

Recording artists voice opposition to the White House at 2017 Grammy Awards

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The 2017 Grammy Awards ceremony February 12 was marked by significant opposition to the policies of President Donald Trump. Numerous artists and presenters referred, directly and indirectly, to the new administration, most signaling a sense of foreboding.

Predictably, many of the criticisms came in the form of a focus on issues of identity, including race and gender. However, certain artists also criticized the blatantly undemocratic character of the Trump administration and its policies.

Beginning with host James Corden, who spoofed Trump's social media behavior as the 59th awards show got underway, numerous singers and musicians voiced opposition to the travel ban imposed by the new administration aimed at Muslim immigrants.

The sharpest rebuke came from rap artist Busta Rhymes, who referred to Trump as "President Agent Orange" in a performance with veteran rap group A Tribe Called Quest (ATCQ). "I just want to thank President Agent Orange for perpetuating all of the evil that you've been perpetuating throughout the United States. I want to thank President Agent Orange for your unsuccessful attempt at the Muslim ban. When we come together, we the people, we the people, we the people, we the people," the rapper declared, segueing into the group's 2016 single "We the People."

The ATCQ performance was punctuated by the group bursting through a foam brick "wall," a clear reference to Trump's declaration of plans to build an anti-immigrant wall on the U.S. border with Mexico. In addition, performers gathered on stage donning hijabs and other Islamic garb. Rapper Q-Tip ended the performance by calling on the audience to "Resist! Resist! Resist! Resist!"

In an apparent nod of support to Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, singer Katy Perry donned an

armband emblazoned with the word "Persist" during her performance. Warren has become something of an icon since being called on to end a speech on the Senate floor last week denouncing one of Trump's nominees, Jeff Sessions. The Senator was told not to "persist" by Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Perry's performance occurred against a projected backdrop of the U.S. Constitution.

Other artists and presenters made similar, if more muted, criticisms of the Trump administration. Paris Jackson, daughter of the late singer Michael Jackson, voiced her support for the protests against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Presenting the first award of the evening, actress-singer Jennifer Lopez remarked, "At this particular point in history, our voices are needed more than ever. As Toni Morrison once said, this is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self pity, no need for silence, and no room for fear."



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