

Today's Music scene: A Christian Perspective: The Truth About Hip Hop

By: Tracy Daniels

Introduction:

This seminar is given with the purpose to help leaders understanding the effects of Hop-Hop & Rap music in this culture. By understanding this style of music, we can work together with the purpose of reaching youth with truth and teaching them what this music represents and the how it affects this generation. One of the most common factors for Hip-Hop and Rap music is it dysfunctional attack upon the church and what it really represents. The purpose of this seminar is also to equip leaders and give them tools to assess and challenge this generation concerning Hip-Hop and Rap styles of music in the church. God's word talks about "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Pro 27:17). This generation is known as "Generation X" so we as leaders must address this issue that finds it fuel in Hip-Hop and Rap music culture and stop it from fully infiltrating this generation by helping them to align with the truth in God's word. John 4:24 says "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth", we must present the truth of God's word so that this generation will know God's truth...and it is not in Hip-Hop!

HIP-HOP CULTURE

During the late 1970s an underground urban movement known as "hip-hop" began to develop in the South Bronx area of New York City. Encompassing graffiti art, break dancing, rap music, and fashion, hip-hop became the dominant cultural movement of the African American and Hispanic communities in the 1980s. Tagging, rapping, and break dancing were all artistic variations on the male competition and one-upmanship of street gangs. Sensing that gang members' often violent urges could be turned into creative ones, Afrika Bambaataa founded the Zulu Nation, a loose confederation of street-dance crews, graffiti artists, and rap musicians. The popularity of hip-hop spread quickly to mainstream white consumers through movies, music videos, radio play, and media coverage. The resulting flood of attention from wealthy investors, art dealers, movie and video producers, and trend-conscious consumers made hip-hop a viable avenue to success for black and Hispanic ghetto youth. Rap music in particular found a huge interracial audience. After 1985, when the mania for graffiti art and break dancing began to wane, rap music continued to gain popularity, emerging as one of the most original music forms of the decade.

Rap Music

Rap originated in the early 1970s in the South Bronx, where DJs played riffs from their favorite dance records at "house parties," creating new sounds by scratching over them or adding drum synthesizers. A partner, the MC, would add a rhyming, spoken vocal (a rap) over the mix, often using clever plays on words. Most rap songs were braggadocio, the aural equivalent of street gangs' strut and swagger. Boasting about their physical prowess and

coolness, rappers used competitiveness with rival males as the motivation for creativity. Some early rap songs promoted global and interracial harmony, including The Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" (1980) and Afrika Bambaataa's "Planet Rock" (1982), which became a crossover hit on the dance charts and sold more than six hundred thousand copies. Other rappers expressed serious political and social messages, often addressing the effects of racism, poverty, and crime on the African American community. One such group was Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, formed in the Bronx in 1978 by Joseph Saddler. Flash first attracted attention with the song "Freedom," released on the rap label Sugar Hill in 1980. Their 1981 album was among the first to feature sampling, and in 1982 their seven-minute recording "The Message"—about black ghetto life—became an underground hit. When Flash went solo, another Furious Five member stepped forward to lead the group as Grandmaster Melle Mel. The new group released the antidrug anthem "White Lines (Don't Do It)" in 1983.

Crossover

Rap remained primarily an underground urban style until the mid 1980s, when it exploded into the mainstream with the unexpected popularity of Run-D.M.C. Formed in 1982 the trio released their first record the following year and watched it become the first rap-music gold album. Their 1985 LP *King of Rock* was an even bigger hit, reaching number fifty-three on the *Billboard* album chart and featuring two videos that achieved significant airplay on MTV. Run-D.M.C.'s heavy metal sampling increased its popularity with young white males, especially after the 1986 recording of "Walk This Way," a remake of an Aerosmith song with a video featuring Joe Perry and Steven Tyler of Aerosmith. The song was the crossover breakthrough for rap music, while the album that featured it, *Raising Hell*, sold more than 3 million copies and became the first platinum rap album. Inspired by the success of Run-D.M.C, MTV launched a daily *Yo! MTV Raps* program. Female rap artists such as Salt-N-Pepa, MC Lyte, and Queen Latifah began to make inroads in the late 1980s, and even white acts jumped on the bandwagon; in 1987 the Beastie Boys had a major hit with "(You've Gotta) Fight for Your Right (to Party)." By the end of the decade rappers such as L. L. Cool J ("I'm Goin Back to Cali," 1988) and Tone Loc ("Wild Thing," 1989) were regularly appearing in the Top 40, and in the 1990s the rap stars Ice-T, Fresh Prince, and Kid 'N Play were elevated to movie and television stars.

Controversy

While some rap songs were lighthearted and fun—for example, Run-D.M.C.'s "My Adidas" celebrated hip footwear—rap music became increasingly political as the decade progressed. Sensing nothing but indifference from the Reagan administration and white America to the escalating problems of crime, poverty, drugs, and unemployment in their communities, many rappers openly raged against the police, the government, big corporations, and other bastions of white male power. In response some critics attacked rap music in the late 1980s for the often overt violence, racism, sexual explicitness, and misogyny of its lyrics. In 1986 Tipper Gore of the Parents' Music Resource Center blamed the music of Run-D.M.C. for the eruption of violence at several stops on their summer tour. Others took issue with the militant, seemingly antiwhite stance of rap group Public Enemy, especially on their million-

selling 1988 album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* and in the song "Fight the Power," featured in Spike Lee's controversial 1989 movie *Do the Right Thing*. Though candid about the evils of bigotry, group members Flavor Flav and Chuck D responded to such criticism by insisting that they advocated improving black life through empowerment. During a concert at Riker's Island Prison in New York, Chuck D announced, "Our goal is to get ourselves out of this mess and be responsible to our sons and daughters so they can lead a better life. My job is to build 5,000 potential black leaders through my means of communication." Also in 1988 the recording "Move Somethin'" by 2 Live Crew ignited controversy when an Alabama store owner was arrested and charged with selling an obscene work. In 1990, 2 Live Crew was again in court, successfully defending their music against obscenity charges.

Messages

Run-D.M.C. sought to be role models for black youth through their involvement in social causes. In addition to decrying the gang fighting at their live shows, they took part in the Live Aid and Artists United Against Apartheid projects, appeared in a promo video for the Martin Luther King national holiday campaign and at an anticrack awareness day, and came out with a strong antidrug message in the song "It's Tricky." Rappers Queen Latifah and N.W.A also spoke out against drugs. Ice-T used his chilling gangland rap "Colors," in the 1988 movie of the same name, as a commentary on the harsh realities of black life in the inner cities. In 1989 leading rappers joined together in the Stop the Violence (STV) movement. Denouncing gang warfare, Chuck D and Flavor Flav of Public Enemy joined KRS-One, Heavy D, MC Lyte, and others to record the single "Self-Destruction," which sold half a million copies. STV donated \$500,000 in royalties to the National Urban League to combat illiteracy. "We wanted to reach the kids most affected by black-on-black crime," said Ann Carli, the Jive Records executive who helped organize STV. "Rap records can be a tool that can be used in education today." Black pride was also the message of rappers Sir Mix-a-Lot ("National Anthem"), Big Daddy Kane ("Young, Gifted and Black"), and Queen Latifah, who dressed in African-inspired garb. "Style is Afrocentric," she said, "and my style and music are one."

Fashion

The underground urban fashion and street language of hip-hop had also reached mainstream America by mid-decade. Inspired by rap performers such as the Furious Five, who sported head-to-toe leather, metal studs, and fur-trimmed coats, ghetto kids modified their street-gang uniforms to include gold rings and chains, personalized belt buckles, and high, knitted ski caps. Furious Five member Kurtis Blow noted, "Not only did our fans want to talk like we did, but they dressed like we did." Spotless jeans, baseball caps, and impeccable Adidas sneakers were standard for hip-hoppers as well. While "b-boys" tended to sport the flashiest clothes, "fly girls" adopted their own version of the look with leather pants and layered sweatshirts. Because of the pervasiveness of hip-hop culture in the mass media, bits of black street vocabulary—including *fresh*, *def chill* and *posse*—became common even in white suburbia. By the late 1980s white teenagers were as conscious of hip-hop fashion and status symbols as the black and Hispanic kids who had inspired them: the "right" Air Jordan sneakers

with the most complex lacing, the hippest bandannas, the perfect layering of shorts over sweatpants. Hip-hop had struck the trendiest nerve in mainstream America—the need to be on the "cutting edge" of fashion.

Break Dancing

A mixture of dancing, tumbling, and gymnastics, break dancing became one of the predominant dance forms of the 1980s, equaled only by the synchronized choreography of music videos. Break-dancers used acrobatic moves—such as splits, headstands, flips, and handsprings—spinning on their shoulders, backs, and heads in an often dazzling display of athletics and choreography. Especially in California, some breakers spun partners overhead or interlocked with other dancers; many danced in pairs. Others incorporated related street moves, such as the robotic electric boogie made popular by Michael Jackson. Most dancing was competitive and, like graffiti art and rap music, performed by young inner-city males. This dance style began in the late 1970s as a type of mock urban warfare in which members of opposing street gangs, usually Hispanic, tried to one-up each other with hot moves. These teenagers started congregating to perform and compete in graffiti-art venues such as Fashion/MODA in the South Bronx and underground clubs such as the Fun House in New York. DJs such as John "Jellybean" Benitez tried out new records at the youth clubs. Dancers would meet on street corners, spinning on pieces of linoleum or cardboard boxes to the thunderous beats of ghetto blasters. In some inner-city schools, breaking started to replace fighting between rival gangs. "It's a way to be No. 1 without blowing somebody away," said the director of a Denver juvenile-delinquency program, who pushed for a city-sponsored break-dance contest. Said one San Francisco gang member, "If you told me a few years ago that I'd be dancing, I'd laugh. It's like a thing: gangs getting ready to fight, but instead we dance."

Conclusion

Who is the God of Music?

Eze 28:12-18

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone [was] thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou [art] the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee [so]: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou [wast] perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast

defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

Isa 14:12-15

How art thou fallen from heaven, o Lucifer, son of morning! How are thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Colossians 3:17

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Romans 12:1 & 2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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Tracy A. Daniels currently works for the Department of the Army Counseling and Family Advocacy Center, Camp Humphreys Army Post Pyeongteak South Korea. As a Victim Advocate, he mediates cases and represents victims of rape & sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse. He also provides mediation services between the victim and: the Command, the alleged perpetrator, family members and other helping organizations such as the chaplain, lawyers and medical personnel as required. Tracy also conducts prevention training such as domestic violence, stress management, conflict resolution, child abuse, rape and sexual assault, and healthy dating relationships. Aside from his Professional work, Tracy is a singer/songwriter/worship leader and serves as one of the leading vocalist with Vee Worship Band. Tracy is married to Jacqueline Daniels for 30 years and has two adult daughters and three grandchildren.