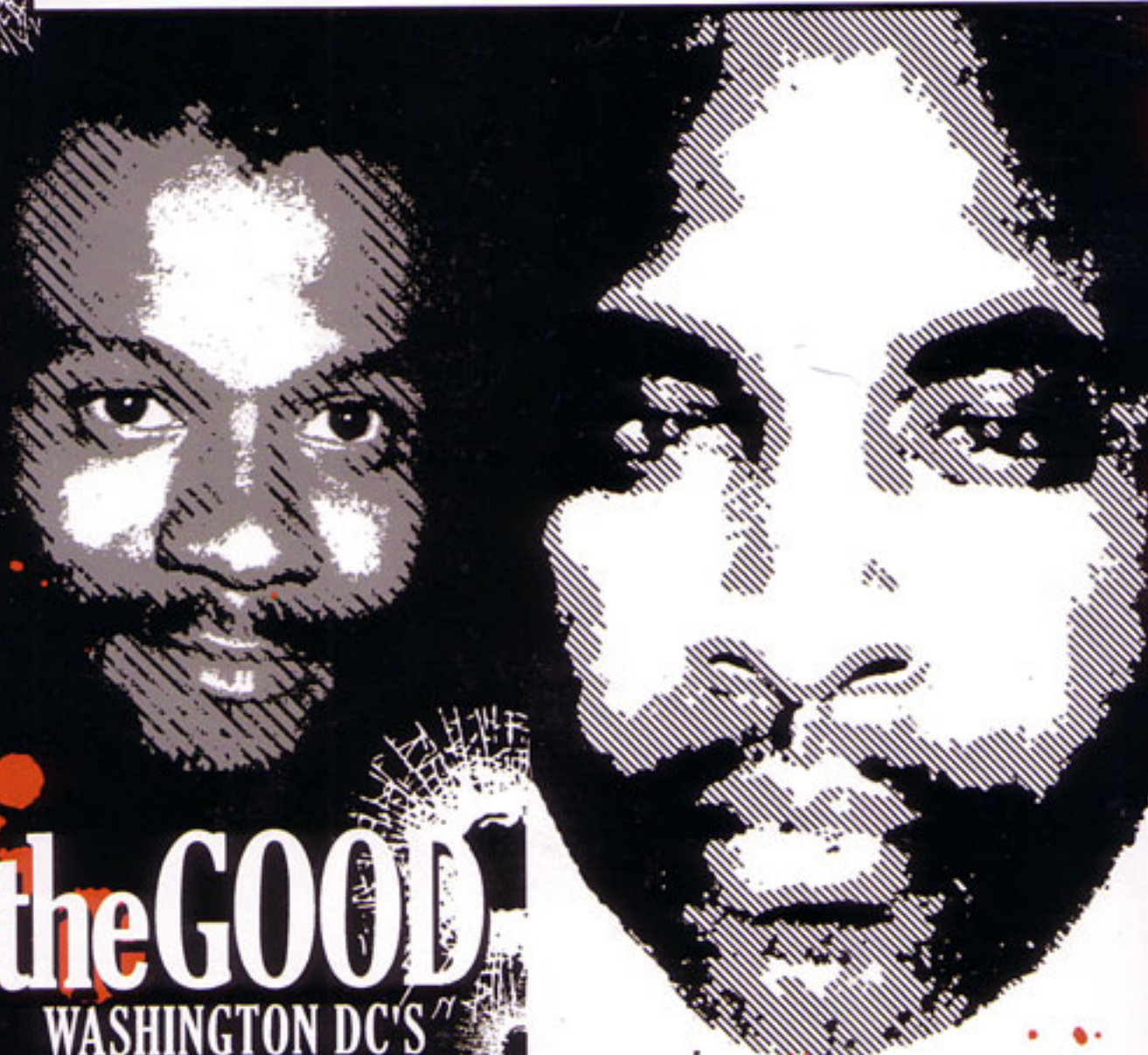


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THE USUAL SUSPECT

Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff

Words: SOUL MAN + Interview : TIFFANY CHILES
Digital-Illustration by Leroy Champaign for (Outhauscreative.com)

He is one of the only renowned drug kingpins of the 80's to outlast the crack era and law enforcements legal assault. By standing up and never cooperating with the government Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff secured his position as one of the most notorious men to ever walk the streets of New York.

Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff was born on September 19, 1959 in the Southside of Jamaica, Queens. McGriff lived across the street from the Baisley Projects where he was raised by both his parents whom worked as transit workers on New York's subway system. McGriff was a good student and football player that was college bound. However his life would take an alternative path.

In 1971 McGriff got his name "Supreme" from his affiliation with the Five Percenters Nation. The Five Percenters are a group that broke away from the Nation of Islam in 1964. The Five Percenter Doctrine teaches that the black man is God and women are Earths. They believe that they are the chosen five percent of humanity while 85% of the population lacks knowledge and the other 10% are devils. McGriff and his fellow Five Percenter crew were known as God-bodies.

By the late 1970's Supreme was the most promising of his crew. He was developing into a young hustler with a whole crew behind him. He started to carry himself like the mature established hustlers in his area. Even as a young man with his muscled physique and infamous green eyes, Supreme had a larger than life persona. The older dudes took notice of Supreme's swagger and took him under their wing.

With cocaine finding a booming market in Queens, drug organization began forming. Colombian drug suppliers were pouring into Jackson Heights with loads of cocaine and killing any Americans who wouldn't get with their plan for

distribution. It was a violent time but dealers like Ronnie Bumps knew how to play the game and he taught his young cohorts. However, Ronnie Bumps who was allegedly buying kilos directly from the Columbians had been arrested on a federal indictment for drug trafficking in Baltimore. Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols was next in line. He figured that with so much profit to made he didn't want to get caught up in a drug war. So Nichols called a meeting with some of the other dealers in the area and they came up with a solution. In 1979 Queens was split up into several territories and launched some of the careers of some of New York's most infamous drug dealers- including Howard "Pappy" Mason, Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols, Tommy "Tony Montana" Mickens, The Corley Brothers, Pretty Tony Fertaudo and Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff.

The Supreme team was a street gang organized in the early 1980's around the Baisley Park Houses (projects) in Jamaica, Queens New York with Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff as its leader. The crew concentrated its criminal efforts on distribution of crack cocaine according to court records.

By 1985 the Supreme Team was on the rise. Their spots were moving a lot of product and Preme would allegedly cruise Baisley Projects in a black Mercedes flashing the muzzles of high powered automatic weapons and waving wads of cash out the window. Preme proved himself to be a capable manager who knew how to motivate people. He was known as a hood diplomat.

Any time your name is ringing bells the way Supreme's was, it should be expected that police would not be far behind. At the time the Queens NY neighborhood had petty criminals that were catching

cases and suddenly returning to the streets unfazed. It was discovered that they were giving up information on the Supreme Team. The police eventually learned where stash houses were that contained drugs, money and guns. They set up surveillance and eventually got a search warrant. In September of 1985, Supreme was arrested in Queens, New York. They police also confiscated guns, drugs, money, money counting machine, assault rifles vests and bullet proof attire. This was a state case and Preme was convicted of drugs and weapons charges and received 9 to life.

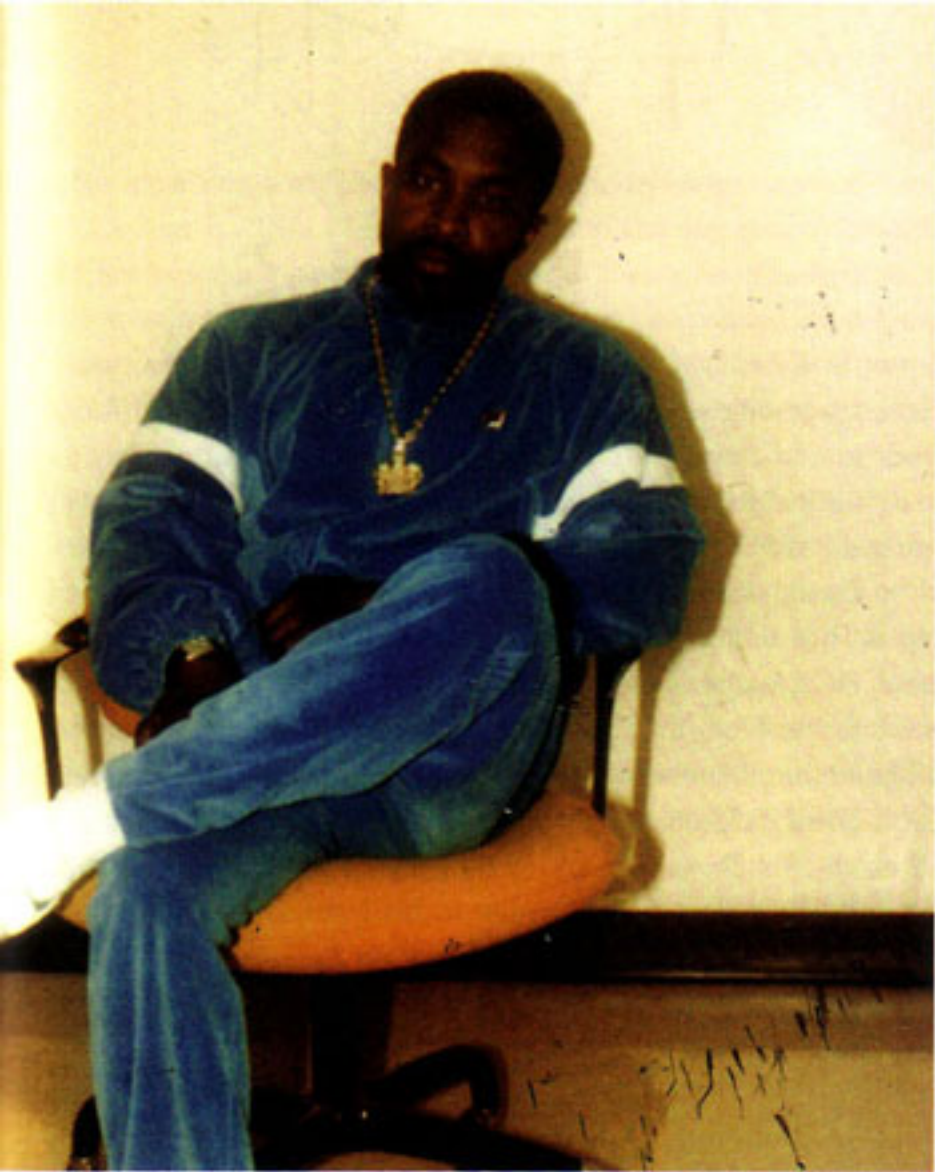
After serving 22 months of his sentence, Supreme's attorney Robert Simels had the appeals court throw out the conviction on a technicality involving the search warrants. By this time Supreme had grown into his own. He developed into a very intellectual and culturally aware young man. He was known amongst his peers as a gentlemen gangster who upheld the virtues of honor, integrity and loyalty.

Under the project towers of Baisley Projects an around the clock crack cocaine trade that operated more like a corporation than a drug operation. The crew allegedly prospered selling 25,000 crack vials a day at its peak in 1987. The Supreme Team allegedly patrolled the streets in bulletproof luxury cars, used rooftop sentinels with 2 way radios to thwart police activity.

By the fall of 1987 the feds were working with Queens Narcotics to investigate the crew. It is suspected that they were frustrated that Supreme beat the drugs and weapons case on appeal on 1985. On November 6, 1987, a massive raid was conducted by FBI agents and Queens Narcotic cops on the Supreme Team headquarters-Baisley Projects. Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff and his top people were all arrested.

"In 2007 a man willing to stand up for his beliefs is rare. Flipping and turning snitch is commonplace. When you have men who won't face 10 years- Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff was facing Death!"

McGriff was charged with CCE- operating a continually criminal enterprise. A charge today that could earn an individual a LIFE sentence in prison because of the federal sentencing guidelines. McGriff took a plea bargain to 12 years with no codefendants. Supreme quietly left the streets in 1987, accepting his fate as a man. Preme's CCE charge and kingpin status immortalized him in the eyes of Queen's urban youth.



Why to you take a plea to 12 years instead of going to trial?

In 1985 NYPD task force executed a warrant for a house we had. I was arrested in the state and sentenced to 9 years to life. My legal team got it overturned in 20 month's on the premise that the warrant was bad. When I came home the Feds promptly picked the case up. This was a pivotal point for me because I just beat the same exact charges in the state. I was adamant about proceeding to trial, but upon consultation with some OG's I met in MCC I conceded to the situation. They advised me it would be prudent to relent and satisfy the government's thirst for blood than to engage in a drawn out battle win no assurances. I was sentenced to 12 years for running a continuing criminal enterprise.

Because Supreme was sentenced under the "old" law before the federal sentencing guidelines were enacted in 1987, he escaped the 80's with a relatively light 12-year sentence and was paroled back to the streets around February 1993. At this time, the leaders of the 2nd generation of the Supreme Team were going on trial for drugs and murder charges. With most of his peers doing life sentences in prison Supreme was in the sites of law enforcement. With only a 12 year sentence, supreme seemed like he was the one who got away. Even though he did the time he was sentenced to for CCE, the FBI, DEA, ATF, NYPD and IRS still wanted a piece of him. Seeing that everyone in the drug game was either in jail or dead, Supreme decided to make a run at legitimacy. With men like J Prince, Suge Knight and Jimmy Henchman building companies and finding a second chance in the hip hop industry, it was plausible that Supreme's street credibility could do the same for him and make his dreams of making a Donald Goines movie come true.

Supreme passed his time in prison reading Donald Goines books. Goines was a Detroit hustler and ex-con who wrote 16 books before he was murdered in 1974. Supreme dreamed of turning the Goines Novels into big screen gangster epics like the God Father. Since hip-hop mimicked the ghetto realism of Goines novels, Preme believed

there would be a substantial mainstream audience for a Goines movie. But it wouldn't be easy.

For the next couple of years McGriff would go in and out of jail on violations. In 1997, Supreme was stuck in a half way house in Queens planning his entrepreneurial venture. He knew he could go legit he just needed the right connections. One day when he was standing outside of a bodega in his old neighborhood of Southeast Queens he was introduced to an up and coming young producer called DJ Irv. Irv was doing a video for a group called Cash Money Click and their single "Get the Fortune." Their fast friendship was a win-win for both men; to Irv it was an opportunity to earn some street credibility and to Preme it was an opportunity to pitch his dream project to a person that could possibly make it happen. The chance meeting was a small but important step for Preme to realize his dream.

Over the next few years DJ Irv would become Irv Gotti, producer and CEO of Murda Inc. Records. With platinum albums and glitzy videos Irv and his artists became magazine cover stories and MTV staples. Irv brought Supreme with him into this world. With Gotti, Supreme made legitimate strides and connections in the entertainment industry. Supreme was an aspiring scriptwriter and film producer who was taking his Donald Goines vision and running with it.

Supreme optioned the rights to Donald Goines' Black Gangster and Crime Partners. The first project he worked on was with Chaz Williams of Blackhand Entertainment. Supreme and Chaz set out to make the soundtrack to the first movie. The soundtrack featured Jay Z, DMX, Ja Rule and 50 Cent.

During this time the government alleged that Supreme was still hustling and financing his films with drug money. They claimed that he did not have a verifiable source of income, so naturally they assumed he was still in the game. Even though Supreme says that everything he did when he came back to the streets was legal the Feds said otherwise. Supreme's lawyer at his 2006 trial said that his client worked hard to make a legitimate life for himself in the entertainment world when he left prison and was unfairly targeted by investigators hell-

bent to find criminal activity in the rap world.

The Black Gangster album was a success selling over 150,000 copies but there was no interest from Hollywood, so Preme decided to do another Goines title, Crime Partners. This time he enlisted Murder Inc, as a partner. Irv Gotti went to Universal Music Group and told them, "Here's a guy getting out of a life of crime can you help?" Supreme landed his Crime Partners soundtrack distribution deal for \$1 million dollars. Five hundred thousand dollars of the money was paid upfront.

Supreme brought his sister, Wayne Davis and John "Love" Ragin to be his partners to produce the film. With Irv's help he got Snoop Dog and Ice T to star in the movie. Supreme was on his way to being a legitimate businessman but he was about to experience some turbulence.

In 1999 in an argument in Queens, Supreme's man, known as Black Just was shot. Guns were pulled and allegedly Supreme's gun jammed and Black Just was shot by a gangster/rapper that went by the name of E-Money Bags. Preme rushed Black Just to the hospital in an SUV registered to his partner in the Crime Partner venture Love's Tuxedo Rentals. Although Supreme rushed him to the hospital, Black Just died at the Southeast Queens Hospital.



S

Supreme trudged on and began production of Crime Partners and also bought the rights to four more Goines Books- Black Girl Lost, Death List, Kenyatta's Revenge and Kenyatta's Last Hit with the money from the Def Jam deal. He envisioned a series of movies based on the Goines books and he was ready to see it through. But with the streets talking about Black Just's death and his name being intertwined, the Feds got involved.

By now, Supreme's name was brought up in relation to every rap related crime. To make matters worse his partners John "Love" Ragin got caught up in illegal activities involving his Tuxedo Rental service and other businesses used as fronts for his credit card fraud and ecstasy-dealing ring. So whatever Preme was doing legal or illegal the spotlight was on him because of his associations.

The murder of Black Just and Love's credit card schemes cast a cloud of suspicion over the Crime Partners production but the worst was still to come. At the same time this was all happening a kid named Curtis

Jackson from Queens took the moniker 50Cent from a dead stick-up kid from Brooklyn and started releasing a series of underground mixtapes including 2000's Guess Who's Back which featured the now infamous Ghetto Qu'ran and the following lyrics:

Why you bear talk of the Soutside/you bear talk of the team/see nig-gas fear Prince an respected Preme/for all you slow muthafuckers I'm gonna break it down iller/See Preme was the business man and Prince was the killer.

Supreme allegedly sent a warning to 50Cent to stop rapping about him. It was notable that 50 was paying homage to the street figures he grew up under but the lines between hustling and hip-hop were blurred. While many of the figures heralded in hip-hop lyrics are either dead or in prison, Supreme was in the streets.

On his come up 50Cent began beefing with Ja'Rule about a world that Preme knew far better than either one of them did. The Ja'Rule and 50Cent beef was partly because Supreme defended Ja'Rule. It is alleged that 50 took that as rejection.

In the streets it is rumored that Supreme had something to do with the murder of 50Cents mother, Sabrina- who was killed in 1984 when Curtis was only 8 years old. The story goes that Sabrina was an alleged Supreme Team associate who messed up some of Preme's money. She was found in her apartment after being dead for 4 days. Somebody had put something in her drink and turned the gas on. In the streets this would be seen as a message- Don't fuck with Supreme's money. 50 Cent perpetuated this rumor with a plot in his movie, "Get Rich or Die Trying."

It is believed that when 50Cent caught wind of the rumors as he grew up and was becoming famous he went on the offense and escalated the beef with JaRule and Murder Inc. A couple of confrontations turned physical. One altercation at an Atlanta club resulted in JaRule's chain being snatched. Then there was an assault on 50 in a Manhattan recording studio. This all suggested to the streets that there was underlying bad blood between 50Cent and Supreme over the lyrics in 50's Ghetto Qu'ran.

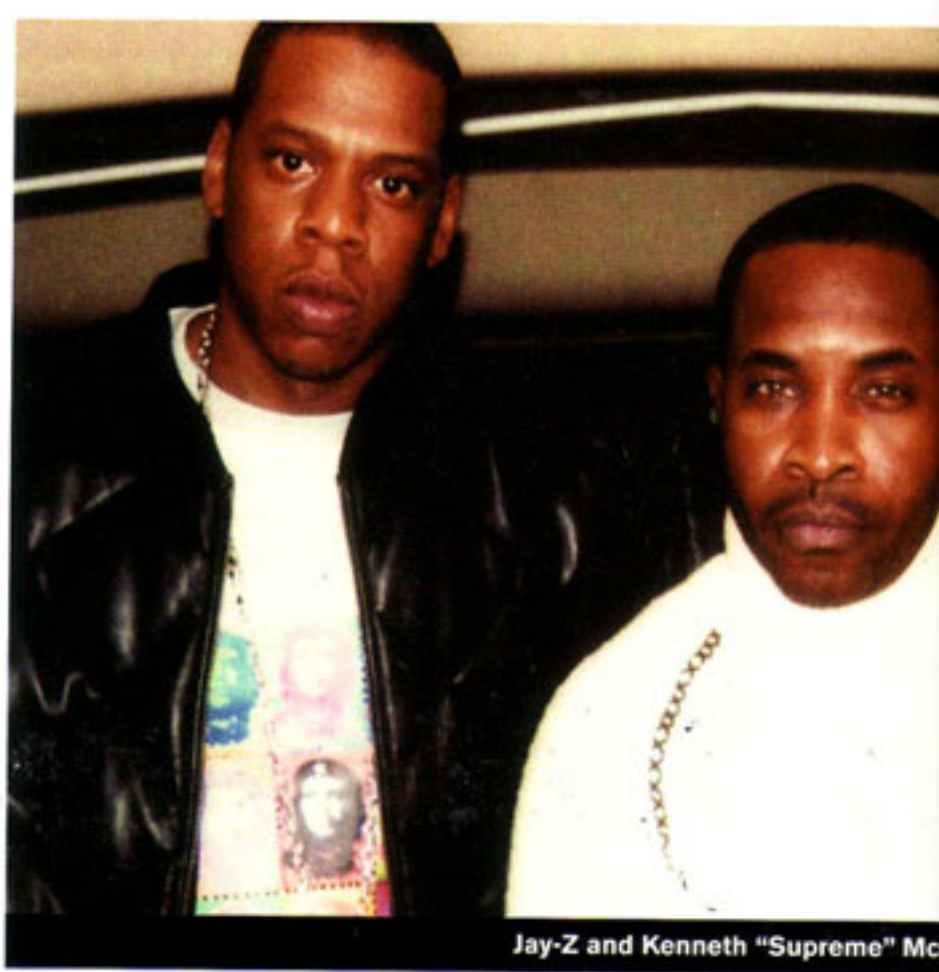
According to Supreme, he was trying to squash the beef between 50 Cent and Murder Inc. A conversation allegedly took place between Supreme and 50 Cent where Supreme was acting as a

mediator. It was agreed that the beef would be squashed...But 50Cent didn't stay true to his word.

What is 50 Cent's issue with you? It is rumored on the street that he believes you had something to do with his mother's murder.

I try not to entertain what spills out of his mouth because I don't wish to engage in a war of words. My statements in Vibe Magazine were not to disparage him, I was merely extolling the virtues of real men that fascinated him and he became incensed. I'm not at war with him nor did I ever have a beef with him. As I said before I was intervening to squash the issue because I thought it was meatball. I think he said Ja Rule didn't say hi or something. Plus security can't stop a real beef. He's temperamental and says what he feels. I'm pragmatic and stick to the facts that don't change every time I speak. I never knew his mother. I knew of her and from what I know she was cool people. I never called him a snitch. I said his behavior could be construed as dry snitching. I was referring to his contact with federal agents and him telling them to listen to his lyrics. I can't convince people to believe anything nor have I tried.

On May 24, 2000 as 50 and a friend sat in a car outside his grandmother's house in South Jamaica Queens a gunman rolled up in a vehicle on 50's left side and pumped 9 shots into his body. 50 was hit in the hand, hip, calf, chest and face. 50Cent survived the assassination attempt and went on to become a superstar but the shooting has always been connected to Supreme. The New York Post ran the headline SLAY PLOT VS. FITTY further trying to pin the crime on Supreme. Although, Supreme was never charged with this crime Supreme was under a microscope.



Jay-Z and Kenneth "Supreme" McCree

On July 16, 2001 at 9:45, 4 gunmen sporting white gloves, driving a Mercedes pulled up along side Eric "E-Money Bags" Smith's Lincoln Navigator, which was parked in Queens Village and opened fire. It was a classic mafia style murder. The first of ten bullets tore through E-Money Bag's body. The gunshots were fired at such close range that 9 millimeter shell casings covered the SUV's interior. The streets immedi-

ately started buzzing that this was a revenge killing for the murder of Black Just in 1999. It is alleged that Supreme boasted that former Supreme Team member Black Just could finally rest in peace.

The same month that E-Money Bags was killed Supreme was pulled over in his BMW near a known Drug Spot in Harlem on 145th Street, when asked for his drivers license by officers he identified himself as Lee Tuten and said he was an executive up at Def Jam. Cops found a .40 caliber glock pistol and \$11,000 in cash. According to arresting officers statements McGriff allegedly told them, "These aren't meant for you. It's a tough neighborhood. We were shopping. You caught me on a bad day, Usually I'm carrying more than that." When he was arrested and charged with weapons possession his true identity was revealed. The ATF traced the gun belonging to a relative of Irv and Chris Lorenzo. "From what I know, since he got home his life was tried four times," Chris (Gotti) said. "Once in broad daylight by a gas station. He might want to keep a gun on him."



Ja Rule and Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff

More murders occurred in the next 3 months. On August 20, 2001 Karon Clarret and Dwayne Thomas were found murdered execution style in Red Run Apartments on Wheelright Drive in Owings Mill Maryland. Word on the street was that both were suspected of snitching on some of Supreme's associates operating in Baltimore. The murders proved to be detrimental. Upon investigating, police discovered an alleged stash house at 4314 Flinthill Drive. The cops found cocaine, heroin, \$30,000 cash, a certificate for a firearms training course in the name of Lee Tuten and a video tape depicting surveillance footage of E-Money Bags 20 minutes before his demise. Crime Partners promotional material and Supreme's fingerprints were also discovered at the stash house. And on October 28, 2001 E-Money Bags partner Troy Singleton was killed outside sports bar, the Club Van Wyck on Liberty Avenue in South Jamaica, Queens. All this coupled with the Jam Master Jay killing which was initially linked to Supreme and the 50 Cent situation sparked a major investigation.

In 2002, Supreme plead guilty to the NY State gun charge result-

ing from his arrest while shopping in Harlem and while awaiting his sentence he took off to Miami. However, with the federal gun charges for the firearms certificate coming down the feds didn't want Supreme on the street. On December 28, 2002 they arrested Supreme at the Loews Hotel in Miami Beach and charged him with the Maryland shooting range training certificate charge. Supreme was sentenced to 37 months. In effect, the feds were putting him on ice as they investigated all the murders that they trying to link to him.

With Supreme temporarily out of the way the feds moved against his Crime Partners co-producer John Ragin and Murder Inc. They raided offices and seized everything that had to do with the film Crime Partners, even the money from Def Jam. The feds actively attempted to build a case that Supreme never left the drug game. Regardless of his guilt or innocence McGriff was the perfect target because of his past. The fact that the hip-hop generation accepted him and put him on a pedestal, as an example of what a gangster should be added fuel to the fire.

Through their investigation the feds were able to pinpoint the location where the video camera was, as it videotaped E-Money Bags last moments. They moved in on the apartment and arrested the residents- Dennis Crosby and Nicole Brown. At first they held their own, eventually they said what the police wanted them to. John "Love" Ragin, Supreme's co-producer on the Crime Partners ventured turned government informant as well rather than face a 15 to 19 year sentence for his credit card scheme. Supreme pled guilty in April 2003 for taking target practice at the Glen Burne Maryland firing range under the name of Lee Tuten. He received a five-year concurrent sentence that would have had him released in the summer of 2005. But it wasn't to be.

On January 26, 2005, a 37 page, 13 count indictment that charged 9 individuals and 2 corporations with racketeering, trafficking in cocaine, heroin, crack, money laundering and murder was handed down by the US Attorney's office in New York. It charged that Irv Gotti used his position to press Def jam executives to pay tens of thousands of dollars to cover Preme's travel expenses and that Gotti persuaded Def Jam to finance Crime Partners by providing a \$500,000 guarantee that was secretly backed by drug money. The feds contended that Supreme was responsible for mafia style murders while moving kilos of cocaine and heroin in multiple states following his release from prison in the mid 90's after his 12 year bid in federal prison.

Following the indictment Murder Inc. recorders and its executives Irv and Chris Lorenzo were tried publicly in the media for months. The all out media borage and assault by the government cost the Lorenzo brothers significantly- eventually Universal Music Group dropped the label and asked them to move out of the building. After Murder Inc.'s case was severed from Supreme's, the Gotti brothers were vindicated and acquitted of money laundering charges on Friday, December 2, 2005.

What is your relationship like now with Chris and Irv Gotti?

Supreme: Those are my brothers. We are family. They went through a great deal by refusing to denounce me. I've had to check a great deal of people in [jail] who don't know how to gauge a real man. The government at one point offered the brothers 6 months and they refused. I know a lot of tough guys, who can [mean] mug all day who would have folded under that kind of pressure. The government knew

these guys did nothing illegal but because they supported me on my dream, they chose to try to make an example of them. But unlike myself, [the Feds] had no background to paint Irv and Chris with. They even tried to cultivate a story about some incident that happened 10 years ago where a guy was beat up. This was desperate and dirty tactic and is an example of what the prosecutors are capable of. Through it all Irv and Chris stood up. I was speaking to Irv on the phone once and I told him "We did nothing [wrong]. When you stand on the side of right- when you know you're right you die for that." I am proud of them. That is why I was in total agreement with severing our trials. I didn't want them painted with my brush. I am the usual suspect. People tried to persuade them to distance themselves from me. But if you know someone and you know what they were trying to accomplish, you don't abandon them just because the government says he is a bad guy. That whole indictment was a charade that I owned Murder Inc. and I gave them start up money and I laundered a million dollars. They tried everything and all of that information came from the [government's] supposed creditable informants- were all lies. That is just a glimpse of how they operate and if they had won, they would have used that formula to go after others [hip-hop companies]- which was their whole intention. I'll never get that image out of my mind, that sambo prosecutor up there- the only

trial the jury was more concerned with who was in my support section- as if the Supreme Team [still] existed and was in the court room.

"The man sitting in the courtroom is one of the most dangerous, feared ruthless gangsters in all Queens," prosecutor Carolyn Pokorney said to start Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff's trial for multiple murders. The federal government was seeking the death penalty and portraying Supreme as a caricature of Mr. Evil. "...And when Supreme gets in a fight with somebody he doesn't go to the cops. He doesn't hire a lawyer. He hires a hit team to assassinate them, to blow them away, so that their moms can barely recognize them when they go down to the morgue," the prosecutor continued. The case was built on a combination of text messages and cooperation testimony. There was a lack of hard evidence and very little physical evidence produced.

As Supreme was awaiting his trial, he wrote Don Diva Magazine and said, "All is well as can be expected under the circumstances. The fix is in- the government is sparing no expense to eliminate me. But I remain undaunted and resolute in my stance- head up and chest out. I am in the box and have been. It only strengthens my resolve. I am focused."

The government's main evidence centered around Supreme allegedly paying \$50,000 to have 2 rivals, Eric "E-Money Bags" Smith and Troy Singleton, gunned down in 2001. "This is about a man with the power and the will to get people murdered," prosecutor Jason Jones told jurors in opening statements in Brooklyn Federal Court. The admitted hitman in both murders Emanuel "Dog" Mosley testified against McGriff. Mosley began cooperating in the spring of 2006. He testified he put together and led the hit squads on both Singleton and E-Money Bags.

Even with the knowledge that the government rarely loses a case, especially ones in which were so high profile- still McGriff fought. All of his codefendants ended up flipping and still- McGriff fought. David, Runke, McGriff's attorney argued that the government was prosecuting somebody who didn't exist anymore. The Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff that allegedly ran one of the most feared drug crew in Queens, New York- no longer existed. Supreme's work in the film industry were an effort to make money legitimately and change the direction of his life.

I provided tangible proof of my efforts, all my years of hard work to put together a legitimate project- a movie and a soundtrack. All of my witnesses were hard working tax paying legitimate people. Government workers, hospital police, concert club owners, the owner of Holloway House Publishing, DMX's manager- they all testified under oath for me and the jury dismissed them totally and accepted the words of a bunch of rats whom in the next 5 to 10 years, they or their families member may have to encounter them when they are set free in the streets.

McGriff's defense also argued that both murder victims, Troy Singleton and Eric "E-Money Bags" Smith were both known street thugs who were armed at the times of their deaths. The point was asserted that these men were not innocent victims and it could have very well been someone else dead at the end of their guns.

Remember the government claimed that my actions were to prevent these guys from killing me. All the jury had to say to the government is we're not going to believe these guys- instead they allowed themselves to be tools of the prosecution who gave deals to devils.

With the death penalty being held over his head, Supreme said in an interview, "You can put the death penalty on me. I've lived my life



Snoop Dog, Ice T and Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff

black saying "They don't call it Murder Inc. for nothing." Then they ate crow- it's a travesty.

The acquittal of Murder Inc. made those following McGriff's case feel like he had a chance. But after numerous delays and several severances Supreme stood alone facing the death penalty with no co-defendants. The media continued to characterize McGriff as a ruthless gun toting drug lord and emphasizing details of his criminal history.

What role did your criminal history play in your case?

The government, with a renewed vigor used that image to discredit and vilify me as a monster with no conscious. The jury came in with a predisposed notion of who I was based on how I was depicted. A lot of these jurors were secretly going on the Internet. The judge had to get rid of the ones that spoke truthfully about it. So I don't know how many remained that may have been affected. Throughout the

already. I've done everything I wanted to do." But the judge threw out the death penalty frustrating the prosecutors on the case. "There's no chance in the world there would be a death penalty verdict in this case," stated the trial judge, US District Court Judge, Frederic Block. Even with the death penalty being dropped is still didn't look too good for preme. Emanuel "Dog" Mosley testified that during the summer of 2001, Supreme approached him about the murder contracts. According to this informant, Supreme wanted to kill Singleton for "fucking" with Murder Inc, and because he fucked with E-Money Bags. The E-Money Bags contract was just a plain and simple retribution killing for the murder of Supreme's man Black Just.

What do you think of the state of the game today? What is your take on snitches today?

The game has been over for a long time. It's in a sad state of affairs. It is now designed so that the only one who can flourish is the rat. As long as he is willing to sleep with the government he can operate with out penalty. Who could you possibly trust? Once the government involves itself in local affairs that is an ominous sign. The feds always create monster's they can no longer control. These snitches are no different- it will come back to haunt them.

Treason is the highest crime in any land, punishable by death. Treason is the betrayal of one's trust or assisting the other side. Now this treachery is frowned upon and unacceptable in every segment of life, but its promoted in the black community- why not in the white community where drugs are just as prevalent? Through out history when every member of society becomes an agent of the government chaos ensues. It's neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother. People are using this to settle old scores. A rat is the lowest life form known to man- they serve no purpose on this planet. They spread disease and misery wherever they are allowed to exist. Who will allow them to infest their environment? Who could possibly feel comfortable in their presence? A man who can not accept culpability for his own actions is not a man.

"There is a profound difference between a witness who has no vested interest in a criminal activity and a snitch who benefits greatly," Supreme says. And unbeknownst to Supreme, Emanuel Dog Mosley was a 5K1 frequent flyer. A 5K1 is a federal sentencing guideline policy says that if a person provides "substantial assistance" to the government regarding the crime of another person they are eligible to receive a reduced sentence for their crimes. It came out in trial that Mosley had snitched in a mid 90's Pennsylvania drug conspiracy when he was facing 20 years. As the prosecutor laid out the numerous murder and drug conspiracy counts and drug operations in New York and Baltimore- more dudes from Mosley's hit squad like Barry "Mungo" Broughton, Alvin Smiley, Eric "EBay" Moore and Russell Allen testified against Supreme. The video tape Nicole Brown made of E-Money Bags 20 minutes before he died was played for the jury. Michael Todd Harvey told the jury how he was involved selling large amounts of cocaine and heroin to Supreme in the mid-90's and John "Love" Ragin, Supreme's supposed partner testified many things, among them how Supreme allegedly told him that the E-Money Bag's murder was like the Fourth of July. The prosecutor Carolyn Pokorney related how "McGriff's fingerprints were lift-

ed from the drug stashhouse where the Baltimore detectives found the video tape of E-Money Bags tape. His fingerprints were allegedly all over the stash house, and not only the stash house but in the exact bag where the detectives found this tape.

How did snitches play a role in this last trial?

Supreme: My entire trial existed on them. They gave out 11 deals to convict 1 person. 6 of these snitches testified at my trial. I had only actually met two of them- Emanuel "Manny Dog" Mosley and Jon Ragin; [then there was] Climente "CJ" Jordan, Barry Trip, Mongo Broughton, Alvin Smiley, Michael Hardy, Terrance "Tony" Terrall, Eddie "Divine Knowledge" Oliver, Juan Romano and Phillip "Dalu" Banks. Climente "CJ" Jordan was the catalyst. He was doing 15 years in Delaware and he decided to cut his sentence at my expense. I had never met him and don't knock him. He told on Manny Dog and his crew. Manny Dog already had a 5K1 (Substantial Assistance) in 1991 in Pennsylvania- and went in for his second time at bat. Now remember in my trial the government said the guys who got killed were trying to kill me and killed my man. But all the rat's had numerous murders, drug dealing and horrendous crimes. They will all be released in 5 to 10 years- just so the government could get a conviction on me. These guys testified under oath that they would lie, have lied and would do what was necessary to receive a deal. They testified that they killed, robbed, sold drugs- and all was forgiven because they now stood with the prosecution and now we are supposed to believe that we can trust them. Would you trust a pit bull who had revealed its true nature, just because it was being held by a beautiful woman and appeared friendly? My attorney asked the jury in closing, if they encountered one of these incorrigible individuals in public would you trust them? Would you buy a car from them? Would you buy a house from them? Then how could you trust them enough to take a man's life? You can't change their nature. The government is willing to tolerate any type of [distasteful] behavior when it serves their interest.

Prosecutors went overboard portraying Supreme as this super evil gangster who couldn't possibly have been involved in any legitimate business ventures. The government's portrayal of Supreme was almost cartoonish. In McGriff's defense attorney, Runke argued, "What we don't have on these murders is wiretaps, we don't have anybody discussing murder over a wiretap, we don't have finger prints that matter. NO FINGERPRINTS THAT MATTER. NO fingerprints associated with the murders at all. Fingerprints or something related to the crime. No eyewitnesses, somebody who explains they were on the street corner and they saw McGriff and Mosley. They don't have any DNA, firearm matches, nothing compares to anything. No matches, no ballistics, nothing." But it didn't matter. What they did have was the testimony of criminal informants and McGriff's criminal history. Once a criminal always a criminal- except of course, if you're a government informant- then the rules don't apply.

When you were initially released from prison and you began to work on your films did you ever think that the Feds would make you a target again? Do you think that you would have been better off just "staying out the way?"

Supreme: Should I have not taken a legal opportunity out of concerns of the feds? What aggravated the feds was that I actually made a film based on a Donald Goines book, with an all-star cast.



Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff and Gerald "Prince" Miller


You see the feds are vindictive in nature, they believe that once a bad guy always a bad guy and that you don't deserve to be prosperous. They sit around all day saying he's got to be doing something wrong and once they believe something, no amount of evidence to the contrary will alter their position. Long before I came along, the feds viewed hip-hop as a criminal entity. There is a tremendous gulf between us and them. Because they can't comprehend our vernacular, or our culture, so they attack it. But one should never allow fear to curtail their potential or anything for that matter. What needs to take place is that we need to remove

all this dichotomy and petty disputes and find some common connections that can strengthen our union- because they want to end hip-hop. I don't regret my efforts to change in a new direction. I am at peace with myself.

On February 1, 2007 the jury after a five day deliberation found Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff guilty of murder conspiracy and drug dealing. The 46-year-old McGriff looked backed and smiled at his supporters when the verdict was issued.

Do you feel that the government proved their case in your trial?

Supreme: First of all there wasn't a case to prove. There was no enterprise and I never paid anyone \$50,000 to kill two street corner hustlers. The president could be assassinated for that. The government has a [history] for adding the dots as opposed to connecting the dots. If you examine the indictment in 2005 the initial premise was a criminal enterprise consisting of me, Irv, Chris, Dennis, Devine Crosby and his girlfriend, Gutter and Irv's accountant. By the time my trial commenced, their initial premise was recalibrated numerous times. I was superseded 4 times. They formulated their case as they went along, until they discovered some rat's that would make it all fit. All of the egregious assertions articulated in the first indictment, the exhaustive and extensive investigation for 5 years was a charade. This entire case against me was inconsistent. I was convenient in nature and my background and my past put me in a precarious position. This case was about some prosecutor's lofty ambitions and closing a chapter... Even the judge in my case, after hearing all the evidence, had serious concerns on why they were seeking the death penalty. The political nuances at play were highly sophisticated.

Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff was sentenced to LIFE in federal prison and was shipped off to federal prison for what would be the last time- but his legend remains. And Supreme will be remembered forever as a sort of philosopher, an eloquent speaker and deep thinker, who knew more than he let on. A man who almost made the journey to legitimacy that so many gangsters before him dreamed about but only a few have attained. "I've never been fascinated by money," Supreme says. "What fascinates me is Nelson Mandela on Robben Island breaking stones, eating bread and drinking water... Nat Turner being in a cell after being captured for leading the slave revolt. That's what fascinates me, the struggle. The Struggle is what defines a man." 

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