



Straight from the Source: An Expose from the Former Editor in Chief of the Hip-Hop Bible

By Kim Osorio

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Kim Osorio had a front-row seat for the biggest beefs, battles, and blow-ups in hip-hop. As the first female editor-in-chief of *The Source*, she had come up.

From her corner office, Kim got the goods on hip-hop's hottest names: Jay-Z, Nas, 50 Cent, Lil' Kim. She developed close -- sometimes intimate -- relationships with the artists she exposed to the public. But *The Source* couldn't hide its own dirty laundry for long.

Behind the scenes, the magazine's volatile owners puppeteered every issue -- even coveted honors like the 5-mic album rating and the Power 30 list of industry heavy-hitters. Then *The Source* declared war on Eminem and began the notorious assault that would send the magazine into swift decline.

In a culture dominated by men, Kim rose to the top, and after years in the magazine's pressure cooker, she hit "send" on a two-sentence e-mail that would thrust her from the sidelines of the scandalous world she reported on to the center of one of the most explosive scandals in hip-hop history. *Straight From the Source* is the Book of Kim, the tell-all memoir only she could write about her influential years at the Bible of Hip-Hop.

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- Sales Rank: #1067541 in eBooks
- Published on: 2008-09-09
- Released on: 2008-04-08
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Kim Osorio, a native of the Bronx, New York, was the first female editor-in-chief of *The Source* magazine. She led the publication to some of its highest-selling issues ever before suing for sexual harassment. She lives in New Jersey with her fiancé and two daughters.

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Chapter One

Time's Up

Time moves too fast in the mornings. No matter how hard I try to be somewhere on time, I can never seem to get it right. But this morning, driving in New York City in the spring of 2003, it would probably help if I allowed myself more than ten minutes to get from New Jersey to lower Manhattan.

I pressed down on my car horn two times with both hands so that the yellow taxi in front of me got the hint. "Come on. The light is fuckin' green!" My windows are up, and no one is in the car with me. Basically, I am just yelling at myself.

The clock read half past six o'clock, and the radio was tuned to NYC's number one hip-hop radio station. "Hot 97, where hip-hop lives. This is the Renegade Radio," I heard Sway say over the airwaves. I was scheduled to do a live radio interview representing the *Source* magazine. As the newly appointed editor in chief, the agenda was to promote the new issue, which had just hit newsstands that week.

My friend Miss Info was one of the jocks on the morning show with Sway, and since she and the *Source*'s owners were not exactly fond of each other, she hooked up the interview as a favor to me more than anything else. I typed out to her on my two-way pager, *I am 5 minutes away*, not factoring in the five minutes it would take to park my car and the additional five minutes that I would need to get past the security desk. Altogether, I was fifteen minutes away, which meant any hopes of my getting coffee before I went on the air were pretty much crushed.

I rushed out of the parking lot so fast that I almost forgot my ticket, then I checked in at the front desk. By the time I made it up the elevator, someone was waiting by the back door to take me into the waiting area. "You're going to go on in about two minutes."

Two minutes! *Ugk*, I thought. Not enough time to mentally prepare for an interview I knew could be tough. "Can I borrow this pad?" I asked the guy that walked me in.

"Sure." He offered me a pen to go along with it.

My mind was racing with questions that I anticipated they could ask. So I started to quickly jot down notes on the pad -- points that I knew I had to hit and topics I knew I needed to avoid.

Benzino's beef with Eminem not connected to the magazine...Stay neutral and don't say anything bad about Eminem...or 50...50! Don't mention knowing 50 personally.

There was so much controversy involving the magazine's rivalry with *XXL*, Benzino's beef with Eminem, and Eminem's record label, Interscope, having pulled their advertising dollars from the magazine that I knew the real reason they'd agreed to have me on the show. This was morning radio. The point was to entertain the listeners by ridiculing the guests. They were not going to ask me anything I wanted to answer. They were not going to help me promote the magazine. That was my job. Their job was to get me to say something that I didn't want to.

"It's time," said the guy, who walked back in the room to take me into the studio. Two minutes had gone by in just one, I swore.

"Okay, I'm ready." I tried to cover up any signs of my nervousness, even though I knew he could see my heart beating through my coat. I'd done live interviews before -- sometimes even on politics and shit that I didn't know the way I knew hip-hop or the *Source* -- but I was more nervous than usual. And this was not even television, it was radio. Normally, all I had to worry about was not stuttering and making sure I used an SAT word every few sentences so I came off intelligent. But this time was different. I felt like Bill Clinton trying to avoid discussing whether I actually inhaled.

I could handle this, though. *Just stay on topic and never let them see you sweat*, I thought. What was I so nervous about anyway? Sway and I were cool. He would not even go there.

"Kim Osorio, editor in chief of the *Source* magazine, is in the room with us," Sway said, standing in front of the microphone, his long dreads standing behind him.

I sat down, put the headphones on one ear so I could listen to anything that went on in the room, and placed the pad with my notes in front of me. There were so many words on the page, but the number stood out like a sore thumb. The number 50.

Miss Info walked over to me from where she had just finished delivering her "celebrity drama" segment and sat in the chair to my right. She scribbled some notes on my pad, but I couldn't look down to read them because Sway had already started asking me questions.

After a couple of easy ones, I was in my comfort zone and had let go of any paranoid thoughts that I'd come into the room with. Then Sway, out of nowhere, straight violated my whole womanhood.

"You were sucking off 50 Cent?"

"Huh?"

"Didn't Eminem say something about you sucking off 50 Cent?"

"Eminem never said that. No."

"Isn't there a song where Eminem said you were on your knees sucking off 50?"

"No, I think you got that wrong."

"So you were never sucking off 50 Cent?"

"No."

What in the hell??? I started to write down on my notepad to Miss Info. That quickly, I was thrown off. I couldn't look Sway in the face because I didn't want to turn him to stone. I was so angry, Medusa had

nothing on me.

Sway cut to a commercial, the on-air light went off, then he walked out of the room to take a break. Miss Info was on her feet. "I'm going to go talk to him."

In truth, it was too late to talk to him because he had already tried to blow up the spot. Did he even know anything about 50? How could I just ignore this now? If my coworkers, or even worse, my superiors, were listening, I was going to be humiliated when I got into the office. I had to calm down and figure out what had just happened.

First off, Sway was way off. I started to work it out in my head like an algebra problem. I've always been good at math, so I knew I could figure out the answer before we went back on the air. *There was an Eminem verse that mentioned my name, but Sway had the lyrics wrong. Wait, maybe this was a new song that he was talking about. Uh-oh. Oh no. No, wait. I know the song he's talking about. Sway's buggin'. That was the song where Eminem was talking about his wife, whose name happens to also be Kim. Damn it, why is her name Kim? "She's probably on her knees somewhere sucking off 50 Cent." He's not talking about me in that song. I should have said that on the air. The song that mentioned my name said something entirely different: "Kim Osorio, you sorry ho...drag you through the barrio." Or something like that. Say that on the air. No, duh, don't say that on the air, but clear this up.*

"Hot 97, we're back on the air with Kim Osorio, editor in chief of the *Source* magazine." Sway was back in the room, and the red on-air light was back on. Miss Info was sitting next to me and writing on my pad again. I felt I was in a time warp. This time, I had no choice but to pay attention to her and not him. *He's going to come back to it. Just stay calm. Treat it like they're men in the street whistling at you and you don't turn around so they just automatically call you a bitch. Stay professional.*

"So there is a song where Eminem mentions you, right?" Sway rephrased his question.

I knew that whenever I acted out of emotion it was usually the wrong thing to do. So now I just followed exactly what Miss Info was telling me to do. *Why is her handwriting so damn small?*

"You know what, Sway. It's, like, what's the first thing a man says when he's whistling at you in the street and you're not paying him any attention? He calls you out of your name. That's all that was. I've never even met Eminem."

That damn Eminem, look at all the shit he was about to start.

It's hard to laugh and joke around when you're as mad as I was at the station that day, but I somehow managed to ignore it and forgive Sway. I left the station immediately after the interview and went straight to the office, pretending it didn't all happen, but knowing it was at the top of everyone's mind and on the tip of everyone's tongue. I couldn't let anyone know just how much it bothered me to have been put on the spot like that. When you're in a position of power, you have to dust your shoulders off. You have to learn how to become immune to insults and expect the worst things to be said about you. Throughout my career at the *Source*, mud was slung so many times on my name, both inside and outside the office. Biggie said it best: "Mo' money, mo' problems." For me, though, once I became editor in chief, it was the problems that seemed to come a lot faster. Copyright © 2008 by Kim Osorio

Users Review

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George Hartzell:

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