



Da' T.R.U.T.H. Interview

The hip-hop culture is often filled with negativity, false pretenses, and immorality and is in dire need of the message of the cross.

GOSPELflava.com conducted an in-depth, exclusive interview with one of holy hip-hop's most prolific envoys, **Da' T.R.U.T.H.** (*To Reach U Through Him*), to shed light on his sophomore release, **The Faith**—a menagerie of diverse cuts that pushes the envelope and paints a vivid picture of the Gospel while identifying with the hip-hop culture.

GOSPELflava.com: Can you tell us a little about your musical background. How did you become a rap artist and why do you think it is so imperative to use hip-hop as a tool to promote the Gospel?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: I started rapping at the age of 16. The story is a bit comical on how I became a rap artist. A friend and I were making fun of some Christian rappers and thought that we sounded good at it. We formed a group called **Chosen One**. I began to develop and fine tune the skill and used it to share Christ once I realized how powerful the tool of hip-hop was. I think that it is vital to use hip-hop to promote the gospel because it teaches and instills values into the culture. Most of those branded as "hip-hoppers" come from fatherless homes and look elsewhere for values such as how to treat women and how to make ends meet. Tainted hip-hop spreads a message of misogyny, illicit sex, drugs, and violence. I chose to use hip-hop as a vehicle to evangelize and express God's heart.

GOSPELflava.com: Your first album, *Moment of Truth*, introduced the world to your skills with poignant, relevant lyrics, and incredible flow. Your sophomore album, **The Faith** is spectacular and has been winning praise from giants in the gospel arena, such as Kirk Franklin. How does your sophomore release differ from your first and what message did you wish to convey on **The Faith**?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: **The Faith** is a more mature album, content wise, with an intentional theme to reach those on the college scene. It is musically different as the musical elements are richer and more developed. I wanted to concentrate and ministerially highlight what is on God's heart, which sadly, is low on the radar and not prevalently communicated. **The Faith** delineates a common faith and a subjective one. We live in a culture that promotes hyperindividualism, encouraging us to be self-absorbed and "I" oriented. The project stresses the fact that we are to have a communal mindset and spur each other on by working together as the early church did. Many times we try to be "cool" instead of being distinct, when we are clearly commanded to be peculiar people. Secular heroes are constantly praised for their contributions and efforts, and I thought it necessary for non-believers to see why we worship and credit those that paved the way for the faith.

GOSPELflava.com: The intro track of the album, "Welcome To The Faith" starts off with some heavy-hitting lyrics... "I know the culture will/Teach us to be self-absorbed/We ain't supposed to be self-absorbed. I know we live in America/In the era of the self-exhorters/ Where the music on the shelf's distorted and the wealth is sordid. As sure as the locusts will fly/Every where we look the focus is I/But we gotta say bye. Bye why? 'Cause in the Kingdom of God/My plus I gotta die/Takes more than I to survive." Could you elaborate on what you're aiming to convey?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: "Welcome To The Faith" sets the pace for the entire album. It seems as if we can all come together on social issues and agree, if it is for a generic cause, whatever the cause may be. In today's society, lesbians and homosexuals can walk alongside Christians for a civil march without there being a contrast or conflict in views. The secular and philosophical way doesn't promote absolute truth; it seems that everything is socially acceptable for the sake of "the cause." I wanted to convey the fact that we are not just to "go with the flow," but also to stand firm and contend for the faith



GOSPELflava.com: You actually play live instruments on some of the cuts in which you display your versatility and various talents. What prompted you to do that? Also, you experiment with different sounds and genres such as bits of rock, R&B, crunk, ballads, and more. Why did you choose to do so?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: Simply put, I love music! I co-produced 4 songs on the project and even played live drums on the cut "Whose Team?." I really wanted to explore various genres and take risks by expressing myself musically.

GOSPELflava.com: Do you think that hip-hop is too self-oriented and does holy hip-hop test the waters at times with songs that come off as egotistical and narcissistic?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: There is no question that it is that way. Oftentimes we forget that scripture tells us to "let another man praise you" and that we are "treasure in earthen vessels." God detests pride (praising and boasting in one's self). Christian hip-hop is guilty of perpetuating arrogant views. The way that we offset that stigma or stereotype is by exercising Christian discipline and virtues. In other words, we are to be blameless and give them a solid reason to despise us rather than adopting egocentric lyrics to fit in.

GOSPELflava.com: Tracks like "Our World," and "Legacy" which is a tribute to the families of the two young ladies that were martyred during the Columbine High incident, and also "On Duty" and "Go" each confirm the mission of promoting faith in Christ. What served as your inspiration for these tracks?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: I must say that ministry is the fuel or inspiration for all of the tracks. I wanted to capitalize and seize every moment to encourage and spur people on. Basically, iron sharpens iron.

GOSPELflava.com: There is also another cut that stands out. "Civilian" is an incredible track and encourages us not to give in to the world's vices yet at the same time, not come off as people that can't relate. You state that we are "civilians and pilgrims." What do you mean by that?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: To be encumbered by "civilian" affairs is sin in that it draws attention away from God. When we become preoccupied with secular things rather than spiritual things, our priorities become distorted. The tendency is to be more civilian, lovers of pleasure rather than disciplined by making time to spend with God. We are to be balanced in all we do.

GOSPELflava.com: The first single off of the album, "Incredible Christian" that you call the "monsta," due to the hotness of the track, serves as a phenomenal self-esteem booster to the listener. Explain the premise of that song.

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: We are seemingly ashamed of our weaknesses and tend to pull on the strength of the world. It is imperative that we have a healthy, elevated view of each other and esteem our own.

GOSPELflava.com: You feature some solid, up and coming artists on this project such as labelmates JR, Flame and Lecrae, as well as LaTia and Keran (S.O.U.L.), and newcomer Shabach. Each track flows together nicely with each collaborating artist. Do you think that unity is an integral part of broadcasting, promoting, and affirming faith in Christ?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: Yes, I believe it is time for us to put our belief on display and unify in spirit.

GOSPELflava.com: The last cut is a hidden track that expounds on the fact that worldly pleasure and selfish gain is overrated. You seem to deem these as archivals of the faith. Can you explain?



Da' T.R.U.T.H.: A lot of people get discouraged when they see those that don't follow God's way prosper. I experienced it first hand. I felt as if I sacrificed my life for God; yet I witnessed those that could care less about the will of God have the finest cars, homes, and money. I realized that my solace or comfort was in spending time with God and focusing on Him instead of my surroundings. The hidden track called "They" was intended to help people understand that there is a reward to look forward to for standing firm for Christ and not to compromise.

GOSPELflava.com: Lately, there have been some who have been trying to denigrate holy hip-hop, putting out a smear campaign against those that use it to reach the lost. Do you have any comments?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: I believe that the entire argument is based on a faulty premise. We can't "throw the baby out with the bath water." I do agree that there is a negative influence on the culture at large and life does imitate music. Indecency, immorality, homosexuality, self-glorification, and other vices that God 'has a problem with' saturate the music. On the other hand, hip-hop is not inherently evil, meaning that it can be redeemed and used for a positive purpose. Some that have cultural prejudices, biases, and personal problems with hip-hop and associate every aspect of it with the negatives are doing a generation a terrible disservice by imposing personal convictions on those that are constructively impacted by it.

GOSPELflava.com: What are some of your future endeavors?

Da' T.R.U.T.H.: Continue to make quality music to reach the masses. I have a slew of TV appearances coming up soon on *Steelroots*, *TBN* live with **Kirk Franklin**, *BET*, officially launched my website at www.datruth.net, article in *The Source* magazine December (2005) issue that features a write up of **The Faith** is on newsstands now (Independent's Day column, page 128), and more.

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— interview by [Brenda M. Ingram II](#)—