

Sanyika Shakur lived for his set. Submersed in gang life and crime until adulthood, his eyes were only opened to other possibilities when he discovered the New Afrikan Independence Movement. Joining, Shakur felt he had found something worth fighting for; causing him to leave the gang. In Shakur's *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*, it tells of the author's destructive past, and his effort to change. But Shakur didn't accomplish anything for his community when he left the Crips, because his personal 'transformation' led to an uneventful life. Therefore, the New Afrikan Independence Movement tricked Shakur into believing he was making a positive change in the world when he really just became a normal person who never cleaned up his mess from gang life.

The Rollin' Sixties and Eight Tray sets were in the midst of a bloody war by chapter three; and Shakur was more serious than ever. Nothing could stop him from destroying the enemy, Shakur's meaning of life was gangbanging. From then on, things only intensified. "I felt nothing but a sense of duty. Revenge was my every thought. Only when I had put work in could I feel good that day...Anything from...spitting on someone to fighting- it's all work. And I was a hard worker." (52). Shakur's sense of duty to his gang meant that no matter what happened in the future, he would always feel responsible for the set. Being so wrapped up in it, Shakur felt his job to be the greatest gang member of all time. Not only did he feel it was an obligation to be in the gang, but Shakur then goes a step further by stating that the only way he could be happy was by working his hardest in the gang. Shakur in turn became blind to all damage he caused; as those personal standards turned him into a successful gang member. Later, feelings associated to how much 'work' he put into it set Shakur up the New Afrikan Independence Movement prematurely influenced him to join. This led Shakur to have an uneventful life because he felt

that all his hard work from gangbanging counted as working extremely hard in the grand scheme of things; even though morally, committing crimes isn't qualifiable as working hard. "I had no idea of peace and tranquility. From my earliest recollections there has been struggle, strife, and the ubiquity of violence...I've never been at peace, and nothing has ever been stable...The set was my clearest vision of stability..." (103). If Shakur grew up with an idea of peace and tranquility, he wouldn't have ended up in the gang. Instead, struggle throughout life made things unpredictable and confusing. As Shakur saw it, the gang took everyone's chaotic lives and gave them a common goal; defeat the enemy and take over. The vision of stability in the gangs made people feel like they could fight the bedlam. Ultimately, this lacking idea of peace in Shakur's life led him to always believe he had to find ways to beat turmoil by fighting. When Shakur then joined the New Afrikan Independence Movement, it led him to have an uneventful life by tricking him into thinking he had made a positive change in the world. His only wish by the end of the memoir was to leave the gang but still fight for power, so when he found the New Afrikan Independence Movement, Shakur thought it was a bonus to have a cause to fight for something besides crime. Thus, he continued on in life without trying to fix anything that would make up for gangbanging all those years; since the New Afrikan Independence Movement made Shkur feel like he was making a hugely positive change by joining.

Shakur couldn't keep up with being in and out of jail anymore; he needed another ease besides gangbanging. During one of his sentences, he starts going to Muslim services and gets introduced to the New Afrikan Independence Movement. After that, he contemplated the life he currently had and what his future held. "I needed to do something that would be as satisfying as banging once was. Banging had taught me that I like the feeling of fighting for something...So I

knew that whatever I did after banging had to involve fighting for power and land.” (278).

Shakur says he needed something that would be satisfying like banging, but none of his intentions were to improve people’s lives. He was only in need of something to fight for. It was all he knew, so naturally he took appeal to it. When finding the New Afrikan Independence Movement, Shakur believed it was the perfect solution because racism was a huge part of his life. Shakur’s goals were not to make a positive change in the world necessarily, but to continue being able to fight for something. But he ended up having an uneventful life when he did join the New Afrikan Independence Movement, because it kept him on the path of fighting. As a result, Shakur had an uneventful life because he could never take time to repay the world for what he did as a gang member. The outcome was that he only moved on from one fight to another in life and never paused to fix the annihilation it caused. “I come from Afrika. I am a soldier for my people, all citizens of the C-Nation.” (338). After joining the New Afrikan Independence Movement, Shakur sees himself as a hero; a soldier to his people. But by this point, he hasn’t done anything except join. The New Afrikan Independence Movement caused Shakur have an uneventful life because he doesn’t make an effort to help his own people; he doesn’t talk about his neighborhood civilians or the kids who will have to grow up dealing with racism. Instead, Shakur refers to the Crips. The New Afrikan Independence Movement tricks him by making him think gangs could be focused on when civilians needed to be a top priority in it.

When Shakur officially left the gang life and joined the New Afrikan Independence Movement, it made him feel he had cleaned his slate. He leaves jail, gets a new name, becomes a family man, and starts all over trying to have a normal life. For Shakur, he has finally found his place in the world with a cause to fight for and a good life. “I saw then that all the talk of the

C-Nation was actually an aspiration of our nationalistic reality. Once I overstood the New Afrikan ideology and pledged my allegiance to the Republic of New Afrika's independence, I began to see Crippling in a different light." (352). The New Afrikan Independence Movement's mission made Shakur believe that the sole reason gangs were around was just to reach a higher level than the 'hood. This was true, but gangs also wrecked communities. The New Afrikan Independence Movement made Shakur see gangs as helpless, so he didn't ever try to make a positive change in his community. Gangs needed help differently; they were dangerous and should have been dispersed. But Shakur takes his New Afrikan Independence Movement knowledge to continue favoring gangs; not struggling communities. Therefore, Shakur had an uneventful life from the New Afrikan Independence Movement because it made him think supporting Crips was changing the world positively when it wasn't and was the wrong group of people to focus on. "I...have caused irreparable damage, such as taking a life, but I did so in a setting that seemed to dictate such action... I feel I have done nothing wrong to warrant the treatment I've received since returning to prison." (380). Shakur says he knows what he did was bad, *but* since he grew up in a bad environment, it was okay to do. He puts all the blame onto his community, saying that he has risen above and it doesn't need anything from him since gangs and communities hurt each other. What Shakur fails to realize is that it's a vicious cycle- bad communities raise gangs members; who in turn ruin them. Shakur's mind has been warped by the fact that his environment, according to the New Afrikan Independence Movement, was all caused by whites oppressing blacks. Because of this information, Shakur continues to support gangs since he has done that his whole life. But, this leads him to have an uneventful life because he doesn't accomplish anything for his community. And in conclusion, the New Afrikan

Independence Movement caused him to do so by making Shakur believe he had positively changed world more than he had.

This essay attempted to prove that Shakur didn't accomplish anything for his community when he left the Crips, because his personal 'transformation' led to an uneventful life. Therefore, the New Afrikan Independence Movement tricked Shakur into believing he was making a positive change in the world when he really just became a normal person who never cleaned up his mess from gang life. This matters because people may see Shakur as a strong figure for overcoming gang life, but by taking a closer look at it *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*, the memoir disproves itself. Shakur was a violent criminal most of his life, and his goals only changed in recent times. But by analyzing quotes from the text, it reveals that Shakur never actually did anything to fix his past; because the New Afrikan Independence Movement made him believe his new lifestyle was making a big impact on the world. After reading this essay, it should be evident that the New Afrikan Independence Movement only turned Shakur into a normal person with an unfixed past of obliteration and too much confidence in his own goodness. The essay helps understand these concepts better by looking at Shakur's own thoughts from his memoir and exploring what he really means by them. Hopefully, this helps further analyze the text more thoroughly in order to explore these new ideas and critically look at the outcome and concluding opinions of Sanyika Shakur.