

## Mixed Message by Hip-Hop Vote Organizers

Written by Westside ID46

Monday, 18 October 2004 07:26 -

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In this election year we have seen a force of rap and hip-hop artists join forces to get out the vote. They are trying to get our vote registered and out. Sounds like a great idea, or are some using it as an advertising agent for themselves?

I have been one to think that Sean 'Puffy' Combs doesn't do anything unless it benefits Sean 'Puffy' Combs.

Recently at the VMA awards we saw Sean 'Puffy' Combs still rocking the VOTE or DIE tee shirts. He has been on 106 and Park pimping them, actually he has been everywhere with this shirt. When I looked into the shirts I found a few interesting things.

When I went to their web site <http://www.citizenchange.com> I did find the shirt and a lot of information on Citizen Change. I learned that:

"Citizen Change is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization with a mission to educate, motivate and empower more than 42 million Americans aged 18 to 30 that are eligible to vote on November 2nd. Founded by businessman, entertainer, actor, and innovator Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Citizen Change has one mission: to make voting hot and relevant to a generation that hasn't reached full participation in the political process".

"Citizen Change is based on a simple premise. Everyday, cultural leaders move millions of young people to exercise their \$890 billion in buying power to purchase the latest album, clothing, cars, bling, magazines, DVDs and other products. The political parallel is obvious. On Election Day, these same leaders -- music artists, business moguls, fashion designers, community activists and professional athletes -- will unite under the banner of Citizen Change to encourage the largest mobilization of youth voter participation in American history".

They are going to make voting hot and relevant to a generation that hasn't reached full

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participation in the political process? Whose fault is that? Who is one of the major contributors to where the young people stand and think on things today? East coast club, bling bling rap. Videos filled with good times and a lack of awareness has contributed to the situation that the younger generation finds itself in. It is like 'lets create a problem and then we can run to the rescue'.

The statement refers to the 'buying' power of young people. And it says that 'cultural leaders' move millions of young people on really what to buy'. Leading youth to buy bling or certain rims for their car is not important, but it is the message sent in a lot of rap and hip-hop videos. Looking at woman as just a sex thing, as hoochies and biatchs is portrayed in the music videos as ok. Where is the awareness there? How come now, suddenly, getting involved is the thing that these artists and 'cultural leaders' want us to do?

This is not for the Chuck D's, who bring awareness to many issues before this election even came around. Chuck D, Krs-1 and others know the struggles of life and try to influence youth in the correct way of life. Not to influence them to think their way. There is a difference when one has a positive influence on a person, and that influence helps the person grow and become a strong adult, a strong free thinking person.

We also see on the site:

"While other individuals and organizations will be out campaigning for candidates in this election, Citizen Change will be campaigning for the people (remember, P. Diddy invented the remix). With the tremendous marketing and celebrity power he commands, he will remix and redefine youth political participation in this country to create a shift in the electorate that hasnt been seen since the 1960s".

No, what we will see is a bunch of people registering to vote, because they are being 'lead' that way. In the sites words they are going to 'make voting hot and relevant'...'Not because they were groomed to be free thinkers and learn about the system and how it works. A lot of young folks (and older ones) find out about the system and how it is, after they get hung up in it. Why now is there this 'push' to get everyone to act responsible, when all along the youth were; and continue to be fed the surreal life that music videos portray?

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There would not be as many movers and shakers to tell us how to think or what to think without the hoochie videos and the tracks about clubbing or gym shoes. Suddenly Sean 'Puffy' Combs is going to lead a generation? He is going to be the one to empower, mobilize and show them what is the right thing to do? How about leading with example. How about putting awareness in your record company's music videos. He is in every video made there; why not use that power he has to cause some awareness in the content of the videos.

Most of the rap and hip hop artists 'Thank God' when they get an award, which means they must have read the Bible or Quran or some book for the knowledge of the Creator. And it is stated in the bible wisely 'Raise up a child in the direction he should go'; you don't wait till the last minute and then say 'Oh we forgot to tell you that you have to be involved in this or that'.

To be teaching awareness thru the music industry is a day short. The mixed message that is put out by them is overwhelming. If life is not one big party then why portray it as such in your videos? If things are so bad then where are all these Hummers on 24's and Bentley's coming from? Oh, that is right – you are the one's with the Hummer's on 24's and the Bentley's. Made available to you because you are the ones selling this mixed message.

'There is no money in awareness videos or music', some will say. Tell that to artists like Tupac Shakur who spit awareness thru many of his tracks, or NWA and Easy E, who brought awareness to the real conditions of neighborhoods. Not only in Compton, but all across the country. Or the other artists who survived the struggle, spitting the truth; groups like Public Enemy, MC Eiht, etc. Really these people and groups became Icons in the Hip-Hop Culture because they kept it real.

Now don't get it twisted, there are a few artists today that are holding down awareness in their work. But most 'mainstream artists' are trying to portray the high life. They are either pimps or gangstas, but in reality are neither. But still they want us to believe that they are so committed to teaching the youth the right way of things. Kind of ironic. Like I said they create a problem and then they want to run in and 'fix' it, and be some kind of savior in the spotlight.

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A big disappointment on that site is to see that those shirts that Sean 'Puffy' Combs is pimping are \$28.00 for ladies and \$30.00 for mens, and surprisingly produced by Sean John. So what about the kid who doesn't have 30 dollars for a tee shirt, you don't want him to rock the vote angle cause he is not of the genre you are trying to portray? The price of these shirts just goes to show how out of touch these 'organizers' are with the youth. A hood rat doesn't have \$30.00 to rock a tee. But if things are well in your family and things are cracking for you then, yea you can rock this shirt and tell people how bad things are and that we need to vote to change them.

I am all for voting and getting the youth involved in the process of government and to teach them how it works. I just feel better spokes people could be found, instead of people who are responsible for some of the way the youth are thinking nowadays.

So I would say to Sean 'Puffy' Combs and some of the others: If you want awareness and a responsible youth set a full time example. Don't come in half way thru the game you create and change the rules. No one respects that. One of the creeds of the Hip-Hop Culture is to keep it real. So please try to keep it real and be a full time role model and mentor if that is what you want to be. Change the way things are portrayed in music videos. Not just Sean 'Puffy' Combs but all those who are jumping on this bandwagon who have the real power to change things; the label owners, the producers and the artists. It is not just a good time and a party out here in the real, so don't portray it as such. Want us to be aware? Show us and lead by example.