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The Voice of the Black Community

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POSTSCRIPTS

Media messages leave teens in more vulnerable position

You've seen the music videos, men fully dressed with jerseys, sagging jeans and a baseball cap. The women have on bikini tops and miniskirts completely surrounded by men who freely throw champagne and dollars at them. Is this the new perception of ladies? With so many teenagers idolizing musicians and their videos, is sexism the new trend?

For years, my friends and I have walked to the neighborhood corner store simply to catch a breeze and see friends from school. The experience has changed dramatically since our junior high school years when everyone focused more on their bags full of Blow Pops and Skittles than the females that roam the store. Now we're greeted with "Ay girl" and "Shorty."

This wouldn't be much of a concern if the guys really didn't know our names, but this isn't the case. There are so many young guys that have not learned to separate the fact from fiction in music so they relate what they hear and see to how they live their everyday life. With songs like "Give me dat" by hip-hop newcomer Webbie, the youth are presented with a new approach to women - give me dat. It's quite ridiculous, but true. This remark isn't thought to be disrespectful in any way because the women in the videos respond to it so well. Since the youth's idols are referring to women as only good for one use, it becomes necessary and acceptable. Who can't use a good pick-up line?

Mike Jones, a new rapper from Houston, expresses in his album women and their interest in one thing - money. "Back Then" is dedicated to females that only see what's right in front of them like the car with spinning rims and the mouth of platinum teeth. The single teaches men that women are gold-diggers and shouldn't be valued because so. "...I don't have the time to call her, Imma stall her... Imma dog her," this excerpt speaks for itself but Mike Jones basically tells men women don't deserve respect and the message is taken and accepted very well with his single topping hip hop countdowns. In every other video, every other song on the radio this message is delivered to our youth. Which is why so many guys find it all right to grab a lady by the hand-not to ask her to dance, but to ask her to take a ride with him. These songs encourage infidelity among relationships with a lot of songs concentrating on "pimping" and obviously leading to other problems.

Just as quickly as the message of violence and crime reach our young ones thinking that is the only way to survive, the whispers of the Ying Yang Twins' "Wait" teach them sweet nothings will undoubtedly impress the women you seek. This song was so increasingly popular that a remix was made with the same message. Not only is sexism encouraged in rap music but also in the entertainment industry, such as commercials for cologne. In such instances where four and five women chased one man in a grocery store because of the cologne he sampled. The moral of the story: get the cologne, get the girls.

Rappers such as Common and Mos Def have been highly successful through their messages to the hip hop community about life and love. Their style of music is the same but with a message to each one. In Common's newest single "The corner" he emphasizes the beauty of the black community and their struggles in everyday society. Mos Def has gone on to hosting HBO series, "Def Poetry Jam," now in its third season. There are plenty of R&B artists who the youth look up to such as John Legend and Lyfe who both express love in their songs and how magical it is. If there was more of a balance with these genres the message of sexism would surely decline.

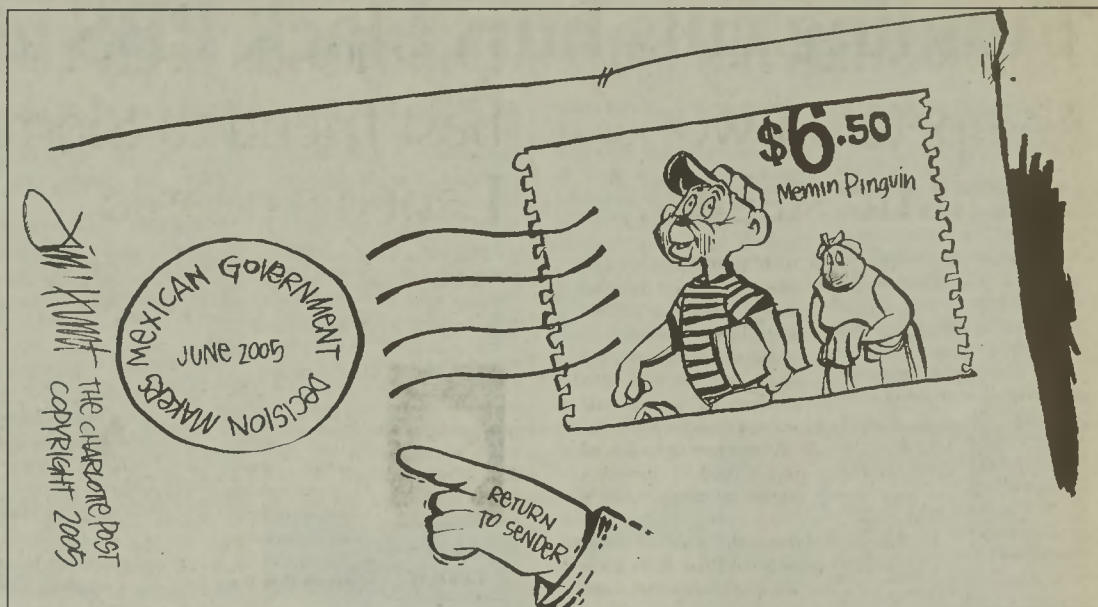
The rap industry overshadows young R&B artists because hip-hop generates more controversy through rivalries and stiff competition, which only boosts record sales. Perhaps the youth should be presented with more questloves from The Roots rather than two quarters.

It isn't fair to blame the media for what goes on in the community because to each its own, but it is necessary for each woman regardless of race or beliefs to realize we don't live in a rap video and regardless of what we wear, it's not an invitation to approach us with lyrics. The only way to end a trend is to start from the root. Women make the world go around and sexism is threatening our rotation-let's end the trend.

GERRI CUNNINGHAM is a senior at West Mecklenburg High School.



R&B singers like newcomer Lyfe (above) expresses love and how magical it is in his recordings



MATTERS OF OPINION

Supreme battle over court appointee

GEORGE E. CURRY



The unexpected resignation of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor creates a vacancy that, once filled, can radically shift the court to the right on social issues. And that can ultimately spell disaster for such issues as affirmative action, women's rights, civil liberties, the death penalty and employees' rights.

O'Connor, the first Supreme Court appointment made by Ronald Reagan, was the court's swing justice, with her vote helping constitute a 5-4 majority on many important issues. Court watchers had expected ailing Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist to retire after this session - but he was expected to be replaced by another conservative, meaning the 9-member court would remain evenly divided, with four liberals, four conservatives and O'Connor darting back and forth between each camp.

However, the resignation of the court's swing voter means that George W. Bush's first court appointee could instantly shift the balance of power, creating a conservative majority.

This appointment will force Bush, who has tried to have it both ways on some issues, to choose between his rhetoric of

compromise and cooperation and his pledge to appoint Supreme Court justices in the mold of Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, the court's most conservative members.

To understand O'Connor's impact, all one has to do is examine some of the 5-4 Supreme Court decisions. She cast the deciding vote in:

- Grutter v. Bollinger, affirming the right of universities to use affirmative action in admissions;
- Brown v. Legal Foundation of Washington, maintaining legal funding for the poor;
- Rush Prudential HMO v. Moran, allowing people enrolled in HMOs to seek a second medical opinion;
- Hunt v. Cromartie, upholding the right of states to consider race as a factor in redistricting and
- Brentwood Academy v. Tennessee Secondary Athletic Association, affirming a lower-court decision that civil rights laws apply to associations regulating intercollegiate sports.

Even before O'Connor announced her decision, the battle lines were drawn and multi-million dollar campaigns had already been launched. Progressives were campaigning to persuade the public - and President Bush - that only mainstream jurists should be appointed to the lifetime appointments on the court. Conservatives were eager to avoid a defeat similar to 1987 attack that blocked the elevation of

Judge of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court and the narrow (52 votes) and bitter confirmation of Clarence Thomas in 1991, formed Alliance Defense Fund, a consortium of conservative Christian organizations.

Even more important, they set in motion a campaign aimed at making sure the next Supreme Court selection will consistently side with conservatives. Upset that Justice David H. Souter, a Reagan appointee, consistently votes with the more liberal wing of the court, conservatives have developed a rallying cry: "No more Souters."

Bush's conservative base is pushing for a strong conservative who will not disappoint them.

A research paper by People for the American Way observes: "...Right-wing activists have turned their harshest fire not on the Court's more moderate justices but on two conservative justices who frequently forge majorities on the most important cases before the Court - Justices O'Connor and Kennedy. A number of far-right leaders have harshly criticized these two Justices, going so far as to call for their impeachment.

"In an April newsletter, Focus on the Family's James Dobson called Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy "the most dangerous man in America," and demanded that he be impeached "along with [Justices] O'Connor,

Ginsberg [sic], Souter, Breyer, and Stevens."

Despite such radical views, White House officials have acknowledged that they are sharing the names of several potential nominees past Dobson and other conservative group for their review.

Some Senators are urging Bush to select a nominee who will enjoy broad bi-partisan support. They note that Sandra Day O'Connor was approved 99-0 in 1981, Anthony Kennedy, 97-0 in 1988, David Souter 90-9 in 1990, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 96-3 in 1993 and Steven G. Breyer 87-9 in 1994, the last time there was a vacancy.

So far, Bush does not seem to be striking a conciliatory tone.

"The nation deserves, and I will select, a Supreme Court justice that Americans can be proud of," Bush said. "The nation also deserves a dignified process of confirmation in the United States Senate, characterized by fair treatment, a fair hearing and a fair vote."

Whether the nominee gets that kind of reception, will depend on whether Bush is able to break the hold the Far Right has on his administration and nominate a mainstream candidate acceptable to both Democrats and Republicans.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. He appears on National Public Radio on "News and Notes with Ed Gordon."

New Jack slavery without due process

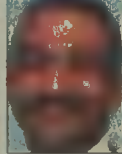
Many of us know that Abe Lincoln and his Emancipation Proclamation did not free our relatives.

On the other hand, many of us believe slavery was abolished when the 13th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in December 1865, even though it took 100 years more to give us our "civil rights." But how many of us know that there is an exception in the 13th Amendment that allows slavery in cases of those "duly convicted" of crimes? Maybe that's why we see all the private jails and all of the money being made on the stock market on prisons. Yes, slavery is alive and well, and I saw a glowing example of it last month in Morgan, Ga.

I was in that small town for the Habeas Corpus hearing for William Mayo, the brother who was sentenced to two life sentences, plus 40 years, - for a robbery he did not commit. It took 13 years for William to get his hearing, and tens of thousands of dollars, a thousand of which was spent to bring the two men who committed the crime to Morgan to exonerate Mayo.

That morning in the remote town, dozens of supporters came hundreds of miles to stand with William Mayo, to

see justice finally rendered, to share the moment with William's mother, his family, and friends, as the judge would listen to the arguments and deliberate, and finally decree that William should have another trial.



JAMES CLINGMAN

Despite an over-abundance of police officers, prison officers, and court room officers (You would have thought William was a serial murderer or worse), we were full of positive anticipation and didn't think much of it when the judge had to be reminded to "bring the petitioner" into the courtroom. Just an oversight, you know.

The judge was also reminded by William's attorney that there were witnesses in the courtroom that would be called and she requested they be sequestered in another room. Oh yes, she also suggested to the judge that they be sworn in collectively, which the judge did.

Judge Cato asked the attorneys to begin. William's attorney spoke for a few minutes, setting up the case and recounting two major points:

the men who did the crime perjured themselves and would disclose that fact, as they had done several years ago, although no one listened; and the prosecutor in the original case acted in a corruptible manner as he cut deals with the real perpetrators to implicate William. That, too, was disclosed years ago, but no one listened. This time we had the "honorable" Judge Cato; he would listen.

After the prosecutor spoke for a few minutes, it was time to rumble. We settled in for a long day in that southern courtroom, in that quaint little town. The defense attorneys, armed with so many files they had to be carted in by hand truck, were ready to go to war. They had the evidence, the witnesses, and they had the hearing they had fought so long to obtain. Justice. What a sweet sounding word.

After both attorneys spoke, Judge Cato clasped his hands and began to speak. Cato started to cite points he had read from the case, and I sat there waiting for him to get to the good part, you know, the part where he says, "Call your witnesses." Ah yeah, any minute now, I thought.

As the judge continued to speak, something in his voice

and his legal jargon suggested he had already made up his mind, even though he had sworn in the witnesses, even though they had spent William's money to bring the two perpetrators to Morgan, Georgia, and even though William's attorneys had hundreds, maybe thousands of documents to share during their presentation. This guy had already made up his mind. He was about to do something that would let everyone know that slavery was still in effect and that he was the master, the one in charge.

Cato ended his brief statements by slamming his gavel down and walking out of the courtroom, leaving in his wake a stunned crowd, a shocked attorney standing there with her mouth wide open wondering what just happened, and a grieving mother who was not even allowed to hug her son. William was literally manhandled and shoved out of the courtroom without the opportunity to speak one word. Thirteen years to get a hearing, but only 10 minutes to deny it. Justice? Yeah, right.

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