

PRO CON

Does gangsta rap go too far?

ROB CLARK

Guest columnist



Awelled obscenity, the sound of a gunshot and a scream. No, this isn't a movie. This is America's nightmare - rap music, 1994. And America is scared. Scared of the "Home Invasion" as Ice T so aptly put it. Rap music has invaded not only the Billboard charts, but the homes of most Americans.

It's a shock to the system. Many people aren't used to hearing such violent songs. But rap has always expressed this ghetto anger. Chuck D. of Public Enemy has said that rap is "black America's CNN." Although gangsta rap is undeniably violent, it is simply a reflection of violence in the ghetto.

Even in the early '80s, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message," said: "It's like a jungle / Sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under."

While this message has been intensified in recent years, the theme remains the same. The frustrations of the street are transferred to song. The shocking revelations in rap compare even to Upton Sinclair's book "The Jungle." Sinclair used the book to expose the horrible conditions of the meat-packing industry in the early 1900s and led to the Pure Food Bill in 1907. While it's unlikely that rap will affect any legislation, today's rappers are following Sinclair's example by exposing and increasing awareness of a problem ignored by most of the population.

The shocking revelations in rap compare to Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle." Today's rappers are following Sinclair's example by exposing and increasing awareness of a problem ignored by most of the population.

The reality in rap may not be reality in College Station. But then again, the war-torn towns in Somalia and Bosnia aren't a local reality either, but people are concerned with those conflicts. Ignorance of problems due to proximity is still ignorance.

Rappers are also the victims of a major double standard. Take the movie "Boyz 'n' the Hood" for example. This critically acclaimed film harshly depicted life in the ghetto. Despite the movie's violence, John Singleton was nominated for an Academy Award for best director.

But when rappers talk about the same topics, people freak out. Why? Rap is simply the musical version of "Boyz 'n' the Hood."

Many rappers are accused of promoting violence. But when you come from a world of violence, what else can you talk about? You can't expect Ice Cube or Ice T's messages to be thoughts of love and happiness - they are representing a world of frustration and anger.

Rap may not be something we want to hear, but we need to listen to those voices. We cannot ignore "the message." Perhaps the attention rap is getting will increase awareness and understanding of these problems. If we silence rap, we only silence the voice of reality.

Rob Clark is a junior journalism major

MELISSA MEGLIOLA

Columnist



Much like Nazi literature is allowed in the United States under the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech, gangsta rap is a protected channel of expression. The aggressive images of black-on-black crime, explicit sexual references and use of vile language are protected by the first amendment. Although legal, gangsta rap lyrics are considered offensive by much of the American public and have caused many people to question the validity of the medium.

Rappers become role models even though many of them stay in trouble with the law. The brutal violence and expletive language are used to increase sales rather than to enhance artistic impression.

Supporters claim that the lyrics serve as a functional outlet for a segment of society that faces low employment, high crime and escalating violence. Opponents say they contribute to the moral decline of society by romanticizing inner city problems. Others argue that the lyrics are merely a byproduct of carefully researched commercialism.

Labeled the voice of inner city life, gangsta rappers claim that their lyrics are a realistic depiction of life in their neighborhoods. They say they rap about life as they see it. Undoubtedly, life in central Long Beach, California, home to many of LA County's most powerful gangs and the neighborhood where popular rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg grew up, was full of violence, anger and fear.

"One of the reasons that we in the black community tended to ignore some of the harsh language in the lyrics was that it reflected the anger of young, black disenfranchised folk," says Nathan McCall, a reporter for the Washington Post.

McCall believes rap has evolved from a poetry of the streets to a powerfully negative influence on society. As a former teenage criminal who shot someone in order to emulate "The Godfather," he knows about the strong influence of entertainment on youth. Rappers become role models even though many of them stay in trouble with the law. The brutal violence, misogyny references and expletive language in rap music are used to increase sales rather than to enhance artistic impression. Gimmicky references to sex and power are employed to shock mainstream record buyers, who (according to Newsweek) make up the greatest percentage of the rap audience.

That marketing plan is working. Youth in both the projects and the suburbs love rap. Snoop Doggy Dogg sold 800,000 copies of his debut album, "Doggystyle," in the first week. Such success is more often attributed to a talented marketing staff rather than talented musicians and promotes continued and heightened use of violent and sexual language.

Although gangsta rap certainly cannot be blamed for the current state of our inner cities, and is within the boundaries of the law regarding obscenities, it is a national embarrassment to exploit the turmoil that plagues urban America.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major

Making sense of Whitewater mess

For the clueless, a listing of key political players

What is Whitewater? And who really cares? I gather that not many people have a clue what it's all about or why the press is fussing over it so much. I have a faint idea, thanks to spending hours reading through past issues of Newsweek and Time. Researching Whitewater is like reading a bad novel - I constantly had to go back to the beginning to look up the characters' names.

To clarify it for all those interested, I shall list a cast of the performers in this twisted play along with a brief description of their roles. Here are the biggest characters in recent news:

MADISON GUARANTY SAVINGS & LOAN was the bank that the Clintons' business partner in Whitewater, James McDougal, owned. Madison's failure cost taxpayers \$47 million. It is under investigation, which will probably shed light on the alleged flow of money between it and Whitewater.

ROSE LAW FIRM is the firm in which Hillary Clinton and many others involved in this mess were partners, including VINCE FOSTER JR., who was in charge of the Whitewater files before he killed himself. Despite a clear conflict of interest, the firm represented the FDIC in a suit against Frost & Co, the company that had audited Madison Guaranty. The suit was settled for \$1 million, \$59 million less than the FDIC had hoped to collect. The partner who represented the FDIC, WEBB HUBBELL, is now the "number three man" in the Justice Department under Janet Reno. Political favoritism?

JAMES McDUGAL and his wife were equal partners in the Whitewater real estate venture with the Clintons. McDougal claims that the Clintons never invested more than \$13,500 of their own money into the land deal. The Clintons currently claim a loss of

LYNN BOOHER

Columnist



\$47,000. It also turns out that they may have helped Madison, his savings and loan, by keeping state and federal regulators at bay when it failed. McDougal hired Rose Law Firm at a \$2,000-a-month advance against services to be performed, and then created a plan for preferred stock to raise money for Madison, his thrift.

BEVERLY BASSETT was serving as Arkansas commissioner of securities at the time of Whitewater. She approved of McDougal's stock plan in spite of a subordinate's question of whether it was even legal in Arkansas to allow a thrift to sell preferred stock to the public. Her approval was outlined in a personal letter to Hillary. The stock sale never occurred.

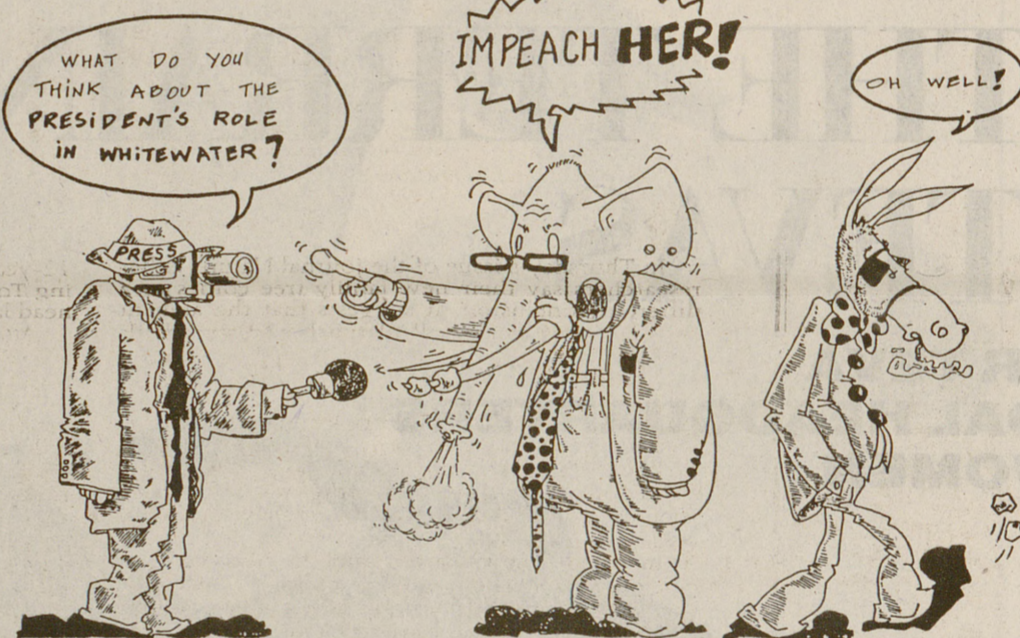
DAVID HALE is a former Little Rock municipal court judge facing trial on charges of fraud and conspiracy. In exchange for leniency in his sentencing, Hale is offering testimony on Whitewater. Hale used to run a federally-backed finance company and charged that in 1986 Clinton personally asked him to loan \$300,000 to a firm owned by McDougal's wife. Of this money, \$110,000 was funneled directly to Whitewater. Hale's credibility is shaken a bit by the fact that he secretly owned 13 of the 57 companies to which he made loans.

JAY STEPHENS was developing a case against DAN ROSTENKOWSKI, the chairman of the very powerful House Ways and Means Committee, when Clinton fired Stephens and the 92 other U.S. attorneys Bush appointed. Rostenkowski was accused of diverting taxpayers' money to personal and campaign funds. He is also Clinton's pivotal ally in the fight for health-care reform. Stephens claims that Clinton fired all of the attorneys to get rid of him without drawing attention to it. Stephens is now heading a civil investigation of Madison for the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC), a federal agency created to deal with the S & L crisis.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS is Clinton's most trusted political adviser after Hillary. He and White House deputy chief of staff HAROLD ICKES purportedly made heated phone calls to JOSHUA STEINER and ROGER ALTMAN in an effort to get Stephens removed as investigator of Madison. Steiner is Treasury Chief of Staff, and Altman was head of the RTC until recently disqualifying himself from dealing with matters related to Madison. Stephanopoulos' aides claim Stephens is a "right-wing zealot" out to get the President. The White House asserts that Stephanopoulos or Ickes' (it is unclear which one made the statements) words were misinterpreted as trying to get Stephens fired.

None of this even starts to touch on Hillary's dealings with some suspicious cattle futures or on the scores of more minor, yet relevant, characters in the drama. So I leave it to all of you to do your own research into this Whitewater affair. I started out thinking it was trivial, but now I'm not so sure.

Lynn Booher is a sophomore English and psychology major



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lowing his political position to jeopardize friendships within the Corps.

Mark Rollins, who just can't seem to let yell leader go, apologizes for involving himself in an election in which he wasn't even running for office.

We all realize the folly of saying damaging things about people when we didn't mean them and consider this situation resolved. We are tired of seeing our names in the paper every day. Gig 'em.

Will Haraway
Class of '94, Corps Commander

Mark Rollins
Class of '94, Head Yell Leader

Ross McGlothlin
Class of '94, Student Senate

Evans library must improve regulations

Approaching exams bring hordes of students into unfamiliar territory: the library. Unfortunately, many students fail to distinguish between study hour and the purpose of a university facility. There are designated group study areas, but no part of the library is safe from noisy social gatherings.

Complaints about the library are common. So are abuses by students and faculty, abuses that are encouraged by library policies. Current lax regulations limit the availability of materials. The undergraduate loan limit of two weeks should be applied to all users, without exceptions, and renewals ended. The current faculty loan limit of four months is outrageous. Any faculty member who would defend this privilege can't expect students to read more than one book per semester. Recall is uncertain and unsatisfactory and could be eliminated with stricter loan limits.

"Books three months overdue may block you from future library privileges. You will be billed for books that are six months overdue." These threats are too lenient and, evidently, no deterrent. Journal articles neatly excised with razor blades, entire issues removed from bound volumes, and books unaccountably missing, are common. These abuses condemn others to endless searches of the copy rooms, waits for interlibrary loans and visits to bookstores. Evans doesn't have to be an Aggie joke. Meanwhile keep it down.

Mary Catherine Wilheit
Graduate student

Mail Call

Faculty Friends ad unacademic, stupid

I would like to contribute to the ongoing "Faculty Friends" debate which seems to take on more significance as hard core, fundamental Christianity leaps from the pages of The Battalion at an increasing rate. Separation of church and state is a basic American tradition that has deep historical roots and a logical foundation. The effort by this group of pious professors to praise Jesus with ads in The Battalion each semester is, in my view, a glaring violation of that tradition, because many of those listed occupy positions of academic authority at a state-supported institution.

It is also, from my perspective, a truly disgusting violation of global academic tradition in that this group of "faculty" is claiming one metaphysical truth to the exclusion of all others.

I am sure that these folks have good reason to proclaim their faith this way and, as indicated by L. Murphy Smith, this grotesque display of small minded parochialism - like similar pronouncements from the Ku Klux Klan - might be protected by the U.S. Constitution.

These advertisements are not, however, academically correct, although they certainly might be politically correct in that individuals able to make or break promotions are among this select group. At any rate, I see the "Faculty Friends" as something allied to Bonfire and other archaic "traditions" of this institution - unacademic, anti-intellectual, and fundamentally stupid.

One is, of course, always seeking intellectually and spiritually satisfying answers to life's most important questions. Why, for instance, are items like "Faculty Friends," Bonfire, evil secretaries, etc. so much a part of everyday life at A&M?

I feel that these bizarre local phenomena are probably attributable to the strong inbreeding tradition of Aggieland. As indicated by the recent replacement for Dr. Koldus, TAMU has no problem violating an ancient academic taboo and regularly hiring faculty with academic experience that does not extend beyond this campus. Cultural inbreeding in an academic set-

Three cadets agree

When we made Rush Limbaugh's show, we realized that this soap opera on the Quad had gone too far. After the last week of mudslinging in the media and around campus, we are aware that there are more than a few in Aggieland who consider at least one of us three to be a complete jerk. In retrospect, this is understandable. For our own individual reasons, we each felt that we were in the right, and rather than work it out in a mature manner, we allowed our personal disputes to become public knowledge, giving Texas A&M, the Corps and ourselves a black eye in the process.

After a lengthy discussion, we have talked out our differences and have come to respect each others' points of view. Despite the apparent severity of the situation, we can now laugh together at the foolishness of our actions. Each of us is in complete agreement with the following:

Will Haraway is definitely no public relations expert. He allowed his personal feelings about the Corps to cloud his better judgment when he signed the memo and interviewed with The Battalion. He, more than anyone on campus, realizes his mistakes.

Ross McGlothlin, who is enjoying great popularity on the Quad these days, regrets al-

Hugh Wilson
Professor of Biology

