

Opinions and Editorials

From the Editor:

Kanye the Crying Baby

Erin C. Perkins
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Once again, Kanye West has cried over spilled milk. Wait, perhaps that is not necessarily fair. He has regressed from his 20s to terrible two's and thrown a massive humiliating temper tantrum that puts all temperamental toddlers to

shame. Although the rap star was named Best Hip Hop artist, he still came off as a sore loser at the MTV Europe Music Awards, according to the Associated Press.

Evidently, Kanye was so disgruntled at not winning for Best Video that he bombarded the stage when the award was

being presented to Justice and Simian for "We are your friends," and mouthed off why he should have won the prize for his video, "Touch the Sky." The same carelessly, outspoken and stuttering cupid that struck Kanye with the non-sense arrow during his political tirade against President Bush for Hurricane Katrina succeeded again, except for less humane purposes.

During an embarrassing



PERKINS

tirade flooded with expletives,

Kanye reasoned that his video should have won because "it cost a million dollars, Pamela Anderson was in it [and] I was jumping across canyons."

According to Kanye's massive ego, "If I don't win, the award shows loses credibility." Right, because all the music award shows are invalid if they don't recognize the humiliating, simple-mind-

ed rhyming, beat-robbing lyrics of Kanye as utter genius. There is nothing wrong with taking original songs and putting a new spin to them, but does every song have to be a sample of someone else's work?

Kanye's silly moment of ridicule is exactly what the black community needs, another negative image of African-Americans. As if there aren't enough thanks to the sexually explicit, drug-related and gangster lyrics of 50 cent, Snoop Dog, Lil'Wayne and countless others, Kanye has

added to the increasing stereotype. As an African-American celebrity, he has an unspoken responsibility, especially when traveling to foreign countries. Many countries are not exposed to African-Americans in a diverse setting, so they are unaware that African-Americans do not always throw hissy fits and cry over spilled milk like Kanye West. Unfortunately, we are left to rely on celebrities and other public figures to represent a positive image of the Black community outside the U.S. Thanks, Kanye, job well done.

Overseas, I made them respect me as a black woman

Brittney L. Huntley
BLACK COLLEGE WIRE AND THE
BLACK COLLEGIAN

Last year, as a sophomore at the University of Cincinnati, I decided to live and study abroad as part of the university's Global Studies Program. I chose Dubai, part of the United Arab Emirates, a desert country about the size of South Carolina that boasts one of the highest standards of living in the world.

As an African American woman there, I was labeled, sexually harassed and constantly defending myself against negative stereotypes of African Americans, due to the negative influence of rap music and U.S. television.

Because of the extensive use of the word "nigga" by African American rap artists, comedians and TV programs that supposedly characterize the "hood," I found that this word is now a part of the daily conversation of Arabs and Africans in various parts of the globe.

The lack of understanding about African American people was so great that I created a history project identifying history's most awakening civil rights movements, drawing on

similarities between world leaders while shining light on the history and culture of African Americans.

I now have a new perspective on the Middle East and Islam. I challenge other African American students and people of the world to redirect their attention to the things that matter most in terms of our being respected globally.

Dubai is one of seven emirates (a federation of independent states, ruled by an emir) that make up the United Arab Emirates, located in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula.

Ten years ago, Dubai consisted of sand and very poor Bedouin people who lived nomadic lives and depended mostly on marine life to feed their families.

Today, Dubai has considerable wealth and economic stability because of its oil and tourism industries, mainly tourism.

Some call Dubai the Las Vegas of the Middle East because of its extravagant architecture and fabulous lifestyle. Dubai is home to expatriates from all over the world. Its diverse population encourages international cooperation on both cor-

porate and cultural levels.

Yet ignorance and stereotypes are inescapable and widespread, negatively affecting individuals and in some cases entire races.

While in Dubai I met Mohammed, an Ethiopian Muslim, and others who had adopted much of the African American rap culture. Mohammed's clothing, speech and demeanor all reflected that he admired rap videos.

I hated Mohammed's obsession with the word "nigga." He used it in his daily conversation, when he would greet me, and especially during basketball games. I understand why he thought the basketball court was the proper setting for its use, but I asked Mohammed where he learned "nigga." He said that when he lived in South Central Los Angeles, the blacks taught him to differentiate between the words "nigga" and "nigger," which would determine whether you offend an African American. "Nigga" is jargon for "nigger," therefore, many blacks feel that "nigga" is less offensive.

How sad that my African brothers would think that calling me such a name

would be acceptable to me!

I also met a young white woman there from Brown University. It seems that in all our encounters, she could use only rap music to initiate conversation. She explained how she lived in wealthy upper Rhode Island. Her brother lived in the southern area, where he was frequently robbed and now had a racist perspective of blacks. She said that most of her encounters with black people were positive and that she "absolutely loved us."

While at the computer lab, she used her media-playing software to present her collection of Biggie Smalls albums and Tupac downloads. I never corrected her for her limited interest in who I was as a person. Truthfully, I was so shocked at how insensitive and limited her interactions were with someone like me that I forgot to get angry.

I did confront my history professor about her unreasonable grading system and biased perspective of Americans. In addition to making negative references to the United States, she applied different, higher standards to American students than

to those who were local.

When I met with her, concerned I could not expect to earn a fair grade, I agreed to write two research papers and create a presentation on Middle Eastern history in order to pass the course. At this point, I had experienced the positive and negative messages music can convey and the stereotypes that are generated, resulting in a real distortion of our true image and culture in this part of the world.

I felt compelled to defend my honor as an African American woman against the negative images of us in the Middle East, as characterized in the images of rap artists and their degrading lyrics. I am proud to be an African American, but I am very disappointed at how little our people actually know or care about our history, and how little of our true culture is positively depicted in the Middle East. Music is a powerful source of communication, with the power to distort or destroy the reputation of individuals and even an entire race. I felt compelled to speak up about these distortions.

My presentation was entitled, "Awakening Civil Rights Movements in History." I welcomed this opportunity to shatter stereotypes. I introduced the African American people as major contributors in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s: We inspired people worldwide to fight not only for civil rights, but human rights.

I drew on comparisons between such world leaders as Dr. Martin Luther King

Jr.; Mohandas Gandhi, the leader of Indian independence; and Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egyptian president and statesman. I wanted the students to know that the civil rights movement began with the African American people of the South. The students were interested and attentive, as was my professor; they respected me for my knowledge and dignity, and therefore gained respect for my people. I encouraged the students to seek a better understanding of African American people and our history and who we really are, without relying on negative images depicted in the media. I received an "A" in the course.

My experiences in Dubai were so challenging that I needed time to process the educational benefit once I returned to the United States.

This article gives me a chance for reflection. I feel proud of myself for turning what could have been a negative experience into a positive one. I learned to negotiate and stand up for myself among strangers, alone in another part of the world. I feel empowered by my strength in overcoming adversity through my faith in God and by conveying the dignity of my people that my parents instilled in me.

The power to change attitudes and minds is important to me. I have decided to make it my life's work.

Brittney L. Huntley is a junior at the University of Cincinnati, majoring in international affairs. She originally wrote this article for The Black Collegian magazine.

Step your game up — BET: Bad Ethnic Television

Steven J. Gaither
SPORTS EDITOR

Twenty-six years ago, a young black businessman from Washington, D.C., named Robert Johnson bought airtime at a local station.

It was from those meager beginnings that America's first black-owned and oriented network, Black Entertainment Television, emerged. Starting a year before MTV, Johnson's network was groundbreaking.

Today, however, that ground has sunken to a new low.

In the past few years, BET has put less emphasis on uplifting and educational programs, and more emphasis on music videos and reality shows. In the past, shows such as "Teen Summit" and "BET News" focused on serious issues affecting the black community.

Today, the network relies heavily on music videos. On a typical day, as

much as one-third of the programming is dedicated to music videos on BET. Many of these music videos center around scantily clad African-American women, gyrating in front of the camera. And they are shown on the network over, and over again.

Another trend that the network has moved toward in recent years is the increased production of reality shows. The problem is not so much with the reality shows themselves, as it is with their content. This season the network added the weekly series "Beef" to its programming. The show, which began as a bootleg DVD, centers on conflicts, or "beefs," between celebrities.

Why would the network spend programming time on a show that centers on such negative themes?

Marilyn Roseboro, associate professor of Mass Communications at Winston-Salem State, says that she finds the content on BET "offensive, both personally and professionally."

I could not agree more. With the majority of the other networks' reinforcing negative stereotypes about African-Americans, you would think that BET would do its best to present a more well-rounded image of black people. BET, which Johnson sold to Viacom in 2000, has failed us in this regard, choosing to sacrifice integrity for ratings.

Like it or not, BET has a responsibility to African-Americans, no matter who is in charge. I'm not saying that it needs to become a black PBS, but it shouldn't be a minstrel show, either.

"I'd like to see balance," Roseboro said. "When that's all you give, the audience either goes away or embraces that."

Step your game up, BET, and give us a reason to tune in. Black people are more than Neanderthals that love to dance and fight amongst themselves.

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