

## Hip Hop - DJ's - Mixtapes and the RIAA Raids

Written by Davey D and Aishah Shahidah Simmons ID3240  
Thursday, 18 January 2007 03:47 -

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#### Rascism, Power & Drama-What's Really Behind the RIAA Raids By Davey D

As stated earlier, many are starting to suspect that there are deeper implications to the RIAA Raid. DJ Drama's sister Aishah Shahidah Simmons who did the incredible documentary "NO" lays out some compelling thoughts in the essay "Thirty Strong And A Gun To His Head...Pay Attention?" following my remarks that all of us need to think about.

As I noted in my first reports on this incident- The raid on the offices of DJ Drama and the Aphilliates WAS NOT about mixtapes, this is about inserting power. Please bear in mind that over the past year, many deejays from all around the country have been quietly organizing and weighing their options while assessing their collective power. For example, last month several hundred deejays met at a highly publicized West Coast Summit. Already we have TJDJs, The pioneering DJs who are down with Tools of War, The Core DJs, The Heavy Hitters, The Big Dawgs, The Beat Junkies Nasty Nes and the RappattackDJs and The Bum Squad DJS all running profitable businesses and working in a collective fashion. Some of these DJ Collectives have been behind the scenes organizing to demand Health Care and other provisions from the industry. When folks got together in LA, it was to start demanding more work opportunities. In all these DJ collectives, they have been asserting that they "run the industry" because the deejay has the ability to make or break records.

In case many of you have not noticed, the DJ is what started off and put Hip Hop culture in motion. It was DJ Kool Herc, DJ Afrika Bambaataa, DJ Grand Wizard Theodore, DJ Grandmaster Flowers, Pete DJ Jones, DJ Hollywood, DJ Lovebug Starski and DJ Grandmaster Flash who people went to see back in the early days of Hip Hop. When the record industry got involved with Hip Hop, the DJ was cut out. Ever since then the DJ has morphed into a producer and behind the scenes man.

In recent years the DJ has returned to being a front and center entity. In 2007 the DJ has become more popular than many of the artists, radio stations and labels that put out material. What makes the deejay collectives so potentially powerful is the fact that their members all have direct income sources which allows them to make moves. The most prevalent being the mixtapes. As these deejay collectives began to further organize, it was only a matter of time

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before you could see people moving in a direction where they could act totally independent of the Record industry. The fact that record labels CAN NOT break music without mixtape deejays is a problem for some in power. The fact that A list artists are dealing directly with popular mixtape deejays is a problem for those in power. With the advent of new technology, the DJ in 2007 has all but perched to move to higher levels and seriously change the game. This was definitely a dream for the late Justo Faison who started organizing mixtape DJs

If you follow the industry closely you can catch glimpse of this potential power being exercised. It may show up in the form of Latin Prince who heads up the Bum Squad DJs being hired as a main marketing VP for Universal Records. It may be people like DJ Skee (Game's DJ) putting together sold out car shows and other events that draw thousands. This is without the major record labels. You can see people like Jazzy Jeff working quietly behind the scenes to develop new radio formats or people like DJ Revolution working with new companies like M-Audio to develop new products for DJs. In the case of DJ Drama, many artists from the South would not have made it without his mixtapes being the the crucial introduction to a public that has become increasingly fickle and dissatisfied with commercial radio. The list goes on and on.

From the K-Slays to the Whoo Kids to the DJ Clues to the DJ Warriors and DJ Vlads we seen DJs all over the country seriously step their game up and get involved with everything from setting up their own Internet Radio stations on down to sparking off their own TV shows. Many of the popular regional music movements like Hyphy, Snap, or Chopped and Screwed would not have surfaced had it not been for the deejays. And this is just the mixtape DJs. We haven't even begun to talk about the stuff jumping off with DJs who call themselves turntablists like your DJ Q-Berts. In fact let me rephrase that-Many of the DJs were forced to be independent of the industry because they weren't getting paid and definitely weren't getting benefits.

At the end of the day all this potential power that can be a problem if you can't control them, buy them off or keep them happy with happy with crumbs. We caught a glimpse of this potential power of these deejay collectives when Young Buck got into a altercation in Atlanta with a popular club DJ. A conference call had to be set up and Young Buck had to do damage control as deejays from around the country stepped up and were ready to start boycotting Young Buck and G-Unit. We saw DJ collectives step up and intervene when Benzino got into beef with Funkmaster Flex and the editor of Ozone Magazine Julie Beverly.

Remember the Recording Industry made moves to eliminate the DJ and focus on the rapper. The DJ made a return for the better. The fact that so many of these deejays were forced to step up their "poli" and "econ" games is the fault of the industry that would do things like hire popular popular deejays to do mixes on commercial radio stations at 25-50 bucks a mix with no benefits.

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And that was considered good pay. Meanwhile these deejays who garnered street cred and large followings, would help these stations move up in the ratings, but not have enough to eat themselves. Thus they stepped their game up and discovered they could do things on their own. DJ Drama moving 50 thousand mixtapes is major. This not about mixtapes-its about power and a fading industry doing everything it can to create the illusion they are in control. The key word here is illusion. Remember the RIAA works for the major labels. If some of these head label honchos aren't stepping up and telling the RIAA to fall back and ease up and let DJ Drama and DJ Canon go free and return their equipment, then like that great urban philosopher Flava Flav would say-You know what time it is. -It's gonna be time for the industry to step up their game even more and totally change the game.

Written by

Davey D

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Thirty Strong And A Gun To His Head...Pay Attention?

By Aishah Shahidah Simmons

There have been and probably will be numerous articles on the January 16, 2007 RIAA raid of the Aphilliates Music Group studio and arrest of my brother Tyree (DJ Drama) Simmons and DJ Don Cannon. There have been and will be numerous articles on what the implications of this raid will not only have on the Aphilliates Music Group but on the entire mixtape business/game.

In the midst of those ongoing discussions, let's not forget the reality that racism and sexism are alive and well in Ameri-KKK-a.

Tuesday, January 16, 2007 marked the first day of my supporting a three day fast that Black

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Women in Durham, North Carolina organized to expel and heal from the ongoing collective trauma that many of us who are victim/survivors of rape and other forms of sexual assault have been experiencing ever since members of the predominantly White Duke LaCrosse team were publicly accused of raping a Black woman in Spring of 2006. Little did I know, that while I supported my Spirit Sister-Survivors in Durham, North Carolina, that another assault against a member of my Blood family was about to happen.

No one will ever be able to explain to me why the hell a SWAT Team of at least 30 strong went charging into the Aphilliates Music Group studio as if they were doing a major drug or an illegal arms bust? Why did they need to put my brother Tyree (DJ Drama) and his cohorts face down on the ground with guns to their heads? Did the agents need to ransack the studio, confiscate cd's featuring artist sanctioned original music not bootlegs, disc drives, computers, cars, ultimately stripping the studio of everything with the exception of furniture

Based on the January 16, 2007 Fox Atlanta News edition

<http://www.myfoxtlanta.com/myfox/pages/Home/Detail?contentId=2083928&version=1&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=VSTY&pageld=1.1.1>, when one of the agents said "Usually, we find other crimes during these types of busts." Clearly the agents expected ( possibly wanted) to find drugs and/or illegal arms. K-9 dogs whose noses are trained to sniff and find drugs, were ultimately board with nothing to do.

So the question for me and the rest of the Portnoy-Simmons-Thwaites family is was a SWAT team needed? Was this solely about mixtapes? Would this have happened if this wasn't a Black run company? One of the claims is that Tyree (DJ Drama) was racketeering. Well, this alleged racketeer is a legitimate businessman who played and continues to play a pivotal role in the careers of numerous known and unknown hip hop artists, which by direct extension helps the recording industry immensely. Tyree (DJ Drama) is also a partner, a father, a brother, and a son.

When I think about all of the scandals in corporate Ameri-KKK-a (Enron and WorldCom to name a minute few)...I don't ever recall hearing about any SWAT enforced raids. I don't recall any images of Ken Lay or other top executives of corporations being forced to lay face down on the ground surrounded by SWAT agents with guns to their heads and K-9 dogs sniffing them. For a detailed expose on the evils that corporations all around the world do and get away with legally and illegally, check out the powerfully gripping documentaries "Enron: The Smartest Guys In the

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Room," and "The Corporation."

As Tyree's (DJ Drama's) sister and as a radical Black feminist lesbian social activist, I am beyond outraged at how the RIAA handled/orchestrated the raid. If he or anyone in the Aphilliates camp didn't follow the directions of the agents, asked the "wrong" questions,"or made the "wrong" move during the raid, he and/or his cohorts could've been murdered in a twinkling of an eye. And for what? Selling mixtapes, which feature artist sanctioned original music?

The RIAA should be held accountable for their actions. They need to know that their violent response to addressing their accusations of racketeering was unacceptable.

There was (and is) no covert operation going on with the business of the Aphilliates; and yet the Aphilliates were treated as if they were public enemy number one.

I am explicitly clear that the music entertainment power structure has a very serious problem with people of Color making profits, on their terms, off a multi-billion dollar international industry hiphop that they created.

I am also clear that since the founding of Ameri-KKK-a, this type of state sanctioned racist and sexist treatment towards men and women of Color happens every single minute of every single day. Unfounded police raids are nothing new to countless communities of Color across this country.

So while we debate and discuss the legalities of mixtapes and the long term impact of what the January 16, 2007 raid of the Aphilliates studio will mean, we must not ever forget that innocent people were terrorized and incarcerated in the name of protecting the Recording Industry Association of America.

\*Aishah Shahidah Simmons is a Black feminist lesbian documentary filmmaker and social activist who recently completed the award-winning documentary NO!, which unveils the reality of rape, other forms of sexual violence, and healing in African-American communities.

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[www.NOtheRapeDocumentary.org](http://www.NOtheRapeDocumentary.org)

[www.myspace.com/afrolez](http://www.myspace.com/afrolez)

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NO! is an award-winning feature length documentary, which unveils the realities of rape, other forms of sexual violence, and healing in African-American communities.

View the NO! Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRGESU0CuvI>

Read "Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology"

<http://www.incite-national.org/resources/covanthology.html>

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