

Essence Magazine Effecting Change

Written by Robert ID640

Sunday, 02 January 2005 21:10 -

The country's largest Black woman's magazine 'Essence' has started the 'Take Back The Music' campaign as a year long in depth look into the way in which black women are depicted in popular music (especially rap and hip-hop), movies, television , videos and the media.

It is about time that major woman's media speaks out. The treatment of our women – all woman- has got to a dangerous point. The sending of 'mixed messages' to our younger generation about women makes one wonder what the future holds. Women are the future of all people. Without women we do not multiply and flourish.

Respect for all women must be taught and shown at an early age, and women need to take the stand that it is to be demanded, not just by some but by all men and young boys.

Here is what Essence magazine has said about this important issue. Congrat's to them for standing up and saying what most should have been addressing all the long.

"We are mothers, sisters, daughters and lovers of hip-hop. We've emulated the sexy confidence of Salt-N-Pepa and the toughness of MC Lyte. We've wept over Tupac Shakur's visceral poetry and marveled at the lyrical dexterity of Notorious B.I.G. When Nas said, "The World Is Yours," we believed him. And today we stand at the forefront of popular culture: independent, talented and comfortable with the skin we're in. We are really feeling ourselves. Perhaps that's why we're so alarmed at the imbalance in the depiction of our sexuality and character in music. In videos we are bikini-clad sisters gyrating around fully clothed grinning brothers like Vegas strippers on meth. When we search for ourselves in music lyrics, mixtapes and DVDs and on the pages of hip-hop magazines, we only seem to find our bare breasts and butts. And when we finally get our five minutes at the mic, too many of us waste it on hypersexual braggadocio and profane one-upmanship. The damage of this imbalanced portrayal of Black women is impossible to measure. An entire generation of Black girls are being raised on these narrow images. And as the messages and images are broadcast globally, they have become the lens through which the world now sees us. This cannot continue.

An entire generation of Black girls are being raised on these narrow images. And as the messages and images are broadcast globally, they have become the lens through which the world now sees us. This cannot continue. We have debated this topic, often heatedly, at Essence. Some of us are fed up; others don't see the big deal. But all of us agree that as

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representatives of the world's foremost publication for Black women, we need to provide a platform for public discussion. Of course, there is a much broader scope of perspectives to be heard than our own, and in the interest of fostering a conversation, we present a survey of the landscape: Entertainment journalist Ayana Byrd and Essence editor Akiba Solomon interviewed a wide range of key players in the music industry: a video director, a choreographer, a rapper, a psychologist and others. Public dialogue is vital to effecting change. Throughout this year we'll explore this topic in our pages, and we invite you to tell us how you feel. E-mail us at letters@essence.com

. Your opinion is the most important part of this discussion. And so it begins. —the editors.”

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