

Rappers Spit Termed 'Hate Speech

Written by Westside ID203

Thursday, 14 October 2004 20:04 -

On Nov. 14, Philadelphia hip-hop act the Roots will perform at Cole Field House at the University of Maryland, but not before they have to deal with some controversy sparked by some members of the Student Government Association (SGA). Those members are upset that the band is performing there because of what they consider their "inflammatory" message. The controversy had more fuel added to it when it found its way to a right-wing news service that noted that the band is supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

According to the Diamondback, the student newspaper, SGA President Aaron Kraus campaigned last spring promising to sign an "A-List" band to play on campus during his first semester as president or resign. Bringing the Roots to the campus fulfills that promise. The Grammy-nominated Roots are one of the most popular hip hop crews today, and have been credited with building the "neo-soul" scene found in Philadelphia today. They are especially praised for shunning the misogynistic and materialistic language found in today's hip hop, and have been involved politically particularly in community concerns. Often however, when those community concerns involve a greater populace hearing the concerns of African Americans, conservatives begin to find a voice against whoever is expressing them, and mount a campaign to silence them. That's what happened this time. The group is being charged with inciting hatred and division with its lyrics by at least one member of the SGA. Meg Hatfield said she and other unnamed members of the SGA were upset by the decision to bring "offensive" and "inflammatory" messages to campus and contend that The Roots does not meet Kraus' "A-list" qualification. "I see it as a cause to try to express themselves as a culture, but by doing it in the manner they do, it causes reverse discrimination," Hatfield said. "Why is it okay to talk about the 'coming of the African American age?' If I talked about the 'Caucasian age', I'd be seen as racist and supremacist."

There was no love lost for the music either. "Of course it's inflammatory, but that's all rap is these days, I feel," Hatfield said. "They are just another rap group in it for the cause."

This is a story that found its way to the Cybercast News Service, a Brent Bozell-fronted organization that is a division of the Media Research Center, an organization that paints itself as one that goes after liberal bias in the media. CNS meanwhile is touted by the MRC as "is an indispensable on-line source for conservatives in the media".

The CNS article added to the controversy the fact that the group supports Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and reporter who is currently on Pennsylvania's Death Row for the December 9, 1980 shooting death of Philadelphia Police Officer Danny Faulkner. Evidence has been presented that suggests Mumia did not receive a fair trial, and may be completely innocent of the crime. For almost 24 years, there has been a worldwide campaign to get him off Death Row and for a new trial. It was only in the past five years that a counter-campaign comprised almost exclusively of white conservatives has found some strength and because of this, some liberals, including filmmaker Michael Moore have stood down so much that they have been able to go so far as remove town councilmen who have supported Mumia in the past.

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The Roots have received this kind of attention from CNS because of a song they have yet to release titled Mumia 911. The song, which features cameos by Dead Prez and Public Enemy's Chuck D, has been termed by CNS as "hate speech", who then notes that the University administration is not going to intervene and halt the show despite this. The CNS article is also framed around the fact that this event is funded by students. "Student Entertainment Events (the organization that promotes campus events) is funded by students" mandatory activities fees. Money is rationed out by the Student Government Association and goes to fund numerous student groups," the article read. "Representatives from Student Entertainment Events did not return calls requesting comment, but the SEE website calls The Roots "one of hip-hops [sic] most popular, versatile, and critically acclaimed acts."

A search of the CNS Web Site did not reveal any articles questioning student fees being paid to inflammatory conservative speakers that appear on college campuses regularly. There were however a number of articles defending their freedom of speech. As of now, the Roots are still performing on Nov. 14, despite the controversy. Kraus said that them performing is an issue of free speech and that and "no matter who you bring, people are going to be upset."

The concert is open to the general public. Tickets to the concert are \$28.00 and \$14.00 for affiliates of the University of Maryland with a university-issued ID.

Lyrics to Mumia 911 by The Roots

Chorus: 2X (first time a capella) Somebody scream bloody murder, inside of my head The executioner's plot controlled by the feds Take illegal action, they want Mumia dead This nation of savages been trying to kill us for years

[Tragedy Khadafi] Yo, federal indictment, militant mind enlightenment Son, we outburst, in the court room, full of excitement Face the jury, thugged out, with blind fury They want us all under the jail, end of the story Brave and heartless, we can have a million marches But when you black you under attack, son regardless Live by the gun, dunn, and die by the gun And revolutionize minds until freedom come

[Black Thought] Check it out, they wants och locked down boxed up in the ground It's war time now from how the sufferin sound We deep in the realm, the planet petrified overwhelmed We all stars livin life out on surveillance film New World law enforced, mind rape, cerebral holocaust No escape, fire for burn the execution date shatter, We on the front lines prepare I want Mumia out the cage the time for action is here

[Pharaohe Monch] Yo, the attempted assassination of Mumia Jabal, they set'im up I come to find out, Tupac they wet'im up Pharaohe, standin behind my fucking curtains with a double-barrel rehearsin Ready for war now for certain Uh, biological warfare suits Black gas masks, black boots, half-assed niggas become troops My dunnns are dooper warriors than ?? now Plenty thug niggas are fruity now

Chorus: 2X

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[Chuck D] ??? the illusion, cause I see my peoples losin The overall battle to keep Republic rats from chosin After all, I feel the bruise of the constitution When my back's against the wall, manifestin in their destiny Shit they just testin me, Mumia's spirit blessin me No alibi, I know Allah is not their ally I believe I can fly, but their type of freedom is a lie So fuck the government, C.I.A. and F.B.I.

[Last Emperor] Shatan will destroy anything for the right price In a physical world one man cannot die twice To the spiritual world your soul cannot fly twice Yet could this be the second time they crucified Christ? Ask Ed Asner, the actor, after the execute'im There will be a peasant uprising like the French Revolution In conclusion, if you detect evil Free the voice of the voiceless, defender of oppressed people

[Dead Prez] I say, "fuck the police," cause they been killin us for years This ain't no free country, niggas get murdered for their ideas Free Mumia means all Africans let go Cause just livin in the ghetto puts you on death row You don't know? You seen how the tried to do Assata Till some real niggas organized themselves and went and got'er Lotta crackers verbalize if Mumia dies, fire in the skies But only time'll tell the truth from the lies

Chorus: 3X

Source: [InfoShop](#)