

in a

Word

Father LeDoux
and youth on brainwashing
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Published by The Society of the Divine Word, Southern Province, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

Volume 19 , No.4, April 2001



Photo by Father Pawlicki, SVD

WHAT DO OUR CHILDREN HEAR?

Students respond from Queen of Angels Academy and Verbum Dei High School, schools in Los Angeles, California



Reflections on Life!

Rev. Jerome LeDoux, S.V.D., syndicated columnist

"First of all I don't think this article is telling the truth at all. Nobody is brainwashed because of music. Music is just another form of entertainment. The article also spoke about lyrics degrading women. Well, that all depends on the person."

Starla M.
Los Angeles CA

"Well, what can I say? It always seems that there is something wrong with teenagers. I suppose a few teens are being "brainwashed", but most of us are not. Even the baby boomers were criticized for their actions...Maybe one of the rappers mentioned will have a complete change of heart and become a priest. Who knows!"

Inga W.
Los Angeles CA

"I completely agree with all this article is saying. I have totally been numbed. I am no longer shocked by what I hear in rap music today. It is a shame that I can so easily listen to a song that talks badly about women or listen to a lady rapper degrade herself and not be outraged about it. I think that I'm not upset by the words in the songs because they don't describe who I am, or even come close to what I think of myself. I do believe it is time for a change because girls today hear these popular songs and see them as an invitation to become what is described in the words of the song. We should promote songs that promote positive aspects of life."

Tiffany P.
Los Angeles CA

We have not been brainwashed. There is a lot more of free self expression. In the 60's there was more sexual freedom. In the 70's there was more of a drug use freedom. But in the 90's and 2000's you see that we have been brainwashed by music and the sex and drug abuse in it. Music from the 60's and 70's all have the same lyrics. This Reflection of Life is full of

Rachel W.
Los Angeles CA

"Well my personal opinion on this is that only the weak get brainwashed because people who know better know not to follow that type of violent lifestyle...the music might degrade women, but women also write songs that degrade men...so this goes both ways."

Alejandra S.
Los Angeles CA

The X Generation, which considers itself the hippest, the most knowledge-able and the best-informed in history, is showing itself to be very vulnerable to the worst enemies any of us have to face: the merchants of brainwashing.

Who are these merchants? They are the many, varied, devious, insidious individuals without but especially within the music, movie, tabloid and general entertainment media who take over the minds of others through the seductive, pleasurable, stimulating, electrifying buzz of music and drama.

Compared to any generation in history, the rap icons are "spawning a generation of children who feel more lost, terrified, disenfranchised, hurt and hopeless," says Sister Mary Rose McGeady, president of Covenant House.

Of course, I agree a hundred percent with sister's assessment. However, it goes far deeper than a "dark philosophy of recklessness, hopelessness and nothingness" which she refers to. In this case, the worst mischief rests not in the message itself but in the means of achieving it; namely, brainwashing.

A healthy, clean mind can deal with all the garbage which envelops us constantly in wrap-around suffocation. Not so a brainwashed mind which has been negatively preconditioned by subliminal as well as in-your-face propaganda to say and do what feels good regardless of consequences.

The greatest danger inherent in brainwashing is that we are unaware of our being brainwashed at any given time. By its definition, brainwashing happens unbeknown to us. Frankly, that means we adults are almost in the same boat as Generation Xers, unless we remain extremely on our guard.

Rappers Eminem, Puff Daddy, Dr. Dre and others who romanticize murder, unlawful sex, blasphemy, profanity, obscenity, abuse and sundry are drumming into our brain a steady tattoo of negative, immoral, brutal stimuli. The worst thing this drumming does is numb our minds and consciences.

God and motherhood, the most sacred realities in life, are degraded and used primarily as vehicles for cursing and displaying macho toughness in the ugly, inherently stupid dialect of dirty rap. How younger or older women can abide the horrible insults to their womanhood, only God knows.

Since many women are tolerant and willing to put up

We're all brainwashed

with dirty rappers' shameful lyrics which degrade, insult and totally disrespect females, we are given to understand that perhaps the majority of women are already so brainwashed that they tolerate the very filthy lyrics which berate them.

When women capitulate en masse, we know that the back-door, covert, sneaky, devious, subconscious attack on morality by horrible lyrics is working. If it numbs the women, who are usually far more mature and stable, how much more effectively must it be working on countless rudderless youth?

Is it any wonder that so many children, adolescents and young adults, numbed by a steady din and diet of negative music, are hell-bent on violence and have such little regard for womanhood, family, morality and religion? Where do we begin with this hydra which plagues our all-too-willing youth?

Curiously, dirty rappers and other obscene/profane musicians are the first victims of their own seamy trade, although you could not convince them that they are real victims in the realm of morality, respect and Godliness. To hear their bravado tell it, they are strong, revealing, relevant and truthful.

That is precisely because they, the brainwashers themselves, are unaware of their own plight since they are already brainwashed and living in the mode of moral zombies. To all appearances, they seem totally immersed in their shady work because they are persuaded that they are truly hot stuff.

Putting it mildly, dirty rappers/musicians need salvation in the worst way, in that they are completely oblivious of their need to be saved from the filthy horrors of their trade. They need to be rescued from their selfish, spiritually deadly occupation of spreading lyrics which destroy the morality of others.

Then, again, maybe the dirty musicians and their sponsors can be turned around through force only. Parents and guardians need to get into the act, educating their little ones to the standards of the Good News, and pressuring them to abandon seamy rap for positive, uplifting rap and music.

The force referred to here is moral force, a real force indeed if it translates into a weak market for dirty music. Our primary problem is, we're all brainwashed to some degree, full of biases and prejudices. "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!" Yes, all change begins with me.

"I guess that people think that rappers brainwash us. I really think that this is really stupid because no one can pressure you into buying what you don't want to buy. When I hear their music I really don't hear nothing wrong. Their just people who are trying to make a living like anyone else."

Deisi C.

Los Angeles CA

"I feel that yes it is wrong for people in the music industry, the artist who put down women calling us names...I'd like to know what their mothers, aunts and sisters feel about it...These men really need Jesus in their lives"

Y. Tijani

Los Angeles CA

"I myself listen to all types of music and I'm not being brainwashed by what they say. I truly feel that rappers should be given a chance to express their talent. It all goes back to the First Amendment to the Constitution...freedom of speech, press, assembly and petition. I feel everyone should have a voice to speak their minds. I think (brainwashing happens to) the younger people who are not being taught by their parents."

Debbie D.

Los Angeles CA

...Rap can't change my life. Rap can't help me with my ups and downs. Rap can't get me closer to God."

Larnell R.

Los Angeles CA

"I understand and can relate to what artists like Snoop go through because I have been in situations like theirs. Music helps me get through a lot of problems."

M. Mach II

Los Angeles CA

"I do not understand how rap stars are considered so deadly and negative when action movie stars, such as Tom Cruise, are considered to be role models."

Vinicio O.

Los Angeles CA

A lot of rappers use a lot of dirty words in their songs especially towards women...I do think it's wrong to think of women that way and I do think it's wrong the way women conduct themselves."

Keith C.

Los Angeles CA

"I believe that I am not influenced by rap videos because I know that the things they show are not necessarily true. I believe that these videos are a bad influence on all children because these children will believe that this is the way you should act, think and dress."

Sergio H.

Los Angeles CA

in a word or two

Bishop Perry Middle School of New Orleans LA is a tuition-free Catholic middle school for African American boys who exhibit potential for success, but are at risk due to negative social and economical influences in their environments. Bishop Perry Middle School serves families that fall below the poverty line; therefore, every student receives an academic scholarship.

Bishop Perry Middle School is seeking a dedicated educational leader, firm in the Catholic faith to be its next principal. Applicant must be willing to embrace the foundations currently present and build upon them with a strong vision for the future. As principal, responsibilities will include curriculum and instruction; disciplinarian of students; summer camp program; admissions, etc. Must be a practicing Catholic, have a Master's Degree, and be sensitive to the Black Catholic agenda. Send cover letter, resume and references to:

Fr. David G. Cray, SSE, President
Bishop Perry Middle School
1941 Dauphine St.
New Orleans LA 70116
Email: david.cray@bpms.org

The Bowman-Francis Ministry is having their Fourth Annual Sankofa Summit, May 4-6, 2001 in St. Louis, Missouri. Ambassadors of the Word, a group of priests who go out to our youth, use their gifts and talents to spiritually educate and uplift them and keep them on the right track. The Summit is a perfect time and place to share values and views. Some workshops include Challenges of Stewardship, Children behind the Wall, Abstinence - Challenges and Choices, Managing Life's Struggles, Black Spirituality for a New Age and a New People. For more information, contact Mrs. Angela Scheck at (317) 632-9349 or Rev. Chester Smith, SVD at (317) 632-9349.

Ken and Gretchen Lovingood have been ministering to married and engaged couples for the last twenty-five years. Their involvement in Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, Parenting for Peace and Justice and Families Against Violence have led them to obtain Masters in Psychology degrees which allows them to now practice Marriage and Family Mediation. The Mediation practice includes private and group sessions and workshops focusing on Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Family Meetings, and other issues dealing with couple relationships. For more information, contact:

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On the 33rd anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., Archbishop of Chicago, released ***Dwell in My Love: A Pastoral Letter on Racism***, which calls on parishes, schools and society as a whole to take strong action to address racial and systemic injustice. According to Cardinal George, "This letter is part of our Archdiocesan commitment to evangelize and bring people together. Each of us needs to examine how we in the Archdiocese respond to Jesus' prayer that we be one. How does the Archdiocese manifest the unifying presence of the Spirit in the midst of racial and cultural, gender and class, the religious, theological and ideological diversity that characterize our society?"

In the pastoral letter, **the Cardinal describes the four types of racism that are practiced today: spatial** (patterns of metropolitan development that isolate people of color), **institutional** (a public pattern of social and racial discrimination), **internalized** (a private sense of identity that reflects social patterns of racial injustice), and **individual** (prejudice against other groups of people). The letter also lists steps that must be taken if church and society are to counter the debilitating effects of racism.

For the administration of the Archdiocese, the letter approves an evaluation of administrative hiring patterns so that persons in managerial and decision-making positions reflect the ethnic and racial composition of the diverse Catholic community. The Archdiocese's administration will continue to affirm its support of church-based community organizations that work for economic justice.

The entire text of the ***DWELL IN MY LOVE*** can be found at the archdiocesan web site <http://www.archdiocese-chgo.org>

We thank Sister Leona Bruner, SSF and Brother Richard Morrill, SVD for encouraging students at Verbum Dei and Queen of Angels Academy to submit their comments. Find a complete listing of comments on the *IN A WORD* web site. We gladly welcome any further comments from young people on this article.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 5,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among blacks in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center.

James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, Nicole Swan, and Matthew Broussard comprise the editorial staff.

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IN A WORD is not published during July and August