

## 7yroid Revolutionary Poet Riles School

Written by Tehuti-4 ID2420

Tuesday, 14 March 2006 21:57 -

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7-year-old prodigy, Autum Ashante, unleashed a firestorm when she recited a poem she wrote comparing Christopher Columbus and Charles Darwin to "pirates" and "vampires" who robbed blacks of their identities and human rights.

Hundreds of parents of Peekskill middle- and high-school students received a recorded phone message last week apologizing for little Autum Ashante's poem, titled "White Nationalism Put U in Bondage."

"Black lands taken from your hands, by vampires with no remorse," the aspiring actress and poet wrote. "They took the gold, the wisdom and all the storytellers. They took the black women, with the black man weak. Made to watch as they changed the paradigm of our village.

"Yeah white nationalism is what put you in bondage. Pirates and vampires like Columbus, Morgan and Darwin."

Autum was invited to speak at the Westchester schools on Feb. 28 by Melvin Bolden, a music teacher at the middle school who advises the high school's Black Culture Club and is a member of the Peekskill City Council.

Autum, whose résumé includes several television appearances and performances at the Apollo Theater and the African Burial Ground in Manhattan, told The Post that her poem was meant to instill pride in black students and to encourage them to steer clear of violence.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with my poem. I was trying to tell them the straight-up truth," Autum said. "I'm trying to tell them not to fight because they're killing the brothers and sisters."

Autum, who is home-schooled in Mount Vernon and speaks several languages, prefaced her performance at the high school with a Black Panthers' pledge asking black youngsters to not harm one another.

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It did not sit well with parents.

In a telephone interview with The Post, Bolden said Autum has been "unofficially" banned from performing in a district school again and that school officials would review transcripts of future speakers.

"It's unfortunate, because some teachers said they wanted this little girl to explain the things she said to their students, but some parents don't want her on school grounds," Bolden said.

"[The poem] might have been a little too aggressive for what the middle-school kids are ready to handle," Bolden added.

Kimberly Greene, a mother of children in the high school and middle school, said she was shocked when she got the recorded phone message.

"If there are people who are upset about what she said, the schools should have talked about and analyzed it rather than send a message to everyone saying this little girl was offensive," Greene said.

Autum's father, Batin Ashante, said he can't believe the fuss over his daughter's poem.

"She's a little girl who does poetry about real things. She doesn't do poetry about cotton candy," Ashante said. "She's a serious little person."

"Now is the time for us to come together with one another, to organize, to speak out and speak up on behalf of each other. There is no time to waste, while we debate, define, and discuss; the enemy continues his genocidal plan. We need to bear in mind the Ashanti proverb: "Two men in a burning house must not stop to argue." " - Dr. Mutulu Shakur

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