

Rhymefest on Hip Hop and the Revolution

Written by Rhymefest ID3070

Monday, 16 October 2006 03:18 -

My Part for the Revolution by Rhymefest

Hip hop artist Rhymefest wrote a member of the UK Parliament named Mr. David Cameron, whose mission is to get Hip Hop music banned in England because of what he described as "its gun & knife culture". The following is from the Blog of the hip hop artist Rhymefest on his MySpace site.

After reviewing your comments from the blog ["Who is going to fund the revolution?"], I was caught by surprise by the amount of you who placed that responsibility in my hands; reversing the question by asking me "What part will you play in this so-called revolution, Fest?"

I guess because of my touring, radio and media exposure, you seem to think I have a bigger voice than the average person to address the issues of the "people". Sometimes, I do forget about the magnitude and impact of the statements that I make. After all, it's just me. My 8-year old son doesn't look at me as Mr. Brand New. My mother doesn't view me as Rhymefest. However, I did receive a call from Kanye a day or so ago asking me "why am I always dissin" him?" I asked him what did he mean; he responded by telling me he read in a magazine where I said that "Kanye pop-up collars were out-of-style". I immediately let him know that my only statement was that "pop-up collars were out-of-style", and the magazine chose to add his name to it. Afterwards, he agreed that the media does embellish the facts.

About one month ago, I wrote a letter to a member of the UK Parliament named Mr. David Cameron, whose mission is to get Hip-Hop music banned in England because of what he described as its gun & knife culture. I wrote to him about artists like Common, Talib Kweli, as well as myself. I challenged him to let me perform for him and have dialogue with him about the importance of Hip-Hop in the community, as well as in the political arena. I never expected a response. However, an English paper found my letter, published it and created a public pressure for Mr. Cameron to meet with me. I'm scheduled to travel to the UK in October in order to have this dialogue about Hip-Hop with Mr. Cameron in front of MTV and BBC cameras. Whoever thought that the power of the pen was truly mightier than the sword? Coming from a ghetto on the South Side of Chicago, I know I didn't. Well, maybe now it's time for me to accept my responsibility, face my trial in life and take my place in history.

On September 12, I announced on my MySpace page what I call the Plugg City Tour. I would

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like to come and see what you, the people, need and want; I would like to be able to articulate your needs to the higher sources I have access to. I plan to come and live with 10 different fans from 10 different states for 3 days each; no matter what their social, economic or cultural background may be. I'm going to go to work with them, participate in family activities with them, as well as let them experience my trials and successes as a major-label artist. I would like to personally get to know my fans, understand them and create music suited toward their lifestyles. This, in my opinion, is a revolutionary move. It reminds me of Che Guevara's motorcycle tour through South America. It will just be myself and a cameraman (for documentation purposes). I plan on visiting cities in Louisiana, Georgia, New York, the Carolinas, etc. No label reps, no bodyguards. Just me; Che A. Smith a/k/a Rhymefest. If you would like to know more about my tour and how you can be the one I visit in your city, please contact me at myspace.com/rhymefest, and the instructions for how to apply are on my profile.

I will begin announcing winners and routing my tour in October, and I plan on leaving in November. I hope to see many of you along my journey. I pray that God watches over me and keeps me safe, and I ask you to pray for me as well. And, I know that my next album due to be released in March 2007 entitled EL CHE will be inspired from the experiences I have with you. That's the best I could come up with [for now] in regards to my part for the revolution. What's yours?

Talk to me...

Visit the MySpace page of Rhymefest at - <http://www.myspace.com/rhymefest>

Here's Rhymefest's Letter from August 3rd

Rhymefest

C/O Beth Brookfield Sony BMG

Bedford House

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69-79 Fulham High Street

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Dear Mr. Cameron,

My name is Rhymefest. You may not have heard of me, but I am a US rap artist and I wanted to write to you in response to your views on hip-hop.

After reviewing the comments made by you on the state of Hip Hop and hip hop culture, I tend to agree with you more than not.

I agree that rap music and urban music depicts a life in the inner cities and poor communities that is often violent. I also agree that by glorifying and promoting violence via radio, TV and videos, it does give an acceptance for that behavior that is then negative for the community.

As a Grammy Award-winning artist, who has worked and written with many other rap artists such as Kanye West and ODB, I myself on occasion am guilty of contributing to the culture. I believe that the hip-hop community is definitely in a state of denial about our complicity with the glorification of drugs and violence. If I was a middle-aged politician who knew nothing about rap music and I turned on the radio, then I would understand exactly the way you feel about urban music.

However, although I agree with you that we are role models that affect our community and our music does play a role in people's behavior, beneath the surface there are artists making changes and making the difference and there is more to rap than what you see.

If you look closer and you examine beyond what is promoted to you as hip-hop, you'll see artists such as Kanye West, Common, Estelle, Lupe Fiasco and myself, Rhymefest, who don't make foul music at all.

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Myself and Kanye West won a Grammy for this and it is a song that is recognized worldwide.

Common, who made an album called Be, conveyed that we can just be ourselves and be free to explore our own spirits and it has no negative connotation to it at all.

I think it is very easy to explore the negatives and it is very easy to exploit the bad in rap music. What I think you need to see, Mr. Cameron, is the other side to rap music. If you don't like it then you can come out and say that you don't but I know that you will like it.

My challenge is to ask that you sit down and have a cup of tea with me. In fact, let me come and perform for you. I am sure you will see that rap music is more than murder music or knife culture. If you truly believe this is a democracy then sit down and discuss with me the issues that you see.

And if you are correct, and your opinion of rap music is the same, then we should come together with the community; rappers, politicians and radio DJs, and have a wider discussion.

I think this is a better way to convey a point and make change than to just be against what appears to be rap culture.

Because, Mr. Cameron, this generalization is not all of us, it's just a few bad apples that spoil the bunch.

So I say to you, and to all of us, let's have a real discussion.

Let's solve the problem of the rap community in a civilized way and in a way that music can still be entertaining.

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This way it can benefit everyone. Amen. I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

Rhymefest