



The Role of the Media (TV, Radio, News, etc.)

The media (TV, radio, newspapers and so forth) must understand the role they play in perpetuating negative images of African Americans. Having the ability *and* the responsibility to present a more balanced picture of our youth and our community, the media, should:

- **Develop** and promote programming that presents positive African American role models. Increase the number of positive images of African American families, as well as individuals, shown on television and in all other media.
- **Provide** opportunities for youth to produce and participate in forums about issues of importance to them, and provide venues for them to exchange information. Give ample media coverage for all summits, conferences, and gatherings that promote proactive, positive images of young people that help them empower themselves.
- **Broadcast** and televise Town Hall meetings for and about youth, as well as provide programming where the youth and adults can dialogue and exchange information to bring together the generations.
- **Provide** volunteering, internships, apprenticeship, and job opportunities to as many African Americans and other people of color as possible. Furthermore, the media must develop and expand their commitment to inform everyone about all media employment and job training opportunities throughout the region.
- **Make** a better effort to inform the community about existing employment and training programs within the community at large.
- **Hire** more people of color in all phases of the media industry.
- **Promote** and feature programming about corporations, governmental agencies, or community-based programs that are making special efforts to provide training or employment opportunities for African Americans and other people of color.
- **Fairly** and accurately report inequities imbedded in the current educational system, such as disparate educational outcomes, high dropout rates, and disproportionate suspension rates.
- **Be** more responsive to community complaints about programming, news items, or other media forms that continue to portray negative stereotypes about people of color.
- **Feature** anti-violence public service announcements.
- **Provide** more media coverage of community-based organizations that are doing positive things in the community.

- **Encourage** local and national media to utilize more people of color as “experts” on issues that affect the entire community, not just for issues concerned with the minority community.
- **Take** an active role in communicating the presence of community hotlines linking youth and families to immediate crisis intervention services.
- **Provide** ongoing exposure of positive role models, who happen to be people of color, not only during months specifically designated for certain cultures and ethnic groups.
- **Encourage** area companies and corporations to underwrite positive public service announcements and campaigns that support alternatives to violence.
- **Provide** educational programming that addresses community ills that contribute to helplessness and violence such as predatory lending, domestic abuse, and health disparities.
- **Conduct** a summit on minority imaging (including the adverse effects of stereotyping).

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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 types of 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 the Appendix for the full version:

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

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