

808s and Healthcare Reform

Presidential Politics Meet Hip- Hop Rivalries

By Hilary B. Bisenieks

WASHINGTON – What began as little more than a rapper’s public outburst and a supposedly off-the-record remark by the President has evolved into history’s first hip-hop-Presidential beef.

In the weeks since West’s interruption of the 2009 Video Music Awards and President Obama’s now-infamous “jackass” comment, members of both crews have been taking daily shots at each other. These shots began with West’s diss track “Democratic (jack)Ass,” released online a day after the comment, following an all-night recording session by West and Chicago-based producer No I.D. What little chance Obama had to play the part of the bigger man was blown soon after by a string of epithets directed at West by Obama’s Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel during a White House press conference, calling West, in part, “fucking whack,” and, in the most printable portion of his outburst, stating that “[West’s] flow is like Cheney’s, after a double-shot of Metamucil.” Since that time, as West said in an interview, “it’s on.”

The next big shot came a week later, when rapper Twista, a member of the now-polarized Chicago hip-hop community, made veiled references to Obama in a radio interview on WGCI-FM, saying, “Some people, you know, they come up here, and then, as soon as they leave, they start hating on their homeboys. They think it’s okay, just

because they’re off in Washington or wherever.”

Despite his early attempts to rise above this feud, Obama was caught making more off-the-record comments, calling West “petty” and “immature” for perpetuating something that “could be solved with a simple apology.” Obama’s early reticence to participate in the feud has not stopped members of his crew from retaliating against West, and there have been reports of Chicago rapper, MC Common, joining forces with Hilary Clinton, Joe Biden, and, in a surprising show of bipartisanship, Condoleezza Rice, to produce their own mix-tape. While the album isn’t scheduled to release for another week, the lead track, “I’m’a Let U Finish (Making a Fool of Yourself in the Public Eye),” has already been leaked to the internet. Rumors are flying that Obama can be heard rhyming a verse on the track “Phil-a-Busta,” despite his seeming unwillingness to be involved further in this feud.

In an exclusive interview, MC Common said of Vice-President Biden, “He’s got amazing flow when you take away the teleprompter—I know a lot of guys in the [hip-hop] scene who only wish they could freestyle like that.”

Even Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize has not been able to bring an end to the feud; if anything, it has only drawn out the conflict, drawing more supporters to each side. Following the announcement from Stockholm, prominent right-wing pundit Rush Limbaugh praised West on his talk show for standing against Obama. Former Vice President Dick Cheney has also issued a statement that he would be interested in collaborating with West on a future “hippie-hop song.” West issued a statement the following day, saying, “fuck no.”

Where the next shot will come from, we can only speculate, but we hope that this beef will come to a peaceful resolution before the UN has to step in and hold talks.