

Rapper David Banner talks politics, race, criminal justice system, music and more



National Entertainment

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WRITTEN BY SHAMONTIEL VAUGHN POSTED: 07/31/2015, 10:00AM

Mississippi native David Banner isn't afraid to make people uncomfortable for telling his truth. However, the "Like a Pimp" and "Play" rapper is not above admitting his own flaws either.



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Rapper David Banner talks politics, race, criminal justice system, music and more



Growing up

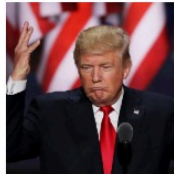
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Instagram

One dimensional is the last way to describe the Southern University graduate whose favorite song is The Police's "[Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic](#)." He may show his noticeably bright set of white teeth or chuckle about his favorite flick "Bustin' Loose" starring Richard Pryor, but he's just as likely to grimace while talking about current events.



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In this Q&A interview with Sun Times Network, David Banner talks about his upcoming album "The God Box," police brutality, the importance of a college education and his views on American racism.



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#theGodbox album cover by @artyman

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SV: When does "The Godbox" release?

DB: If people support the single ["Uzi"] I'll drop it tomorrow. Being that I run my own company, I can drop it when I feel. But because I believe this is one of the best rap albums not just in recent history but period, I just don't want it to be wasted. If you look at most southern rappers they're never totally given that spot.

SV: What was the biggest lesson you learned about the music industry that it was impossible to know when you first started?

DB: The only thing that I won't do again is be somebody's artist. We can do a joint venture, but I don't want to sign off to anybody again. I'm a business man. No other person, no manager, no label head, no one is going to care about your business like you. I still own a very successful company that's outside of rap. I can make more money with one deal than I can make touring for eight or nine months. The deals that I do in rap are so miniscule when it comes to my overall business structure. I rap to talk to my people. I rap to be creative. I rap to put myself in positions to further help my people and further help my family move forward. But this ain't about no money. Ain't nobody buying no records. Everybody want to rap, but don't nobody want to be a fan or a consumer. Why do you expect somebody to pay for something that you don't buy?

SV: On Instagram, you say, "You may sell less but give them more to buy. They will support." But are you really selling less? Do you think the artists are ever to blame for lesser quality?

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DB: We get upset when Usher doesn't sell as much as Justin Timberlake, but Justin Timberlake's people are the majority in the United States. Their people are the ones that's pushing out the album. They're of course going to market Justin Timberlake another way. When we don't sell as much, our feelings get hurt and we think that we're less talented. No, the system is rigged in the first place. Stop trying to compete. It's not a race.

SV: Do you think the confederate flag debate is a distraction or a necessary conversation that needed to be had a long time ago?



Confederate flag supporter uses Dr. King as an example for not stereotyping

I think that's a necessary conversation but not one we should be having now. White supremacy has a tendency of throwing scraps out when there's bigger fish to fry. I always tell people if you're looking for the arsonist, never look at the fire. He sets the fire as far away as he can. It's a distraction for all of these cases. They are killing black people, innocent black people. Not even black people who have done suspicious crimes. They're killing innocent black people. And the problem is we all know. If this was a white girl or a white young man, America would shut down everything. That's why I say when people say that there's good cops and there's good people in America, well, if there were really good people then they would care about the lives of other Americans. But they don't. Because if they did then they would do something about it.

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SV: With the shooting that happened in Colorado, there were white people involved in that and gun control still didn't change.



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Instagram

DB: I believe every human should have a gun. If police have guns, if America has guns, and they are compromised of human beings and human beings are flawed. As long as they have guns we should have the right to protect ourselves. And why in the hell would you let your oppressor keep all the guns when they have always historically killed you? That's so silly to me. Black folks are the main people in America getting killed, and they're the only ones hollering about gun control. That is so slave-minded to me. A gun has not killed any person. Stupid people kill people, not guns.

I don't have all the answers, love. I don't even know what's right. But I sure in the hell know what's wrong. I don't claim to be all knowing. We don't know how to solve the problem of black people being murdered by cops, but we damn sure know it's a problem because we are what? Dying. As a man, it is always my fault. It's nobody else's responsibility to provide for you and your family. We're looking for other people to make the black problem better. It is up to black people.

SV: Clearly you're a lyrical rapper. If you had to pick your hardest line of all of your songs what would it be?

DB: "Barack pushed hope.
Reagan pushed dope.
Clinton pushed something down a young gal's throat.
Yeah, and since we talking about throats
White folks, what you know about ropes?"

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Yeah, what you know about trees?
And men swinging from them that look like me."



SV: [President] Obama did an interview recently, and he said if there was a third term, he would win. Would you vote for him if there was a third term?

DB: I just want to see what he's going to do in his second term.



Obama likes his chances for a third term – if he could run

SV: Before Obama leaves office, what is it that you would like to see him do that would make you look at him differently?

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SV: Before Obama leaves office, what is it that you would like to see him do that would make you look at him differently?

DB: Maybe lift the drug laws that are purposely set up towards black and Latino men that Reagan and Bush pushed. I would love to see the drug laws that are help fueling these private prisons change. Look at the number of people who are in jail for nonviolent crimes because of the dope that they allowed in our country in the first place. Black people think this system is fair. It was never fair. It was always set up for us. The system is working the way that it's supposed to.

SV: You said on Instagram that at one point you were homeless and living in a van, but you had a 3.9 GPA in the master's program. What made you turn your life around and go for more of an educational, artistic route?

DB: My mother has always pushed me towards education, graduated Magna Cum Laude. I wasn't a first-generation graduate. My grandmother had a college degree. [However,] I said, "If I don't make it in pursuing my dreams then I'll die." I made myself be homeless. I didn't have to be homeless. I had girls that wanted to date me that I could've shackled up with. I could've gotten jobs. I had a degree. I could've gotten a job at a bank or Wal-Mart or any other place, but I wouldn't accept that. It was back and forth for about a year or two. It was either my dream or death.

SV: What can we expect from you as the host from the [American Black Film Festival](#) that starts on Monday, August 3, 9 p.m. EDT?

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DB: I was very happy that "Aspire" allowed me to be me. Most people don't know the educated David Banner yet. They get a whiff of it through my politics and through the stuff I say on [Instagram](#), but most of the movies that we're in are stereotypes or typecasting. We're not able to show real acting. Most of my debates are chopped up so much. Or, if they're in a rap environment the tone of it is just a little bit different. Most of my fans are not going to go look up my debate against Congress. With ABFF, I was able to show people another side of me.

David Banner Debates Police Brutality



SV: Do you feel you would've had the same success in hip-hop without a traditional education?

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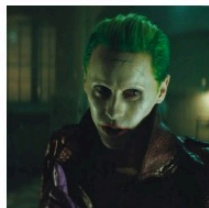
DB: Yeah, I could have. Guns and butter are guns and butter. Conventional American religion taught me the ability to network. Stuff about business I learned from pimps. I didn't learn from no books. Why would business men teach you how to be their competitors? All of these business situations and business classes they're not really teaching these people for the most part unless you're in a private school or you're at least in a situation. They don't really teach you how to be an entrepreneur. I learned these tricks by failing. I learned these tricks from going broke.

SV: Then what would you say to an artist who is wondering, "Why do I need the degree?" then?

DB: What college does in a lot of cases is it forces you to read and write. In most cases we won't do it on our own. I just think it's a safe environment for you to get it together. If you do go to school, you have to be specific. Just saying that you're majoring in business, no, major in something specific so you will have a real trade, a real skill. If you're going to be a doctor, be a surgeon. If you're going to go into business, be an accountant so you'll know how to keep books. Don't learn theory. America has sold Black America on theory, on words like "hope," on places like "Heaven," on general terms that can't be seen. Every day of their lives other people in America are building buildings and the Internet that you can actually use and touch. Black people got hope from Obama. Other people got laws passed.



Stars who refused to do nudity



Big-name stars whose movie roles got cut



29 stars who married ordinary people