

THE IMPOSSIBLE MUSIC SESSIONS

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NEW YORK UNDERGROUND MEETS AFRICAN UNDERGROUND

NJ-based emcee Hasan Salaam partners with artists in Guinea Bissau facing military repression

New York (24 May 2010) – The underground rapper Hasan Salaam is learning the music of Baloberos Crew, a hip hop group that quite literally has been driven underground in their native West African nation of Guinea Bissau.

The collaboration is part of a unique new project called The Impossible Music Sessions, which connects censored artists from around the world with artists in New York who learn and perform their music live at Littlefield performance and art space, 622 Degraw St., Gowanus, Brooklyn.

At Impossible Music Session 2, scheduled for 30 June 2010 at 7 p.m., Salaam will play a tribute to Baloberos Crew, who will appear via live video feed from Africa.

In 2009, members of Baloberos Crew were detained and intimidated by members of the military intelligence because of their song "Seven Minutes of Truth," which criticizes the military and the government, "Guinea, where did you go wrong?" the chorus asks. "The republic of Guinea is being written in bullets."

"They put us into a cell that didn't have any conditions at all, and threatened us for almost two days," explained one member of Baloberos, speaking through a Portuguese translator. "We criticize the military, we criticize civil society, we criticize those in government for all of the ways in which the country is not working. . . . We sing about these things, and we want to change people's points of view and change people's mentality, and call them to change these things."

Hasan Salaam's debut album, *Paradise Lost* (2004), earned him Song of the Year at the 2005 Underground Music Awards for "Blaxploitation." He has performed all over the East Coast and on NBC's "Showtime at the Apollo", FUSE TV's "Digital Downloads", C-SPAN, and elsewhere, and has opened for Curtis Blow, Wyclef Jean, Naughty by Nature, Busta Rhymes, and dead prez. Other releases include *Tales of the Lost Tribe* (2006) and *Children of God* (2008).

Through teaching and community activism at P.S. 41 in Jersey City, Essex County Youth House, and Eastern New Correctional Facility, Salaam has engaged youth and adults in creative writing, music composition, and music production.

Salaam commented, "I got involved in the Impossible Music Sessions because I believe in Freedom, Justice, and Equality. I believe that music should inspire that in all people around the world, and I support any artist in any genre that stands for the same basic human rights."

In the first of the Sessions, on 3 March 2010, the Brooklyn-based group Cruel Black Dove played a tribute to the music of the Iranian band The Plastic Wave--effectively illegal because of their female lead singer--who appeared via video chat from Tehran. Mark Levine, writing for the *Huffington Post*, reported that the event would "go down in the annals of rock history."

Hasan Salaam



Baloberos Crew



photo: Maureen Grisot