

Public Enemy, “Fight The Power” (1989)

In 1989, film director Spike Lee asked Hip Hop group Public Enemy to create an anthem for *Do the Right Thing*, a film that explores racial tension in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood over the course of a few hot summer days. According to a Rolling Stone interview, Lee originally envisioned Public Enemy creating a hip hop version of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” often considered the black national anthem, but producer and Public Enemy collaborator Hank Shocklee replied that people weren't going to play such a song out of their cars. In response, Lee gave Public Enemy creative freedom to create their own anthem. Inspired by the Isley Brothers' “Fight the Power,” Public Enemy was able to create the loud, bold, and empowering anthem that has taken a life beyond being the song playing out of character Radio Raheem's boombox.



With lyrics that speak directly to issues of black empowerment and racial inequality, “Fight the Power” doesn't stray far from Public Enemy's original identity. With albums such as *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold us Back* (1988) and *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990), Public Enemy's music covers a range of topics related to the everyday injustices experienced daily by African Americans. In “Fight the Power,” declarations of black pride are made along with brash criticisms of white America.

Lyric Excerpt

<p>Elvis was a hero to most But he never meant s--t to me you see Straight up racist that sucker was Simple and plain Mother f--k him and John Wayne Cause I'm Black and I'm proud I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps Sample a look back you look and find Nothing but rednecks for 400 years</p>	<p>if you check Don't worry be happy Was a number one jam Damn if I say it you can slap me right here (Get it) let's get this party started right Right on, c'mon What we got to say Power to the people no delay To make everybody see In order to fight the powers that be!</p>
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