

Awareness Harmony Acceptance  
Advocates



## AHA Advocate Talk: Dregs One



**Samantha Ellison:** How did you first get interested in rapping and how do you use your music to make a difference within the world? Within your latest album you address such issues as the war in Afghanistan, capitalism, and the many standards placed upon women by the beauty industry. What made you want to talk about these issues and what was your influence in making this last album more political and how can hip-hop be a vehicle for change?

**Dregs One:** I always had an interest in music; my parents always exposed me to different types early on. And rap music was starting to become more and more dominant when I was a kid, it was the music of my generation. So I developed a love for the music early and I always practiced writing rhymes or making beats. When I got to

high school I would mess around and freestyle with my friends and it turns out I was actually pretty good. So I stuck with it.

Since that's the music that speaks most to my generation, I decided that that was the best tool I had to make a difference in the world. Hip-hop is the voice of the people. If you really understand the culture you know it represents community, unity, fun, knowledge... these are all things we need to utilize to make a change.

Because I reached a certain point where I was learning so much about the injustices in the world and in my community, I felt like I had to do something. I was inspired by history, and things I lived to witness. So I try to give people that same type of inspiration in my music. All the things I talk about on "The Wake Up Call" are things I was sick of dealing with. I was tired of hearing about all this foul stuff going on right in front of us, everyday... literally killing us... tired of no one really doing anything about them or even worse not even knowing- even worse not even caring. So yeah. That album is a very raw expression of that feeling.

**SE: Are there challenges/benefits to being a political rapper?**

**DO:** Yeah there are definitely some challenges. I mean all my beliefs go against pretty much everything the music industry represents right now. The industry, mind you, not the music itself... I'm talking about the industry that basically has ownership of all the methods for me to get my music heard by a mass audience. Not that I'm dealing with Hollywood record execs but that stuff trickles down into the local music scene, politics, radio, etc. And on top of that the truth is that many people just don't want to hear what I'm talking about. They prefer not to listen to quote unquote conscious music. Or they don't agree with my views. All good.

I feel like the benefit is... well I think that's what the people who do listen to my music like about it the most- the fact that I talk about real life. I represent conscious thought, community, and social change. It allows me to connect with a whole separate audience from the commercialized hip-hop crowd. I've gotten to do amazing events for the community, and meet some incredible people who are doing activism and community work.

**SE: Could you talk a little about your Rock The School Bells conference and workshops coming up Saturday March 9th?**

**DO:** Rock the School Bells is like hip-hop high school. It's an all-day free event for youth to learn about all the elements of hip-hop culture from graffiti to breakdancing to rapping to DJing. It also places value on education and career skills. Last year I taught a workshop on Bay Area hip-hop history and I also performed at the RTSB concert with dead prez and other great artists. I'm excited to be coming back. I'm going to do a workshop about how the music industry has changed the culture of hip-hop.

**SE: What are you working on now and what is something you want to accomplish this year?**

**DO:** Right now I'm working on a variety of musical projects, solo. I'm going to drop a mixtape called "the STYLE tape" this Spring, which is a tribute to the art of hip-hop. Then I'm hoping to release an EP album, "Mood Swings." It's kind of like a jazz album concept. The EP is going to come out with a short film, which I'm in the process of finishing right now. I'm hoping to premiere that in theatres and have it available on DVD and online. Other than that I've been working on a business plan to start my own non-profit organization, so I could teach workshops and coordinate community events full-time. That's been my dream for a minute.

**SE: What recent news story made you upset or gave you inspiration?**

**DO:** Well a news story that made me upset and gave me inspiration was an article by CW Nevius in my hometown paper the San Francisco Chronicle that basically praised gentrification. Gentrification is a problem that has drastically shifted the population of the city and pushed out most working class families and people of color. This is one of the most expensive places to live in the US. It's becoming a playground for elitists and basically the San Francisco I knew as a child is almost completely gone. So for this guy to try to say that gentrification isn't a bad thing pissed me off, and it pisses me off that this paper would run that. So I want to organize some protests around that, I want to get the voices of working class residents heard.

**SE: If you could sit down with any activist, alive or passed away, who would it be and why?**

**DO:** Bob Marley. Because Bob Marley wasn't a musician, or an activist- he was both. His music was political, cultural, revolutionary but at the same time you could dance and party to it. I would want to spend a day with him in the studio in Jamaica and ask him for advice on how I could do the same. And talk about the struggles going on in Jamaica and the US. And of course we'd probably talk about weed and women too. Haha. I think Bob Marley would like my music.