

# Is hip-hop culture harming our youth?

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Is Hip-Hop Culture Harming Our Youth? Hip-hop culture is everywhere. The culture, which encompasses rapping, deejaying, break-dancing and graffiti-writing, has become so popular that it has entered mainstream fashion and modern language. It doesn't stop there. The culture permeates everything from TV commercials to toys to video games. Currently, there is even a hip-hop exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. You name it, and hip hop is there representing. However, hip hop's most potent form is its rap music--embraced by urban Blacks and suburban Whites alike.

It is raw self-expression that sometimes features profane lyrics, misogyny and violence. The music, along with rap videos that often present a disturbing mix of rap, hip-hop dance styles, fashion and language, leave many people asking: "Is hip-hop culture harming our youth?". "The hip-hop culture is just like electricity," civil rights leader the Rev. Al Sharpton told JET. "It can be used negatively or positively. The same electric current that lights up your house can also electrocute you.

It is the misuse of hip-hop culture to attack our women and promote violence. We must encourage the proper use of hip-hop culture. We are all influenced by the hip-hop generation. "Sharpton, who recently hosted a special summit on social responsibility in the hip-hop industry, labeled gangsta rappers "well-paid slaves." Advertisement "Don't let some record executive tell you that cursing out your mama is in style. Anytime you perpetuate a slave mentality that desecrates women and that desecrates our race in the name of a record.... I consider you a well-paid slave. Sharpton labeled the fashion of these rappers--loose-fitting pants and sneakers without shoelaces--prison clothes. Sharpton was joined at the summit by

some of the industry's superstars, including Master P, Sean "Puffy" Combs, Chuck D and RZA. No Limit Records' CEO-rapper Master P apologetically admitted that some of his lyrics might be offensive to women. "Everything that came from me like that came out of ignorance. I hope to edit myself in the future," he reportedly said during the event. However, he asserted, "I don't believe any form of entertainment is harming our youth.

It is up to parents to raise their own children and teach them. Blaming entertainment is a scapegoat. "Dr. C. DeLores Tucker, chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women, Inc. , who has been a strong critic of hip-hop culture for more than a decade, continues to cite its reported negative influence over our youth. "The glorification of pornography, wanton disregard for civil authority, misogynistic disrespect for women and a penchant for violence are the unintended impact of hip-hop culture on today's youth," the activist revealed. I say unintended, because hip hop ... was intended to celebrate the revival of the age-old rhymed recitations of life's problems and aspirations set to music. "Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, some unscrupulous elements hijacked this influential conduit to our youth and loaded it with the evil and debasing, hate-driven messages in the lyrics we now know as gangsta rap. Hence the artistry of the rappers in the streets is used by the gangstas in the suites to spread cultural garbage among our youth. Hip-hop music mogul Russell Simmons, who dubs himself the "grandfather of hip hop," says the culture has been helpful in allowing others to understand Blacks' inner-city plight. "It is not going to go away. I will stand by the door to keep it from being censored. It is easy to try to put a lid on what you don't like. But the real test, if you are freedom-loving

people, is to protect even that which we don't like from the censorship by the government," he explained. He points out the positive contributions from the hip-hop culture. The slam poetry settings evolved out of the hip-hop community. Some of it does not have any curse words. Young folks have found a way to express themselves that was really inspired by rap. Kids are writing. They are thinking; brilliant thoughts are coming out in this creative poetry. " Concludes Simmons, " The hip-hop culture will evolve in ways that will be known as a significant art. The rap artists are not the poets that they are yet to become, but they are indeed poets. "