

IMUS



For a moment African Americans had to check their calendars to make sure the year was indeed 2007.

When the heat intensified to a broil, Imus found a “safe” scapegoat to blame for his narrow thinking – he blamed hip hop.

Hip hop – the entertainment industry’s billion dollar baby – is not to blame for Imus’ repulsive and inexcusable actions. He said what he wanted to say, because he has been saying what he has wanted to say for over 30 years. Hip hop was an easy pawn Imus used to deflect the fact the words that escaped from his lips, were words that came from his heart.

Hip hop is not to blame for the New York Knicks being called “chest-thumping pimps” on Imus’ morning. It was not hip hop that made Imus make reference to a “nigger in a woodpile” when former Black Panther leader, H. Rap Brown was found hiding in a shed. Or could it have been Jim Jones who inspired him to call

PBS journalist Gwen Ifill a “cleaning lady?” It is easy to see how Snoop Dogg could have been the root of Imus’ admittance to a 60 Minutes producer that his sidekick McGuirk was hired to make “nigger jokes.” Or was hip hop the culprit when in what was supposed to have been his moment of apologetic clarity, he uttered yet another phrase that makes African Americans cringe – “you people.”

And if hip hop is to blame for what Imus and others say when they have a slip of the tongue, then what responsibility does rock, pop, advertising and film industries bear?

I doubt if Imus is a hip hop connoisseur, but I am positive he was spewing hurtful innuendos long before rapper Richboy was “throwin’ some D’s” on his Cadillac. It is easy to say the fault rests on Jay Z’s or 50 Cent’s shoulders, but neither of these men own radio stations. Granted they both have record labels, and have made millions from the degradation of African American women, but the millions they have made are a mere fraction of the billions they have made for white executives. At this rate, people will

blame hip hop for the Iraqi war and gas prices, and any other problem the world finds itself in.

Without question, hip hop is in a state of emergency. There are serious issues that need to be addressed in regard to lyrics and the portrayal of African American women in videos. It is agreed that we have an obligation to our own. If we are not our brother’s keeper, then why should anyone else do so? If we do not think of our women as queens, then why should anyone else? We have to clean our own yards up, before we can invite anyone into our house.

The general consensus is that people should not jump on “the hip hop is to blame” bandwagon that Imus created. While he was shifting the blame from his shoulders, Imus overlooked the fact that there is a balance in the music genre. It should be understood that for every Jeezy, there is a Common. For every Shwnna, there is a Jean Grae. For every Crime Mob, there

is a Dead Prez. There are positive aspects to hip hop, but these artists are not pushed to the forefront. The industry makes too much money on negative topics to start focusing on those topics that would empower the urban community.

The African American community should applaud Imus for a few things. If it were not for his asinine comments, the various dialogues that are happening would not as prevalent. From CNN highlights to Oprah’s town hall forum with the music industry’s elite, we are finally really talking about the real issues in hip hop. Had Imus not suffered from the “foot-in-the-mouth” syndrome, the world would not have had the privilege to see C. Vivian Stringer in her grand eloquence, nor would we be able to witness a team of poised and articulate African American women.

Hip hop is not where racism and the negativity began, but it can be where it stops.

