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.

**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 DJs?
  - 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 ourselves: 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 should 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 public 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 HIPHOP

SEIZING POWER
- The rules of this universe don’t see any benefit for uplifting the Black people. Instead, the system is designed to destroy us.
  - As a race, we’re fodder for the economic & political machinery around the world.
  - We need to seize power and take care of our own needs.
  - If you know you’re beautiful, powerful, you don’t need to spread negativity.

ONE WOMAN’S STORY
- In the 60s, I was introduced to hip hop. It was a bad time. There was no money in it.
  - Today, as a DJ, I must respect myself.
  - And I must respect the audientes.
  - Let’s all be here.

WHERE ARE ALL THE WOMEN?
- Many women gave up or moved on. Scores of scores that are in the business, are the “elbow grease” of the business.
- Women are invisible to the minds of the men in hip hop.

Q&A
- 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.

WHAT ARE THE LARGER ISSUES?
- Once the mainstream gets ahead of the music, hip hop revolutionary music - they take the culture out of it, the heart & soul out of it.
- It’s hard to be a revolutionary, but it’s easy to dress like one.

Comparing 2 Cultures

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

HIP HOP CULTURE
- Leadership
- Innovation
- Equality
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Love

COMMERCE
- Fellowship
- Melodicy
- Inequality
- Modesty
- Revolution
- Fear

The cap music industry is not socially responsible. It’s here to get us to spend.

Comparing 2 Cultures

 redevelopment

Women need to be shown more respect to gain balance in this industry.

There’s no protection against sexual harassment in the hip hop industry.

How can these women stand up for what they believe in?

If you have the gift of music, conduct yourself with integrity.

LOVING TO REFLE  

P酺IBLE 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.

In music, the media doesn’t portray the positive aspects of our lives.

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

HIP-HOP CULTURE
- Leadership
- Innovation
- Equality
- Creativity
- Competition
- Love

COMMERCE
- Followship
- Mediocrity
- Inequality
- Monotony
- Competition
- Fear

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.

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 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.

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.
  - Women need to be shown more respect to gain balance in this industry.
  - Once the mainstream gets a hold of the music — Hip-Hop revolution music — they take the culture out of it, the heart and folk soul out of it. It's hard to be a revolutionary, but it's easy to dress like one.
  - 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

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: N.W.A. 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-reality world
- In a post-crack cocaine culture
- In a post-child support enforcement world
- In a world of full prisons

The hip hop music has an influence beyond itself, though it's not the 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...
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.
- We are caught in the vortex of violence between these two.

**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.

**SOLUTIONS**
- Hip-Hop artists must be outspoken about domestic violence.
- 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.