

The Aftermath of the Terrorist Attack On America

How Hip Hop is Dealing With The Tragedy

By Raoul Juneja

A large part of hip-hop has always been about resisting those who oppress in any way, shape, or form — Public Enemy told us to “fight the power,” 2Pac pointed out that “they got money for wars but can’t feed the poor,” and most recently, Dead Prez asked us if we’d rather have a “Lexus or justice.”

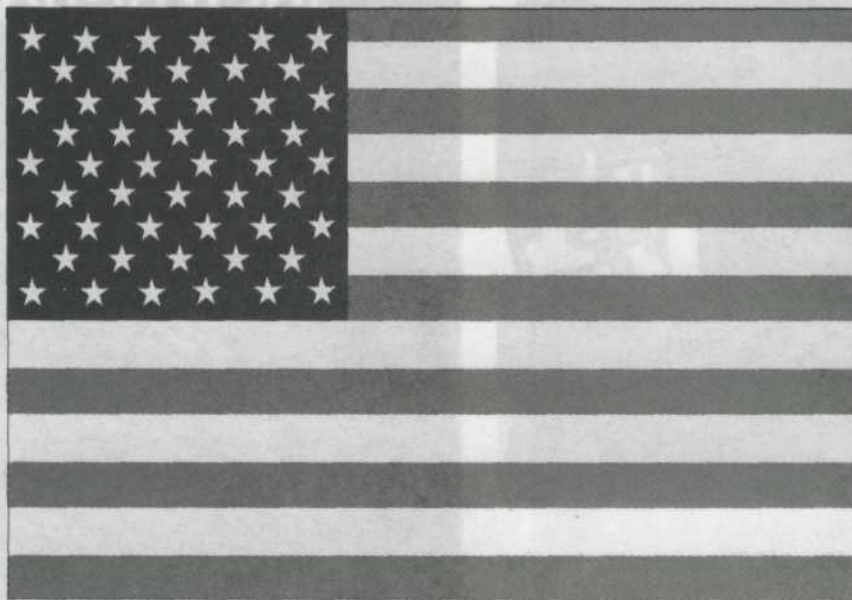
In light of the recent terrorist attacks that targeted the United States on September 11th (and the subsequent racial backlash that minorities suffered worldwide), WORD Magazine decided to ask a few prominent thinkers in North America’s hip-hop community about their feelings on the matter, and if they anticipated our culture or music being affected by these tragic events.

It is my hope that peace can ultimately be obtained not only in North America, but across the globe, through an open debate between countries and citizens that also allows for peaceful political dissent. We’re all outraged by the attacks! It must be remembered that people from over 80 nations died at the World Trade Center. They were Christians, Muslims and Jews who perished. Please do not misinterpret this article or any of the following hip-hop artists’ comments as condoning the September 11th attacks.

Dan-e-o

“As I was talking to [fellow Monolith member] Grimace Love the other day, he mentioned to me that he thinks and hopes that a new revolution in music will soon occur. Just as say the Civil Rights Movement or the “Hippie” Movement affected certain types of music and the messages in them — it is my belief that modern-day music, especially hip-hop, will experience a revolution or change back towards a greater cause. I’ve always been inspired by projects like that of KRS-One’s “Stop The Violence” Movement (“Self-Destruction” is my favourite posse cut of all time), so I don’t think that cats will be able to rhyme about their menial material possessions anymore in the wake of what has happened lately. There are obviously more important issues in the world.”

Hip-Hop, out of all musical artforms, should especially become more socially aware and significant. I’ve always attempted to keep my music pertinent with substantial substance, but we’ll have to see what the rest of the hip-hop world does. If anything, I think hip-hop will now take a look at America’s government all over again. Minorities have experienced



numerous atrocities (such as slavery) in North America for so long, so I seriously doubt that hip-hop will take an “America is #1” approach to this situation. Then again — who knows! My angle will always be that it doesn’t matter where you’re from, what you look like, or what you believe in — I’ll always choose good over evil and wish blessings upon all those who agree.”

Tara Chase

“The artists that focus on resistance to oppressive authorities may not necessarily be affected by the attacks with regards to their lyrical content, because

they’ve been preaching about this type of thing happening all along. Many MCs who I know that may somewhat fall into that political category have always been about trying to show everyone that we can’t close our eyes to what’s happening around us because it will eventually arrive in our backyards. I feel that these recent events are an awakening, even for myself, to all of what is happening around me. I’m overwhelmed and I find myself searching for truth, and not necessarily retribution.”

“I think the responsibility of educating the masses about the truth may fall into the laps of these political MCs, because who best to go to but the experts — I call them street professors! They know more about what’s really going on than any of these so-called political science specialists I’ve seen on TV feeding me foolishness. I think the change won’t be in the MCs — it’ll be in the listeners. As they search for answers beyond CNN, they’ll start noticing these MCs more. So that outcome may seem as though these educated MCs came out of nowhere, but truly they’ve always been here—we’ve just been riding high on rims and blinded by too much bling-bling to have noticed them before.”

“In terms of the other side of hip-hop, I believe that it won’t be affected. I mean Jay-Z’s new album has already sold 400,000 copies right now and it was released on September 11th! To be honest, I actually don’t want the other side affected, because we need to have fun and be distracted now and then. I personally would go crazy if I thought about all that’s been going on 24-7, because I need mental breaks now and then as does everyone else. My only thing is I never want to fall into having a permanent mental break and get stuck in some comfort zone — I want to be aware of what’s going on!”

Zion (of Zion I)

“I think that the attacks on the United States have created an intense wave of emotion in the people, and we all know that strong emotions clog the

wheels of clear thinking. Hence, there has been a dramatic swelling of American nationalist sentiment across the world. Some people are mourning all the lives lost in the tragedy, while others are channelling their anger and pointing the finger at innocent scapegoats who they consider the enemy. But the greater issue to me is the programming done by the government via the media. I personally feel that hip-hop should respond with a critique of the United States' international policy, since their meddling in everyone else's affairs is what has engendered this response.

"Hence, the innocent American citizens are paying the price of a government that consistently manipulates the lives of people in impoverished countries for its own benefit. I feel that many hip-hop artists can relate to the desperation that the people in these countries obviously feel, because many of us have also been used and abused by this same United States government. However, when you see your own people massacred it does give you the desire for some type of revenge, and this feeling created is obviously confusing — a mixture of empathy and anger. The best way to deal with it would be to begin holding the American government accountable for its actions overseas. We've got to begin thinking as a world community."

"I feel folks were definitely stunned into reappraising what was important in their lives for real, but people are still keeping their daily activities moving. I don't see the bling-bling fading right away, but I do see it becoming obsolete with young men and women going to war and being killed in the name of capitalism.

Spade (of Citizen Kane)

"I say that it won't affect hip-hop's attitude towards oppression in Canada or the United States or any other place. This approaching war, even though it may be tragic (and my heart goes out to all those directly and indirectly affected by it), it has little to do with the struggle black people are going through in North America. This war has everything to do with money and religion, and we have very little to do with either of those issues in the world! We are utterly powerless!"

"However, I do see our music changing from the money-hungry and violent attitudes into a more intellectual vibe. Even though it still might have some money and violence talk, it will come from a more educational point of view. People are getting tired of rappers gloating in front of their faces — they want to see someone they can relate to! I also see rappers getting more comfortable with their positions in the music industry and in life. They now know what and who they are dealing with. I just think that music is in for a change."

Misfit (of The Rascalz)

"I say that we should really form a militant standpoint first and know the training that an enlisted soldier has to go through before we even comment on what any army does. In terms of the politicians themselves, one must ask the question: 'What would I do given the circumstances?' Most often the ones commenting on such diplomatic issues don't even have the full picture as to what it is they are speaking on. So to logically solve any problems or to do things right, one must ask questions and involve as many people as possible, hence a congress or a church community."

"Now in terms of hip-hop, just using the voice to speak on such things isn't always the best way to solve problems — doing concerts to raise funds or the actual act of speaking at conferences is more of what we should get at. Messages are often lost or for the most part convoluted when put into music or seen in a video. An artist must first take into consideration the environment where the music gets played in, when it gets played, who is playing the music, and who it gets played to, because

sometimes the imagery that comes with the music is the most important part of making a statement that is to be heard. I personally can say that from N.W.A. to Public Enemy, no actual songs had any real effect on me growing up — it was the visuals that played the real hand in what shaped my way of thinking."

"If money and fine counterparts is what makes you happy then by all means get it while you can — I actually hope this part of our music doesn't change to some extent, because then our balance of hip-hop will be lost. Think about it — if Bob Marley didn't [make a statement by] smoking weed, would his music and messages have gotten as far as it has? All the real impacts of the world, whether through people or things, always have a good and a bad side. So if you enjoy the mundane side of hip-hop then don't complain if hip-hop isn't becoming your saviour and guiding light."

K-OS

"Both the angst and bling-bling aspects of hip-hop have been there from its beginning, and as long as the world is based on capitalism and exploitation, these opinions will exist. What is important for us now is to move beyond opinions and diametrically opposed ideologies, and consider a way to be open to the truth."

"Many say that everyone has their own truth, but if this is so, then the universe would be totally disorderly, and we all know in our hearts that this is not true. Really, organised religions, class systems, and culture create different ways of looking at the same problem, thus dividing us as a human family. Hip-hop will be affected, and there will be a few reactionary revolutions, as well as some 'We Are the World' type collaborations, however, until man ends the war within himself, all other efforts are futile!"