

Toronto SWAT Raids Hip Hop Artist Kama StudioHome

Written by Ann Brown ID4396
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On Sunday, June 1, 2008 at approx. 11:30 pm more than 50 members of the Toronto Metro Police & S.W.A.T. unit raided the studio/home of Hip-Hop artist, record company owner and community leader Kama (aka Kamikaze). The police departed at approximately 1:30 am without confiscating any items from the premises and did not press charges against Kama or his partner, Kanine, who was also present.

"We had just wrapped an editing session in the studio with a client before the raid," recalls Kama. "Next thing I know, my door is being knocked down, smoke bombs are going off and I'm being told to get down on the ground by masked officers."

While Indie Hip Hop Artist Kama, who founded EZAKIMAK Inc. in 2000, does not want to blame racism on the raid, he fears it may be a serious factor. Many people in the mostly black community, says Kama, have felt under attack by authorities lately. "The area is developing into Toronto's black business/entertainment district, and there are those who do not want us to succeed," notes Kama, whose given name is Kevin Clarke. "Another business, right across the street, was raided a few days later." Kama's home-based business is located in the Vaughn & Oakwood/ West area of Toronto, often referred to as "Little Jamaica." The residents are primarily of Caribbean descent. Kama, who is of Trinidadian ancestry, was born and raised in the area.

As a means to address the issue, Kama has teamed up with Black Action Defense Committee (BADC)'s Freedom Cipher Program for a rally on June 19th (6:30-8:30 pm) against human rights violations in the community. The event will also mark the official launch of Kama's non-profit organization, HoodNet. Speakers include: BADC's Shawn Kent, who will talk about BADC's Hip Hop Program (Freedom Cipher) and the need for local youth to be involved in the community by joining HoodNet; Kama will discuss Ez-Mak Entertainment and HoodNet (By Youth For Youth); and Wasun of BADC will speak about the ongoing struggle against police brutality and human rights violations in the Vaughn & Oakwood area. Wassun will also encourage the community to become organized in order to prevent further unnecessary raids on the area's residents. The event will include live performances by Ez-Mak recording artist Quanche, other local acts as well as an open mic.

For Indie Hip Hop Artist Kama, he doesn't want what happened to him to happen to one of his neighbors. "I'm thankful there were no children present at the time of the raid," says Kama. "We often have kids around." Kama rewards local children who stay in school and out of trouble by teaching them the inner workings of a recording studio and the entertainment business. "I'm

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giving back to the community," says Kama, who also owns a merchandising business and is venturing into real estate. "When the kids see me, they don't see someone on the corner selling drugs or involved in gang activity. They see someone who has his own incorporated, legitimate business." EZ-MAK Records & Entertainment has created subsidiaries specifically for entertainment-related activities known as EZ-Mak Films, EzMakTV, EZ-MAK.comEZ-Gear & HoodNet Academy.

Kama is considering legal action against the police for civil right violations.

According to Police Constable Tony Vella of the Toronto Police Service, Public Information Unit, a raid was carried out at the location in search of firearms. None were found and the search was concluded. According to Kama, neither the police who conducted the raid nor the warrant stated it was a search for weapons. Additionally, Kama does not own a gun, nor did anyone else at the location.

Unfortunately, this is not the only encounter Kama has had lately with the Toronto police. "Being so involved in the community and in Hip Hop, I have become the target of harassment," says Kama. "I'm followed around constantly and have been stopped while driving on many occasions. Until now I have let these incidents pass, but what happened on June 1st, I can't allow this to happen to anyone else. I have to speak out and take action. We in the Hip-Hop community and in the Oakwood & Vaughn area do not deserve to be treated like this; no innocent person deserves to be treated like this. We deserve respect--not harassment."

Among Kama's hit indie hip hop / rap singles is "Today," whose music video aired on Canada's Much Music and Much Vibe. In 2002, His single "Kamillion" was placed in heavy rotation on all urban commercial radio stations across Canada. His next singles "Messin' Wit Me" and "Independence Day" were released in the fall of 2003 and featured a double video that aired on Much Vibe and MTV2 in November 2003. The song "Kama's World" featured American Hip-Hop legend Doug E. Fresh and became the largest commercial success for Kama across Canada. His latest single and video "T.A.V. (I Wanna Make It)" were inspired by the Jane Creba shooting incident in Downtown Toronto, which sparked the creation of a new police unit called T.A.V. The unit has been praised and criticized for its crackdown on guns and gangs in Toronto's inner cities. About his song Kama says, "I'm reporting the other side of the story that never gets told--our side and a lot of people don't like my speaking about the negative side of the T.A.V. "

Currently, Kama is finishing up a documentary based on his life struggles and successes called

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The Man, The Myth, The Legend. The debut album from Indie Hip Hop Artist Kama, Independence Day and Balance (the book and the movie) are also slated for release soon. Add to this Coming To America: The Mix-tape and the EZ-Mak merchandise flagship store. Kama has also partnered with American Hip-Hop magazine Don Diva to bring the publication to Canada beginning July 2008.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.ez-mak.com/>