

PARTING SHOT FROM EDWARD STRATTON

A weekly snapshot from The Daily Astorian and Chinook Observer photographers



Drivers on the Youngs Bay Bridge were entertained by a kite surfer Sunday.

ODDITY*Express yourself***Obama uses rap to tout free speech in Vietnam**

Associated Press

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam — President Barack Obama's parting shot before leaving communist Vietnam: let people express themselves.

He may have been referring to rap but the subtle mes-

sage was aimed at his hosts who have been criticized for muzzling dissent.

During his three-day visit, Obama had spoken out strongly for human rights and free speech. On Wednesday, he brought it up again during a light moment after providing a supporting beat to a female rapper who asked him a question at a town hall meeting with hundreds of young Vietnamese.

"Before I answer your question, why don't you give me a little rap, let's see what you got," Obama — his sky-

blue shirt sleeves rolled up — told the rapper known as Suboi. "Come on. Do you need like a little beat?" And he went on to show off his oral beat-producing skills on the microphone.

"Vietnamese or English?" asked Suboi, Vietnam's queen of hip-hop. "In Vietnamese, of course," the president responded. "I won't know what it means, but ... just a short version, because I've got to get going. Go ahead."

After a few seconds of Suboi's catchy hip-hop, in which the rest of the crowd joined by providing an applause beat, Obama told her: "That was good. See

there? That was pretty good." He requested the meaning of the verse and got a lesson in materialism from the 26-year-old woman.

"I was just talking about some people having a lot of money, having big houses. But actually, are they really happy?" she said. Then she went on to talk about stereotypes: how people make assumptions when they see women rappers (cute girls).

That was Obama's cue. "Well that's true in the United States too ... there's always been, sort of, sexism and gender stereotypes in the music industry, like every other part of life," he said.

He pointed out that rap, which started as an expression of poor African-Americans, is now a global phenomenon, the art form of young people around the world.

"And imagine if at the time that rap was starting off that the government had said 'no because some of the things you say are offensive or some of the lyrics are rude or you're cursing too much.'"

"That connection that we've seen now in hip-hop culture around the world wouldn't exist. So you've got to let people express themselves. That's part of what a modern 21st-century culture is all about," he said.



AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster
President Barack Obama turns to listen to a question from the audience as he speaks to Vietnamese young people during the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative town hall-style event at the GEM Center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, on Wednesday.



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