

Violent and vulgar rap lyrics



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

VIOLENT AND VULGAR RAP LYRICS What happened to censorship? “ Then shall we allow our children to listen to any story anyone happens to make up, and so receive into their minds ideas that often the very opposite of those we shall think they ought to have when they are grown up? ” Plato, The Republic While Plato may not have had rap music to contend with, he posed a question that could be a leading concept for a society concerned with the impact of today’s music on its kids.

In truth, Plato would note a archetype shift from a culture that put their family’s social, emotional, and spiritual well being as primary; to a society that is enslaved to whoever or whatever nets the mighty dollar gets to make decisions regarding what is right for our youth. Let us begin with censorship. Most freedoms are taken for granted, because they always seem to be in effect. Censorship keeps freedoms in check, or so it should. There are some things that are not suitable for the whole population. Children should not be exposed to vulgar or violent media.

The young impressionable minds of our youth should not be exposed to media that promotes relaxed morals, risky sexual behavior, substance abuse, and the glorification of being a violent criminal. There are a lot of arguments regarding censorship, pro and con. I am willing to bet that those opposed to censorship of vulgar music do not have small children, specifically daughters. There are a lot of reasons to support censorship to protect our youth and our future. But those in control, those making major profits from the offensive media, only have their fat bank accounts to protect-not our precious children.

On the following pages, I am going to submit some evidence that shows what effects rap music has had on our youth. I am also going to show you some examples of how this insult to our children's minds, growth and healthy development has been allowed to continue. And finally, since the power's that be are so hard to stop-I am going to propose a solution that we, as citizens, parents, and teachers can do to help gain some of our power back in educating our youth. The federal government and the states have long been permitted to limit obscenity or pornography. (Deflem)] While the Supreme Court has generally refused to give obscenity any protection under the First Ammendment, pornography is subject to little regulation. However, the exact definition of obscenity and pornography has changed over time. In fact, federal obscenity law in the U. S. is highly unusual in that not only is there no uniform national standard, but there is an explicit legal precedent (the " Miller test") that all but guarantees that something that is legally obscene in one jurisdiction may not be in another. In effect, the First Amendment protections of free speech vary by location within the U. S. , and over time.

The " Miller Test" has 3 basic guidelines for the trier of fact: (a). Whether 'the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the *prurient interest, (b). Whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law. (c). Whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. (The First Amendment, Miller vs Californie, 1973) An great example of

the ambiguity of the Miller Test was during the 2Live Crew obscenity trial in 1991.

Legal scholars have argued against each and every decision the Judge Gonzales made when he used to Miller Test during the first trial when he ruled in favor of the plaintiff and found 2Live Crew guilty of violating obscenity laws. First, it was argued that the Judge's determination of the relevant community and its standards was overtly subjective. The Judge decided upon a geographical concept of community, but this was inappropriate because the fact that people live in close physical proximity does not automatically suggest that they share common values.

Judge Gonzalez was also inconsistent in determining, on the one hand, that the considered community is generally more tolerant than others, and, on the other hand, that he could rely on his personal knowledge of the community standards which he never defined, of which he did not say whether they could change over time, and of which he did not determine the defining criteria. Second, the three standards of the Miller test (prurient interest, patently offensive, lacking serious value) were not met.

With regard to determination of the album's prurient interest, it was argued that there was no clear intention on the part of 2 Live Crew to lure hearers into sexual activity, and, referring to the profit-making motive of the rap band, Judge Gonzalez ignored that motive was irrelevant in aesthetic matters. Next, the patently offensive character of the "Nasty" album was decided upon as the result of a misinterpretation of the lyrics, based upon Gonzalez' arbitrary determination of "the" community standards. Actually, the lyrics of

2 Live Crew's music should not be taken literally as they are comedic parodies in a culturally specific language.

Also, music does not appeal to the intellect but to human emotions and imagination. Finally, the Judge's ruling that "Nasty" did not have any serious artistic value was by definition mistaken since the "as a whole" test fails automatically in the case of a recording which after all always has some serious elements (the Judge never heard all the songs). Judge Gonzalez particularly failed to take into account Professor Henry Louis Gates's testimony which indicated the specific artistic style of the "Nasty" recording.

Long pointed to the call and response style, the tradition of "doing the dozens" (a word game with insults), and the meaning of "boasting" as part of this type of rap music. Judge Gonzalez thus completely ignored the specific African American cultural values that are manifested by the album. Gates testified on behalf of Navarro, arguing that the material that the county alleged was profane actually had important roots in African-American vernacular, games, and literary traditions and should be protected. [(Deflem)] What a slipper slope.

Not to mention "the prosecution suffered a setback when Judge June L. Johnson of Broward County Court agreed with the defense that a transcript of the tape contained comments that might distract the jurors and said that it could not be admitted as evidence". [(RIMER)] When Joanne Cantor was asked to comment on Freedom of Speech issues at a Madison Civics Club dinner on October 12, 2002 this is what she had to share, "Many people have noted that corporate interests control what gets discussed in the

media, and one place where this is obvious is the controversy over the media's effects on children.

Research shows that violent television, movies, videogames, and even commercials can produce serious harmful effects on children, such as promoting violent behaviors and inducing intense anxieties. Parents need this information so they can make informed choices about their children's viewing, but the media use their corporate power to censor information that might damage their profits. At the same time, these corporations raise First Amendment concerns when solutions that might help parents are proposed.

" Here are the examples of what she was referring to: 1.

In 1997, I participated in a taping of The Leeza Show. On that show, parents were highly critical of the TV industry's new age-based rating system that was supposed to help them block harmful content using a device called the V-chip. NBC, which opposed making changes in the rating system, refused to let that program air. And five years later, they still have not gone along with the compromise that the other stations adopted. 2. After the National Institute on Media and the Family released a list of the 10 most violent video games, they were sued by the manufacturer of one of the games on the list.

Although the lawsuit was eventually dropped, the costly process caused the organization's liability insurance to double, and they were subsequently lucky to get any insurance at all. 3. The Center for Successful Parenting produced a documentary on the effects of media violence for Court TV, a cable channel that is owned by Time-Warner. Before the program could air, the producers were told to remove the mention of Time-Warner's products. They were also required to include remarks by lobbyist Jack Valenti, who claimed

that the research showing harmful effects was inconclusive. (Joanne Cantor)] These are just a few of many examples of corporate interests using their muscle to restrict the free flow of information to parents. They say that it's up to parents, not the media, to raise their children. But they make harmful products, which come into our homes automatically through television and radio and the internet. They market them to children too young to use them safely, and they try to keep parents in the dark about their effects. There are many studies that show the effects of violent and vulgar lyrics on our youth.

The studies are too numerous to dispute and the results are pretty much the same. Teen pregnancy, STD's are on the rise and although some studies indicate a drop in crime- they don't' show you the rise in crime in offenders under the age of 19, which is significant. I don't want to go into all the statistics and the sources. I want to focus, instead, on the plan to use knowledge to empower ourselves and our youth-It's called Media Literacy. The impact of media is critical, especially when it comes to the socialization of our children. Dr.

Renee Hobbs writes that, " Media messages are representations of social reality, defined as perceptions about the contemporary world, which are shared among individuals. Messages also represent the social realities of times and places far removed, and help us make sense of the past, present and future. People need the ability to judge the accuracy of particular messages, which may or may not reflect social reality" (Handbook of Research on Teaching Literacy Through the Communicative and Visual Arts,

1998). few understand that media literacy consists of teaching about media as well.

So the problem is clear: our students are growing up with media messages, messages that fill the bulk of their leisure time and provide them with information about who to vote for and what consumer decisions to make. Yet students receive little to no training in the skills of analyzing or evaluating these messages, many of which make use of language, moving images, music, sound effects, special visual effects and other techniques that powerfully affect our emotional responses. Educator's are still focusing on historical context of the past, when cultural survival depended upon the mastery of the printed word.

While these skills are even more important today, language is only one of a number of symbol systems which humans use to express and share meaning. Changes in communication technologies over the past 100 years have created a cultural environment that has extended and reshaped the role of language and the written word. Over the past decade, there's been a lot of discussion about how to best help teachers, parents and students be more critical consumers of the media. Quite logically, this response has been called " media literacy. Media scholar David Considine describes media literacy: " In an age when most Americans get most of their information from television, not textbooks, pictures not print, we need a wider definition of what it means to be literate. [Media literacy], then, is an expanded information and communications skill that is responsive to the changing nature of information in our society. It moves from merely recognizing and comprehending information to the higher order critical thinking skill implicit in

questioning, analyzing and evaluating that information" (Telemedium, Fall 95).

Because the presence of media has become so accepted, we mistakenly presume that consumers of media are able to decode, deconstruct and digest media messages. Most of us received considerable teaching on how to interpret the written word, but we've had zero preparation for "reading" media messages. In an age when most Americans get most of their information from television not textbooks, pictures not print, we need a wider definition of what it means to be literate. Many of us grew up hearing the proverbs and adages like these: You Can't Judge a Book By Its Cover, A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.

These words are even truer today in an age not only of computers and telecommunications but of virtual reality and imageneering. Today's technologies represent a startling fusion of sight and sound that frequently make it difficult for us to discern illusion from reality, fact from fiction. Special effects like those seen in movies like "JFK" and "Forrest Gump" merge the past with the present, color with black and white, the dead with the living, fact with fiction in such a way that the real truth can often be confused with the reel truth.

Censorship and the welfare of our youth can not compete with big business, all we can do is try to arm ourselves and our children with the knowledge and understanding to correctly comprehend the messages that are being spewed from the media. With that power we may not be able to control what our children hear and see, but we can protect them with the knowledge of the motives of the messages. BIBLIOGRAPHY Deflem, Mathieu. Rap, Rock,

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