

Holy Hip Hop or Hip Hopcrisy by Min Paul Scott

Written by Min. Paul Scott ID3082
Sunday, 22 October 2006 01:11 -

Jesus Crip Walks With Me: Holy Hip Hop or Hip Hopcrisy by Min. Paul Scott

"What do you believe in Heaven or Hell? You don't believe in Heaven cuz we're livin' in Hell" -
Raekwon and Ghostface

It's another sunny Sunday morning at the First Holy House of Hip Hop. The service begins with the choir director/DJ Mixmaster Bro. Charles scratching Amazing Grace from his spot in the balcony. The choir comes down the aisle doin' the Chicken Noodle Soup Dance as Harvard Theological School graduate the Right Reverend Dr. Thadeus Johnson aka Pastor TJ Kool pimps his way to the pulpit. The 3rd Street Gangsta's...(I mean the ushers) , strongly suggest that the members give up some dollars for the offering as Pastor TJ delivers his show stoppin' sermon/rap from his upcoming mixtape, "If it Feels Good Do it (Just Don't Hurt Nobody)....

The mixture of rap and religion has been going on since the early 80's. When the mixture works, it has worked well as it has not only challenged outdated theological concepts but served as a source of salvation and inspiration for a generation searching for God in all the wrong places. However, when it has failed it has failed miserably resulting in confusing the already confused and losing the already lost.

Historically, the "word of God" has been something that Blacks folks just didn't mess with. This is especially evident when music and ministry began to mix. One can remember the controversy that resulted when the early blues singers tried to put a little swing in the Gospel. The success of more secular sounding artists of the 70's was a sign to the old church Sista's that we were all goin' to Hell in a handbasket.

During the 80's, the 5% and Islamic teachings of artists like Rakim and Brand Nubian had Hip Hop headz thinking that maybe King James, wasn't down with tha Brotha's, after all.

By the mid 90's, desperate to find a way to reach Black youth, the church finally went hip as Kirk Franklin forced the church to take the usual "if you can't beat em, join em" stance and even the most conservative Gospel stars couldn't help but drop a funky beat by a hot Hip Hop producer.

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But in the 21st century with Hip Hop culture being an irresistible dominate force, globally, the marriage of music and ministry becomes more problematic. Twenty years since we first checked out Rakim's melody and almost a decade since Kirk Franklin's revolution began, the "popular" corporate controlled Hip Hop is now an endless cycle of soulless, Babylon supporting babble repeated over and over again. While the Black community has allowed the rappers to escape social responsibility they are now able to escape the most important; spiritual responsibility.

With Rev. Creflo Dollar flossin' in Jermaine Dupree's video, Rev. Mason "Mase" Betha rollin' with G Unit, Min. Ben Chavis Muhammad down with Dip Set and now Bishop Eddie Long kickin' a spiritual freestyle on Ludacris' new CD, many religious folks are scratching their heads wondering whether they go to church, synagogue mosque or to tha club...

While the justification of the cameo appearances is always that they are "tryin" to reach the youth" one must ask are the ministers having a greater influence on the rappers or are the rapper's having a greater influence on the preachers? Are the rappers becoming more spiritual or the ministers becoming more "gangsta?"

Part of the problem has been the ever present staple of western Eurocentric theology that all things can be forgiven if you repent before you take your last breath. You can be as nasty as you want to be at the strip club on Saturday night but as long as you can drag your tired behind out of bed Easter Sunday morning, everything is cool. While "Jesus Walks" was groundbreaking, at the end of the day did it change behavior

or did it convince the youth that

even if you are a hustler, killer, murderer, drug dealer even a stripper, a

white "Jesus" still walks with you while you're out doing your dirt and to not worry about his "facial features"

cuZ

that ain't important.

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So how can you fault MC Kill 4 Thrill for rappin" about stickin" up sucka's in the alley and then thanking the man upstairs at an awards show when a slave trader can write a song about "savin" a wretch like me" and all is forgiven. Is there a difference between R Kelly having a thing for teenage girls and still singing spiritual songs and a priest having a thing for teenage boys?

While the story about "casting the first stone" is often used and abused by those who want to justify behaviors that neither the Torah, Bible nor Koran condone, it is not without merit.

However, the problem comes when we use religion to justify the unjustifiable and when we neglect our responsibility to speak TRUTH to Power.

Speaking TRUTH not only to politicians but the white owners of the mega corporations who are responsible fo the negativity in Hip Hop. Maybe our time would be better spent delivering a fire and brimstone type "Let My People Go" sermon on the steps of Universal Entertainment instead of on a feel good sermon that makes Big Betty Boom feel better about being a stripper.

While it is admirable that some ministers try to reach their target audience by appearing on commercial Hip Hop tracks, in a time when the Black community is catching hell like never before would it not be better to vibe with Conscious MC's that are saying somethin" besides "shake that money maker...Yeaaaaaaaahhh..OKKK !!!." Kinda like what Dr. Khallid Muhammad did with PE and Ice Cube back in the day? While there is a war going on over seas and wars going on in the hood, it is imperative that our religious leaders give clear directions to our youth and not a thug motivational moment buried under bangin" beats and Hip Hop hooks.

But as an admitted addict addicted to music (maybe it's a habit, I gotta use it), who am I to judge?

I just believe that somewhere between Min. Ben's liberal theology that Hip Hop is a gift from God and Elder G. Craig Lewis" ultra conservative stance that Hip Hop is a tool of the devil, lies the TRUTH.

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At the end of the day the answer that history will demand is how did we move tha crowd. Did we move our people to FREEDOM or slavery, enlightenment or ignorance, Heaven or Hell?

Until then, I guess the Tupac-alyptic theology works, "Only God can judge us."

True dat Pac; true dat....

This is the TRUTH Minista signing off from exile....

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