

Speaker vocalizes on Gangsta Rap

By JOHN LAPOINT

"Gangsta rap is a negative influence on kids," said Dr. James Johnson, lecturer on Tuesday, February 11, at 11:00 a.m. to a crowd of 50 in the Lecture Hall.

The Diversity Task Force sponsored this presentation. Annette Hawkins, chair of the task force, arranged the event.

Dr. Johnson, who has a doctorate in social psychology from Indiana University, was the first African American and the youngest student ever to receive that degree from that university.

He began his talk by stating that he was not against rap music in general.

In fact, he said that he thought some rap was some of the best music in the world.

But he said he was anti-gangsta rap.

He said that he became interested in gangsta rap when he heard it discussed on talk shows. But for all the talk show claims about it, talk show guests had no evidence for their claims.

So Dr. Johnson went about collecting empirical evidence on the subject.

Another reason Dr. Johnson did the research is that he liked working with young African American males, and he is concerned about positive and negative images of them in music.

He told a story of working with a black gang leader who wanted to be a lawyer but felt he couldn't because his high school principal had told him he would be in jail by age 21 or be dead.

His teachers had labeled him a failure, his mother had a minimum wage job, his sister was retarded, his brother was in jail and his was father gone.

Johnson took this young man named Fred to take the SAT and he blew it away.

Johnson helped Fred get through college, where he got all A's except for one B. Soon Fred was in Chapel Hill Law School and beating Johnson at debate.

Fred was featured in a newspaper article and 15 kids from his neighborhood cut it out.

Fred, now a prosecutor, sent a copy of his law degree to his high school principal.

Johnson said he does his work for the "Fred" of the world.

"Most students bitch and moan about their problems," said Dr. Johnson. This kid had every reason to bitch and moan, but he didn't!"

Dr. Johnson said that gangsta rap tells kids to solve problems, not by discussion but by violence.

"Violence is the philosophy of Snoop Doggie Dog," he said.

He found this trend disturbing in a country where violence is one of the leading causes of death among black males.

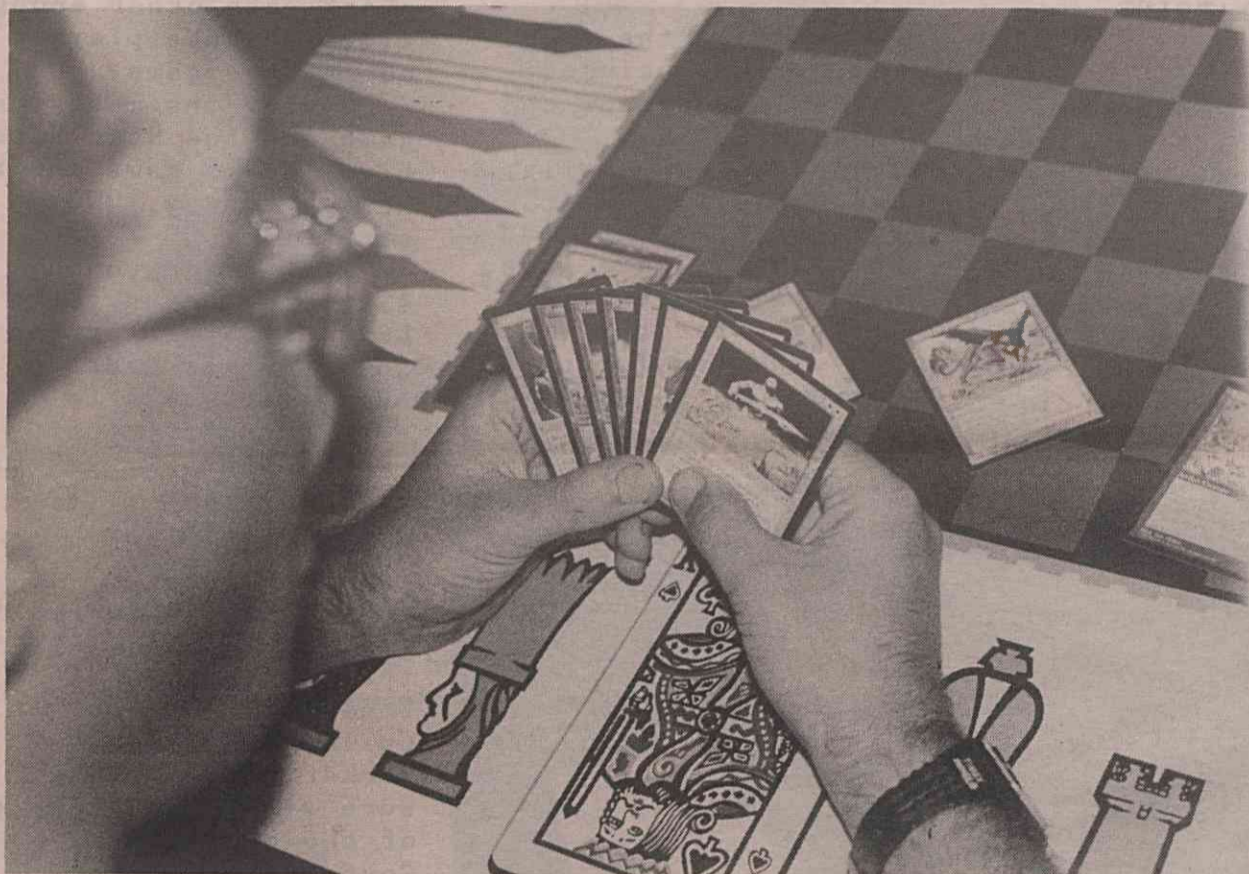
He played some examples of gangsta rap, which he said 11-12-year-old kids may know every lyric of.

To prove his findings, Johnson did an experiment. He exposed subjects to rap music with violent lyrics, rap music with non-violent lyrics, or no music at all.

He then had subjects read 2 stories and give opinions on those stories.

He said his evidence, as well as other evidence, shows a causal link between violence and gangsta rap music.

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WCC student displays his hand during a game of Magic, the Gathering in the Student Lounge.

PHOTO: JOHN LAPOINT

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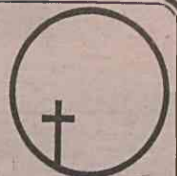
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