

PRACTITIONER'S VIEWPOINTS

Our next two panelists, Leah Aldridge (Commission on Assaults Against Women) and Howard Pinderhughes (University of California at San Francisco), addressed the challenges and barriers to serving the Hip-Hop generation and maintaining a healthy gender identity in the face of varying images from the practitioners' point of view.

LEAH ALDRIDGE

MEDIA'S INFLUENCE

- We know media is powerful and influential.
- For example, my 11-year old clients all know about "Girls Gone Wild." They strip at ditching parties.
- It's what they are exposed to and consider normal.

HIP-HOP MAGAZINE COVERS

- Males are portrayed as hard, tough and cool. Women are portrayed as sexy.

HIP-HOP MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS

- Males are portrayed as larger than life, as having dominion over others.
- Ads sell male images of wealth and power with women perceived as adornments, attachments and accessories.
- Women are posed, playful and unnatural in advertisements. They are exposed, castrated, exotic and objectified.

SEX (IN VIDEO) SELLS

- There is a rising objectification of females in our videos.
- Is this moving our male and females into the world of creating and producing porn?

CHALLENGES TO HEALTHY GENDER IDENTITY

- Overrepresentation of females as sex objects and adornments
- Overrepresentation of males as powerbrokers
- Growing association between the sex industry and Hip-Hop

HOWARD PINDERHUGHES

YOUTH IS NOT DIFFERENT

- There is a subtext that youth today is different. This is not true. What is true is that what we subject them to everyday in this world – a different set of rules and cultural context – is different.
 - One of the fundamental barriers we have in working with our young people is we're afraid of them.
 - Everything is more dangerous in our youth's world including sex.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP

- Involve young people in understanding what their needs are and what they want to do.
- Youth power is the key out of this mess!
- We must step into the shoes that parents leave empty and do the work they aren't doing.
- We must go to our young people who are doing good work, train them, then get out of the way.

UNDERSTANDING HIP-HOP CULTURE

- It may be negative at times, but it offers us the best critique of our culture today. At its best, it engages our youth in describing the truth about the urban condition.
 - The spoken word movement.
 - Speaking truth to power.

OUR URBAN ECONOMIES

- The economies in our urban areas now are based on substance abuse, sex and violence.

POWER OF IMAGES

- The negative images we see wouldn't be so powerful if they weren't the only game in town.



WHY HAVE PEOPLE BOUGHT INTO THE IMAGE OF HIP HOP THAT EXISTS TODAY?

When it was clear that there were dollars to be made, hip hop became what it is today.

But it was the power of the combination of the image & the music that took it to a new stage.

I'm hopeful about the beginnings of a hip hop political movement. This is a new direction to take this cultural form and it gives us the potential for great freedom.

HOW DO YOU DEPROGRAM LITTLE GIRLS WHEN THEY SEE THESE IMAGES EVERYDAY?

Work with individuals and provide them with alternative opportunities. Critique the images with them and listen to them.

A healthy sense of sexuality only happens when you have a healthy sense of yourself - you are loved and you love yourself.

Need is often irrelevant. Find out what young girls want.

HOW DO YOU CONVERSE WITH YOUTH ON THESE TOPICS AND WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE?

There is not a lot of historical understanding of the roots of violence. So we try to find out what their experiences are culturally and find the strengths within these.

We need to pay attention to our history of oppression but not let it define who we are.

Ask the youth: What do you want? How will you get there? What are the barriers? Who can support you in this work? Help them envision what they want.

Cuba has very little youth violence. Why?

- Communities have remained intact. Everybody knows everybody. They are cohesive.
- Teachers watch for disruptive behaviors and work with children, including a Saturday program where kids dialogue.
- Teachers look for what children want to do, then direct them in it.

HOW DO WE ADDRESS HOMOPHOBIA IN BLACK CULTURE?

I'd hazard that much of homophobia is based in misogyny and patriarchy. Let's not let masculinity be built on the backs of women or gay men.

You have to challenge & confront this behavior when you see it or hear it.

Q&A

with Leah Aldridge and Howard Pinderhughes



Q&A WITH LEAH ALDRIDGE AND HOWARD PINDERHUGHES

THE EFFECT OF HIP-HOP LYRICS?

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BEYOND BEATS & RHYMES WITH BYRON HURT

STRUGGLE TO PRODUCE THIS FILM

It's been difficult producing this film because I grew up with HipHop and as I matured and learned more about gender issues, sexism and misogyny I had to question what I thought of HipHop. Now, I'm finding it difficult to contextualize HipHop in the larger culture in which it exists.



I want to do justice to all the issues involved in this film. It's complex, yet, at the same time, I have to address it with simplicity.

Corporate culture has mythologized the misogyny. So those who disagree are not given a platform to speak.

Look in the mirror, Byron, and you will see the best example of manhood. Thank you!

How can we have this great art form that works to our benefit?

I am not blaming HipHop for all of these behaviors. It's naive to say that the music causes this behavior but it isn't naive to say that there is a relationship between these two.

? Is life imitating art or is art imitating life?

I want to reinvigorate the discussion by people who are inside the Hip Hop culture about the music and the violence it contains. I want my audience to be critical thinkers, to deconstruct the images.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The real purpose of the film is to point the finger at men, so I want to include information on women's participation, but I need to be careful.

Often, the focus shifts from the men to what the women do to provoke the men's behavior. I want to focus on why men do what they do, or don't do.

I want to deal with women's complicity, but not give it too much weight in this film.

I apologize for using the word "prolet" because it has historical connotations that men have an obligation to control women in a way that is historically problematic. It implies women are weaker, less than, vulnerable and unable to defend themselves. It implies that the only way women can survive is if men come to their aid.



CONFRONTING MEN

I've been trained to confront men displaying sexist behavior, so it was very difficult to watch what was happening at Daytona Beach.

Yet, I've talked with men in the Marines and the corporate world and have heard the same thing as I heard at Daytona Beach.

HipHop, as it's been commercialized, has taken the worst behaviors and displayed them.

It's one thing to talk about misogynist behavior in HipHop music and it's another to see it happen at a Hip Hop event.

Are you a traitor?

Are you betraying us?

Are you gay?

The key to change this behavior is men confronting other men.

Yo! What's up with dat?

Black men feel that it's not their right to confront other men, that it's not their business. We just don't do it.

It's going to take a long time before this behavior will change at any great level.

BEYOND BEATS & RHYMES

Byron Hurt (God Bless the Children Productions, Inc.) screened his film-in-progress *Beyond Beats & Rhymes* as a launching point for a lively discussion on the meaning of masculinity in today's culture and women's participation in creating the images and violence in this culture.



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- I want to do justice to all the issues involved in this film. It's complex, yet, at the same time, I have to address it with simplicity.
- Corporate culture has mythologized the misogyny. So those who disagree are not given a platform to speak.
- How can we have this great art form that works to our benefit?
- I am not blaming Hip-Hop for all of these behaviors. It's naïve to say that the music causes this behavior but it isn't naïve to say that there is a relationship between these two.
- Is life imitating art or is art imitating life?
- I want to reinvigorate the discussion by people who are inside the Hip-Hop culture about the music and the violence it contains. I want my audience to be critical thinkers, to deconstruct the images.
- Look in the mirror, Byron, and you will see the best example of manhood. Thank you!

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- Often, the focus shifts from men to what the women do to provoke the men's behavior. I want to focus on why men do what they do, or don't do.
- I want to deal with women's complexity, but not give it too much weight in this film.
- I apologize for using the word "protect" because it has historical connotations that men have an obligation to control women in a way that is historically problematic. It implies women are weaker, less than, vulnerable and unable to defend themselves. It implies that the only way women can survive is if men come to their aid.

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- Yet, I've talked with men in the Marines and the corporate world and have heard the same thing as I heard at Daytona Beach.
- Hip-Hop, as it's been commercialized, has taken the worst behaviors and displayed them.

- It's one thing to talk about misogynist behavior in Hip-Hop music and it's another to see it happen at a Hip-Hop event.
- The key to changing this behavior is men confronting other men.
- Black men feel that it's not their right to confront other men, that it's not their business. We just don't do it.
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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTH

IVAN JUZANG

A few

- Themes I've seen emerge in my work

- Young men respect women who wait.
- Men have their own issues around sexual health care.

- If you're working with youth, you must add "communicator" to your title.

- Hip Hop is an oral-based culture, so how are you persuasive with an oral-based culture?

- How do we use media to our advantage?

- How do we use peer-to-peer communication?

- How do adults talk to youth? Have adults earned their respect?

- How, as a community, do we support parenting?

LEAH ALDRIDGE

1. People don't need to wait until they're 21 years old to experience domestic violence. Young people experience in their partner relationships and often these are the best relationships they have.

2. We have to be prepared to address the needs of our youth holistically before we can even begin to address healthy relationships.

3. We have to think of & respond to their economic, health, physical, social, housing needs, to name just a few.

4. We can also help them learn how to criticize media so they can deconstruct it then make consumer choices based on a deeper understanding of media.

BYRON HURT

"Men, do you do anything on a daily basis to protect yourself, on a daily basis, against sexual assault or rape?"

THIS QUESTION CHANGED MY LIFE.

For the past ten years, I've been on a real journey.

The more I've learned, the more I challenged other men, the more I had to question what I heard in Hip Hop.

I want to inspire men to speak out against anything to do with misogyny, homophobia, ultra-masculinity. As men, we can do something about it!

