

Our Chickens - The Current State of Hip Hop

Written by J. Michael Carr Jr. ID3139
Thursday, 30 November 2006 04:01 -

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Holiday greetings from the Carr family at A New Way Media and the Fathers For The Future Foundation. As usual this time of year, I always encourage friends and family to reflect on their past 365 days. And, my, my, my, what a year it's been. Proudly in this year of the dog, I can boast that I have overcome several personal and professional challenges, and faced my own inner journey head on (applied directly to the forehead). I consider you family too, so I ask you to analyze your peaks and valleys. Please do so on an individual level as well as a member of our Hip Hop Nation.

At our State of the Union Address, given by the illustrious Katt Williams, during the 1st Annual BET Hip Hop Awards in Atlanta, GA, he gave us a remarkably optimistic assessment of the Hip Hop Nation's past and present. Unfortunately, he didn't spend a great deal of time talking about our nation's future, and the many of the challenges we need to address. Sounds a lot like our current president. No offense Katt, but I also want to chime in on the state of our State. Sorry I don't have a podium to pontificate; however, if Myspace.com has taught us nothing else, I have the internet. In many ways, the computer has actually become mightier than the sword. Touché Mr. Shakespeare.

In my previous life I was an accountant, and even at one time an auditor. Field auditors are required to determine a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Therefore, in my professional opinion (as if anyone asked), the Hip Hop Nation's paramount strength is that it promises great financial reward. Corporations and politicians seeking a bountiful return on investment or political capital need to look no further. With an estimated \$14 billion in net revenues, the hip hop industry is both liquid and solvent (Note: If you don't know the meanings of these words, please look them up). Nevertheless, bling aside, the hip hop industry's weakness is that it is socially depleted. Social entrepreneurs looking for a sound investment based on improving the public welfare: Please do not apply. The hip hop industry's mores, ethics, and cultural awareness have bankrupted the self-esteem of the majority of the hip hop generation. Hip hop has become more interested in pimped out rides and cribs than with the struggle that the hip hop art form brought to the media's attention over 30 years ago in the first place. "Sambo-ism" and buffoonery has so thoroughly infiltrated and co-opted the basic values of the hip hop culture that I predict our nation will implode within ten years. If hip hop is not dead already. Now, maybe it is or maybe it is not. That argument is open for debate. I don't know, but what I do know is...our nation is at war.

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“Yes J., we’re all know about the War on Terror,” sarcastically reads someone who wants me to get to the point so they can get back to making their Rhapsody play list. Work with me people. There is another war. A more sinister, covert war that is happening on the streets of most American cities. A war that the Hip Hop Nation is in the middle of here and now. A “War on Youth”. And if you haven’t experienced this war like I did this past year in Las Vegas, then don’t worry, the battlefield is coming to city near you. Soon.

Throughout America, young men and women are being handcuffed, tased, jailed, and in frequent occurrences, murdered. Unexpectedly, this war has leaked out of the ghetto streets on to university campuses, comedy clubs, tourist locales like the Las Vegas strip, in the front of strip clubs, and even to the extreme of murdering a 88 year-old grandmother while serving a “no knock” warrant for, guess who, a young man allegedly selling drugs. What next?

I will tell you, “what next”? May I recommend for our 2007 New Year resolutions we Protest! Protest! Protest! As they said in the sixties, “It’s time to take it to the streets”. We need to be heard. We need to hit the blogs. We need to start fax campaigns. We need to tell our political representatives don’t count on our vote until this War on Youth campaign stops. Anything and everything until we are heard! We will no longer accept this malicious and oppressive treatment by our government, corporations, police departments, and ourselves.

Yes, I said it, and if you’re with me, more of us need to say it. I say ourselves because I love you and I love our children, the future. We have become our own worse enemies though. This past year I heard the slogan from the National Hip Hop Political Convention (NHHPC), “We are the leaders we have been waiting for”. Well...it’s time for us to lead. The seeds we, the Hip Hop nation, have sown are growing into weeds not tulips. Our chickens have finally come home to roost.

Many of you don’t know me well or even at all, but I always represent myself as a gentleman that strives to teach unity because I approach people from a place of love. Nonetheless, I grew up on 69th and Cottage Grove on the south side of Chicago, and when I have to, I can get real gutter to reach certain people. If I offend you, please accept my apologies in advance. Let’s clear the air. That said, I would like to encourage a few discussion points about opportunities for improvement within the hip hop community:

1). Mutha fuckas need to take them fuckin’ grills out their mouths. That @#%\$ looks stupid, and it’s played no matter how much you spent on it. People are starving in the very neighborhoods

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you grew up in, but you have a \$10K mouth piece to draw more attention to your no talking ass. It's an insult to the very people in the hood that support you.

2). Stop carrying guns and drugs to the airport. Watch the news! They are searching people that get on airplanes now. Dumb asses! The whole gangsta and pimp subculture is butt. From someone who's mother was a prostitute when he was a young child, and had to witness beatings by her pimp, glorifying these lifestyles infuriates me. It's time for a makeover.

3). Women, if you ever decide to write a book about being a music video ho, don't tell the readers you learned your lesson, then go get pregnant by a married celebrity. It makes you even more of a gold digga and a ho fo sho! Respect yourself and others will respect you.

4). To video vixens, strippers, and hookers, stop fuckin' it up for women on the grind working two or three jobs to help support their families. Yes, stripping, hooking, and dancing in music videos are viable professions, but they are not the only ones. Learn a trade.

5). Entrepreneurship is the American way. So, I commend all y'all who have started their own businesses. As usual though, we always run @#%\$ into the ground. Please launch different business models other than record labels and clothing lines. Be innovators instead of falling in line with the status quo.

6). Finally, we all need to make a pact with ourselves to refrain from using the N-word. This is a hard one for me. We use the word a lot in our house and with friends, but I am committed to stop using it after that Michael Richards incident at the comedy club in LA. His apology made me realize that regardless of using the N-word as a term of endearment or cultural ownership, it's wrong, and it gives too much license for the word to be abused by idiots.

These are only a few discussion topics, which I hope will spark a much needed dialogue inside the hip hop community on list serves, blogs, e-zines, lunch tables, bars, strip clubs, or wherever you entertain. The comments made were not directed at any specific persons or regions, but only to demonstrate particular behaviors. I don't claim to be an authority on hip hop nor a spokesman. I'm just a father that cares about his children, and yours. And like Katt Williams and so many of us, I too live hip hop, but I live it through the eyes of my children not the eyes of Viacom. I am sometimes guilty of turning a blind to many of the challenges within our culture,

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but I never turn a blind eye to injustice. I strongly urge you to join the fight against the War on Youth campaign next year because it must be immediately addressed at a national level for any material change to occur. However, I'm not letting our generation off the hook easily, we need to stop making excuses, and start taking more individual responsibility for the behavior we will and/or will not tolerate.

If hip hop is truly dead, what sacrifices will you make to resurrect it? What sacrifices will you make to save the Hip Hop Nation? In closing, please be mindful of your own responsibilities, and remember that the day will soon be upon us when our nation, the Hip Hop Nation, will govern this Nation, The United States of America.

Thank you, and have a happy new year.

"Any form of art is a form of power; it has impact, it can affect change - it can not only move us, it makes us move." -- Ossie Davis

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