

YOU DISRESPECT MY ART

Part 1

“They’re not all thugs,” I countered Mrs. Hass one day.

“Sure they are. They just rap about drugs, violence, and have no respect for women.”

“Which rappers are you referring to in particular?” I already knew a few she might say.

5 “All of them. I’ve never heard an intelligent rap, much less an intelligent rapper. They call it rap because it’s Ridiculous Attempts at Poetry. R-A-P.”

I thought long and hard about someone that didn’t rap about those negative things. I couldn’t think of one rapper that didn’t mention those things or at least implied them in their songs. It was a sad truth; not because they were rapping about it, but because their lives were drowned in those things.

10 “They’re just rapping about their reality; that’s what they know. Mr. Salas says that a good writer writes about what he knows.”

“Whatever Mr. Salas does in his class is his business,” she shot back.

“It’s not his fault you’re too stupid to understand rap music.”

Mrs. Hass turned around with her eyes opened wider than the Pacific. “What did you just say to me?” she scowled.

15 “You need to respect your elders and teachers, Troy Jones.”

“Respect is earned and cannot be demanded from someone, Mrs. Linda Hass.”

With that she quickly walked to her desk, phoned the principal, and asked that I be removed from her class because of “a severely inappropriate classroom disruption.”

20 Within a minute, the hall monitor, a middle-aged, brawny man stood at the door of the classroom and waved me over to him. As I stepped out of the classroom, I said, “Have a good day, Mrs. Hass,” and walked out. [...]

Part 2

“I got the fire,

I’m takin’ the rap game even higher.

I’m a Slim Samurai coming straight from the south,

And that’s dope alliteration comin’ straight out my mouth...”

5 That was just a little something that I wrote in I.S.S. That stands for In School Suspension. I wasn’t a bad kid, it’s just that I knew what I wanted to do with my life. Rap. And only rap. It wasn’t about the money or the fame. It was about the art and doing what I wanted to do with my life and helping my mom in the process.

10 I couldn’t just let Mrs. Hass disrespect my art and passion like that. What if I had talked the same about Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, or Stephen Hawking like that? I knew that would make her erupt inside, too. My blood was still boiling from the encounter when Mrs. Hass came in and whispered something to the I.S.S. teacher and pointed to me. “Hello, Troy. I think we need to talk. I’m not happy with what happened earlier, are you?” she started.

I shook my head without looking up from my lyrics.

