

homeland. NOLAPS also organized the New Orleans Human Rights Film Festival and brought notable speakers such as artist and activist Ellen O'Grady; PLO legal adviser Diana Butt; and Cynthia McKinney, a six-term congresswomen from Georgia. Not only is McKinney one of the few African-American women in Congress, but she also is one of a very few elected representatives to speak out in support of Palestinian human rights, as well as taking courageous stands for justice on many other issues.

The Palestinian hip-hop concert started off with a preview of the film "SlingShot Hip-Hop," directed by Jacqueline Salloum, and a music video called "Meen Erhabe" ("Who's the Terrorist?") by the Palestinian hip-hop group DAM. Local New Orleanians then blessed the evening with beautiful and glowing poetry. This writer, a Palestinian American high school senior from East Jerusalem, started it off with her poem "Reuniting with Palestine," based on her recent trip to Palestine.

Local African-American poet Theron Smith recited two fierce poems of radical

struggle, declaring in one piece, "I have a secret/I support the resistance in Iraq." Rebecca Rapp, a Louisiana-born American and member of the New Orleans Human Rights Delegation who spent four months in Nablus, performed her ethereal and heartfelt song, "Give Us Peace." Mr. Nice, a local young African-American poet, read another beautiful poem, followed by Sherean Murad, a Palestinian American with a sociology degree and roots in Beit Anan, Palestine, who recited "On My Little Rooftop," a poem written from the rooftop of her Palestine home.

When the hip hop music began, the crowd went wild. First up was Kama-Kaze Entertainment, in the persons of Reveluot, also known as Samer Murad, a New Orleanian from Beit Anan, Palestine, and MO P.L.O., also known as Morad Ibrahim, from Mukhmas, Palestine and Philadelphia. Their lyrics celebrate Islam, and depict reality on the streets in both the U.S. and Palestine. The pair performed songs from their latest album "Point of No Return Volume I," including "Bullet That Cried," "Time's Up," "How I Be" and "To the Top." They also provided a sneak peek from their upcoming album coming out this spring entitled "A Soulja's Story Volume II." Their CDs can be purchased via their Web site, <www.kama-kazeent.com>.

As the capacity crowd continued to scream out for more, the evening's final acts took the stage. Representing Silwad, Palestine were Shaheed and Arabian Outlaw, a.k.a. Ahmad Jabbar and Salem Tayseer. Both grew up in New Orleans, but spent most of 1995 to 1998 in Silwad. Shaheed started it out with "Reality," laying down the facts for all to see: "I'm here to tell you 'bout what you never see, the occupation, the oppression and the reality. And no, terrorism isn't our weapon, it's the name they give the weak when they're showin' aggression." Shaheed and Arabian Outlaw proceeded to light the room on fire with "Owf," "Y'all Ain't Ready to Ride," "From Silwad to U.S." and "I Need a Arabeya."

All who participated in this historic expression of cultural resistance—artists and audience alike—not only hoped to give strength to their sisters and brothers fighting on the front lines for freedom, but to demonstrate their determination to reclaim their culture and to show that, deep in the heart of the U.S., there are voices shouting out for justice and steadfastness that will not be silenced. As Shaheed had written on his shirt, "With our blood, with our souls, we will free you, Palestine."

—Mai Bader

Hip Hop for Palestine in the Crescent City

The Crescent City—also known as New Orleans—had its first Palestinian hip-hop concert on Jan. 28, 2005 before an enthusiastic audience. This historic event—the first time Palestinian hip-hop groups have gotten together in New Orleans to perform a concert for Palestine—was sponsored by NOLAPS (New Orleans, Louisiana Palestine Solidarity, <www.nolaps.org>) and held at Neighborhood Gallery, a vital and progressive African-American community space. Since NOLAPS was founded in the summer of 2003 it has worked nonstop for justice. It organized and funded (with generous community support) a New Orleans Human Rights Delegation that sent eight New Orleanians to Palestine to experience first hand the daily struggle of Palestinians under occupation in their own



PHOTOS C. K. HARPOLE

A capacity crowd (above) enjoyed such local New Orleans hip-hop artists as Arabian Outlaw and Shaheed (top right).