

OPINION

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Hip Hop - It's in the Game Industry profits on negative messages

BY MIQUEL JOHNSON



Hip hop and the gaming/video games such as X Box and Play Station are a big part of what young people are involved in. But are the hip hop and the gaming industry's influence on youth positive or negative? What is the message that is being relayed to these young people?

What ever happened to hip hop from the days when it was okay to listen to the lyrics in front of momma and daddy without having to turn down the song when a curse word came on, and when the music brought positive messages to their audiences like the early hip hoppers Talib Kwaleb and Mos Def.

Hip hop and gaming have many things in common. Both have big impacts in the way young people live their lives. In the

gaming industry, African American hip hop artists are being portrayed as thugs and ho's and so-called pimps that have nice cars and lots of money. From these images and language, young people begin to think it's ok to use the same negative language and behaviors that they hear in the music and see on the video games.

"Bang bang, pow-pow. Jay Z hop in the car let's go kill them. Oh shit, I can't run no more I just been shot by them fools." Those are the words I heard being played by my little brother and his cousin outside in the front yard.

I said to them, "You know, if mom came out here and seen y'all playing them games both of y'all would be getting a whooping." One of their replies was, "No we wouldn't because Justin got that stuff on his X Box and mom let us play the X Box games."

The message these games are bringing

to the youth today is how to kill each other, how to steal cars, how to run from the police and how to use bad language.

If you take two children and give them two separate games to play, one game Grand Theft Auto, where people are stealing cars, running from police and doing just about what ever they have to do to get

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a car--then you give the other child a game that has to do with learning and how to read but in a fun way --which child is more likely to grow up to be the school president and which one is more likely to grow up to be the leader of a gang?

Another thing that hip hop and gaming have in common with each other is that

they both use each other to make money. Artists put their bad stories into these top selling games to promote their records. The gaming industry is making money as well because the more hip hop music is in a game the more it draws minorities to get involved with the gaming industry.

Again, remember back in the day

when the message that the hip hop artists brought to the table was ok for young children to listen like "I gotta get home and clean my room before momma gets home". Or songs like Electric Slide when we were having fun just dancing and singing. Now it's more like bump and grind where people are being sexual

without actually having sex and violating each others zones of privacy with titillation and no respect to one another because of what the song says.

Remember when the video games had positive themes like Super Mario Brothers when Mario and Luigi would try to rescue the princess by smashing the dummy dolls. Now the games themes are whack. They have no moral value. All they do is talk about killing, stealing and shooting.

Although today's gaming industry and hip hop musicians promote negative influences, it's like they don't care about anything but making money and doing whatever it takes to sell an album or game.

Isn't there a better way to promote an album or sell a game than using profanity and killing?

Miquel Johnson is a 19-year-old student at Portland Community College.

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Fostering Change Starts Here

Most kids just want a good home

BY FAY SCHULER

Changing a life can be an easy choice. In the words of Sean, a foster youth "I want to be believed and given hope, and a family to love and have fun with." His wishes are simple, and yet poignant. Like most kids, he just wants a good home.

Sean is not alone. He is one of more than 7,000 children who are living in Oregon's foster care system. Due to family substance abuse issues, the rate of youth being placed into foster homes has risen to levels that are straining our state's system. As adult alcohol and drug addictions become more prevalent and treatment options less accessible, more and more children are left vulnerable. Many youth, unable to return home to healthy families, will stay in foster care long term, up to the age of 18. The emotional and financial costs to youth and communities are staggering.

An increasing number of Oregonians are familiar with the challenges the state faces in responding to this foster care crisis. However, most are not aware of the key role the Boys & Girls Aid Society continues to play in addressing the issue. The Boys & Girls Aid Society pioneered the original concept of foster care back in the early 1900's. We are uniquely qualified and prepared to meet this acute need for reliable foster care. As Oregon's oldest and most experienced private non-profit child-welfare agency, we deliver fostering services that communities deserve. We offer the therapeutic care kids need, while supporting our foster parents with ample attention and resources.

The Boys & Girls Aid Society has cared for over 500 displaced youth in the last year alone. We know firsthand the value and satisfaction of quality foster care. Our success is built upon our enduring partnerships with local foster families. Working together, we strengthen communities, while giving kids like Sean a second chance. Please choose to impact your own community by becoming a Boys & Girls Aid Society foster parent. Contact us today at 503-542-2311 or fostercare@boysandgirlsaid.org to find out how you can "be the change" for a child.

Fay Schuler is a foster family recruiter for the Boys and Girls Aid Society.

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