

Why President Elect Barack Obama is not the first Hip Hop President

Written by Rosa A. Clemente ID4579
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"Each generation out of relative obscurity, must discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it." Frantz Fanon

It has been 45 days since the Hip Hop generation helped usher in the first Black male President of the United States of America.

Since that historic night, many within Hip Hop culture, like writer Greg Kot of the Boston Globe, entrepreneur Russell Simmons, artists

Common, Jay-Z and P. Diddy, have declared President-Elect Obama the first Hip Hop president. In my humble opinion they are wrong, dead wrong. It does not matter how many Hip Hop pundits, non-profit organizations, and recognizable figures within the culture declare it. Much like an MC or B-Girl battle, I'm ready to challenge that declaration.

As a long time community organizer and Hip Hop activist and journalist, I have always followed a rule: never allow someone to be come your priority while you become his or her option. For President Elect Barack Obama and the entire Democrat Party leadership in this

country, the Hip Hop generation has never been a priority, we have always been an option and that option is used mostly to get out the

vote during elections. Efforts like Vote or Die, Generation Vote, Rock the Vote, Respect my Vote, do not empower a generation - they are catchy slogans emblazoned on pretty white tees that offer empty

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rhetoric. At the end of the day, those G.O.T.V. efforts become guaranteed votes for the Democratic Party and often fail to educate their followers about candidates that run outside of the two-party

system.

I believe that like many before him, President-Elect Barack Obama's campaign used Hip Hop to create excitement amongst young people in

this country, but we must clearly see through the \$750 million bling-bling marketing haze of his campaign. The few times he was pressed on his association to Hip Hop, he spoke about offensive rap lyrics and Black men having respect for themselves by pulling up their pants. I do not recall one specific mention of the political victories and social consciousness brought out by millions in the culture. Just because you brush off your shoulders, fist bump the future First Lady, or play a mean game of street ball, that does not make you Hip Hop.

What we have now is an Obama administration that came into power with the promise of change, but is remixing that promise by sampling from the Bill Clinton Presidency, including Hillary herself, and this new remix will do nothing to change the mass conditions of our people.

In Van Jones new book, The Green Collar Economy, Van says, "It is time to change from fighting against something to fighting for something."

For me that statement encapsulates why I chose to accept Cynthia's McKinney

's invitation to be her running mate and why the Green Party made history by choosing us as the first women- of-color ticket in American Presidential politics. I accepted the call because I was no longer interested in fighting against the Democratic or Republican Party.

I want to fight for a Hip Hop political movement not dominated by white liberal politics or white

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foundation money. I want to fight for a Hip Hop political movement that is African-centered, respects women as leaders and believes in Universal Health Care. A Hip Hop movement that fights for amnesty for undocumented immigrants and an end to the prison industrial complex. We must all fight for a Hip Hop political movement that wants to be at peace with our global brothers and sisters, that will build a truly independent media apparatus and will stand up and mobilize against the increasing racial violence against Latino/a immigrants and demands a live-able wage. We need a Hip Hop movement that is not afraid to say that the Palestinian people should have the full right of return and that the Israeli Occupation of their

homeland is illegal. I need Hip Hop to affirm the right of the Puerto Rican people and our island to be an independent nation and I need Hip Hop to help free all of our political prisoners and prisoners of war. We need Hip Hop to end the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, to end the

death penalty and we must create a Hip Hop political movement that empowers working class communities, fights for Green Jobs and will never deny L.G.B.T. brothers and sisters their God-given human rights. Finally I want Hip Hop to uplift and support its women, to accept women of color as capable much needed leaders, and to understand that as long as it continues to deny women their much fought place in the culture, Hip Hop will die.

So this is what I am fighting for. For me its not only about holding Obama, the House of Representatives, or the United States Senate

accountable. Holding public officials accountable is important, but building a multi-racial social justice movement is a necessity for our very existence. Yes Hip Hop, President-Elect Barack Obama may be the first Black President, but he will not be the first Hip Hop President. Only we the people of Hip Hop can make that a reality.

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Rosa Clemente and her daughter Alicia-Maria, live in North Carolina. This the first in a series of four articles commissioned for the Green

Institute by Rosa Clemente.

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