

“Historically in this country, the outspoken, powerful African American male is targeted,” says CSI: New York star, Hill Harper. “If you are outspoken, if you are intelligent, if you are African American, if you are a man and people are listening to what you are saying, then people are going to try to shut you up.” Harper’s statements were part of a debate on the growing number of hip-hop artists being arrested on charges ranging from drug possession to assault. Wu Tang Clan founding member, Rza, adds that young African American men are being profiled for arrest by law enforcement. “There is a hip-hop task force that has a whole list of artists’ names like we’re terrorists or some kind of group against the government.” The discussion takes place on America’s Black Forum, the Emmy Award-winning nationally syndicated television news and information program.

America’s Black Forum host, James Brown, asked if the lifestyle of hip-hop artists encourages unwarranted attention. Rza responds, “Hip-hop is from the streets. We definitely have a walk and a talk and a slang about ourselves. We probably do fit the description.” Reverend A. R. Bernard, pastor of the Christian Cultural Center in New York City believes there is a general stereotype in America that Black men cannot legitimately attain wealth and success. Rev. Bernard says if an African American displays an image of achievement, he is often regarded with suspicion. When well dressed and driving his BMW, Rev. Bernard says he has been pulled over for questioning by police. “I’m the pastor of a congregation and I personally have experienced it coming through Brooklyn.”

Syndicated columnist Armstrong Williams believes the antisocial behavior and violence embraced by the hip-hop community has legitimately put them under greater scrutiny by law enforcement. The charge that police routinely pull over Black men is a problem from a past era. He says, “That may have been true thirty years ago, but so much has changed in America.” Unfortunately, Williams adds, criminal behavior by hip-hop artists plays into the hands of police. Hip-hop historian, Davey D opined that law enforcement is focusing on the wrong issues. “The crime in our community is not going to disappear if you arrest any of these artists who are under surveillance by police.” Finally, Williams issued a challenge to the hip-hop community: “Let’s talk about how you can change your behavior and the sewer material that you put out.”

In Washington, D.C., AMERICA’S BLACK FORUM is presented Mondays on WUSA/Ch. 9 at 1:30 am, ET; in Los Angeles, it airs Sunday on KCAL/Ch. 9 at 1:30 pm, PT. In New York, the program airs Sunday at 1:00 p.m. on WABC/Ch.7. For other markets, please check local listings for exact air times and dates. [Source](#)