

Opinion: Nipsey Hussle's death takes a hero away from us

By Master Tesfatsion, Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.11.19

Word Count **708**

Level **790L**



Rapper Nipsey Hussle attends Craft Syndicate's music collaboration unveiling event at the Opera Atlanta nightclub on December 10, 2018, in Atlanta, Georgia. Photo by: Prince Williams/Getty Images

I sat on the plane fighting tears. I looked at my phone as my messages were delivered. I was in complete shock.

The rapper Nipsey Hussle had died.

He was known as a product of Crenshaw, a neighborhood in South Los Angeles, California. Los Angeles is called L.A. for short. There, he was popular because of his music, his gang connections and his work in the community. L.A. and the hip-hop community are grieving his death.

Grieving The Loss Of A Brother

Hussle was killed on March 31 in front of his store, the Marathon Clothing. Meanwhile, the Eritrean community is grieving the loss of our brother, too.

That's because the Grammy-nominated rapper also had connections to Eritrea. This small East African country is home to about 5 million people. Hussle's father, Dawit Asghedom, grew up there and would tell his son stories about the country. Hussle's birth name is Ermias Asghedom.

Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia, a much larger country, in 1962. When a country is annexed it is added to another country without its permission. It spent the next 30 years fighting for independence. In 1991, Eritrea finally won back independence. The victory serves as a badge of honor for Eritreans, creating a mindset of willpower that Hussle drew inspiration from.

Coming Out Victorious

"From being outnumbered and being against superpowers, to coming out victorious," Hussle said last year on Eritrean TV. "It's similar to what I stand for in music."

Hussle took his first trip to Eritrea in 2004, when he stayed for three months, and described it as life-changing. He went back again last year after releasing his Grammy-nominated album "Victory Lap."

"A lot of who I am, I understood more once I went over [to Eritrea]," Hussle said last year. "Who I thought I was naturally, parts of my personality and what I was interested in is connected to my dad's side."

For Eritrean Americans, Hussle carried our flag. He was the face of an invisible country hardly mentioned in mainstream U.S. media. Eritrea is constantly in the shadow of Ethiopia because of similar cultures and traditions.

Hussle made the comparison to a marathon in his music and clothing brand. The comparison is fitting since so many world-class long-distance runners come from Eritrea.

Made People Believe They Could Succeed

Hussle's music served as the soundtrack for Eritreans whose parents made the long journey to the United States. He made us believe we could make it out of low-income housing. He made us believe we could succeed in a country that often rewards wealth over work ethic.

"He inspired us all," said Eritrean-American NFL player Nat Berhe, who grew up in California. "I started listening to Nipsey when I was a freshman in college. That alone motivated me to finish college. I'm hurt by it. I think he meant the utmost to the Eritrean community."

Although many of us arrived in this country poor and with little to no education, Hussle loved us. He spoke about us.

Tiffany Haddish is a fellow Eritrean-American. The actress grew up in L.A., and wore an Eritrean zuria dress at the 2018 Academy Awards. I asked Hussle about it.

"I was proud and inspired by that," Hussle said. "Our country is such a small country, and it's so underrepresented in the world."

Hussle, Haddish and Berhe were honored at the 2018 Eritrean Festival in Washington, D.C. It's home to the largest Eritrean community in the United States.

"I felt like I was with Malcolm X," Berhe said about Hussle. Malcolm X was a leader in the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement fought to get equal rights for African-Americans. "You just got that feeling that he was just somebody really important."

I first met Hussle at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game in L.A. For once, I wasn't the only Eritrean. I'll remember how his face lit up when I told him I was Eritrean.

This past week, there were more than 40 services in his memory worldwide. Hussle died at 33 and left a huge hole in our community that won't be replaced. Still, we will continue the marathon.

Master Tesfatsion is a sports writer who has covered the NFL's Washington football team and the Minnesota Vikings.

Quiz

- 1 Read the selection below from the section "Grieving The Loss Of A Brother."

That's because the Grammy-nominated rapper also had connections to Eritrea. This small East African country is home to about 5 million people. Hussle's father, Dawit Asghedom, grew up there and would tell his son stories about the country. Hussle's birth name is Ermias Asghedom.

Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia, a much larger country, in 1962. When a country is annexed it is added to another country without its permission. It spent the next 30 years fighting for independence. In 1991, Eritrea finally won back independence. The victory serves as a badge of honor for Eritreans, creating a mindset of willpower that Hussle drew inspiration from.

Which sentence from this selection supports the conclusion that people from Eritrea were happy that Eritrea won its independence from Ethiopia?

- (A) That's because the Grammy-nominated rapper also had connections to Eritrea.
- (B) Hussle's father, Dawit Asghedom, grew up there and would tell his son stories about the country.
- (C) It spent the next 30 years fighting for independence.
- (D) The victory serves as a badge of honor for Eritreans, creating a mindset of willpower that Hussle drew inspiration from.

- 2 Read the section "Made People Believe They Could Succeed."

Which sentence from the section shows why many Eritreans were inspired by Hussle's music?

- (A) He made us believe we could make it out of low-income housing.
- (B) "He inspired us all," said Eritrean American NFL player Nat Berhe, who grew up in California.
- (C) The actress grew up in L.A., and wore an Eritrean zuria dress at the 2018 Academy Awards.
- (D) "I was proud and inspired by that," Hussle said.

3 Read the paragraph from the article.

For Eritrean-Americans, Hussle carried our flag. He was the face of an invisible country hardly mentioned in mainstream U.S. media. Eritrea is constantly in the shadow of Ethiopia because of similar cultures and traditions.

How does this paragraph support the main idea of the article?

- (A) It describes the cultures and traditions of Eritrea and Ethiopia as being similar.
- (B) It shows that Eritrea is a country that has a flag.
- (C) It helps explain why Eritrean-Americans are upset about Hussle's death.
- (D) It suggests that Hussle's face was rarely shown in U.S. media.

4 Read the paragraph from the article.

I first met Hussle at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game in L.A. For once, I wasn't the only Eritrean. I'll remember how his face lit up when I told him I was Eritrean.

Which statement summarizes the paragraph?

- (A) The author remembers that the very first time he met Hussle was in L.A. at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game.
- (B) The author remembers feeling surprised when he found out that Hussle was at the the 2018 NBA All-Star Game.
- (C) The author remembers that Hussle was very happy to meet another Eritrean when they first met at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game.
- (D) The author remembers telling Hussle at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game that he was Eritrean just like Hussle was.

Answer Key

- 1 Read the selection below from the section "Grieving The Loss Of A Brother."

That's because the Grammy-nominated rapper also had connections to Eritrea. This small East African country is home to about 5 million people. Hussle's father, Dawit Asghedom, grew up there and would tell his son stories about the country. Hussle's birth name is Ermias Asghedom.

Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia, a much larger country, in 1962. When a country is annexed it is added to another country without its permission. It spent the next 30 years fighting for independence. In 1991, Eritrea finally won back independence. The victory serves as a badge of honor for Eritreans, creating a mindset of willpower that Hussle drew inspiration from.

Which sentence from this selection supports the conclusion that people from Eritrea were happy that Eritrea won its independence from Ethiopia?

- (A) That's because the Grammy-nominated rapper also had connections to Eritrea.
- (B) Hussle's father, Dawit Asghedom, grew up there and would tell his son stories about the country.
- (C) It spent the next 30 years fighting for independence.
- (D) The victory serves as a badge of honor for Eritreans, creating a mindset of willpower that Hussle drew inspiration from.**

- 2 Read the section "Made People Believe They Could Succeed."

Which sentence from the section shows why many Eritreans were inspired by Hussle's music?

- (A) He made us believe we could make it out of low-income housing.**
- (B) "He inspired us all," said Eritrean American NFL player Nat Berhe, who grew up in California.
- (C) The actress grew up in L.A., and wore an Eritrean zuria dress at the 2018 Academy Awards.
- (D) "I was proud and inspired by that," Hussle said.

3 Read the paragraph from the article.

For Eritrean-Americans, Hussle carried our flag. He was the face of an invisible country hardly mentioned in mainstream U.S. media. Eritrea is constantly in the shadow of Ethiopia because of similar cultures and traditions.

How does this paragraph support the main idea of the article?

- (A) It describes the cultures and traditions of Eritrea and Ethiopia as being similar.
- (B) It shows that Eritrea is a country that has a flag.
- (C) It helps explain why Eritrean-Americans are upset about Hussle's death.**
- (D) It suggests that Hussle's face was rarely shown in U.S. media.

4 Read the paragraph from the article.

I first met Hussle at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game in L.A. For once, I wasn't the only Eritrean. I'll remember how his face lit up when I told him I was Eritrean.

Which statement summarizes the paragraph?

- (A) The author remembers that the very first time he met Hussle was in L.A. at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game.
- (B) The author remembers feeling surprised when he found out that Hussle was at the the 2018 NBA All-Star Game.
- (C) The author remembers that Hussle was very happy to meet another Eritrean when they first met at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game.**
- (D) The author remembers telling Hussle at the 2018 NBA All-Star Game that he was Eritrean just like Hussle was.