

 Sunday, July 04, 2010



Black Korea

by

Ice Cube

Album: Death Certificate Released: [1991](#)

Songfacts: You can leave comments about the song at the bottom of the page.

Music writer and historian Alexander Baron writes of this song:

Written shortly before the LA riots of March, 1991, Ice Cube rails against these people who can't speak English properly. He is resentful of their apparently suspicious attitude towards him and his fellow blacks - if he'd been in LA during the riots he might have understood why.

He ends the song with the charming threat of burning down their stores if they try to turn the "ghetto" into "Black Korea." If this song had been pressed in the UK it would have been banned by the BBC and undoubtedly fallen foul of the admittedly Draconian *Race Relations Act*. In the UK, whites have been thrown into jail for using far less vitriolic language against blacks, and black organizations have welcomed such prosecutions with open arms.

Having said all that, Ice Cube's rant is a monument to his ignorance of economics, far more so than of race. Malcolm X expressed similar sentiments in his autobiography when he claimed Jewish businessmen who owned the major businesses in the ghetto took that money out of the ghetto every night and kept its residents poor. It is clear that many blacks in Los Angeles saw the same parasitic traits in Korean shopkeepers, but this begs the question, if the Koreans take all the money out of the ghetto, how does it get into the ghetto in the first place? The answer is of course that money does not go from black to white, black to Korean, etc., it goes round and round. There may have been numerous Korean shopkeepers in LA at that time, but how many Korean rap singers were there? And how many were as wealthy as Ice Cube, who even in 1990 by his own account regarded a \$75,000 contract as an insult?

The black contribution to music has been less enormous than phenomenal; it is no exaggeration to say that without black songwriters, composers and performers, contemporary music as we know it would hardly exist. It is equally true to say that on this performance it would have been not one whit poorer if Ice Cube had graduated from the Phoenix Institute of Technology with a degree in architecture instead of opting for a career in music.

Comments:

I have to disagree with me about one point, Cube wrote this song before the LA riots as I just realised when researching the Joni Mitchell song "Sex Kills" which was inspired directly by the riots. This songfact will be edited and the reference to the riots removed during the next update. I've also got a songfact pending for "No Vaseline" in which your homeboy incites the murder of his former manager. Now tell me again why he feels disdain at being treated like a potential criminal by Korean shopkeepers? And tell me too how much money had he made from his rapping before he met his supposedly so parasitic Jewish manager? If you really want to understand why Korean shopkeepers and so many white people regard law-abiding black as potential muggers or worse I suggest you ask women why when they travel alone at night they regard all men as potential rapists. Or you might check out Chris Rock's "Black People v Niggers" routine. Re police brutality, you are WAY off-beam. Never heard of Liddle Towers? Check out the songfacts. Check out too the many videos on Youtube of white people, some elderly or under-age, being tasered, beaten up or simply abused by uniformed thugs? Or the black police officer who assaulted Nicola Fischer at the 2009 London protests. Police brutality is not and never has been about "racism", a disease that doesn't exist anyway, and I would refer you to my researches on this chimera to enlighten your darkness. A Baron

- Alexander, London, United Kingdom

Once again Ice-Cube has recorded a racist song.

- Hugh, Liverpool, United Kingdom

I have to disagree with Mr. Baron on many points. The riots following the Rodney King assailant trial were inevitable well before the cops' eventual acquittal. Police brutality was/is a fact of life in Los Angeles, and much of Ice Cube's body of work deals with that issue. "Black Korea" gives voice to the daily frustration that some blacks experienced in the 1990s when they spend what little money they have in poor neighborhoods in shops where the owners treat you like a criminal as soon as you walk in the door. When even law abiding black citizens are wary of the wrath of white cops and Asian disdain daily - it becomes even harder to avoid looking at life through a racial

prism. As for the \$75K contract... had Ice Cube accepted it, he would have had to forfeit any rights to the songs he performed or wrote with NWA. Jerry Heller, who wrote the contract, figured some teenagers from the hood would never turn down that kind of money. Of course, Ice Cube saw that situation through a racial prism as well that he discussed in "No Vaseline" on the same album.

- Matthew, Atlanta, GA