

A Woman's Worth

By Carmen Scott

"Pass it to Nas or pass it to Naish, or pass it to Jung, or pass it to Horse, then that ass gettin' tossed . . . Grab her hair, slap her ass, she screamin' like she dyin'"

- QB Finest ("Oochi Wally")

From hoes to bitches, pigeons to chicken heads, area codes to ethnic stereotypes, jeeps to bank accounts, women are animals and objects more often than they are women.

The word ho, an abbreviation of whore, is defined by Webster's New World College Dictionary as any woman who engages in promiscuous sexual intercourse. What do you call a man who engages in promiscuous sexual intercourse? A man.

A bitch is a female dog, the primary purpose of the animal is to serve as man's loyal companion. Among the negative connotations of the word bitch, which again the dictionary associates with being female, are lewd, bad-tempered, malicious and aggressive. What do you call a lewd, bad-tempered, malicious or aggressive man? A man.

The words bitch and ho have become so synonymous with the word woman that regardless of whether a woman is actually promiscuous, she is still called a ho, and regardless of whether a woman is bad-tempered or not, she is still called a bitch. In any event, one word, a dog, symbolizes subservience while the other, a whore, symbolizes immorality; both severely understate a woman's worth. No where is this more evident than in the music we listen to. In the song, "I'm Real" by Ja-Rule and Jennifer Lopez, Ja-Rule compliments Lopez's walk, her talk, her style, her smile and claims he "can't go on without her" yet calls her a bitch in the same breath.

Years ago people who were bi-racial were called mulattoes. The title was derived from the word mule because like the mule, which is a sterile hybrid species, mulattos were thought to be the offspring of two different species and incapable of reproduction. Although that theory of infertility was immediately disproved, to call someone who is bi-racial a mulatto is to credit the belief that bi-racials are part human and part black. To call a woman a bitch, even though hip-hop artists have made it a fashionable epithet for a female, is to perpetuate the theory that women are somehow subhuman.

The fact that Trina and Kim refer to themselves as hoes and bitches does not authorize the continuation of female dehumanization and objectification. The fact that those and other women do not speak more highly of themselves is confirmation that this internalization of inferiority has seeped into the female psyche, where it will undoubtedly do the most damage.

Today's sexism is a sexism unfamiliar to our parents' generation, which forced a glass ceiling over women in the work force and mandated that their place was at home with the children. It

isn't the sexism of two generations ago that kept our grandmothers from the voting booths. It is a new breed of blatant and deliberate objectification that has found itself a cozy niche in our generation.

Does it seem nonsensical that in Nelly's "Batter Up" video all the women are playing baseball in string bikinis while the guys sit back in the dugout fully dressed? Have you ever been to a house party like the ones featured in the videos for Jagged Edge's "Where the Party At" and Mystikal's "Shake It Fast" where all the female attendees are dressed for the beach but the males are actually dressed for a party? Does it bother you that, like pieces of meat, women are assessed according to their fat content in the song, "Fatty Girl?" If you think women who take offense to these lyrics and images are overly sensitive and would condescendingly say to them, "It's not that serious," consider whether your lack of perception may be part

of the problem.

Women in music videos are sexual objects without a name, without a personality and when Hype Williams determines they're only camera worthy from the neck down (Q-Tip's "Vivrant Thing", Jay Z's "Big Pimpin'"), they're without a face. Justifying the trend by pointing out that women flock to video sets willingly is like writing off the portrayal of blacks as oversexed, lanky and simple-minded beings by the minstrel shows of the 1930s because for every stereotypical role there was a Stepin Fetchit to play the part.

"What means the world to you?" is a phrase Cam'ron made popular in 2000. Where do women place on this man's list of importance? On the hierarchy of what means the world to him, women: his mothers, sisters, daughters and lovers, are unranked. Hoes, however, come in an impressive third, just after the first runner up, doe, not to be confused with the first place winner, money. Hoes just edge out the fourth place honoree, clothes.

In the song "Contagious" both Ron Isley and R. Kelly take the opportunity to assert their superiority over Chante Moore, the lowly woman. While one calls her a bitch, the other talks to her like a child. The infamous line, "Shut up/ Can't you see two men are talking?" is at first listen humorous in its ridiculous implication that women should immediately become silent when their male counterparts are speaking. But can listeners recognize this type of dialogue as sexist or has that word been phased out of our vocabulary as if it no longer has a place there?

To you I may be just another woman who wants to whine and complain about a few music videos. But actually, I'm just a woman who knows her worth.

*"You will
lose if you choose
to refuse to put her first.
She will if she can't find a
man who knows her worth."*

- Alicia Keys