



“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation”

The Media: Impact of Rap Music on Violence

Capitalizing on the huge popularity of rap music, the record labels, the movie and TV entertainment industry, as well as the advertising industry, have invested billions of dollars into promoting artists with music influenced by the gangster, the gang, and the pimp cultures. The entire entertainment industry, as well as a few rap stars, have gained huge financial benefits at the expense of the “hearts and minds” of millions of youth. Today’s youth are given a skewed view of life and are receiving mixed messages that are damaging to their healthy development and well-being when they are exposed to music videos, video games, or movies with violent themes. Even young children are being exposed to sexually explicit lyrics, curse words, and messages that glorify the ‘fast life.’ Playing violent video games desensitizes youth to the real consequences of violence. Heavy exposure to negative music and images has a great impact on youth violence in the African American community.

Everyone – the entertainment media, music artists, parents, and the community -- has to take responsibility for what our children and youth are seeing and hearing. These messages and images found in the music contribute to the violence that permeates the streets of our communities. There has to be a change. Therefore, the following groups should accept these challenges:

Parents and Families should:

- **Monitor** what music teens and children listen to and what they see in the media (TV, movies, videos, and games). Recognize and be ready to counteract the potentially damaging messages about gender roles, self-gratification and the acceptability of violence.
- **Prevent** children from playing violent video games, from watching violent movies and consuming other forms of media. Movies, music and pop culture glorify violence and have a strong influence on our youth.
- **Become** educated about the lyrics and the messages in the music and videos and have discussions with their children to help them understand the messages they receive. Be mindful that many of the messages in the music are subliminal.

Rap Artists should:

- **Take** creative control of their music. Learn about the true history of the Hip Hop culture, and reclaim the notion that rap music can be a vehicle for teaching social awareness in a more positive manner.
- **Stop** using curse words, as well as racist, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic and other hateful and derogatory words in their music.

- **Lay** the N –word to rest!

The music, advertising, and other media should:

- **Recognize** the harm being done to the mental and spiritual health and well-being of all youth by consistently promoting artists who project and exhibit harmful messages.
- **Promote** and nurture both local and national rap artists who present more positive messages.
- **Realize** they have traded profits for the well-being of our communities and must provide restitution. For example, provide financial support to community initiatives, agencies and programs counteracting violence.
- **Accept** their complicity in creating and promoting negative stereotypes of African Americans through the exploitation of Black talent.

The Community should:

- **Pressure** the local broadcast corporations to play more music with positive messages by local and national artists.
- **Support** rap artists who present more uplifting messages in their music; artists who do not use misogynistic, sexist, racist, or homophobic words and messages.
- **Lobby** local, state and federal legislators to encourage them to regulate, to the extent they can, violent content in the media.
- **Join** with artists, community leaders, and national spokespeople who advocate for a radical change in the rap music industry, which has seemingly lost its creativity, forgotten its original responsibility to uplift the Black Community through the promotion of the positive values coming from the Hip Hop culture.

See Appendix A for the full version:

A Historical Perspective of Rap Music As It Relates to Violence in the African American Community by Steve Johnson