

Maybe it's time to flush the potty mouths

by Sandi Dolbee

My friends say I'm going to get hurt one of these days. There was, for instance, the time I was at a gas station when a young man pulled up, leaving his rap music booming with all the subtlety of a jet plane taking off.

I couldn't help but hear the words.

"Excuse me," I said to him. "Would you like to see your sister raped?"

His face scrunched up like an album left too long in the sun. I tried to explain. "That's what your song is saying - it's talking about raping your sister. Have you ever really listened to it?"

He shrugged and turned his back. So much for my superhero powers of persuasion.

I got to thinking about that incident after radio host Don Imus was fired for calling the Rutgers women's basketball team "nappy-headed hos." Imus argued unsuccessfully that rappers use a lot worse language and they get glorified.

Democratic presidential candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are among those who have gotten buddy-buddy with famous potty mouths.

Obama invited Ludacris to his office to discuss the rapper's AIDS campaign. This is a man who raps about killing people and flicking pennies from an overpass at rush hour. And those are his good points.

Clinton's rendezvous was with Timbaland, who threw a fundraiser for her at his Miami home. Timbaland's lyrics are salted with a derogatory description of women (rhymes with "witch"), the n-word and the before-mentioned "ho." And these guys are considered mainstream artists.

Recently, two Southern California organizations that represent mobile DJs - like those who go to weddings and corporate parties - announced they will stop playing music with violent or hateful lyrics.

"If we don't make a stand against it, the envelope is just going to be pushed further and further," says Ron Jones, president of the San Diego Disc Jockey Association. His group is joined in the campaign by the San Diego chapter of the American Disc Jockey Association.

The biggest culprit is rap music, says Jones. "This is not some parent sitting around in 1957 saying Elvis is horrible. This stuff is vile."

Jones believes the ethical responsibility lies with companies that put out this music. But in the world of everyday ethics, it's more basic. It's about making the decision to turn this stuff off, one button at a time.

Newsboys, a faith-based rock group, has a rap song out that includes these lines: "See I agree we oughtta boycott hell, but we oughtta boycott dumb lyrics as well."

I think what I hear them saying is that smut is smut - no matter how good the beat.

Meanwhile, in Philadelphia, The Associated Press reports that police union leaders want a city firefighter fired over anti-police rap lyrics he wrote about turning "pigs into bacon bits."

And the hits keep coming.

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