In this year of America saying and showing it wants change, can we change present hip hop music to more fit the culture of hip hop? Can we depend on the leaders that will be elected to say to the music industry; enough is enough?

With countless senseless killings and record numbers of people being incarcerated, isn't it time we say enough is enough while we still have young people to watch out for and to lead.

The major record labels have been 'censoring' the hip hop music we hear for years, so why not force them to stop with the music that tears down the community instead of enriching it.

It is hard to imagine that the hip hop scene we have today is what Afrika Bambaataa first imagined when first using the term hip hop to describe the subculture
that hip hop music belongs to.

The 'elements' of hip hop - DJ'ing, Rapping, Graffiti, Breakdancing and Beatboxing where meant to uphold and build the community – not destroy it. The injection of gangsta rap into the culture was a pivotal turning point, since the corporate end of the hip hop scene seen nothing but money in gangsta rap. The first gangsta rap album to become a mainstream pop hit, selling more than 2.5 million copies, was N.W.A.'s Straight Outta Compton and the flood gates were open to the anything goes era.

That was the 80's and still today 20 years later almost every hip hop and rap artist wants to portray themselves as gangsta, with shoot 'em up lyrics and death with 'honor' as a subtitle, drinking and clubbing is more important than knowledge and advancement.

Today the lyrics of many hip hop tracks incite violence against either another rapper, sect or crew or they want to disrespect women and even worse is the use of the word ‘nigga’; which disrespects an entire race of people.

Now if we look at the definition of the word ‘nigga’, some can argue that the hip hop icon rap artist Tupac Shakur (2Pac) looked at it this way **– N – never, I – ignorant, G – getting, - G – goals, A – accomplished = ‘NIGGA’** . Now that may make sense to those who know 2Pac’s explanation of the word, but many are from an era when the word ‘nigga’, ‘nigger’ or anything close would be taken literally and there would be no time for explanations; the result would be a confrontation of some type.

If we look at the struggles, the pain, the deaths that brought us from Frederick Douglass to Malcolm X to Martin Luther King Jr. to the Honorable Minister Farrakhan; and the many in between; and the demand for respect for a people: how can we use that word so freely and comfortably? How can the struggles of the Civil Rights movement be thrown out so nonchalantly? Many people were beat, many died gaining respect for a race and culture and now that is all forgotten and the word is mainstream again. That is a pitiful statement against the ‘elders’ who brought us all to this point.

How can women be treated and represented in such an ill light, when they are the center of humanity. With out women we do not reproduce, we fail to exist and still some would compare them to female dogs?

In this time of everyone wanting change, let's change what the perception of hip hop and hip hop culture is and build communities instead of destroying them.

Some things can not be changed but if hip hop is to continue in its true form we have to change the perception of the culture by changing the landscape that makes up the community we call the hip hop community.

Will the leaders, or so called leaders, have enough truth and quality in them to tell the music industry enough is enough? Or will they walk that thin line and use excuses like freedom of speech as a way to let things go on the way they are going. Yes we have freedom of speech but just as you can not yell fire in a movie theater without repercussions neither should we be able to incite or condone things that hurt our youth and hurt the community at large.

As a generation of youth is lost: either by killings, lock downs or as innocent victims; we all should be concerned that maybe the music industry is on the verge of child abuse – just to make money.

And the music is not the only thing in question here. Another factor is police brutality and the perception that maybe the Bloods and the Crips, and other street organizations, are not the only 'gangs' roaming the streets. The biggest 'gang' on the streets today seems to be the police. Increased beat downs, police shootings (as in the case of Sean Bell), and racial profiling and 'hip hop' profiling are serious issues that need to be addressed. When the people do not trust

those who are suppose to enforce the law, there can only be a serious breakdown of society.

Everyone needs to be held accountable for what seems to be a national trend. Is this country so arrogant to think that these problems will work out by themselves? Police departments from coast to coast seem to be out of control.

Should hip hop remain the culture of the exploited for financial gain by corporations who are just out to make a buck off the pain of our culture. Should those who ‘look hip hop’ be more closely scrutinized by the police than any other group? Should our women take a back seat when it comes to respect from some of the artists who feel it necessary to degrade them?

CHANGE – yes we need change both in our political arena but also in our social arena. Seeing the violence, the waste of life, the disrespect and the lawlessness that is being created should make you aware of that. But will those so called leaders who are now pimping CHANGE really change anything? Will they include the recording industry in their plan for this big change?

Probably not because after all it is all about the money, but those in hip hop culture who are standing up and saying yes we need change should also realize that change needs to be across the board. Preservation is more important than money; I know that is a new concept but in reality it is true.

CHANGE, I agree we need it but for the sake of hip hop culture and all the ancestors before us: Be about it just don't talk about it. (*So Sen. Obama... if we stand with you and give you a chance to make change, don't forget change is a good thing if it includes everything that is harmful to the community at large).

The lyrics of Tupac's (2Pac) 'Changes', like many of his tracks, foretell where we find ourselves:

"We gotta make a change...

It's time for us as a people to start makin'' some changes.

Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live

and let's change the way we treat each other.

You see the old way wasn''t working so it's on us to do

what we gotta do, to survive."

Tupac Shakur 'Changes'