

Toronto Hip-Hop Activist Speaks Out For Tookie

Written by Robert ID2123

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In an added effort to save the life of death row inmate Stan "Tookie" Williams, Los Angeles Crips gang founder turned Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Toronto's Pride News Magazine covered the launch of a Canadian "Save Tookie" chapter, fighting for Williams' clemency.

Williams, co-founder of the infamous L.A. Crips gang, was convicted of killing four individuals in California. Yet while he admits to his gang involvement, he maintains he is not guilty of the charges he has been sentenced for.

While in prison, Williams has turned his life around, authoring several children's books with distinct anti-gang, anti-violence themes. Tookie's literary and humanitarian efforts, including his life-saving personal mentorship, have earned him several Nobel Peace Prize nominations.

His intriguing story was turned into the 2004 Sundance and Cannes recognized film "Redemption" - which was filmed in Toronto and starred Jamie Foxx as Tookie Williams.

"We can't let [the execution] happen," Foxx told Fox News at the October 30 New York premiere of "Jarhead", his latest film. "We've got to do everything we can to get the word out."

Tookie is set to be executed on December 13, which is also Foxx's 38th birthday. Raoul S. Juneja, a.k.a. DeeJay Ra, has worked closely with Williams' co-author Barbra Becnel, who was played by Lynn Whitfield in "Redemption", and Juneja has now established a "Save Tookie" Canada branch, working out of a home studio with his Toronto rapper and DJ colleagues volunteering their time.

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Juneja told Pride reporter Roger Love, "Like Tookie's co-author Barbara Becnel points out in her Tookie awareness flyer, clemency is not a pardon, it is simply a request for mercy, so, instead of the death sentence, a prisoner will be jailed for life without the possibility of parole. I think wrongful conviction cases of Canadians like Steven Truscott and David Milgaard, who were saved from execution, has fortunately turned Canadians against the death penalty, and we believe Stan "Tookie" Williams has been wrongfully convicted."

Juneja, of Lyrical Knockout Entertainment, explains that the move to save Williams is one that is especially relevant to Canadians this year, due to the increase in gun violence in Toronto.

"I would strongly advise Canadian parents, teachers and, especially students, to learn about the case and the positive effect supporting Tookie and his books could have on Canadian cities like Toronto, who are trying to decrease gang-related violence."

"A 'save Tookie' awareness flyer is also available on his Tookie.com website, which can be printed out. And testimonies of support for Tookie are also posted online from the American Library Association and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, among many others."

Juneja adds, "I hope Canadian teachers will also consider reading from Tookie's books to their class or showing their students the Jamie Foxx "Redemption" movie about Tookie's life. This week, we will also be releasing a 'save Tookie' Canadian hip-hop tribute song, featuring Muslim rap artist Imaan Faith, as well as setting up some Toronto school readings and performances to raise awareness."

Despite the high profile of the campaign's supporters, and the fact that famed California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is the only one who can grant Williams' clemency, Juneja worries that the lack of media attention and time may hurt Williams' chances.

"Time is of the essence, with only a month left before Tookie's execution date. I know kids are tied up with holiday exams at the end of their semesters, but they don't need to be legal students to get involved. Even if you're just a fan of Jamie Foxx, or a fan of hip-hop and R&B music, I think this case should be of immediate interest."

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Juneja, who is organizing as many public-speaking engagements as possible to spread the word, urges Canadians join the struggle.

"Please help us show the international community that Toronto and Canada chose mercy over revenge and redemption over condemnation, in late 2005, when Nobel Peace Prize nominee Stan "Tookie" Williams needed our support."

For more about the "Save Tookie" clemency petition signed by teachers, professors, juvenile correctional officers and law enforcement officials around the world, visit the new www.SaveTookie.org website, or in Canada e-mail: deejay_ra@chrwradio.com