

OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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And that's a rap

By Christopher LaFuria
editor in chief

In honor of Black History Month, it is only fitting that we pay tribute to the beginning and the end of a genre of music that was founded by, but not limited to, the Black population of music. In the early 70s, as a response to the demise of disco music, many Black, Latino and Puerto Rican musicians developed a form of musical expression that came to be known as hip-hop. In the mid-90s the genre as the American public came to know and adore took an unexpected turn towards not expressing the intentions of the founders, but basking in the glory of fat paychecks, fancy cars and oversized houses.

Although the genre took off in the 70s, a large portion of the early success can be credited to Grand Master Flash, the Furious Five and the Sugar Hill Gang. It is through Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five that the terms "hip-hop" and "MC" were coined. It has become accepted that the term "hip-hop" was Keith Cowboy's, a rapper in the Furious Five, way of expressing the cadence of the U.S. Army's march in response to a good friend who had joined the army. Melle Mel, one of the lyricists for the Furious Five, was one of the first musicians to refer to themselves as an "MC."

In the 70s, hip-hop took off with such acts as Grand Master Flash, Sugar Hill Gang and Kurtis Blow. In the middle of the 1980s, with the emergence of LL Cool J, Run DMC and Public Enemy, hip-hop became more than just musical expression. It became the reflection of a culture of individuals who needed an outlet for their own expression. Whether it was a need to sport a pair of unlaced Adidas sneakers and a tracksuit like in the case of Run DMC, who used hip-hop to express their musical beats and loops, or it was an expression of political and official injustice like in Public Enemy and later NWA, hip-hop took on all forms of appearances.

Into the 90s, hip-hop took yet another form of expression, this time to reflect the struggles of Black people on the

streets and in society. Acts such as NWA, Ice-T, Tupac Shakur, Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre and Warren G used their lyrics to express their struggles on the streets, their distaste for authority and their perpetual grapple with the drug underworld.

Songs such as Ice-T's "Cop Killer" used lyrics to stretch the First Amendment and express downright detest for police in an artful manner. "COP KILLER/it's better you than me/COP KILLER/f*** police brutality/COP KILLER/I know your family's grieving/COP KILLER/but tonight we get even." Within the song, there are references to Rodney King, a Black citizen who was beaten by the LAPD.

Enter Diddy in 1998 (then known as Puff Daddy), who, along with other notorious money-makers, forever changed the face and direction of hip-hop. With the release of his track "It's All About the Benjamins," hip-hop became more of an outlet to express love of money and the need to have the biggest bank account and the fattest wallet. Later in 1998, rapper B.G., with Juvenile, Birdman and Lil Wayne introduced the phrase "bling-bling," which was used to express jewelry worn by wealthy rappers.

This epidemic of lyrics about money, sex and drugs spread into the new millennium with acts such as Ludacris, Chingy, Nelly and Ginuwine who cared more about expressing their material wealth than for rapping about the emotional struggles that were endured by other rappers throughout the 80s and early 90s. Although there are rappers such as Talib Kweli, Mos Def and Common who still remain true to hip-hop's intention, to hit the mark for a hip-hop artist in today's society, a rapper needs to write about wealth, sex and drugs. Hip-hop artists in the 80s maintained their identity by expressing tangible and genuine issues. Today, most rap songs share the same form of commercial success and monetary gain. This is why we need to pay tribute to the fathers of hip-hop--the Grand Master Flashes and the Sugar Hill Gangs. And to pay tribute to the death of their genre and hope we never forget hip-hop's roots.

This week in politics



By Chris Brown
copy editor

On Feb. 6, the House Oversight and Government Committee heard testimony concerning the shipment of over \$12 billion of cash to Iraq between May 2003 and June 2004. Let that sink in...CASH. It was Iraqi money from oil sales and leftover revenue from the UN Oil-for-food program; it was the responsibility of the United States, under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483, to make sure that money was spent appropriately. Needless to say, the U.S. failed miserably and since the Iraqi money ran out U.S. taxpayers are forced to foot the bill for Iraqi reconstruction.

The main problem seemed to be how much oversight and transparency the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) needed to provide in the handling of the money. The CPA had the job of getting Iraq's government up and running again

after the invasion: part of that job included distributing the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI). "The CPA's interpretation of transparency was that [it] required transparency with respect to how the CPA managed the development fund for Iraq internally, and not what happened to them after they were transferred to the ministries," testified the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Stuart Bowen, a staunch critic of the CPA's accounting practices.

The financial oversight problems and inability of the CPA to rebuild the Iraqi economy stem from the composition of the CPA workforce. When choosing the CPA staff the Bush administration chose a bunch of recent college graduates with no experience in financial management instead of seasoned experts from Treasury, Energy, and Commerce Departments. It also chose an administrator, Paul Bremer, who had no experience in civil reconstruction efforts and staff members who had little overseas experience: a majority of whom applied for their first passport when hired to go to Iraq.

However, the lost money in Iraq isn't even the biggest story to come out of the hearing: it's old news. Bowen first reported these findings about the \$12 billion lost and inexperience in the CPA workforce in an audit report to a Republican-controlled congress in Jan. 2005. The bigger story is that Congress finally performed one of its most important functions in government,

oversight of the Executive branch. Why hold a committee hearing on it now, over two years later? Because no one bothered to hold one in the first place.

Governor Ed Rendell unveiled his budget plan to the State Legislature last week. Included in the plan is a proposal to increase the state sales tax to 7%, accelerate his plan to cut property taxes, a plan to lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and an overall increase in spending to help cover the costs of diminished financial support from the federal government.

Critics claim that the increased sales tax would drive consumers out of state or to the internet and thereby hurt in-state businesses. That makes no sense. Neighboring states' sales tax rates range from 5.5-7%. That means at most, someone could save 1.5 cents per dollar spent. If gasoline prices remain steady (that's a big if) and if your car gets good gas mileage, it costs about 9 cents per mile; not including the cost of your time to go out of state or the hassle of having to drive somewhere. Even if gas costs are split between four people, each person would have to spend about \$225 on merchandise if the people go to Buffalo or Cleveland from Erie to break even; anything above that and the cents saved start adding up. I don't know anyone willing to make that sacrifice for so little. The best bet for increased business in Pennsylvania is to attract it here with low property taxes and increased incentives that can be offered only if we cover the costs with a sales tax.



What the hell was he thinking?

By Janet Niedenberger
opinion editor

This past Wednesday, Feb. 7, an article was published in *The Recorder*, the newspaper at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). The article, entitled, "Rape Only Hurts If You Fight It" was written by the paper's opinion editor, John Petroski. The article is disgusting, and it trivializes as well as mocks rape.

According to Petroski, "Far from a vile act, rape is a magical experience that benefits society as a whole...If it weren't for rape, Western Civilization might not exist as we know it today." Basically, Petroski has decided that rape isn't just okay, but it's necessary. After reading the article, I thought that maybe it was a sick attempt at satire, but something changed my mind. I found out about this article through a Facebook group; the numbers of members in this group grow by the second, and hundreds of people have given their opinions of the piece. Earlier today, Thursday, Feb. 8, Petroski wrote a message on the group's board. I cannot quote any of the comment, though, because Petroski has apparently deleted his Facebook profile. The comment, however, was a sincere

apology from Petroski; the apology included verification that the article in fact was not meant to be satirical. Petroski claimed that he was just stupid for writing the article, and that he was very sorry.

It seems that no one is really ready to accept this apology. Many people are enraged; on Monday, Feb. 12, the Student Government Association at CCSU is holding a town hall meeting so that the concerns raised by this article can be addressed.

The president of CCSU, Dr. Jack Miller, has also taken an action against the article. He put a statement on CCSU's website, saying, "Many times in the past I have been called upon to defend First Amendment principles. But what Mr. Petroski wrote in the February 7 issue of 'The Recorder' deserves to be roundly condemned as deeply offensive and hurtful." Miller went on to say, "We will in the near future gather a group composed of students and faculty to examine the editorial process and to take positive steps to educate students about the damage such blatantly misogynistic and homophobic content causes. While we always want to protect journalistic integrity and First Amendment principles, we need to be sure that students understand that such hateful speech is

not protected and simply is not worthy, on any ground, of publication."

Being an opinion editor myself, I am still dumbfounded as to how such trash could possibly have been printed in a college publication. The fact that none of the other editors omitted it from the issue also makes me doubt their ability to properly run their newspaper. Petroski not only disgraced *The Recorder*, he has insulted journalists everywhere.

Petroski ended his article as "tastefully" as he began it, saying, "But if there is one bread and butter reason for why rape should not only be accepted, but even endorsed, it is because our news editors are in dire need of interesting stories for our front page. Bookstore stories? Fossils? One dollar coins? Please. Now, some saucy circle-jerk rape action? Yeah, that's the ticket." I'm pretty much speechless.

If you want to read the article for yourself, go to: <http://clubs.ccsu.edu/recorder/currentissue.pdf>. The article is on page seven. If you're interested in the Facebook group, go to: <http://psu.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2232925990>. If that link doesn't work, search for the group, which is named, "Petition against 'Rape Only Hurts If You Fight It' by John Petroski."

Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page. Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to jan219@psu.edu or directly to the Beacon office, located in the Reed Building.

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the submission.

All submissions must include the writer's year in school, major and name as The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue. All submissions are considered, but because of space limitations, some may not be published.

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.