

Fred Hampton Jr Speaks to Vibe

Written by Robert ID606

Saturday, 25 December 2004 02:09 -

Chairman Fred Hampton Jr.

On the eve of December 4th, I listened to Dead Prez's Turn Off the Radio mixtape track "Know Your Enemy" in my iTunes and I thought about the relevance of hip hop music, not all but some. It's Stic.man's line "You want to stop terrorist, start with the U.S. imperialist / Ain't no track record like America's," that had me thinking about the recent changes in President Bush's cabinet, especially his recent nomination for Homeland Security, as well as the significance of December 4th.

No, it's not Jay-Z's birthday that makes December 4th special. If you can imagine, there's a larger historical context than Jigga's birthday that needs to be remembered on this day.

The story goes, thirty-five years ago early in the AM on Chicago's Westside, Illinois" Black Panther Party Chairman Fred Hampton laid asleep beside his pregnant comrade Akua Njeri when gunfire erupted in 21 year-old Hampton's house. Under orders of Illinois' Cook County State's Attorney, fourteen officers opened fired on not only Fred, but his fellow Black Panther Party members including Defense Captain Mark Clark, 22. Ninety-eight rounds of bullets later, Clark and Hampton laid dead and several others in the house suffered from gunshot wounds. The tale sounds like a familiar Godfather-wannabe-rhyme from any miscellaneous rapper (new or old), but the story is not a verse. Hampton wasn't dealing drugs to his community and he wasn't stealing from the community, although this didn't stop him from seeing the inside of many prisons in Illinois. He was a freedom fighter, a political prisoner, not yet iconic like the late revolutionary Che Guevara today. Hampton was banging for freedom, as Dead Prez would put it. He lead free breakfast programs, united the people, helped create a free medical center, initiated a door to door program of health services which tested for sickle cell anemia, and he encouraged blood drives for the Cook County Hospital. So far, it doesn't sound like there was a justifiable cause for his assassination. But that didn't stop what seemed like the inevitable for black leaders fighting for "The People."

As heard on Dead Prez's Let's Get Free album on the song "Behind Enemy Lines," this tragic event left behind Hampton's unborn son, who today, "Looks just like him, walks just like him, talks just like him." I recently talk to Fred Hampton Jr., he shared his thoughts about the significance of December 4 and his father.

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Vibe Interviews Chairman Fred Hampton Jr.:

As a child what were you told about December 4, growing up?

In plain laymen's terms, I was told that it was a day that the government, federal government via the Chicago Police Department [long pause] came in early in the morning and gunned down 22 year-old Defense Captain Mark Clark as well as my father, who was 21 years-old at the time, Deputy Chairman of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party Fred Hampton.

You were born shortly after your father was killed, what day were you born?

Approximately two-and-half weeks later, December 29th the same year.

How has your life been impacted by being the son of Fred Hampton?

Loved by the people, sweated by the "you know who," and being subjected to the similar, if not the same, counterinsurgency.

Who's the you know who?

The U.S. government.

Are you involved in the same type of movement that your father was involved in?

I'm presently the Chairman of the Prisoners of Consciousness Committee (P.O.C.C.), in which one of our models is that we be the great grandchildren of Garvey, offspring of Malcolm and the

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cubs of Panthers.

How do you celebrate your father's legacy?

Everyday I continue to work and put into practice what Chairman Fred said that, "You can kill a revolutionary, but you can't kill a revolution." In particular on December 4th, we go to the black community's Ground Zero, that being 2337 W. Monroe, and clinch fist in the air in a private and silent vigil. This is done annually.

I saw the resolution, introduced by Chicago's former Alderwoman Marlene C. Carter, commemorating December 4th as "Fred Hampton Day in Chicago." It referred to 2337 W. Monroe, where your father was murdered, as Ground Zero. Do you compare what happened on September 11th to the murder of your father?

I see this as the black and colonized community's Ground Zero. We define it as one of the most brutal acts of terrorism to ever occur on U.S. soil. The way they assassinated Chairman Fred and Defense Captain Mark Clark was done in a strategic type of way to send a message of terror to their present generation and future generations to never take such a stance that forces like Chairman Fred and Defense Captain Mark Clark had took. It was a strategic terrorist strike and all those who played the role in the assassination of Chairman Fred, we identify as terrorist.

What does the P.O.C.C. do, what type of work in the community and what are you involved in?

Some of our survival programs include food programs, political education programs that we host, some of our campaigns include the "One Prisoner, One Contact" campaign. It's widely known for it's ability to form principal coalitions as well as scientific relationships.

What do you think about the re-election of President Bush?

We refer to it as the selection [not election], it was already setup of who they were going to have

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as the next gang chief. We didn't have a lot of hope invested in Kerry or nobody else. Our position is that we know history, there's never been no Great White Hope that saves us. We didn't take a lot of cats role as "Vote or Die." Our position was "Organize or Die" or "Ride or Die." We still maintain that position, it's going to take us, to get down, organize for the liberation of our people.

Neither of these individuals, either Bush or Kerry, addressed the issues of what's going down in our community. Basically, what I was hearing spewed from both of their mouths or their party was like a foreign language. I heard no talk about addressing the issues of political prisoners. I heard no talk about the issue of reparation. I heard no talk from their mouths about addressing the African Anti-terrorism Bill. These are the issues that we're faced with in our community.

What is the African Anti-Terrorism Bill?

The African Anti-Terrorism Bill is a bill that we're putting forth. We're taking a position that we don't care if an individual is running for President or running for garbage collector in the city of Chicago, they have to take a position on this African Anti-Terrorism Bill.

It addresses this phenomenon of terrorism from the viewpoint of the O.V.'s. The O.V's be the Original Victims of Terrorism and that means African people. People who have been subjected to terrorism under such euphemisms as slavery, Jim Crow, red lining, gentrification, etc. We're putting these in their correct context. We say that the crime of terrorism has no statute of limitations. We say that bomb dropped on African women and children, the MOVE organization May 13, 1985 in Philadelphia on Osage Avenue, that was terrorism. Or what happened December, 4th 1969, assassination of Chairman Fred and Defense Captain Mark Clark Defense Captain Mark Clark that was one of our Ground Zero's. Matter of fact, yesterday December 2, 2004 when we mobilized deep to march the one-year anniversary of the cold-blooded shooting of little 17 year-old Darryl Hamilton, the brother was shot by Chicago Police. Shot several times in the back and in the head. He had his face pulled over the concrete !

up under the surveillance camera. He's an individual that we identify as our modern day Emmett Till. These are all victims of terrorism. In fact, more than that, they are original victims of terrorism. That's just a bill that we're pushing forward and we're holding cats accountable. Whether they come from the white-left or any other community they'll be endless discussion about this phenomenon.

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Just like the ruling class, they have code orange, code yellow, code green so and so forth. We have classifications for the terror we're subjected to. Code green. Code black. Code Red. We say Mumia Abu Jamal's status is code red. Sundiata Acoli...his code is red and so many other soldiers and soldierettes who are held inside the concentration camps and in the general community at large.

Dead Prez released a song about your family. Did you know that Dead Prez would be releasing "Behind Enemy Lines?" How did it come about?

I believe at the time I was riding the circuit.

When you say circuit, what do you mean?

I was being transferred from one concentration camp to another.

When you say concentrate camp, you mean?

What the U.S. refers to as the prisons. On the circuit it's hard to get word. Your mail don't catch up with you, you don't get no phone calls etcetera- etcetera. You get moved around at 3 o'clock in the morning via helicopter via cars, whatever the case may be. So it's kinda hard to get word.

I can't recall when it was, but I don't think I actually heard the piece until I was unleashed in 2001. I heard word about it. I would have to depend on a lot of brothers who would come into the camps and keep me updated through the grapevine.

For me, in particular, they [the prison] would go out their way to make sure I was not kept updated on letters or how the support was going. But, the piece was inspired by the "Free Fred" international campaign to free Fred Hampton Jr.

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Why were you in prison?

I was snatched up for me being what I define a 3-Strike offender. One, just for being African. Two, for being the son of Deputy Chairman Fred and Akua Njeri. Three, for continuing to fight for the liberation of my people.

The trumped-up charge that I was issued were two charges of aggravated arson. The state claims that I fire-bombed two Korean owned stores on the Southside of Chicago, which later claim that a motive was done in response to the verdict that was surrendered in Simi Valley about the LAPD beating of Rodney King.

Have you cleared your name?

No, we have a campaign still going on called "Fight the Frame, Clear Fred's Name." We want people to continue to write letters to the present governor of Illinois, Rod Blagojevich ...The "Free Fred" campaign is still going down, because we say it wasn't just about me. It's a matter of freeing all political prisoners. That trumped case is still on the record.

What hip hop artists do you listen to?

It's this young brother named Saigon. A little brother who did seven years.

What is it about his music that you like?

One is his content and also I did a background check on this cat and he has this thing called the Abandoned Nation that he does, it's an organization that they get down with. They get clothes and stuff for children of prisoners and they give it to them, but they don't tell the children that it comes from them. The children are under the impression that it actually comes from their parent. That's just one of the things.

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I'm going to be honest with you. Glad you asked this question. Prior to me meeting this cat, as organizers we try to use every part possible of this phenomenon as we can. We're looking at hip hop as a phenomenon, it's a tool that we want to try to use to help heighten the conscious of people. But, I ain't go lie to you. I had said this whole thing, this hip hop thing...man, we need Pac back in the game. It was getting real demoralized trying to work this phenomenon.

I think that it can be safely said that Richard Pryor provided more economical assistance or support for the Panther Party or the struggle in general than all these artists combined today. And that's a sad statement but it's a true statement. But I'm not going to negate, I want to give a clinched fist to the Dead Prez's or the Common's and the Erykah Badu's. Sometimes it looks bleak.

Were you disappointed that Jay-Z didn't include the death of your father in his "December 4" song on The Black album?

I think it was an insult. I wasn't disappointed and to be honest I wasn't surprised. A lot of these cats have made it very clear whose interest they work in. If our people don't want to see these contradictions, again I wasn't surprised, I'm clear.

In the ruling class, when you say September 11, automatically they recognize that date. Again, Decmeber 4th was one of the most brutal acts of terrorism ever to occur on U.S. soil.

I know for a number of reasons a lot of these cats address safe subjects, they're clear. Like the old saying, those Negroes (he laughs) got freedom of speech as long as they don't say the wrong thing.

I'm going to say a word, I want you to say the first word that comes to mind:

President Bush?

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Criminal

Tupac Shakur?

Panther cub

Aaron Patterson?

Soldier. S-O-U-L-J-A-H

Akua Njeri?

Mother comrade, soldier

Condeleeza Rice?

Criminal

Hip Hop?

A phenomenon

December 4th?

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