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## Immortal Technique Q&A

By [Colin Groundwater](#) 23 March 2012 [No Comments](#)

*Last Sunday, rapper and activist Immortal Technique came to Toad's. The Herald sat down with him to discuss his thoughts on his work, Afghanistan, Rick Santorum, and hip-hop culture.*

**Yale Herald:** All right, so how you feeling? You got a show in like, 10-15 minutes?

**Immortal Technique:** The show starts in 10-15 minutes. I always bring a slew of my own people. I always like to see my friends and my family get exposure for the hard work that they do, what they help to have me accomplish. The reality is that I don't want to pretend like I do this alone. I do this with a lot of support.

**YH:** What's ahead this year? Do you have plans for the rest of 2012?

**IT:** I'm going to Europe: Portugal, Zurich, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Lund, Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki.

**YH:** You have a big message behind your music. Do you try to communicate something different when you go overseas than you would otherwise to an American audience?

**IT:** I don't change my message or politics, per se, based on where I am, but I definitely want to make it relatable to them. So when I'm overseas, if something relative to what's happening here is relevant to what's happening over there, I definitely want to connect those struggles. I think one of the greatest issues—what takes away from revolutionary struggles—is people not being able to connect those struggles. For example, the people of Palestine could say, “Hey man, let's look at the Native Americans, people who are indigenous to the land and now are told that God has decided someone else will have this land.” The people in Egypt struggling to set up a democracy can look at the way our democracy was set up. You know, all these struggles can be interconnected. If we don't learn from one, we're doomed to repeat history.

**YH:** So what do you think the main struggle facing the U.S. is right now, and what can we look back to for comparison?

**IT:** I think something from history that mirrors the United States' struggle right now would be something like Rome: the Republic that moves more and more towards consolidation into a corporate oligarchy, and eventually to one person. That's where we're obviously headed.

**YH:** In that vein, you rap about the death of democracy on your latest, *The Martyr*. Is there a way to save democracy?

**IT:** I think it's very possible to remind the American public [about the issues] in not so many words, and as many mediums as

possible. When we, as the biggest prognosticators of democracy, the biggest propagators of a free market economy can't even hold those principles up, for the places [where] we are the modern colonizers, it's a detriment to trying to rebuild democracy. In other words, when we set our companies up overseas, that's not even real capitalism. When you have a corporation backed up by a corrupt military dictatorship that crushes all opposition, literally out there with killing squads murdering people—you know, Chevron, Exxon, and Gulf, they all have their competitors, right, but you don't see them going from gas station to gas station killing motherfuckers that work for Citgo or Hess. That's what happens in the quote unquote "third world." And that is no part of capitalism. So you can't keep true to the principles that you've set up, the system you want the world to implement, that's why it's obviously a farce from day one.

**YH:** You've done a lot of philanthropic work in Afghanistan. What should U.S. policy look like there, particularly now that Karzai has called for a speedier withdrawal?

**IT:** Well, we put him there, so he's not taking the biggest stand he possibly can. I think he can pretend to be as outraged as possible, but until he truly stands up and demands they go, I don't think they will. The war has become unwinnable, and Afghanistan is where empires go to die. The Russians, the British, and Alexander the Great failed there at their height. America obviously hasn't learned from history or is purposefully doing this because it's still making money at the expense of working class lives.

**YH:** What do you think it will take to see real change? Do you think the election will change anything?

**IT:** I don't know. I don't think Obama's second term will produce any different results from his first. I don't think anyone has a snowball's chance in hell of beating him. The Republicans are probably headed to their convention with no candidate in mind.

**YH:** What do you think about Rick Santorum?

**IT:** You know, it's funny. When I look at the GOP candidates, all of the ones that are pro-war have never served. The only one who opposes the war, Ron Paul, is a veteran. It's insane, and it's an embarrassment for their party. It's also an embarrassment for the Democratic party; Obama has never served, yet he's become a pro-war president. I mean [Rick Santorum's] saying he'll bomb Iran. Yeah, that's what we need, a third war we can't afford and you can't do anything about. "Why did you apologize for the burning of the Qu'ran?" We have more than just Afghanistan to consider; the entire region is going up in arms over this, and you're going to make a faux pas by refusing to make an apology? We're the empire, stupid! We're supposed to rule not only by strength, but by giving people the illusion that we represent justice.

**YH:** So when you go out on your tour, is getting this sort of information out your primary goal, or is it more about your music?

**IT:** It's a balance. I want to get the information out but I also want to give people the music.

**YH:** You have a documentary coming out. A lot of cool people appear, like Cornel West. How did he come into the picture?

**IT:** We were scheduled to be at a couple events together, so we linked up earlier. I was doing a show at Princeton, and I arranged to meet him before that. We just clicked. Then Ice T, KRS-1, Chuck D, legends in hip-hop [appear in the film]. You can't put a price tag on that. They drop jewels about some of the most important parts of longevity, survivability, business acumen, and, really, culture.

**YH:** What do you mean by that, by culture?

**IT:** I think in hip-hop now, we've lost a semblance of that, the idea that hip-hop is more than just music: it's a culture. It represents knowledge of self, it represents a reclaiming of what was taken from people, of who they are and who their ancestors are and what they gave this country, the world, and this art form. Regardless of what that looks like in the future, the people who live in those urban environments that are black and Latino took an art form and decided that they would reinvent sampling music, lyricism, and the way that rhymes were spit. They took an age-old phenomenon of truth-telling, soothsaying, traveling bard, whatever you want to call it, or a philosopher, prophet, poet, and combined these things into something that transcends race, religion, and sex. That's what hip-hop does.

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