

Gangsta Rap Interview

From 1988 *Behind the Beat* Interview with rapper (and former gang member) Ice-T:



A lot of people always ask me... why do I wear a gun or what does the gun signify. And, to be honest, I was in New York City and I saw the gun in a jewelry store and I just wanted it, I liked it... I don't know why I liked it. I also like the movie *The Terminator*, *Lethal Weapon*, and a lot of other things. I pay income taxes here in the United States, and they say, Ice, we're gonna spend your money, and spend it on peace, and they buy guns. Reagan is telling me, yeah, Ice, this is what it's for. He tells the American people... peace are guns, and I don't understand that, but if that's what he says, then I guess I got a peace symbol around my neck. And we all know that's not true, but I'm just as stupid as they want us to be. . . .

I chose to take my rap and speak to the kids, you know, let 'em know exactly what time it is. And with that, they feel they have a spokesperson in Ice-T. . . . My attitude is what you need is maybe a negative image with a positive message. Instead of taking all the professional basketball players or the successful people to go back to talk to the kids, take some of the kids out of prison, take some of the men who have been in the penitentiaries, and take them back and let them talk to the kids. 'Cause on the street if they don't believe, as they say, you know what time it is, they don't want to hear nothin' you got to say. And everybody in Los Angeles know I've been through it, I've been shot, I've rolled up and down these streets daily, and they know that Ice knows what time it is. I used the guns on my album cover to attract the attention of the violent kids, and then maybe I have a chance to tap 'em and give them something positive.