

Rapper Talib Kweli Rocks the Mic in Cuba

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Cuban Rap Agency reports that local bands Mano Armada, Brebaje Man, Invaxion and Kilometro 969 will share the stage with Kweli.

Hip-Hop rapper, social activist and entrepreneur Talib Kweli is on the eve of making his debut performance in Cuba. The concert will take place at the Rhumba Palace on Friday.

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Renowned for uncompromising lyrics that address social and political issues, Kweli's career ascended the hip-hop radar in 1998 when he and fellow hip-hop artist, Mos Def (currently Yasiin Bey), released their debut studio album, Black Star. The title of the album alluded to the Black Star Line, a shipping line established by Pan-Africanist revolutionary Marcus Garvey.

Talib, having called U.S. politics an illusion, refuses to vote. He also speaks out about political prisoners incarcerated in the U.S. such as Mumia Abu Jamal and is an active supporter of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

Cuban hip-hop has as its matriarch, Nehanda Abiodun. A graduate of Columbia University, Abiodun would soon join ranks with the National Black Human Rights Coalition and the Republic of New Afrika. She received political asylum in Cuba in the 1990s after the US government

charged her with aiding in the escape of Assata Shakur and a series of other revolutionary actions.

Since living in Cuba Abiodun has frequently spoken to Cuban youth about the social and political vitality of hip-hop music. She stressed that rap music is the “voice of protest” located throughout the world.

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She added that “once you step out of the U.S., a large part of the global community of hip hoppers are progressive” because it's produced by the Indigenous people of that place.

As a testament to its power of resistance to the forces of imperialism and oppression, hip-hop has also been co-opted in favor of U.S. hegemony.

According to documents obtained by the Associated Press, the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, had secretly attempted and failed to infiltrate Cuba's underground hip-hop movement for over two years.

The Guardian reported that the objective of the operation was “to break the information blockade” and “spark a youth movement against the government.”

But, rest assured, you shouldn't expect a weak, imperialist performance when Kweli rocks the mic Friday night.