

**Artists who fuse together politics and their art often have to toe a line between speaking to audiences that are already politically active and those that are not. Can you talk a little bit about how you approach the complication of preaching to the choir versus reaching new listeners?**

First and foremost, when you preach to the choir, when you speak to people who already have a revolutionary mindset, you're going to encounter more cynicism. It's funny, because you'd think that you'd encounter more cynicism from people who don't already know what's up. I think a lot of it has to do with the human ego, that always seems to have to play itself out to the degree that, "Oh, don't try to educate me, I already know that," or "Oh, Technique's just sayin' stuff that I already know." Well, congratulations, I'm glad that you're so fucking enlightened, you know what I mean? Now have you done anything with that knowledge you have?

Personally, I live what I rhyme about. And I've continued to take this as far as I possibly can, so when I went to Haiti, and I went to Afghanistan to do what we did there, it was to serve as an example for what people can do here. To say, hey, if we can do that there, then what's the excuse of not being able to do it here in Eugene, Oregon, or in Seattle, or in Olympia, or wherever. And I think another thing people need to understand is that being a revolutionary doesn't mean you have to do it by being a guerrilla fighting in the jungle, or being on stage. You can be a lawyer and help clients that don't have any money who you know are innocent, you can be a doctor, a teacher, you can be involved in independent media. There's a million things you could potentially do to offer your services when you have a revolutionary mind state. In terms of balancing all that, I think it just takes patience.

**You're most recent album *The Martyr* has a pretty ominous title.**

I think the point of *The Martyr* is to show that you don't have to die for revolution. That it's more important to live for revolution. That it's easy to romanticize a revolution, but – so, there's a book called *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a good read that I had a long time ago and in the book there is a passage that reminds me of your question, where it talks about how a revolutionary has to die for his revolution, but not in the sense that he physically dies, but the things about him that are selfish and shallow have to die. For example, he has to be able to sacrifice his ego, his time, and sometimes ends up sacrificing his family, which is why a lot of revolutionaries don't turn out to be some of the best parents. These are all things to take with a grain of salt.

When the notion of revolution comes up, people automatically assume that the government has to kill you to silence you, but I think that'd be the worst mistake the government could make now. I think what they look to do primarily is to discredit people, to marginalize them. Or to try to get them out of the newspaper, make them seem insane, or whatever. And I really don't have skeletons like that in my closet, you know, I'm not into little boys or midgets or anything crazy like that, you know. I'm a regular guy. What are they going to do, tell people that I like football? At some point people have to realize that a government has to measure public opinion about what they're involved in. And if that public opinion turns against them, then they endanger their investments. And that's what they're more concerned about, more so than some young man with a bunch of radical ideas.

**It seems like a certain type of double consciousness has to exist in an activist who is also a performer. People have sometimes criticized you for a lack of P.C. language in your lyrics. Can you speak to the difference between how you handle yourself on the mic and how you convey your beliefs in a different forum, such as the political sphere?**

Over the course of the years I think there's been an evolution in my persona and in my music. I mean, I took the word "nigga" out of my music as much as I could. I still say it sometimes, only because I grew up saying it. But I don't mean it disrespectfully. I think there's been evolutions in my class politics, in racial politics, in gender politics. When people criticize me about that stuff I tell them, "Yeah, okay, now try finding some of those words in the last few albums." Yes, everybody is a work in progress. I grew up in the hood. I had a prison experience where people were divided not just by race but along class and gender lines. It's not like it was a happy community where people embraced individuals who were heterosexually ambiguous when you're incarcerated. That was my experience.

Now, if someone is offended by curses they might as well hang themselves, because they're not ready for the real world. I'm much more offended by a hundred thousand-plus innocent victims that are categorized as "collateral damage" of the war in Iraq than I am by the words fuck, shit or pussy. And if you're not, as a human being, then there is something pretentious about you, there is something selfish about you, and you really need to do some soul searching instead of being overly anal retentive about my lyrics. Because I'm trying to stop these injustices by bringing them to life, while you're being a word Nazi. I can't help you. You need a different type of help.

**Does being of Afro-Latin decent affect your identity as an artist in this country?**

Well, my background is very simple: my grandfather was a black Hispanic, an Afro-Peruvian, he came from the West Indies. He bought his freedom and moved to South America, and the bottom line is that my mother didn't raise me to resent that part of my heritage. The way a lot of Latinos seem to say to themselves, "Well, alright, at least we're not black." That's the kind of racism that happens in the Latino community, and sometimes it's worse than white people's racism because at least when you look at white people's racism they tend to love themselves. In fact, they love themselves so much – and this is not an across-the-board blanket generalization of all white people, but of white supremacist society, which is what we live in now – they change history to make it seem as if they did things that they didn't. That's how much they love themselves.

But a lot of Latino people end up hating other people, black people, white people, even themselves, because they themselves are part white, part indigenous, part black, and they haven't come to terms with that as a part of who they are. And I think my mother never raised me to identify like that. And my father, too. And that gave me the dignity and the self-confidence to represent myself no matter where I am or what I'm doing.

**On this tour, you've visited more than seventeen of the individual Occupy movements throughout the country. Can you talk a little bit about how you've experienced the Occupy movement on a national scale?**

I see the Occupiers themselves dealing with a lot of local issues. Like drug addiction, homelessness. But these things are perfectly relatable to everything the Occupy movement was meant to exemplify. Because if people use those as criticisms, and they say, "Oh look at these homeless people." Oh, homeless people, you mean people who lost their houses because a bank came along and stole every single thing that they had? Oh, you mean drug addicts, you mean people who are thrown in prison for 30 or 40 years of their life because of marijuana possession and the three strikes law? Because they're criminalized rather than given help. These people are sick, they need help. A person who takes meth wouldn't be breaking into a car at five o'clock in the morning if they were cured. They have a disease, they need help. I think it's incredibly important to point out that the Occupy movement started out on a national stage, and is now dealing with each of the local problems Occupiers have based on what the demographic of their city is. I think that's a good thing, but I also think they should refocus on the national platform, to unify all of them. **EW**

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