

Laila Ali Speaks On Hip-Hop Rap Videos

Written by Robert ID1303

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Black music videos have evolved, or some might say, degenerated over the years into vehicles which primarily showcase Black women's gyrating hips, jiggling gluteal muscles and bodies clad in little more than the skimpiest lingerie.

Sex sells, always has and, in this society always will; and male R&B/Hip Hop and rap artists and video producers aim to capitalize on that concept by filling their videos with the eye candy, i.e., the video honeys, that have become standard inventory in their sensual visual shops.

Video Honeys, or as some call them Video Hos, are undeniably pretty and seductive which makes them innocent enough to many people but other outspoken individuals, like women's boxing champ Laila Ali, find them extremely damaging to the image of Black women collectively.

She recently spoke at EspeciallyMe, an annual conference for young, Black, female high school students held in Denver Colorado. The event aims to honor the presence of or instill more confidence, self-esteem, respect and dignity in the growing young ladies who attend the affair.

The Queen Bee of women's boxing snuck a jab on the topic into her presentation while encouraging her audience not to do things just because everyone else was doing them or because they were the so-called popular things to do. She then mentioned how booty-shaking in videos has become the current "hot" activity which has moved many women, teens and even little girls around the country to emulate the dancing they see on screen.

Ali shared that even she had received requests from artists seeking to have her in their videos but as a serious fighter and not a professional booty shaker, she declined the offers. She believes the women who appear in these videos as a means to get ahead in the entertainment industry, will never be truly respected or taken seriously if and/or when they arrive at the station they seek to obtain.

"All you see in Black videos are people shaking their butt," she remarked. "What about other races who turn that on?"

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They think all Black women are hos and all we got is a big booty and are just trying to show it off.

It's sad."

It appears that more and more individuals and groups are speaking out on the decline of Black music, but particularly Hip Hop and rap lyrics and videos. Last year, students at Atlanta's Spelman College rejected an appearance by hip-hop rap artist Nelly because he would not agree to discuss their concerns about how women were portrayed in his hip-hop videos, while more recently Rev. Al Sharpton called for a 90-day ban on gangsta rap and Essence Magazine began a Take Back the Music campaign to address the negative portrayal of women in hip hop.

All of these protests, however, can be called latecomers in comparison to the 1994 campaign against the degrading portrayal of women in hip hop videos and lyrics that was led by civil rights activist C. Delores Tucker. In spite of those mid-90s protests, hip hop's portrayal of women has continued a downward spiral into what might be seen as a bottomless abyss.

Laila Ali says the focus should not be on changing the industry since the big ballas who run it are going to cater to whatever sells, no matter how raunchy, degrading or insulting. The champ believes the key to real change rests in the hands of the women who willingly choose to participate in the videos and the many females who choose to emulate, at clubs, dances, parties and skating rinks across the country, what these video honeys do for a living.

"You have to care enough about the image you're portraying and not just about yourself, making your little dollar and having your little fame," she said. "[It] has to do with how we are all portrayed as a people."