



# Rev. Wright, Obama and racism in the U.S.

by LeiLani Dowell, NYC FIST

Now that a Black presidential candidate has a real chance of winning the Democratic nomination and even the presidency, we're once again asked not to talk about oppression. We're supposed to reject the teachings of, for instance, Malcolm X, and even Martin Luther King Jr. We're supposed to deny what, for so many poor and oppressed peoples in the United States and throughout the world, is a clear-cut reality. We're not supposed to be angry—and we're definitely not supposed to speak up and fight back.

Such is the case in the media-bashing of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, former spiritual mentor of presidential candidate Barack Obama.

In a media flooded with racist, sexist and anti-LGBT images and voices, the words of a Black man calling the U.S. on its violence and oppression are labeled “hate speech.” Obama's opponent for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Rodham Clinton, went so far as to put Wright on a par with Don Imus—who is back on the air even after his racist, sexist rants made international headlines.

The attack on the Rev. Wright is nothing less than nationalist baiting and anti-patriot baiting. It is being used not only to undermine Obama's campaign, but particularly in an attempt to defeat the Black struggle.

The media, as they will often do when attempting to defile someone's character, have reduced Wright's comments to mere snippets and sound bites of supposedly inexplicable outbursts against the U.S. Even in that limited context, it is hard to find fault in his words.

For instance, the idea that HIV was created to target people of color (and LGBT people) is not new, and understandable given the overall government attack on those commu-

nities.

The warehousing of people of color in the prison industrial complex, as well as the flooding of drugs into poor people of color communities, has been well documented. Why, then, wouldn't Wright say: “The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strikes law, and then wants us to sing ‘God Bless America.’ No, no, no, God damn America.”

However, the media was also careful to omit the obvious evidence Wright presented for some of his words. Here are some excerpts of Wright's comments on 9/11, the video of which can be viewed at [alternet.org](http://alternet.org):

“I heard Ambassador Peck on an interview yesterday. ... This is a white man and he was upsetting the Fox news commentators to no end. ... He pointed out that what Malcolm X said ... was in fact coming true, America's chickens are coming home to roost. We took this country, by terror, away from the Sioux, the Apache, the Arawak, the Comanche, the Rapaho, the Navaho—terrorism. We took Africans from their country to build our way of ease and kept them enslaved and living in fear—terrorism.

“We bombed Grenada and killed innocent civilians, babies, non-military personnel; we bombed the Black civilian community of Panama with stealth bombers and killed unarmed teenagers and toddlers, pregnant mothers and hardworking fathers. We bombed Qaddafi's home and killed his child. ...

“We bombed Iraq, we killed unarmed civilians trying to make a living. We bombed a plant in Sudan to pay back for the attack on our embassy; killed hundreds of hard-working people, mothers and fathers who left home to go to work that day, not knowing that they'd never get back home. We bombed Hiroshima;



Reverend Jeremiah Wright

we bombed Nagasaki; and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon—and we never batted an eye: kids playing in the playground, mothers picking up children after school, civilians, not soldiers; people just trying to make it day by day.

“We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and Black South Africans, and now we are indignant, because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought back into our own front yard.

“America's chickens are coming home to roost. Violence begets violence. Hatred begets hatred. And terrorism begets terrorism. A white ambassador said that, y'all, not a Black militant, not a reverend who preaches about racism.”

Elections in the U.S. are always an attempt to dampen militant people's struggles, to silence our legitimate outrage at oppression and demands for justice.

With the attacks on the Rev. Wright, the continued attack on communities of color, an election season and a growing economic crisis that is sure to exacerbate misery for working people—now is the time to affirm the self-determination of oppressed peoples and stand together in solidarity with the Black struggle. ■

# Conscious hip-hop to revive ‘golden era’



## LARRY HALES OF FIST INTERVIEWS JASIRI X

Jasiri X, who started rapping in 1990, says artistic culture “springs from our experiences and spiritual connection and is a tool for change.” He sees it as a “survival mechanism.”

Any student of the history of the Black musical tradition understands the value of song, stretching all the way back to the field hollers during the times of chattel slavery. While the rhythms and other aspects of the Black musical tradition do indeed come from Africa, the content itself is rooted in the desire of an oppressed people for freedom.

Jasiri uses his music to teach, but sees in it the possibility to make positive change. He works with youth in Pittsburgh and is one of the founders of 1HOOD, an organization “created to promote unity among young men, to strengthen and support each individual member's programs and to promote peace in local Pittsburgh neighborhoods.”

Jasiri started listening to hip-hop music in the late 1980s—what's known as the golden era, a time when many popular artists were conscious. Now, Jasiri says, “I listen to everything except country, from Rage to Phil Collins to Stevie

Wonder.”

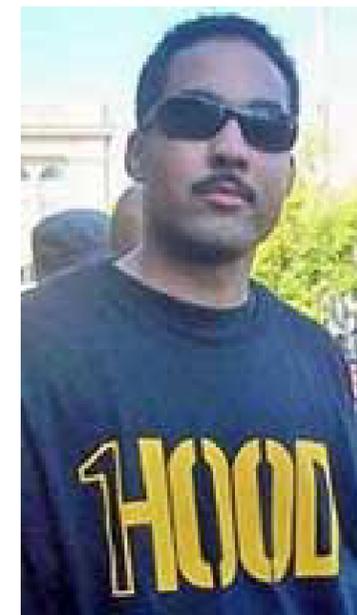
It was hip-hop music that drove him to be politically active. He wants to connect with other conscious rappers and to usher in a new golden era, where content means something and reflects the conditions people are faced with.

His newest protest song, “Enough is Enough,” was written after the three cops that killed Sean Bell were acquitted. The song begins with media coverage of the acquittal, as the music builds with protests in the background and Jasiri chanting, “Enough is Enough.” He yells, “We will not surrender!” followed by the lyrics:

*In the war of cops and robbers,  
the cops are robbers  
They on the block with product,  
filling slots for lock up  
You'll get strong armed by the  
long arm of the law  
His small arms were too small to  
box with em  
Shots to them, glocks spittin hot  
ammo  
You'll get the mop handle  
You'll get Dialloed or Louimaed  
Or even locked up like Mumia  
Waitin for that same man who  
put ya in prison to free ya  
See the Bell tolls and if you see a  
cop wearin jail clothes  
I've bet hell froze*

Jasiri recorded the song “Free the Jena 6” in two days. The song was awarded “Hip Hop Political Song of the Year” and “Single of the Year” at the Pittsburgh Hip Hop Awards.

He first heard about the six young Black men, who defended themselves and their community from racist attack, from the Final Call newspaper and e-mail alerts. His urgency in making the song, which became a clarion call, grew



Jasiri X

from his understanding of culture.

Jasiri says the problem with hip-hop now is that it has been taken over by corporations that use it to make profit, and that a lot of the musicians have to fit a model made for them that has no basis in actual reality.

He says that while many mainstream artists speak of “keeping it real,” the images shown in videos and the content of the lyrics reflect a lifestyle that many of the artists who tout it can't even afford to live.

“Reality is hard enough without our youth being bombarded with negative images,” especially considering that many young people “internalize the conditions and turn on one another.” Ultimately, Jasiri believes that the system itself needs to be thrown out and replaced with one more humane that will put an end to oppression.

To find out more about Jasiri X, including the lyrics to “Free the Jena 6,” visit [www.myspace.com/JASIRIX](http://www.myspace.com/JASIRIX). ■