

Cedric Muhammad's Latest Article

Written by Robert ID674

Thursday, 06 January 2005 23:03 -

Cedric Muhammad a columnist at Black Electorate.com has a great article on their site. It deals with several aspects of Hip-Hop culture and the 'debates' within the hip hop community.

There are a wide range of topics covered from Karl Marx, rappers the Wu Tang Klan, rap artist Jay-Z and rap record mogul Suge Knight.

This insightful well written article needs to be looked at and understood by the entire hip-hop community. Cedric Muhammad has a way of writing that draws you into his topic and makes you eager to hear his next point.

Here is an excerpt from his article. This is part of the view on Suge Knight expressed by Cedric Muhammad. Hopefully this will get you interested enough to go to the Black Electorate site ([H ERE](#)) and read the full article and do follow up reading to try to understand some of the points that are laid out in this article.

Here is part of the 'view' on Suge Knight –

Suge Knight.

How is owning one's master recordings anything but revolutionary? I really don't understand this one. And let's be honest, isn't it a little bit disingenuous for people to be murmuring and complaining about Suge's bullying tactics in Hip-Hop? Name your favorite conscious artist. I listened to the albums of two "conscious" Hip-Hop artists this week, in my travels, and both of them were advocating violence, even against other artists to preserve the culture and to obtain what is rightfully theirs. It is interesting that many in the Hip-Hop community who romanticize with the 1960s are so quick to embrace groups that bore arms and advocated violence in limited cases, even against their own people (always conveniently deemed sell outs or Uncle Toms) for proactive reasons but are so shook up over Suge Knight's rumored roughing up of individuals. But the most important point we think should be made is that Suge isn't getting the ownership of master recordings by pimping artists, he is getting that form of power from the industry establishment because he will not settle for less. He made a power move on Interscope and the

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majors in getting ownership of the Death Row masters, not by taking advantage of some ignorant artist. Controlling your masters means that you control all future value of that creative work, in perpetuity. If a TV commercial is made using your recording you see money on that, in a big way. Certainly Suge represents more of the interests of executives rather than artists in this respect but don't we need powerful Black and Hip-Hop executives? Don't we need the control of the most valuable entity containing human capital - the recorded creative work? Shouldn't that control rest in the hands of those who come from the community that produces the artists that create the culture? Say what you want about Suge Knight - he is from the community that created Hip-Hop culture and he is bringing ownership of what that community produces closer to its source of origin. That is revolution.

The Suge-haters should consider this answer to a question that I posed to RapCoalition's Wendy Day in an exclusive interview in December of 2000:

Cedric Muhammad: What is the biggest change that you have seen in the music business over the last five years?

Wendy Day: Ownership. Labels are actually allowing some savvy artists and artist-owned labels ownership of their masters. Only because these artists are aware of the actual financial realities of ownership and hold out for it. This means an artist with a major distribution deal can make 80% as opposed to an artist signed to a label making 12% after repaying most of the expenses. The real numbers could look like this: an artist owned label can make \$8.00 a record from the first sale forward, compared to a signed artist making 80 cents a record after paying back most of the expenses (could mean not seeing a payment until record # 275,000).

We could go much further, and in a different way we will in, part two of this brief series but all we ask is for people to consider that very important question that we posed last week, "Doesn't hip-hop consciousness have an economic component?" Or shouldn't it, if it doesn't already, we could ask?

The quality of the thought and answer to that question that we all give, from within the community, will determine the life-expectancy of culture and art that we all claim to love but still, after 30 years, seem to have a problem protecting and preserving the integrity of.

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Go [HERE](#) and read the full article and make sure you go back for part two.

*UPDATE: They have posted Pt.2 [HERE](#)