

**New York Folklore Society
2002-03 Documentary Heritage Program Project
Documenting Hip Hop**

Collection creator:

Thembisa Mshaka-Morris

Title:

Marketing plan for The Notorious B.I.G.'s *Life After Death* album

Date:

March 6, 1997

Extent:

1 marketing plan
1 autographed photograph

Biographical/historical note:

A native of Los Angeles, Thembisa Mshaka-Morris is a music promoter and writer. She began her career at Absolute Artists, a small but powerful booking agency, working with many music legends, including George Clinton, Etta James, Junior Walker and Gil-Scott Heron. From December 1993 to May 1998, Mshaka-Morris was Rap Editor for *Gavin Magazine*, a music industry trade publication, which is now defunct. She was the first woman to hold this position, and was instrumental in breaking many Hip Hop artists who became best-sellers, including, Busta Rhymes, The Fugees, and Timbaland. Since leaving Gavin, she has worked as a Senior Advertising Copywriter for Sony Music, and is responsible for developing advertising campaigns for the company's Hip Hop, reggae, rhythm and blues and crossover artists, including Lauryn Hill, Kenny Lattimore, George Michael and Babyface. She made a foray into music supervision with the award-winning independent film "Anne B. Real" (Urban Dream Productions, 2002).

As a writer, Thembisa Mshaka-Morris became widely known as for her controversial column, "The Monthly Flow," in the now defunct *BLAZE* magazine. The column addressed the convergence of gender and Hip Hop culture in a progressive, groundbreaking, journalistic style. Her writings have been published in, *Launch.com*, *Essence.com*, and *Honey*, and she is also editor-at-large for *The Hotness.com*, an online magazine for young women of color. Mshaka-Morris is at work on her first book, *Handle Your [music] Business: Her Guide To Entering, Navigating, and Exiting the Record Industry*, and contributes a monthly music business column with the same title to *Emixshow* magazine.

Scope and content:

This collection consists of the original marketing plan for the music of Christopher Wallace, and an autographed photograph of him. Wallace, who performed first as Biggie Smalls, and then as The Notorious B.I.G, signed the agreement and the photograph on March 5, 1997, during a listening party for retail merchants and the press for his new album, *Life After Death*, at the BMG offices in San Francisco, California. The photograph was autographed at this time, and includes a personal message to Thembisa Mshaka-Morris, who, as rap editor for *Gavin* magazine, had been very supportive of his music. Three days after signing this agreement, on March 9, 1997 Wallace was fatally shot in Los Angeles. This California trip was part of the marketing plan for this album, which, even before Wallace's murder, was entitled *Life After Death*. The album was released several weeks later, debuting at the top of the rap charts.

Christopher Wallace was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1972. After great underground success, first performing as Biggie Smalls, and then as The Notorious B.I.G., Sean "Puffy" Combs signed Wallace to his Bad Boy Records. B.I.G.'s debut album, *Ready to Die* (1994), was extraordinarily successful, selling two million copies, and he was named *Billboard* Rapper of the Year. His second album, a double-disc collection prophetically entitled *Life After Death* that debuted at number one on sales charts, was released shortly after B.I.G. was killed in Los Angeles in March 1997.

Finding aid note:

There is no finding aid for this material. Information on this collection was gathered during an interview with Thembisa Mshaka-Morris by Chic Smith of Urban Think Tank in the Spring of 2003.

Location:

This collection is held by Thembisa Mshaka-Morris, Brooklyn, New York

Restrictions on Access:

Researchers interested in using this material should contact Urban Think Tank; P.O. Box 1476, New York, NY 10185; telephone 718-679-3739; fax 718-596-1228; Email, urbanthinktank@usa.net.

Indexing terms:

Personal names:

The Notorious B.I.G (born Christopher Wallace, also performed as Biggie Smalls)

Title:

Life after death (sound recording: 1997)

Corporate/organizational names:

Bad Boy Records

Subject terms:

Hip-hop
Rap (music)
Marketing planning
Sound recording industry

Occupations:

Rap musicians

Date of interview and survey: Spring 2003

Interview and survey by: Chic Smith

This summary written by: Nancy Johnson with information provided by Chic Smith.