game. It's the game of life....Do I win or do I lose?. I know one day they're gonna shut the game down but I gotta have as much fun and go around the board as many times as I can before it's my turn to leave.

**How did you first get down with Suge Knight and Death Row?**

**TS:** I used to always see Suge. When they did the soundtrack for Murder Was The Case and I was going through all those legal problems..He was like 'Yo give me a song dog'. I gave him a song and I got the most I ever got for a song. It was damn near an album

budget. I got something like 200 thousand dollars for one song and they didn't even use it. But I still got paid for everything I did for the sound track. I remember when he did it.. He did it not because he was jocking me, but because he knew I was having crazy legal problems and I was a man. He had asked me to come to Death Row and I told him I wasn't ready,. Instead of taking it personal he did that for me and I appreciated that.

So when I was in jail just sittin' there..I was gonna quit rap-pin' but then Puffy and Biggie came out in Vibe Magazine and lied and twisted the facts. All I wanted to do was end everything and walk away from the shit. I

wanted to get out the game. I'm trying to get out the game and they wanna dirty up my memory. They wanna dirty up everything I worked for. So instead of quit- tin' it made me wanna come back and be more relentless to destroy who used to be my comrades and homeboys.

These guys were my closest click. I worked hard all my life as far as this music business to bring about east coast west coast love and make everybody feel comfortable. I dreamed of the day when I could go to New York and feel comfortable and they could come out here and be comfortable. So when people ask me about this east coast/west coast thing it's not silly at all...but you

can't disrespect the love. You can't disrespect the peace treaty.. That's just like when the Indians made deals with the white dudes and they would just come and rape their women and shoot'em up and leave...of course the Indians aren't gonna love white people no more.. They're gonna want to kick up some dust until people think about it and re negotiate the terms of the treaty and that's where this east coast west coast stuff is at right now. We gotta have this beef and these words and this dialogue until we can re negotiate the terms of the treaty. I love the east coast.. I from the east coast, but they have to understand you just can't be saying shit about us and think we're not gonna take it person-

ally... You just can't be calling us fakers and pretenders and non-creative and say we can't free- style..and we just sit back and say 'Naw it's cool 'cause we love them because they started hip hop'. Hell no, we're gonna take it personal, just like a kid would when his bigger brother who ain't doing his shit steps to him. That's like a little brother making lots of cash and the bigger brother comin' along and sayin' 'You owe it all to me' That's wrong.. Don't be mad because the little niggah is comin' up.

**Pac you gave a lot of love back to some Bay Area artist like E-40, Rappin' 4Tay, Dru Down and the whole crew...talk about what made you decide to**

**work with them.**

**TS:** Because I can't always be in the Bay. I know how the Bay is. The Bay is the type of place where if you ain't there they're gonna talk about you. I wanted them to know that I love you, I feel you and I'm gonna represent for you. I know I gotta a certain amount of acclaim so I bring the Bay with me... I know E-40 is what I was when I was with Digital Underground. He is the Bay right now ..him and 4Tay. So I get them on my album to represent the Bay. It shows we still have love and we're still all good. By us being representatives we bring the Bay where ever we go.. Rappin' 4Tay has always been raw to me and I like his style. When I was in jail I used to al-

ways listen to stuff so when I got out we clicked and did the song. Now he's in jail and I gotta do what he did for me. When I was in jail he used to send out shout outs and show support, so now I support 4Tay. Everybody pray for him and send letters. I hope the brother gets out of jail as soon as possible.. [Rappin' 4Tay was released in July '96]. You know its a struggle for every young Black man... You know how it is only God can judge us.

**Now is the east coast /west coast beef, really both coasts? Or is it Bad Boy and Death Row?**

**TS:** It's not both coasts. What it is..is the people on the East coast are real proud and real cultural

and real strong like we are on the west coast. What happen was Biggie came at a time just like Hitler did with the Germans. Biggie came at a time when they were open to somebody saying 'We're the master race and these guys [west coast] are nothing. They're pretenders and this is why we're not makin' it in the business. It's because of these guys. This is why we're not doing nothing.

So the east coast really not hatin' us or knowing anything about us..have just been listening to their supposed to be leader. They were listening to the person who's supposed to be represent- ing' for them... They didn't know that what they were doing was

ending our culture. We [west coast] held it down for you all. That's how I felt. I was in tears.. When LL was out there dancin' with women in silver suits which I'm not mad at..because I might do that one day.. But when the East coast was trying to be creative and test other boundaries we were holdin' it down with this hardcore shit. It might not have been what you [east coast] wanted but it kept rap alive for years. It kept money comin' in. It let them [the world] notice us. So how could you [east coast] look at us and say 'You're not good enough'? We're from a broken home. Y'all [east coast] didn't teach us this.. we ain't got no subways and graffiti.

In spite of the gangs and all of that we still came up with this culture. I feel like we never got what we deserved. I took it personal because I'm from the East coast and I know about that culture but I know about this [west coast] culture because I was here when it was being put down...

So now I'm doing what the East coast would've did if the west coast did this to them... I'm riding..for my side. You're wrong.. It's not right..

Recognize us. The only way the east coast is gonna recognize us if for us to do it on record, by money, by sales and by representing. Just like KRS-One... when PM Dawn got on stage and he had been talking shit

about him..what did KRS-One do?...[He bum rushed him] So why are people telling me I'm wrong for doing what I'm doing. They love KRS-One.. He is hip hop..am I correct? I'm mad at Biggie and I'm rushin' the nigga. What's the problem?

As soon as the east coast separate themselves from Biggie we will do shows in the east.. Everything is beautiful..But so far the east coast has been with him. Everything I read..every letter I read. every interview I read .niggus keep saying 'Fuck 2Pac..Biggie Biggie this and Biggie Biggie that like he's representin' everyone from the east coast.That's why I attack the way I do.. I'm a general and I'm a smart general and

I'm not gonna attack at no blind soldier. I'm gonna attack those who attack me. The only reason why people was mad was because I came out of jail and made this a reality. When I got out of jail the east coast west coast shit was really started. California Love, when I was singin' put it down. and now niggahs is mad because money is fucked up, attitudes have changed..it's not as safe as it used to be. Niggahs gotta think about their business and that's what I wanted to happen..Now let's go to the table.. Let's talk..Let's make peace..let's work it out...let's give the community the money.

**So are you saying a conversation with Puffy and Biggie**

**would...**

**TS:** I wouldn't sit down and have a conversation with Puffy and Biggie..because that's like Scarface sitting down with the dude he's hoping to rule. They are not on my level..but I can sit down with the OGs and from there [back east] which we are doing. People need to now we're not beefing with the East coast.. We're about to start Death Row East with Eric B and all the OG niggahs out there. We got Big Daddy Kane.. Christopher Williams..we're trying to get Bobby Brown.

We're trying to get the East coast Death Row to be like the West Coast Death Row and make it major. We're not doing that until we get this business settled..

Even while we're doing this we're trying to get Wu-Tang.. I feel as though they represent the east coast the way we represent the west coast and I love them. If everybody's raps is what they really think then everybody should understand what I'm doing. It's gangsta shit..It's warrior shit.. and it's all by the rules of the game. I'm calling for dialogue. I'm gathering attention for dialogue which is what you do in a struggle for power.

**What's going on with Dre and how does that effect Death Row?**

**TS:** Dre is doing his own thing.. It doesn't effect us..My take on what happened was that Snoop went on trial for murder

for his life..somebody said Dre was in the car.. The jury believed that we needed Dre to be able to say he wasn't there.. once they would've saw that he wasn't there that would've saved Snoop's whole case. They would've saw that the witness was lying. Dre never showed up. He said he was too busy. That's how they told me..When they told me that I was like no matter how dope he is and Dre was one of my heros in the music industry..If he's not down for his homeboys.. I don't wanna be a part of him or around him. Plus I feel that what was done in the dark will come to light. There are secrets that everybody's gonna find out about.. and you'll know what I did it. I swear to god y'all

we are living by the rules of the game.

**Hey Pac why don't you talk about the project you are doing with Jodeci right now.**

**TS:** My next single is gonna be 'How Do You Want It', Amerikka's Most Wanted, 'Hit 'Em Up' and 'California Love' .. the version people couldn't buy. Hit 'Em Up is a song which is a classic hip hop record..meaning it's a straight battle record to all the Bad Boy staff.. It's to Puffy, to Biggie to Lil Kim..to all of them.

**What about Mobb Deep?**

**TS:** My little homies is attacking them. That's why I'm not even addressing the Mobb Deep issue. They're not even on my level.

I find it disrespectful that they would even think they can attack me or the West Coast... So I don't even address those busta ass fakes.. Please print that.... It is on and poppin'. If you don't see me rushin' them that means it's cause they bowed down. Those Mobb Deep fools they don't want it.. Chino XL, Mobb Deep , Bad Boy, Biggie , Lil Ceasar, Junior Mafia all of them is on our hitlist and I'm getting with them with my new click called The Outlaws. They're some Jersey dudes who are keeping that east coast flava poppin' . It's some west coast dudes, southern dudes.. It's the epitome of what I represent. I got Big Syke from Thug Life .

We got 'How Do You Want It' with Ron Hightower doing the directing with me and we got all porno stars. I got Nina Hartley from the Bay..and all the big time people. It's the dirtiest nastiest video I've ever done. I got a play-boy version and a regular version. We got nudity. It's the most amazing video you'll ever see.

We just did the video for 'Amerika's Most Wanted' which is the classic dis video. We got 'Piggy' and 'Buffy'...

We're doing videos for 'All Eyes On Me', 'I Ain't Mad At Ya', 'All About You' .. The record company got all the money in the world so we're just gonna put it out..

When things get real slow, we'll release a home video with 'Ambitions Of A Rider', and a couple of the hardcore songs....I just did a remix to 'What's Your Phone Number' with all new lyrics. We took that MC Lyte beat from her new song she has out..[Keep On Movin' Up] It's so freaky you won't believe it... I got a whole new album out...waiting for the sound track. It's clean..all positive..all in the vein of songs like 'Keep Your Head Up'. and 'Brenda's Got A Baby'.. It's that type of stuff. I just put out a hardcore double album.. and next I'm gonna put out an introspective album.. It'll be like a 'Me Against The World pt 2' That's what I think my fans are looking for... I'm gonna show that I appreciate

your support..

**So you worked with Janet Jackson.. I was wondering if you can hook me up with her number?**

**TS:** If anybody finds Janet, tell her I'm looking for her. That's why I said that shit in my song 'My Minds Made Up', but give me Janet. I feel like she got shit twisted and people gone made her my enemy. She ain't my enemy.. I ain't mad at her. I want her to know that. It ain't even like that. She met me at a time in my life when I was real immature. I was comin' up and going through a lot. Now she probably sees me in a whole different light. Maybe not and maybe she will. I want

that opportunity. When I see Janet, I 'm gonna try to make right where we made wrong.

**Let's talk on some other things like your new movie and soundtrack you're working on?**

**TS:** We got a movie called 'Gridlock' coming out which is a mainstream movie. It's me coming back into the theaters with Tim Ross from Pulp Fiction.. I don't know who it is, but there's a big name female in the movie. I'm the music supervisor for the sound track. It's my first chance ever doing something like this... We got Alanis Morissette and all these other big name alternative groups . It's supposedly people I would never get with.. I got them all on the sound track just to

show what kind of range I got.. I'll be putting that type of sound track out and then I'll be putting out a rap sound track. I'm gonna do it like a 2Pac album with me doing a whole bunch of solo songs and Snoop on there doing some songs. This is just to show I have a business mind as well as a creative mind. I can make my way in this business besides rapping.

**What's the one thing you would like people to know about you?**

**TS:** Number one, when I dis y'all..meaning like when you come up to me and I'm not giving you the type of reaction that you think I should give you, it's not because I'm ungrateful...

It's because I'm nervous. I'm paranoid, I just got out of jail. I've been shot, cheated lied and framed and I just don't know how to deal with so many people giving me that much affection. I never had that in my life. So if I do that ..don't take it personal.. Try to understand it and see it for what it is.

Now I understand what its truly like to be a fine female who goes to a club and all the guys just rush you before you're ready to be rushed. Everyone is touching you before you're ready to get touched. So now I have a better understanding of what it's like to be a woman..I have a better understanding of fans not making you do things. I'm gonna

do it because I love y'all.. I do appreciate what you did ..But if you make me do it..then I don't wanna do it.. I don't care how many albums you brought. My fans to me are people who follow me who are down for me..who understand me and no matter what people say, they know me... because they've followed me through my career.

A lot of people just brought my album.. I buy albums all the time. I just buy them to listen to...If you brought my album, you brought it for the music. You didn't buy it so when you see me, I just break down and start eating you out. I don't like that.. Don't start extorting me for an autograph. I'm real. I give

autographs when I want to...I wanna be in this game for a long time. I don't ever wanna hate the fans That's what these other niggahs do. They might give you autographs all the time, but they hate you. They never even look at you like people. I do look at you like people. That's why I feel like I can look you in your eye and say 'Yo I don't feel like doing that right now.. I don't feel like signing no autographs. and you should understand. I look at you like a human being. Let's kick it.. Lets not take pictures..let's kick it. Do that.. I want some females to do that... Every female wanna come up to me and show me how much they're not attracted to me.. Do the opposite cause these ghetto girls..these minority

women..they're the only women I can get cause every one else is scared of me. Their parents tell them not to mess with me.. Y'all can't fade me. Y'all can't turn on me Don't change on me.. Stay down for me..'cause I stay down for you and don't extort me unless you intend to do it forever.

### **Five years from now what do you see yourself doing?**

**TS:**.. I see myself having a job on Death Row...being the A&R person and an artist that drop an album like Paul McCartney every five years. Not that I'm like Paul McCartney but there's no rapper who ever did it so that's why I use him as an example... But I wanna do it at leisure. My music will mean something and

I'll drop deeper shit. I'll have my own production company which I'm close to right now... I'm doing my own movies. I have my own restaurant...which I got right now with Alanis or Suge or Snoop. I just wanna expand. I'm starting to put out some calendars for charity. I'm gonna start a little youth league in California so we can start playing some east coast teams..some southern teams ...I wanna have like a Pop Warner League except the rappers fund it and they're the head coaches. Have a league where you can get a big trophy with diamonds in it for a nigguh to stay drug free and stay in school. That's the only way you can be on the team. We'll have fun and eat pizza and have the finest girls

there and throw concerts at the end of the year. That's what I mean by giving back.

Interview by Sway