

The Revolution Will Be Televised

The Dead Prez Videos



Story: Roosevelt Franklin (a.k.a. Equality Justice)

Dead Prez, if you ain't know, is the revolutionary rap group best described as a cross between Public Enemy and N.W.A. They're two kids who grew up in the streets, but similar to Malcolm X, changed how they were living to do positive things for their community. Like rapping Black Panthers, they're on a mission to take Hip-Hop to that next level, using it as a tool to talk about more than just sex, jewelry and murder. Their songs concern problems Black and Latino youth have to deal with in this country, like police brutality, prison, drug addiction, as well as the miseducation and ignorance of the educational system.

Beyond the music and political stance, rappers M1 and Sticman have been quietly building a strong body of work in film and video. You may have seen their cameo in the movie *Whiteboys*. What you need to peep are the 4 videos for the songs from their debut album *Let's Get Free*.

The first of the group is a companion to the three song promo tape put out to big up the album before it was released. Shot in gritty, super-8, low budget style, the video is a medley of the three songs, "Happiness," and two joints not included on the album, "These Are the Times" and "Food, Clothes and Shelter." The storyline begins with a young dread couple spending the afternoon in the park, enjoying the sun. The world turns upside down as if martial law was declared, and cops in riot gear arrest people for no reason. Packs of kids disguised in ski masks run up in supermarkets like wolves, stealing as much food as they can, while others outside get beat down trying to fight against police.

Simple political messages flash on the screen between shots of people practicing martial arts in the video for "It's Bigger Than Hip-Hop." Scenes of Dead Prez and their crew dressed as thugs with handkerchiefs

covering their faces like gangbangers are mixed with scenes of them rocking loudspeakers on a platform before a hyped crowd of ghetto youth at a protest rally.

In "Mind Sex," the duo portray themselves as inmates in prison with M1 on death row. From their jail cells, they fantasize of beautiful black women and how tenderly they'd treat them if they could. A cameo by Abiodun of the legendary Last Poets appearing as another inmate ends the video with his poem "Black Rose."

Their last video has caused the most controversy so far. Both BET and MTV refused to air it. For the song "They Schools," the setting is a public high school whose students are mainly Black and Latino. Piggish looking teachers are shown yelling at students and treating them as if they were dumb while clips of Dead Prez burning school books flip back and forth. The last minute of the video has Stic, M1 and others hung in nooses like slaves were in the south when they tried to escape or learned to read and write. The school scenes showing them playing the roles of the school's janitors are symbolic on many levels. In one sense, they're showing how in this society it's more likely the average black man can only have a job doing the most low level work, as opposed to him being a teacher or principal. On a more subliminal level, it's the janitor who cleans all the dirt and filth out of the school. They take out the trash.

The videos are all conceptualized by Dead Prez and are part of a home video collection soon to be released by Loud Records. While Dead Prez will be working behind the camera more in the near future, directing as well as producing, you can still check for M1 who has a small role in the upcoming film "Brooklyn Babylon."