

An Evening with CHUCK D OF PUBLIC ENEMY A USC AMPLIFIED Event

Thursday, November 5, 2020, at 6 p.m. PT
Live via zoom
University of Southern California

WHAT TO KNOW

- Chuck D is a founding member of the rap group Public Enemy, which is considered one of the originators of socially conscious hip hop.
- In addition to making music, he has authored books and spoken out in support of peace, a drug-free America, voting, and more.
- Chuck D will be in conversation with USC professor Allissa V. Richardson, the author of *Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans, Smartphones and the New Protest #Journalism*.

CHUCK D

Chuck D was born Carlton Douglas Ridenhour in Queens, New York, in 1960. In 1985, he co-founded the hugely influential rap group Public Enemy, one of the leading originators of socially and politically conscious hip hop.

In addition to making music, Chuck D has co-hosted a radio show (Air America's *Unfiltered*), founded a record company (Slam Jamz), co-written a book (*Fight the Power: Rap, Race, and Reality*, with Yusuf Jah), and spoken out as an activist.

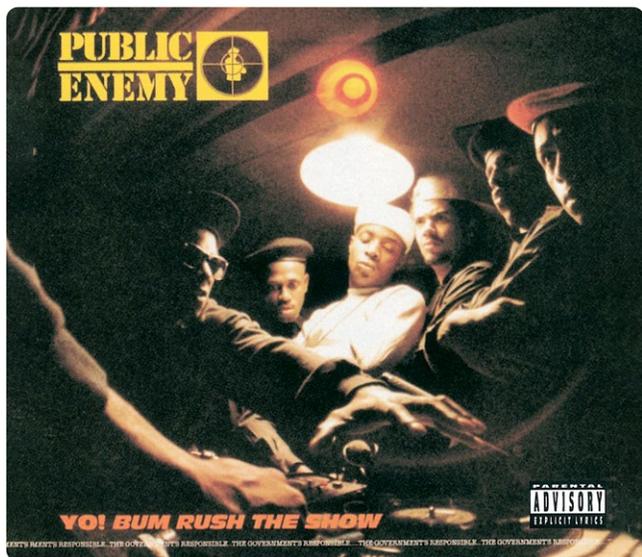
Chuck D was also part of the rap supergroup Prophets of Rage, active from 2016 to 2019, which included members of Rage Against the Machine, Audioslave, Cypress Hill, and Public Enemy.

IN CONTEXT

Public Enemy's first album, *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*, was released in 1987. It was critically acclaimed and one of the fastest-selling hip hop records of the time, even while many radio stations shied away from the album because of its powerful politics.

Consider the context in which *Yo! Bum Rush the Show* was made, as reported by Lorraine Boissoneault in *Smithsonian Magazine*:

"In September 1983, graffiti artist Michael Stewart was beaten and arrested by Manhattan police officers, leading to his death. In October 1984, an elderly and mentally disturbed woman named Eleanor Bumpers was shot to death by police officers attempting to evict her from her Bronx apartment. In December 1984, a white man named Bernhard Goetz shot four African-American teenagers on the subway after one of the boys approached Goetz for money.



FEAR OF A BLACK PLANET

I've been wonderin' why
 People livin' in fear
 Of my shade
 (Or my high-top fade)
 I'm not the one that's runnin'
 But they got me on the run
 Treat me like I have a gun
 All I got is genes and chromosomes
 Consider me Black to the bone
 All I want is peace and love on this planet
 (Ain't how that God planned it?)

—from “Fear of a Black Planet” by Public Enemy

FIGHT THE POWER

1989 the number another summer (get down)
 Sound of the funky drummer
 Music hitting your heart 'cause I know you got soul
 (Brothers and sisters, hey)
 Listen if you're missing y'all
 Swinging while I'm singing
 Giving whatcha getting
 Knowing what I know
 While the Black bands sweatin'
 And the rhythm rhymes rollin'
 Got to give us what we want (uh)
 Gotta give us what we need (hey)
 Our freedom of speech is freedom or death
 We got to fight the powers that be

—from “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy

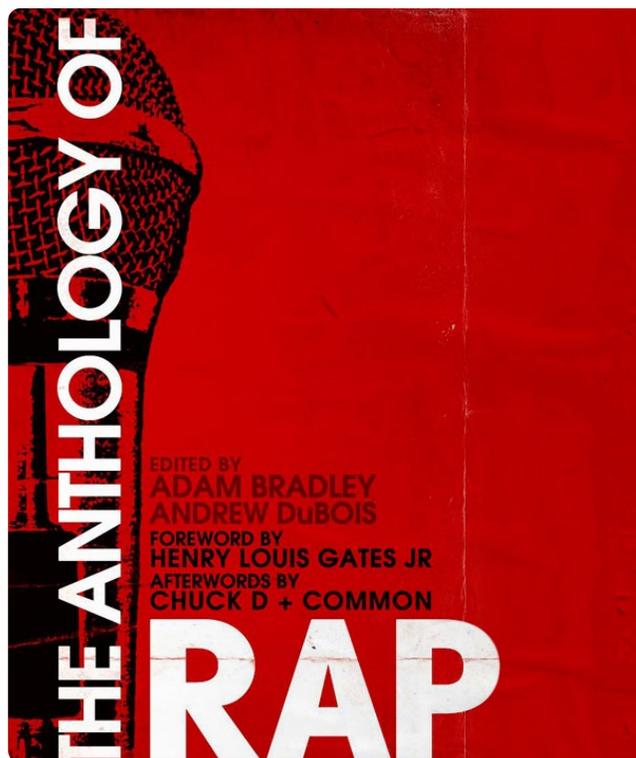
. . . And in December 1986 . . . three young African-American men whose car had broken down were attacked by a gang of white teenagers in the predominately white, middle-class neighborhood of Howard Beach. . . All these deaths, and the rampant discrimination and economic disadvantages African-American communities faced, was the fuel on which Public Enemy propelled itself to fame. Through music, the group created a conversation.”

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Some say hip hop is inherently political. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- The phrase “public enemy” was popularized in the United States in the 1930s, when it was used by law enforcement to describe people like bank robber John Dillinger and mobster Al Capone. Why do you think the rap group chose this name?
- How has Chuck D evolved as an artist and a person over the decades of his long career?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Chuck D on Twitter
[@MrChuckD](https://twitter.com/MrChuckD)
- USC Black Student Assembly on Social Media
[@uscbsa](https://twitter.com/uscbsa)
- USC Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs
cbcsa.usc.edu
- La CASA
lacasa.usc.edu



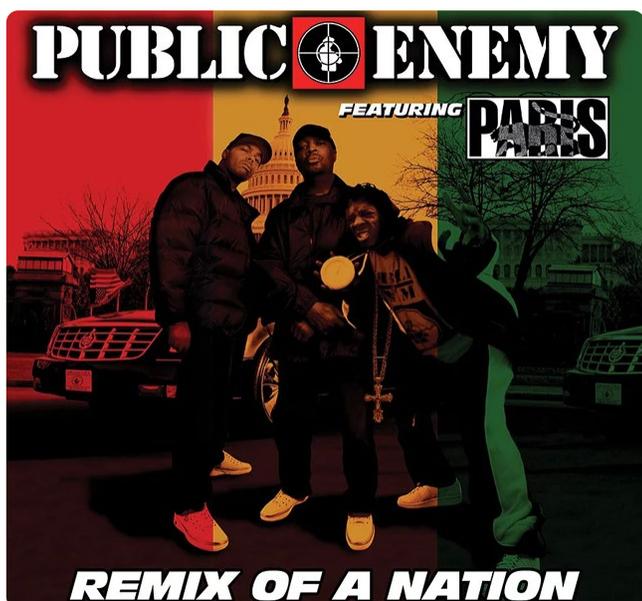
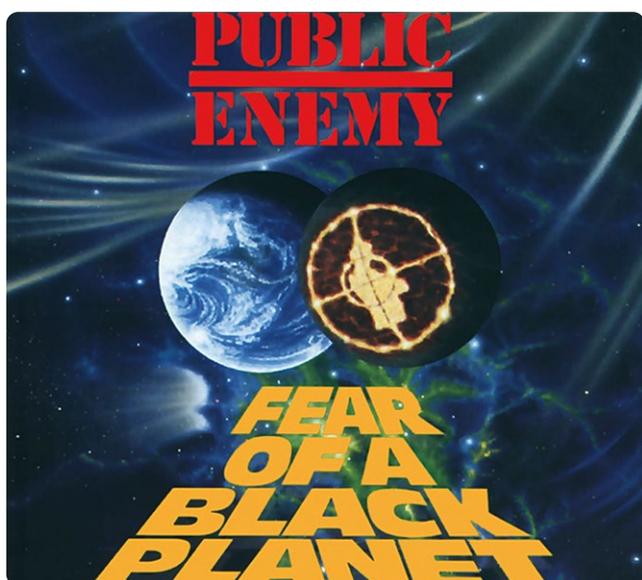


Fight the Power

Rap Race AND Reality

'This is a book every person should read...Do the right thing.' SPIKE

Chuck D



DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ANDREW JUSTICE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this evening's event. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. e-books, journals, and databases) are electronic resources, which are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

- Adam Bradley, ed., [*The Anthology of Rap*](#) (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2011).
- Chuck D and Yusuf Jah, [*Fight the Power: Rap, Race, and Reality*](#) (New York: Dell, 1998).
MUSIC LIBRARY: ML3531.D2 1998
- Kool Moe Dee, [*There's a God on the Mic: The True 50 Greatest MCs*](#) (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2003).
MUSIC LIBRARY: ML394.K66 2003
- Christopher Weingarten, [*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*](#) (New York: Continuum, 2010).

AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

- Robert Clift, [*Blackening Up: Hip-Hop's Remix of Race and Identity*](#) (California Newsreel, 2010).
LEAVEY LIBRARY: DVD 6178
- Benjamin Franzen, [*Copyright Criminals*](#) (Atlanta: Indiepix Films, 2010).
- Public Enemy, [*Fear of a Black Planet*](#) (New York: Def Jam, 1990).
MUSIC LIBRARY: CD 18240
- Public Enemy, [*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*](#) (New York: Def Jam, 1988).
MUSIC LIBRARY: CD 9878
- Public Enemy and Paris, [*Remix of a Nation*](#) (Danville: Guerrilla Funk Recordings, 2007).

ARTICLES

- Naima Cochrane, "[Music Sermon: How 'Fight the Power' Saved Public Enemy,](#)" *Vibe* (June 24, 2019).
- Chuck D, "[Run-DMC,](#)" *Rolling Stone* (April 15, 2004), 138-39.
- Joseph Eiswerth, [*Rap Music as Protest: A Rhetorical Analysis of Public Enemy's Lyrics*](#) (master's thesis, UNLV, 1996).
- Soraya Nadia McDonald, "[Q&A: Chuck D of Public Enemy Talks NWA, the Black Lives Matter Movement and Bill Cosby,](#)" *Washington Post* (August 17, 2015).