

Whatever Happened to the Hip Hop Vote or Die

Written by Davey D ID2866
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Whatever Happened to Vote or Die? By Davey D

I have this nagging question, that won't go away regarding Mr. Sean P-Diddy' Combs. It's the eve of the second annual Hip Hop Political Convention, so I'm in a political mind set and hence I keep asking myself; 'Does anyone know what the hell happened to his Vote or Die Campaign and his organization Citizens for Change?'

I mean I already know the obvious, he shut that @#%\$ down a while back and he's been running around throwing lavish parties, doing 'Making The Band' for MTV, he was in a play 'Raisin of the Sun' and now he's gearing up for his new album in October of this year.

On the surface, most people are gonna be quick to say, 'Dude was phony and all his 'Vote or Die' campaign did was help sell him a bunch of T-shirts'. Others will say he was never really serious about politics in the first place and he was on some sort of ego trip when he jumped into Hip Hop and politics arena.

Maybe it's me, but I don't think it's as simple as that... I remember when Diddy spoke at the Patrick Lipert Awards in February of 2004, before he started Citizen For Change or launched Vote or Die, he caught everyone by surprise when he jumped on stage to accept an award and told the packed audience he wanted to 'Get Bush's ass out of office'. The crowd roared with approval and P-Diddy repeated his remarks to make sure his point was not missed.

Startled officials from the non-profit, non-partisan Rock the Vote organization who put on the event got nervous real quick and moved toward Diddy as if to hurry him up. I guess he realized that by making such an overtly partisan statement he could get RTV in trouble so he backed off just a little and tried to recast his remarks.

But then Diddy came back harder by talking about how Bush was a lousy President who failed to comfort grieving mothers who lost their sons to the War in Iraq. The crowd went nuts and Diddy restated his opening remarks about 'Getting Bush's ass out of office'. Nobody including myself thought we'd hear such biting remarks from Mr. Party Central aka P-Diddy directed at the president

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After he left the stage I tried my best to get a copy of the remarks, but RTV held on to their copies and wouldn't release them. Although there were a number of press outlets present including MTV, you didn't really see or hear a lot of coverage regarding Diddy's remarks. It wasn't until several months later I got a tape of his speech...

Which you can hear here:

www.odeo.com/audio/1508557/view

In the meantime Diddy went out and started his Vote or Die campaign and showed up everywhere including the couch of Oprah to extol the values of voting. When I finally caught up with him, it was at the Democratic Convention that July. He was definitely passionate but avoided talking about his remarks about Bush when I brought it up. He kept saying that he was non-partisan and hadn't made up his mind. It was like a mantra. I figured he was just being careful because Citizen Change was a non-profit and he didn't wanna get hemmed up the way Russell did when he campaigned to end the Rockefeller Drug Laws the year prior.

Now after the 2004 election we all know and heard the blowhard talk show pundits like MSNBC Chris Mathews who tried to take aim at Diddy and claim that the youth/ Hip Hop vote never materialized. That was in fact a lie. The goal was to get 20 million people to the polls. More than 21 million showed up marking an increase by 11% of voters between the ages 18-25.

With respect to Bush's opponent Senator John Kerry, the only demographic to vote for him in the majority and with record numbers was the Youth/Hip Hop vote. Sadly his spineless punk ass never bothered to show any gratitude. It was the older critics of the youth vote who voted for Kerry didn't pull their weight in the last election...

But back to P-Diddy. Here's a guy that often states that he hates to fail. If he does have an ego, it's one that pushes him to look and sound good at all times. I can't understand how he just slide off into the sunset without a word. Regarding his campaign. That's not a good look. Why not continue the momentum? Was it really about selling t-shirts? Was it really about jumping on a trend? If Diddy was so passionate and so much against Bush's politics in 2004, why wouldn't he

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jump at the chance to weaken the president's grip in these 2006 midterm elections? Forget the 'Vote or Die' campaign; I just wanna know why he's been so silent about any of these issues.

Sometimes I wonder if he pissed some folks off in high places who saw him as having the potential to really wreck some political havoc and as a result he got unceremoniously got shut down. I mean it's not like P-Diddy has always been spiffy clean. There's had to be few times he was 'ridin' dirty'. It's hard not to when you get to certain levels in the music biz. It's hard not to when you get high up there in politics. On certain levels in both these professions people play hard and they play for keeps. Positioning, market share and power are the end games.

With that in mind, how can I not put it past folks who roll in that infamous Neocon circle of Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Pearle and the rest of the gang that have all but hijacked the government and led us to War, to sit idly by when their position is challenged.

Think about it, if you were a high ranking political type trying to make power moves and you looked out your window and saw a guy like Diddy telling people to vote your ass out of office, you don't think you wouldn't dig up some dirt on him and shut him down and make him be quiet?

You don't think you would find some sort of angle where you could literally make him an offer he couldn't refuse? We're talking about the music biz folks, where its always dirty. We're talking politics here folks which has long been the dirtiest and grimeiest business you can get into. Vote or Die had the potential to unseat some folks who many believe went out and stole a couple of elections and lied to us so we could be led us into a war for fictional reasons. In short the guys in power don't play.

If you think this is far fetched, look at the vicious attacks that regularly go on during campaigns. Look at the Swiss Boat ads that sunk decorated war hero John Kerry. Look at how war hero Senator John McCain got taken out by the Neo-cons in their character attacks on him. Remember this was a guy who was a Prisoner of War during Vietnam and he stayed in prison and endured all sorts of torture to save the lives of his men.

When he ran against Bush in the 2000 primaries he looked perched to maybe win the GOP nomination, but Bush's team took him out with the vilest attacks. Nowadays John McCain has

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totally changed his tune and wholeheartedly supports the president after he once proudly stood against him. He must've gotten some ass kicking to have changed up like that.

For a boisterous guy like Diddy to suddenly go silent, one can't but think that something went down behind the scenes. Listen to his remarks in that February before the election. Ask yourself, how do you go from saying all that to not saying anything? The silence is glaring. The absence is more than noticeable. Diddy said he wanted to get Bush's ass out of office and apparently, somehow, somehow, somebody got his ass out of politics. How did that happen?

During the recent BET Awards, Diddy showed up to the press gallery about 20 minutes after boxing promoter Don King came through and lit up the place by telling everyone why George Bush is the greatest President ever and how he's been real good to Black people.

Politics was on everyone's mind when Diddy came to field questions and several reporters including myself and Andreas Hale of HipHopdx.com along with a woman from another newspaper who's name I forgot, raised our hands to ask P-Diddy the 64 thousand dollar question; 'Where did 'Vote or Die' disappeared to? 'Do you agree with Don King and think Bush is a great President for Black people?' etc etc

In typical BET fashion, the press monitor avoided picking anyone who he thought would 'go there' and instead chose three people who asked Diddy simple questions like 'what kind of outfit he was wearing and how does he like working with Yung Joc'. He answered those three or four questions and bounced with the wind.

So anyway, P-Diddy involving himself in the 2006 election or politics in general is not be all, end all. This weekend in Chicago, there will be others who are fully prepared to engage that arena and they'll stick I through no matter what. It's like I said 20 years from now some of us will have grand kids and they're gonna come across a video or an old Vibe Magazine cover or read about this campaign and they gonna have a few questions. It's too bad Diddy hasn't just sat down and given a full explanation. And if was somehow encouraged/forced out, it be nice if he one day open up about that.