MALES SPEAK OUT

Mike Bobbitt (Vera Institute of Justice) moderated a panel addressing "Males Speak Out on Images of Women and Men in Hip-Hop and Violence." Panelists included Tylon Washington (Black Waxx Recordings), Abiodun Oyewole (Last Poets), Wise Intelligent (Poor Righteous Teachers) and Brandon Hudson (Duke University).

LYRICS

- What images of self are created by lyrics?
- What images of self are created within relationships?
- How can Hip-Hop lyrics be proscriptive?

LAST POETS

- Last Poets began with the ideal that it takes a village to raise a child. There was a whole value system that our work was based on.
- Over 400 years ago, domestic violence was built into the slave-master society. It still lives within us today.
- Today, everything is being revealed. Curse words are flung about everywhere.
- We've created all kinds of music – blues, jazz, rock, Hip-Hop, to liberate us and take us way from the hell we've been given.
- We must speak to what is beautiful, Black and bold.
- We must speak to our young children. Tell them our stories. They come from us.

GHANA: ONE MAN'S EXPERIENCE

- Polygamy exists in this culture.
- Inferiority in women sets in and men use their power negatively.

KNOW YOURSELF

- You must know yourself and live your life.
- No one can define you and tell you what to do.
- Take Hip-Hop as entertainment. Don't live it.

THE POWER OF OUR MUSIC

- The machinery of the music industry and the supremacist society knows the power of our music.
- They are using this power against us. We are under attack!
- We must take action.
  - — Turn off your radio when you hear offensive music.
  - — Join organizations that speak out.
  - — Think of reparations around domestic violence.
- We must stop having our priority be the money and have it be the content.
- Our bottom line has to be Black power.
- We must hold onto our intellectual property. We must gain control. We must not give into the negativity.
- We must create our own independent labels. We must understand the economics of how the money system works.

Q&A

- Hip-Hop: Entertainment or liberation?
  - — Entertaining ourselves is liberating ourselves.
  - — Saying "fuck" is just putting a chain around our necks.
- Responsibility of Black DJ's?
  - — They're just trying to make a buck at our expense.
  - — We must be an active audience and speak out.
- Music artists doing negative and positive work?
  - — A music artist does the negative to make money and positive so he can sleep at night. This is schizophrenic and America is a kind of country where even the best will be schizophrenic.
  - — We all must learn who we are and control onrselves: the bitch and nigga within us.
  - — We must create our own agenda!
- Violent Hip-Hop lyrics?
  - — If you're a man and you call your woman a bitch, a ho', it's a reflection on yourself. It's what you think of yourself.
  - — But remember, a lot of people who enjoy Hip-Hop music are not Black.
  - — Women shonld refuse to appear in videos with vulgar language – it's a two-way street.
- Responsibility of lyricists?
  - — We must be responsible to the folks in the community and write things that elevate us.
  - — We must stop selling each other into slavery.
  - — If you are preparing my kid to go to prison, you are a pnblic enemy.
- Should churches accept money from negative Hip-Hop artists?
  - — This country is built on dirty money. We don't need to forgive these people. We just can take their money and say, "thank you!" then use it for the good.

WOMEN WHO WORK IN HIP HOP

HIP HOP CULTURE		COMMERCE
Leadership	⟷	Followship
Innovation	⟷	Mediocrity
Equality	⟷	Inequality
Creativity	⟷	Monotony
Competition	⟷	Competition
Love	⟷	Fear

The rap music industry is not socially responsible. It's here to get us to spend.

COMPARING 2 CULTURES

ONE WOMAN'S STORY

- In the 1980's, I was introduced to hip hop. It was a fad. There was no money in it.
- Today, I play those old hip hop songs & reintroduce them to the younger generation.
- As a DJ, I must respect myself. And I must respect the audiences I spin records for.
- We need more women out there letting people know it's our time, we are here.

SEIZING POWER

- Many of the issues Black women encounter are based in the Black family.
- As a race, we're fodder for the economic & political machinery around the world
- We must communicate with each other, and if we all are, where is the breakdown taking place?
- The rulers of this universe don't see any benefit for uplifting the Black people. Instead the system is designed to destroy us.

- We need to seize power and take care of our own needs.
- If you know you're BEAUTIFUL and POWERFUL you don't need to spew negativity.

Q&A

WHERE ARE ALL THE WOMEN?

1. Many women gave up or moved on. Scores & scores that are in the business, are the "elbow grease" of the business.
2. Women are invisible in the minds of the men in hip hop.
3. Women need to be shown more respect to gain balance in this industry.
4. Once the mainstream gets ahold of the music—hip hop revolutionary music—they take the culture out of it, the heart & folk soul out of it. It's hard to be a revolutionary, but it's easy to dress like one.
5. There's no protection against sexual harassment in the hip hop industry.
6. How can these women stand up for what they believe in? If you have the gift of music, conduct yourself with integrity.

WHAT ARE THE LARGER ISSUES?

We must speak into existence our slave past so we can complete the past and heal. Until we have the "responsibility conversation," we will not be able to heal.

DOUBLE MINORITY?

The media has played a large role in how we view each other. But the issue is really within the Black family: we don't know how to relate to each other, how to be intimate with each other. Images in the media don't portray the positive aspects of our lives.

Take the long & slow road.

Women Who Work in Hip-Hop

Our next panel discussion provided us with a portrait of African American Women who work in Hip-Hop. Panelists included Thembisa Mshaka (Sony Music), Nomadik (disc jockey), and NaNa Soul (Black Waxx Recordings).

COMPARING TWO CULTURES

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HIP-HOP CULTURE	COMMERCE
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Equality	Inequality
Creativity	Monotony
Competition	Competition
Love	Fear

ONE WOMAN'S STORY

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- Today, I play those old Hip-Hop songs and reintroduce them to the younger generation.
- As a DJ, I must respect myself. And I must respect the audiences I "spin records" for.
- We need more women out there letting people know it's our time, we are here.

SEIZING POWER

- Those who do not identify with the culture have their hands in it. Entities from outside this culture have come in and attempted to change it.
- Your local radio station will only tell you what they want you to know, as will record companies and video producers.

CHALLENGES

- Many of the issues Black women encounter are based in the Black family.
- As a race, we're fodder for the economic and political machinery around the world.
- We must communicate with each other, If we think we already are, where is the breakdown taking place?
- The rulers of this universe don't see any benefit for uplifting the Black people. Instead the system is designed to destroy us.
- We need to seize power and take care of our own needs.
- If you know you're beautiful and powerful, you don't need to spew negativity.

Q&A

- Where are all the women?
  - — Many women gave up or moved on. Scores and scores that are in the business are the "elbow grease" of the business.
  - — Women are invisible in the mind of the men in Hip-Hop.
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  - — There's no protection against sexual harassment in the Hip-Hop industry.
  - — If you have the gift of music, conduct yourself with integrity
- What are the larger issues?
  - — We must speak into existence our slave past so we can complete the past and heal. Until we have the "responsibility conversation," we will not be able to heal.
- Double minority?
  - — The media has played a large role in how we view each other. But the issue is really within the Black family: we don't know how to relate to each other, how to be intimate with each other. Images in the media don't portray the positive aspects of our lives.

GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES

WITH BAKARI KITWANA

EXPLORING WHETHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HIP HOP GENERATION ARE EXCLUSIVE TO THIS GENERATION OR IF THEY HAVE EXISTED IN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OR... "PUT THE SMACK DOWN or REMEMBERING DEE BARNES"

HISTORY

EARLY 1980s: In the early days of Hip Hop: music was published by independent labels.

MID-1980s: Wide variety of hip hop being published. At the same time the music industry is consolidating with independents being bought out.

LATE 1980s: NWA emerges out of Los Angeles. Their sound became the formula for hip hop – it became the dominant theme that the corporate music industry could sell.

EARLY 1990s: The violent lyrics and images become embedded in corporate hip hop.

TODAY: There is now a long history of violence against women by Hip Hop men.

WHAT IS THE MUSIC DOING TO TEACH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ABOUT VIOLENCE?

CREATION of the HIP HOP CULTURE

- Culture in the black community was transferred through the family and black community institutions for many years.
  - Today, the transfer of culture among blacks is different.
- Hip Hop generation is the first to grow up...
  - in a post-segregation world.
  - in a post-feminism world.
  - in a post free-love world.
  - in a global economy.
  - in an extreme consumer culture.
  - in a crack cocaine culture.
  - in a child support enforcement world.
  - in a world of full prisons.
- Hip Hop Culture is based on a shared world view of spirituality, economics and political philosophies.
- In Hip Hop Culture, bitches and hos can be male or female. It's the behavior we're talking about and right now we're attributing that behavior to women.
  - Hip hop artists & consumers rationalize the use of the word "bitch" (which they use to signify a female) by saying they're talking about the behavior of males or females.

- The hip hop music has an influence beyond itself, though it's not a direct cause of domestic violence.
- There are broader influences in society which cause domestic violence.
- We are caught in the vortex of violence between these two.

SOLUTIONS

1. Hip hop artists must be outspoken about domestic violence.
2. Young people must protest against negative images.
3. Negative impressions of women in music must be addressed.
4. Practitioners must stay informed about hip hop and its influences: read the literature on hip hop.
5. Push for change in the music industry at the congressional level.
6. Push for forums around the country to enlighten people on hip hop generation and culture.
7. Avoid falling into the trap of blaming everything that's wrong on hip hop. It will drive a wedge between generations.

GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES

Bakari Kitwana (Kent State University) provided the keynote address for the second day titling his presentation "Put the Smack Down or Remembering Dee Barnes." He explored whether characteristics of the Hip-Hop generation are exclusive to this generation or if they have existed in previous generations.

HISTORY

- Early 1980s: In the early days of Hip-Hop, music was published by independent labels.
- Mid-1980s: A wide variety of Hip-Hop is being published. At the same time the music industry is consolidating with independents ultimately being bought out.
- Late 1980s: NWA emerges out of Los Angeles. Their sound became the formula for Hip-Hop – it became the dominant theme that the corporate music industry could sell.
- Early 1990s: The violent lyrics and images become embedded in corporate Hip-Hop.
- Today: There is now a long history of violence against women by Hip-Hop men.
- What is the music doing to teach young men and women about violence?
  - — Hip-Hop music has an influence beyond itself, though it's not a direct cause of domestic violence.
  - — There are broader influences in society which cause domestic violence.
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SOLUTIONS

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- Young people must protest against negative images.
- Negative impressions of women in music must be addressed.
- Practitioners must stay informed about Hip-Hop and its influences: read Hip-Hop literature.
- Push for change in the music industry at the congressional level.
- Push for forums around the country to enlighten people on the Hip-Hop generation and culture.
- Avoid falling into the trap of blaming everything that's wrong on Hip-Hop. It will drive a wedge between generations.