

## Talib Kweli on Barack Obama 08

Written by Talib Kweli, MCEO, Blacksmith ID4164  
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It is the last year of the Bush administration and thank God. I usually rail against being described as simply "political rapper", and I haven't voted since Bill Clinton first ran for President. I was following the tradition that Black Americans have had of voting for democrats since we got the right in 1964 (temporarily). Then, Clinton, as president's go, seemed better than Bush Sr., but I did not like his policies in Sudan or the constant bombing of Iraq. I also did not like the way our government dragged us thru the Lewinsky scandal. I felt betrayed by the system, and I stopped voting, no longer accepting of the lesser of two evils. I knew the two party system was designed to fail us. I knew that politicians must lie for a living, because it would be impossible to make good on their promises. I knew about the lobbyists and the PAC. I did not make it my issue, but if someone asked me, I would explain why I didn't vote. Most of the time people talked to me like I lost my mind, but every once and awhile someone understood. I knew that our ancestors fought and died for the right to vote, but I didn't feel like voting for the lesser of two evils in a broken system was the proper way to honor them. It was pageantry, and I wasn't with it. I wasn't with Vote or Die, because I knew that voting itself, with no real knowledge of who is paying these candidates to run million dollar a day campaigns, is far from a revolutionary act. I haven't even started to talk about the electoral college that they taught us about in grade school. In this republic, delegates votes are counted, and states with more land have more votes. You can technically have more votes, but lose the election. When the verdict is in question, the Supreme Court decides, as they did when Al Gore clearly won the election but lost due to bipartisan bullshit. The bankers of the world pay our politicians, and often tailor laws and regulations to line their own pockets. I have often stated that I cannot participate in a system that not only is designed to see me fail, but corrupts itself as well.

This was all before Barack Obama threw his hat in the ring. I, like many, appreciated his effort from the sidelines, watching him do the dance on the news. I found myself relating to him and enjoying hearing him speak, but I still remained distrustful of politicians in general. I felt like I could serve my community in many ways on a grassroots level that proceeded politics. I started to see the Obama campaign doing that grassroots work. I hear him speaking about poor people, the environment, things that I haven't heard from politicians who have electability. My criticism of the political system is that it siphons out rational thought because who have to be all things to all people. You can't stand for anything doing that. I remember when Obama spoke out against the war, early. I think the time he spent as a civil rights attorney on Chicago's south side gives him a unique perspective. I often hear about his lack of experience, but his experience is one that I most closely identify with. I'm not saying I could be president, but I am saying that our government could use a new energy. In order for a revolution to happen, you need revolutionary writers, soldiers, teachers, poets, musicians, garbage men, cab drivers, politicians, across the board. Everyone will not always agree, but the things we agree on, we should strengthen. When I was younger, none of this really mattered. Now I have two beautiful children, and Barack Obama is an incredibly positive influence on them. I want them to know they can be anything they want.

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With that said, I still feel the same as I do about the political system, and one man can't change it. But this man deserves our support nonetheless. I appreciate what he's doing, and there comes a time in history when change is necessary for all of us to prosper. I can't be critical of a society that is scared of change, but be stubborn in my ways for the sake of it. I support Barack Obama and encourage others to take a real look at his campaign so they can come to their own conclusions. I am not delusional about what the office of the president represents, but my support for him is just that, support for someone speaking my language amidst an ocean of doubletalk. Thank you for you time.

Talib Kweli, MCEO, Blacksmith