

World's Oldest Professional Rap Singer Hip-hops For Obama

By Kollaborator Productions

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80-year-old Stanley "Kwayzar" Hoffman is the oldest professional rap singer. He's white, he's Jewish and he's on the Obama bandwagon with a rocking rap song, "The Vote of a Lifetime." For Kwayzar, it's the break of a lifetime

Sometimes it's a world crisis that enables real talent to rise to the surface — even though it's the most unlikely person in the most unlikely medium.

So begins the story of one of millions who have dreamt the dream and hung on long enough for it to begin to come true.

The declining economy, the controversial war in Iraq and the belief that corruption has reached a record high all motivated a California man to create the ultimate rap song: "The Vote of a Lifetime." It's a most unusual song about the Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Barack Obama (D-Illinois).

If Florida and some of the other traditional "red" states turn "blue", then it could be disenchanted senior citizens who make it all happen.

If all the world is a stage, then Stanley "Kwayzar" Hoffman's life is a song — and he says he already knows the lyrics.

"The refrain of my life is "Starting all over."

Indeed, the 80-year-old has experienced a lifetime of chasing the dream, coming within inches of it and then, again and again, having fate, bad luck or misfortune snatch it away from him. He's been set up more times than a bowling pin, and turned down as many times as a Holiday Inn bedspread.

If disappointment paid dividends, Hoffman would be worth millions.

He was a carrot-topped, be-freckled five-year-old when he first heard his first chorus of "don't call us, we'll call you." He had frozen up during an audition for the "Our Gang" series — he couldn't say even one word aloud.

His determination to be an actor was so strong that his mother moved the family into an apartment that was close enough for him to attend Hollywood High School. Later, he would team up with one of his school buddies and form a stand-up comedy team — Wallace and Lee (he dropped the first part of Stanley). They played the club circuit and, eventually, caught the eye of the producers of the original "Tonight Show," hosted by the late Steve Allen.

Just before they were to New York City for their appearance, his partner broke up the act. That pulled the plug on what Hoffman believes could have been his second chance at stardom.

Hoffman went solo and caught the attention of people from the Ed Sullivan Show. They nibbled, he said, but never reeled him in. He blames himself for not following through when he didn't hear from them.

"It's just like your swing in golf or in baseball," he says, "you've got to follow through. The

follow-through is more important than the first part of the swing.”

There were other close calls with success. When the United States was competing with the Soviet Union in 1957 to launch a satellite into space, Hoffman wrote the song “Satellite Baby” under the name Skip Stanley and went in search of someone to sing it for a recording. When the young, upcoming singer Bobbie Darin turned down the offer, Hoffman recorded it himself and then set out to promote it.

“The only way to get a record on the radio back then,” he said, “was to pay the disc jockeys to play it. It was payola.”

Repeatedly, he forked out \$25 for five “spins”, but he ran out of money before any distributors were convinced enough to sign him on.

What sets Hoffman apart from the waves of entertainment wannabes is his tenacity — his unwillingness to hang up his hopes and to settle for any other life pursuit. Sure, eventually he came to the realization that he needed a “day job,” but he never considered his decades in real estate sales a “day career.” It did more than pay the bills — it would help to finance the perpetuation of his dream.

The closest he ever came to saying “aw hell, screw it” was when he was standing in the unemployment line in South Gate, California. But, like a scene from a ‘40s movie, God or fate or good karma spoke to him.

“I’m in line and I’m dejected,” Hoffman said. “I’m remembering all of the times I almost made it. ‘That’ never worked out and ‘that’ never worked out and ‘that’ never worked out.” Soon, he was sharing his woes with a big man who was standing in line in front of him.

“He said, ‘Let me tell you something, Son, You can get everything you want in life.’

“I says, ‘Really?’

“He says, ‘Oh yeah. If you want it bad enough, you’ll get it. There’s just one thing: you’ve got to live long enough to get it. You’ve got to live,’” the stranger told him, “‘but you’ll get it.’”

In an instant, Hoffman says, he could feel the dream inside of him coming back to life and gasping for breath. He knew that it was up to him to keep that dream alive.

“That’s when I went on a health kick and I started eating health foods. No smoking. Eat my vegetables — eat more spinach.”

He started walking around the block, then jogging around the neighborhood and eventually running mile after mile around a school track. His excess pounds melted away and, at the same time, his internal music changed. It went from the painful blues to stimulating Souza marches.

It was then, he says, that his desires, almost like magic, began turning into realities.

“I always wanted a Cadillac,” he said. “I got a Cadillac. I always wanted my own home. I got my own home.”

Ever since, Hoffman has been a creative machine, only more so — he’s transformed himself into a creative factory that’s running three shifts a day.

“I wrote a Broadway musical about my life called ‘Odds’ — a three-hour Broadway musical. I wrote 48 songs. I met a guy and he wrote all the music to it.”

Has anyone performed it on Broadway yet? No, but that hasn’t curbed his creative juices.

“I wrote 70 or 80 short stories with tricky endings,” he says. I wrote two novellas. I wrote a full-length novel called ‘A Figure Draped in White.’”

He says he stopped asking for permission to do what he loves — he just does it. And, he never stops dreaming.

“If you’re not looking for anything, you’re not going to find it,” Hoffman says.

He became active in writers’ groups and explored every form of the craft. Soon, he discovered that the great poets and other great writers shared one characteristic: their best works sprouted from seeds within them — seeds that were planted as a result of the person’s lifelong pain, struggles and hardships.

“It’s the same with great comedy,” he said, “and I discovered that it’s also the same with the early rap music. Great comedy, great poetry and great rap music comes about as a result of suffering in some form.”

Hoffman was in his sixties when he embraced the passion, the pain and the poetry of contemporary rap music, he says. He said that he could feel the pain in the rap music of Eminem and Ice Cube. He began writing his own rap music and performing it. That’s when he came up with his rap name of Kwanza.

Kwanza produced two CDs. The content, however, was more about observations and interpretations than it was about his personal struggles or angst. When the moderator of his writer’s group encouraged the participants to write a poem about presidential candidate Barack Obama, Hoffman’s anger and frustration rose to the surface. His anger toward the corrupt George W. Bush administration and his hope for someone to rescue the democracy became the lyrics for his latest song, “The Vote of a Lifetime.”

Just as he had when was younger, the 80-year-old Jewish performer – the world’s oldest professional rap singer – hit the streets in search of the best producer he could find. When he stumbled into the studios of Kollaborator Productions near his Downey home, he says he quickly realized that the pendulum of good fortune had finally swung in his direction.

The rest is history in the making.

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