Comments of stic.man of Dead Prez
FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Preserving an Open Internet
Docket # 09-191

My name is stic.man and I am a member of the group Dead Prez. We are a hip-hop duo formed in Tallahassee, FL in 1996. I believe strongly in access to the open internet, particularly for those living in underserved and disenfranchised communities, which is why I am respectfully submitting these comments in the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Preserving an Open Internet.

Dead Prez has released seven albums since our 2000 debut, and have increasingly used the internet to promote not only our releases, but also our concerts, videos, lectures and books. That's right, we aren't just rappers — we're also authors. As a member of a politically-conscious hip-hop group, I recognize the important platform for speech and organization the open internet represents. Without access to this powerful tool for communication, even more Americans — particularly people of color — would be without a voice on the most important debates of the day. The situation now is far from perfect, as far too many groups and individuals lack affordable access to basic internet service, but without net neutrality, the silence would be deafening.

Dead Prez are do-it-yourself in practically every sense. We use the internet to handle our entire business – without it, we probably wouldn't be here to offer these comments. As a small business, our three core areas are licensing, touring and selling merchandise, and the internet makes it easier to do all three. The Dead Prez website is our main hub, where fans can go to get tour info, check out audio and video, and purchase CDs and other merchandise in our webstore. We don't outsource anything — even our booking is done in-house, right through our website. We are able to do deals with companies and organizations interesting in licensing our brand via the web, without having to go through a middleman. Right now, we're working on a site redesign that will hopefully make access even easier for our fans and those seeking to do business with us. We don't want everything we've worked for to go out the window because somebody decides to alter the structure of the internet.

In addition to our own site, we also use social networks like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and MySpace. We are actually the ones behind all of these accounts, which gives us an honest, real-time means of communication with not only our fans, but anyone interested in what we have to say. When people see our stuff — whether it's a video, a tweet or a MySpace update — they know it's coming from us, and not a PR person. This has been an invaluable way for Dead Prez to spread our message about justice for people of color, as well as our conviction that technology like the internet shouldn't be kept from people in disenfranchised communities.

As a group and as individuals, we believe strongly in taking proactive steps to close the digital divide between poor and well off; black and white. I personally feel very strongly about ensuring that America's underprivileged communities have a chance to participate in the digital revolution, because it's the only way we will be able to position ourselves

for the future. These days you can't even apply for a job without having access to the internet. Expanding broadband to more areas and increasing digital literacy is incredibly important to closing the still-too-wide gap between those with opportunity and those without. Of course, the government should also make sure that the structure of the web remains open and neutral so that everyone has a voice to communicate, or else we'll just end up leaving even more people behind. This is something that communities that have already had to struggle to keep up due to historic injustices absolutely cannot afford.

Our upcoming album, *Information Age*, actually talks about some of these issues. Although many of us are clearly living in the information age, so many others are left out of the loop. Democracy and civic understanding require access to information, which is hard to come by these days if you don't have the means to get online. And once you connect, you still need to be able to go where you need to without restrictions from some corporate entity.

I also support the FCC in its efforts to extend net neutrality to wireless services. A 2009 Pew Internet report found that 56 percent of all Americans access the internet via wireless technology. The study also indicated that African-Americans are the most active users of the mobile internet, and that this kind of use is also the fastest growing among our community. [1]Many people of color don't have internet in their homes, but they can access it via their mobile phones. Which means it's all the more important to guarantee that their movement and freedoms are not restricted on this platform.

Dead Prez definitely benefit from the open internet in terms of running our business, but it is clear that the issue is way bigger than us. It's about increasing opportunity, and expanding the public's access to news, entertainment and civic discourse. I am also supportive of expanding broadband access and making sure the internet remains open to all users. From a small business perspective, it's critical. From a democratic perspective, it's critical. From an inclusion perspective, it's critical. There is simply no more powerful tool for communication and information than the internet, and that's why we need to make sure that everyone has access the access they need.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my views on this proceeding. It is right to make this process transparent and open to the public, who are ultimately the ones that will be affected by the outcome. As an artist and member of that public, I count on the internet to not only keep creating, but also to address social issues in the best way I know how — through my music and my message. Thank you.

stic.man
Dead Prez

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[1] Pew Internet Study on Wireless Internet Usage, April 2009:
http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/12-Wireless-Internet-Use.aspx?r=1