



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 10, 2011

## White House To Honor Controversial Rapper

Tomorrow the White House will host a special evening in celebration of American poetry and prose. Among the poets, musicians, and artists who will attend is controversial rapper, Common (photo, left). Others to be honored at the event scheduled by First Lady Michelle Obama are Elizabeth Alexander, Billy Collins, Rita Dove, Kenneth Goldsmith, Alison Knowles, Aimee Mann, and Jill Scott, all of whom will be reading, singing, or otherwise celebrating the influence of prose and poetry on the American culture.



Lonnie Rashid Lynn, Jr., better known as Common, may provide a jarring note at the event. *The New Hampshire Journal* [reports](#):

Some of Commons poetry could also raise some eyebrows among those who might find cop-killing and racially-tinged language or misogynist language beneath the Office of the Presidency.

Common is known for controversial lyrics such as Tell the law my Uzi weighs a ton I hold up a peace sign but I carry a gun.

Commons hip-hop lyrics are characterized by messages of racism and are generally anti-law enforcement. [Policelink.com](#) [explains](#):

Lynns divisive lyrics about gun violence, shooting police, and even for burning the president (who at the time was George W. Bush), make him a controversial choice for the White House. Burn a Bush cos for peace he no push no button, he raps on a YouTube video with more than 800,000 views.

*The Examiner* reports that Common is also a supporter of convicted cop killer Mumia Abu-Jamal, a member of the Black Panther Party who was sentenced in 1981 for the killing of a Philadelphia police officer.

Additionally, Lynn named his daughter after Assata Shakur, in honor of the radical Black Panther activist who was found guilty of first-degree murder and fled to Cuba after escaping prison.

Apparently President Obama and Common are members of the same church, Trinity United Church of Christ, where the controversial Reverend Jeremiah Wright has delivered a number of divisive sermons. *The New Hampshire Journal* reports:

Several of Wrights sermons caused a firestorm of controversy during the 2008 presidential campaign due to their caustic, racially charged, anti-American tones. One sermon in particular caused Obama a severe headache the one in which he blamed America for Osama bin Ladens terrorist attacks. "Americas chickens are coming home to roost," he said.

When President Obama did his best to repudiate the minister's sermons and distance himself from his long-time pastor during the 2008 presidential campaign, Common came to Reverend Wrights defense,



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declaring:

What I picked up from the pews was messages of love. Anything that was going on against that love he would acknowledge and expose. Hes been a preacher thats helped raise one of the greatest political figures in the world, and hopefully, the next President.

Referring to himself, Common added, Hes also raised one of the greatest rappers in the world.

The *New Hampshire Journal* contends that it is likely President Obama met Common at the church.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the rapper's presence at the White House function is that the First Lady will be hosting an afternoon workshop for students across the country so that they may learn from the nights performers.

This is not the first time the Obama administration has shown an affinity for musicians with a generally anti-law enforcement philosophy. In 2010, President Obama [hosted](#) Brooklyn, New York, rapper Jay-Z at the White House. Prior to the visit, Jay-Z told British talk-show host Jonathan Ross that he had been invited to the White House by the Obama administration a couple of times.

Jay-Z is also known for controversial lyrics of a misogynistic and anti-law enforcement nature. In his song "99 Problems," for example, the rapper describes what he asserts is a typical traffic stop between a police officer and a black male:

In my rear view mirror is the mother f\*\*\*\*ng law.  
I got two choices y'all, pull over the car or  
bounce on the double, put the pedal to the floor.  
Now I ain't trying to see no highway chase with jake,  
Plus I got a few dollars, I can fight the case.  
So I ... pull over to the side of the road,  
And I heard "Son, do you know why I'm stopping you for?"  
Cause I'm young and I'm black and my hat's real low  
Do I look like a mind reader, sir? I don't know.  
Am I under arrest or should I guess some mo'?'  
"Well you was doing fifty five in a fifty four,"  
"License and registration and step out of the car."  
"Are you carrying a weapon on you? I know alot of you are."  
I ain't steppin' out of s\*\*t all my papers legit.  
"Do you mind if I look round the car a little bit?"  
Well my glove compartment is locked, so is the trunk and the back,  
And I know my rights, so you gon' need a warrant for that.  
"Aren't you sharp as a tack? Are you some type of lawyer or somethin'?"  
"Or somebody important or somethin'?"  
Nah, I ain't passed the bar, but I know a little bit  
Enough that you won't illegally search my s\*\*t.

During an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, President Obama [admitted](#) that his iPod holds songs from Jay-Z, as well as from rapper Nas, whose song Middle Finger repeats, Cops keep firing in my environment, Middle finger to the law ni\*\*er gripping my b\*\*ls.

Perhaps the President feels a kinship with others who are highly critical of law enforcement. After all, in 2009, Obama revealed his own [bias](#) against law enforcement. When asked about the iconic arrest of



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Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. for disorderly conduct, Obama admitted that he did not know all the details of the incident. Nevertheless, he still commented, "I dont know not having been there and not seeing all the facts what role race played in that, but I think its fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry; number two, that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home." Obama noted that Gates was a friend of his, adding, so I may be a little biased here. I dont know all the facts.

Obama certainly has a right to his own personal musical preferences, but when the White House publicly honors such individuals as Common and Jay-Z, it is placing the imprimatur of the office of President of the United States on their words and actions.

*Photo: Rapper Lonnie Rashid Lynn, Jr., better known by his stage name, "Common."*



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