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Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council and NYS Association of Black & Puerto Rican Legislators, Inc. host “Youth Empowerment Day” & launch partnership to use the Power of Hip-Hop to service our children

Hip-Hop, Politics & Economics Youth Summit discusses the influence that Hip-Hop has on Drugs, Guns, Gang Violence, Unemployment and the Criminal Justice System

Hip-Hop & Politics Program launched to prepare our Youth for the 2008 Elections

February 21, 2008—Albany, NY. In an effort to educate our youths and young adults how to constructively use Hip-Hop as a vehicle for Social, Political and Economic Empowerment the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council, Inc. (HHSYC.org) and the NYS Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, Inc. (NYSABPRL) launched “Youth Empowerment Day” at the 37th Annual Legislative Conference Weekend. The “Hip-Hop, Politics and Economics” Youth Summit was attended by notables such as Hip-Hop Icon Slick Rick, Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith, Assemblyman Carl E. Heastie, Senator Antoine M. Thompson, Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries, Senator Shirley Huntley, Assemblyman William Scarborough, Dr. Divine Pryor, Tamika Mallory, Tyrone McCray, Donovan Richards, DJ Baby Bear and over 400 youths. Special thanks to Daymond John from FUBU, KJR Sales, Chavam Entertainment, The System Within, Ruff Ryder Films, Hue-man Bookstore, DJ Baby Bear, Peter Benjamin and Hatcher Enterprises for helping make the event a success.



Slick Rick, Sen. Smith, Randy & Charles Fisher, Assemblyman Jeffries



L to R: Tyrone McCray, Donovan Richards, Dr. Pryor, Slick Rick, Randy, Sen. Smith, Charles, Tameka Malloy, Sen. Thompson

How to get *'To the Top with Hip-Hop'* was the theme of the Youth Summit. The majority of the discussion focused on the influence that Hip-Hop has on Education, Drugs, Gang Violence, Poverty, Unemployment and the Criminal Justice System with many solutions being offered. Participants were afforded an opportunity to register for our new *Hip-Hop & Politics* program created to show young citizens how to use the influence of the multi-billion dollar Hip-Hop Culture for Political Empowerment. Discussions touched on the role that Hip-Hop and the Youth Vote could play in the 2008 Elections. Voter Education, Registration and Participation was the message conveyed by all those in attendance. "No matter who your candidate is just make sure you go to the polls and represent your dreams and community" stated Rashad Drakeford, National Deputy Field Director, Students for Barack Obama. The young audience was told by Powerful Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith that "You have the Political Power to make real changes in your life and community. By working with the HSYC and the NYSABPRL you will get a chance to make a difference during the State and Presidential elections."

The impact that Nas' controversial new album "*Nigg__*" would have on our youths was also a hot topic of discussion. Because of the positive influence he has had on our youths in the past, many gave Nas' the benefit of the doubt believing that he would deliver an album with a message about the detrimental affects of the use of the 'N' word and other negative stigmas that compromise our society.

There was discussion about how African-Americans could use their "Buying Power" to influence the music that record labels release and market to our children. The most important discussion about this issue was spearheaded by Senator Antoine Thompson who told the audience that "The New York State Pension fund has 2.8 billion dollars of your money invested in 16 entertainment companies, with some of them supporting "*Gangster Rap*" and music that degrades our women. The people have the power to protect their children from offensive lyrics and negative images sold by record companies, all you have to do is write me a letter and I will show you how to make a difference by pulling the State's money out of these companies if they don't comply with our wishes."

Afterwards there was a short break before the “*Time 2 Shine*” Talent Search began. Contestants danced, sang, read poetry, rapped and even acted out scenes for the possibility of acquiring a major recording contract or a chance to receive a walk-on role in a video or film. There was a Youth Fashion Show and a Karate exhibition that also brought joy and excitement to the crowd.

“We made a huge impact on those kids from upstate and the ones from the city that came up. The questions the youths asked were very intriguing and it showed me that they are ready for a change. We look forward to working with the NYSABPRL on future projects. I want to thank them along with Assemblyman Heastie and the other panelists for their support” stated Randy Fisher, Executive Director of the National Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council.

Charles Fisher, Founder & Chairman of the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council says “the entire day was a huge success and the Power of Raptivism was in full effect. Bringing Hip-Hop to the Caucus Weekend Celebration gave young people a feel of representation and importance. Bridging the communication gap is the key to developing long-term solutions to address the needs of our children. I applaud the NYSABPRL and the 41 state elected officials they represent for allowing us to partner with them to produce a day of events solely for the benefit of our youths. This day laid down the foundation to launch a New Youth Movement for Social Change during a very important Political year when the youth vote will be the difference. Our commitment to work with the NYSABPRL goes beyond this event because we are both concerned about the safety and development of our children. We will be working throughout the year to follow-up on the many issues that were addressed at the Youth Summit.”

“I’m also looking forward to working with Hip-Hop Icon Slick Rick because I know he can bring a lot of wisdom to the table to motivate our youth to be productive citizens, as he did during the event. He will also be working with us on a new initiative to ‘Save the Black Male’ entitled ‘*Reach for the Sky*’. This new innovative program was created through the office of Senator Smith with support from a host of professionals to specifically address this life threatening issue that plagues our country. I want to thank DJ Baby Bear, Daymond John from FUBU, KJR Sales, Chavam Entertainment, The System Within, Ruff Ryder Films, Hue-man Bookstore, Peter Benjamin and Hatcher Enterprises for their support for this event” ended Fisher.

“According to a New York Times article and other research material I have collected for years it is a fact that the “Black Male” in America is an endangered species and something has to be done before we lose whole generations to drugs, guns, gang violence, unemployment, dropping out of school and the Criminal Justice System” ended Dr. Pryor, deputy director of the Nu-Leadership Policy Group, one of the countries leading experts on Criminal Justice.

“On behalf of Assemblyman Carl Heastie and the NYSABPRL, we appreciate the hard work the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council put into making this event a huge success and we will continue to work with them on a host of issues that confront the lives of our children. This new partnership was created to enhance the efforts of our elected officials to better serve our youths and now it is officially off the ground” ended Sentaria DePass-Murray, Executive Director, NYS Association of Black & Puerto Rican Legislators.

“With the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council working closely with our elected officials and other Hip-Hop Artists, I know we have a great opportunity to build a strong team for real change. I am ready to do my part not just as an artist, but also to solicit the services of

other celebrities to join us in our work for Social Justice and Political Empowerment” said Hip-Hop Icon Slick Rick.

“Working with the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council to develop new ideas that can use Hip-Hop to increase academic grades and graduation rates is a task that I welcome, especially with our young male students. I want to commend Senator Smith and the Committee for the Pursuit of Excellence for African-American Males for their months of hard work to design the “*Reach for the Sky*” program. I will do all that I can to support the launch and success of this very much needed initiative” stated Senator Shirley Huntley.

“Using Hip-Hop to bring families together is a creative way to address the many issues that many kids don’t get a chance to talk about at home with their parents. The family structure is an important element for the social development of a strong and viable community; even more so with our young males. I will give the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council any support they need to better service our children and improve their life” ended Assemblyman William Scarscrough.

“Getting young people involved with politics is a step toward solving all the problems in our communities because their “Voice and Vote” are the Power Tools that build new movements for equality. Whatever support the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council needs to implement new positive programs for social justice will be supported by my office because we represent the empowerment of our youths” ended Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries.

“The Bronx is the Birth Place of the Hip-Hop Culture and we will do all we can to empower our youths, not just in the Bronx, but throughout the State of New York. My office is committed to working with the Hip-Hop Summit Youth Council, Slick Rick and the Hip-Hop Community to improve the lives of our children” ended Assemblyman Carl Heastie.

PHOTOS BY LARRY MOORE

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