

Hip Hop Scholarship Race Interview w Michael Eric Dyson

Written by Davey D ID3556
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Michael Eric Dyson is by far one of the most spirited, passionate and sharpest people you will come across. Dubbed a Hip Hop Intellectual, over the years he's made his mark with a string of books (14 in all) that have covered all sorts of topics including 2Pac (Tupac Shakur), Marvin Gaye, Martin Luther King, Hurricane Katrina, and of course his favorite topic - Bill Cosby.

He just released his latest book called "Debating Race" where he focuses on the current state of race relations here in America. In this book he takes on everyone from Civil Rights leader Jesse Jackson to Black conservative Ward Connerly to George Bush's lap dog Condoleezza Rice to racist blowhard Bill O'Reilly and that ditzy airhead Ann Coulter. Dyson also weighs in on key issues like Hurricane Katrina, Manhood, Mexican Immigration and Reparations.

During our interview we started off by talking about the politics of academia and role Hip Hop plays on University campuses. We talked specifically about the types of challenges faced by professors who must publish certain types of books written in very specific and often times "heady" language in order to be accepted and make progress in Academic circles. Dyson explained the struggle he once faced and what many emerging professors now face where they get criticized and penalized for writing material that is easily understood by the masses. It's not considered rigorous scholarship by those who can grant tenure or access. Dyson felt that Hip Hop scholars are now positioned to play important roles and can add immensely to the discussions that need to be taking place.

We talked about Hip Hop being dead and what that really means above and beyond the surface discussions many have been having. He feels Hip Hop is at a point where we need to do some serious self reflection, purging and examination. He felt it was good that Nas raised the issue.

We got into discussions around race and many of the topics covered in his book. This is where our discussions got to be most interesting. We talked about Senator Barack Obama running for office and what that means. We talked about Al Sharpton and others raising the issue about whether or not Obama was Black enough. We also talked about some of Obama's strength and weaknesses.

We talked about Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other Black faces in high places and how that plays out internationally. We spoke at length about her role in the White House and how she has been used to be a black face championing the War in Iraq.

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We also tackled the sticky issue of Black vs. Brown tensions in places like Los Angeles. Dyson noted that many of us need to get over our hang ups and face the fact that we weren't all that concerned about Latinos when their numbers were smaller. But now that they have grown larger we're raising a stink and expressing concern.

Last but not least we spoke about Bill Cosby and how his remarks had impacted poor Black folks.

This interview was done in two parts. You can hear them by clicking the following players

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Part 1

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