

Lupe Fiasco kicked off US inaugural stage while performing anti-war song

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Lupe Fiasco, the Grammy-nominated and multi-platinum-selling musician, was removed from the stage at an official pre-inauguration concert Saturday while he was performing “Words I Never Said,” an anti-war song.

Amid the scripted, self-congratulatory celebrations and parties surrounding the 2013 presidential inauguration, the first sign of political opposition was treated as a criminal act and suppressed by security guards.

The artist’s decision to perform the song—which denounces militarism, the attack on democratic rights, and austerity—in addition to being an act of personal courage, echoes the sentiments of millions of people in their opposition to the policies of the Obama administration.

The song, the second single from Lupe Fiasco’s third studio album, *Lasers*, is a denunciation of the “war on terror” and ongoing attacks on democratic rights.

The lyrics include: “I really think the war on terror is a bunch of bullshit,
Just a poor excuse for you to use up all your bullets.”

It relates the expansion of war to austerity policies and the attack on democratic rights, proclaiming: “Your child’s future was the first to go with budget cuts.”

It then moves on to a denunciation of Obama:

“Gaza strip was getting bombed, Obama didn’t say shit

That’s why I ain’t vote for him, next one either
I’m a part of the problem, my problem is I’m peaceful
And I believe in the people”

(See video)

These lyrics were apparently too much for the concert’s organizers, who tried to stop the song, and, when the artist refused, he was kicked off stage, despite the fact that he was the headliner and his image was

used as the main promotional material of the concert. Not only was he stopped from playing, but was escorted out of the venue.

HyperVocal, one of the companies organizing the event, tacitly acknowledged the political motivation for suppressing the performance shortly afterwards on Twitter. “Disappointed that an artist took opportunity to use an event celebrating innovation/startups to make a political statement,” the company’s tweet read.

Later, seemingly having become conscious of the widespread anger provoked by their action, the concert’s organizers issued an official statement claiming that he was not “kicked off stage” for an “anti-Obama rant.” They hypocritically added: “We are staunch supporters of free speech, and free political speech. This was not about his opinions. Instead, after a bizarrely repetitive, jarring performance that left the crowd vocally dissatisfied, organizers decided to move on to the next act.”

A video of the performance seems to indicate exactly the opposite, showing cheers for the artist both during his performance and as he was forced from the stage.

The event sparked an outpouring of support on the song’s YouTube page.

“SoÖ glad to see someone in Hollywood that isn’t afraid of the powers that be,” wrote one. “Put hope in the people not in these false hope criminals that run this world.”

“Land of the free speech?” commented another. “It’s funny how the US fights in the Middle East for ‘freedom’ yet there’s no freedom of speech.”

Lupe Fiasco, whose real name is Wasalu Muhammad Jaco, replied to the comments with a quote from Martin Luther King: “You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say.”

The artist, who despite being a staple of commercial

radio charts has had frequent clashes with record labels, announced last week that he was scrapping his next record and quitting Twitter.

In a radio interview last year, Jaco restated his denunciation of Obama made in 2011 with the release of “Words I Never Said.”

“You have someone who is a great speaker, but kills little children—our president,” he said.

“I’m not talking about an accident,” he continued. “I’m talking about ordering a drone attack. Ordering drone attacks that go and kill mothers, innocent bystanders, children. Militants too, but the collateral damage. You’re responsible for that, too.”

When the show’s host defended the civilian deaths as accidental, Jaco responded that a “Drug dealer can say the same thing ... ‘I didn’t mean to kill all the people in the restaurant. I was just trying to get that one dude who killed my cousin. Just so happened that that little girl was there.’ Same thing.”

In a 2011 CBS interview following the release of “Words I Never Said,” Jaco said, “In my fight against terrorism, to me, the biggest terrorist is Obama and the United States of America. For me, I’m trying to fight the terrorism that’s actually causing the other forms of terrorism. The root cause of the terrorism is the stuff that you as a government allow to happen and the foreign policies that we have in place in different countries.”

Jaco’s performance, the official hostility with which it was met, and the widespread support that his stand received served to rip aside the official media attempt to cast the inauguration as an occasion for national unity and celebration. It also exposed the hollow attempts to identify Obama with the sentiments of youth.

In performing the song and resisting the attempts to silence it, Lupe Fiasco gave expression to the growing popular hostility toward the Obama administration, which is increasingly identified with drone assassinations and the assault on democratic and social rights.



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