

Shame on you BET!

Written by Dr. Janet Taylor
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I watched the recent BET (Black Entertainment Television) Awards Show at the Shrine Auditorium for two reasons. The first was obviously because I wanted to watch the tribute to the recently-departed Michael Jackson. The audience, including myself, was not disappointed. From Beyonce to the surprise appearance of Michael's sister Janet, the awards show touched the hearts of millions. The second reason that I tuned in is for the live acts. There is nothing like listening to singers in real time.

Now, I enjoy rap with the exception of rappers who use lyrics to degrade, defame or threaten others. In my opinion, the music is not productive and I frequently will simply turn it off. On the show, when rapper Drake appeared sitting down to rest his torn Achilles, I was like OK ... pretty tame. I don't have a problem with Lil' Wayne, he is creative and his writing is brilliant at times. However, his song "Every Girl" is offensive and disturbing. The lyrics are shocking and crude. Perhaps, they are what our kids are used to. I have teenagers, girls no less, who have heard the song and like it. My problem was the pre-teens who were proudly on stage, shaking their groove things to this misogynistic, disrespectful song. It was ridiculous. Debra Lee, the CEO of BET, also the mother of two children, should be asking herself who approved this and how these young girls were allowed to be a part of this "act".

It is time for perspective here. In the minutes that were wasted on stage during this song, almost four women were forcibly raped in the United States. The age group 13-17, that these young "dancers" belong, include the highest victims of forcible rape at 32%. Women who are sexually or physically abused just once in their lifetime are more likely to experience a poor range of physical and mental health outcomes.

Why are we as women and mothers passively allowing our young girls to be utilized as sexual entertainment? We need to wake up and understand the importance of what we expose our

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children and teens to. Surely, you would not pop in porn for movie night with your family, how can one justify the bright idea of pre-teens rocking out to hardcore rap under the watchful eyes of the adults in the audience?

The negative portrayal of young women and girls can lead to unequal power in relationships, influence sexual behavior, contributes to violence against women, and challenges what is acceptable norms and behavior within gender. I am not making an indictment against rap, my issue is with the producers who allowed this debacle to happen.

Find the clip (we tried but it looks like BET has pulled it from YouTube), and talk to your daughters and sons about the song and the "dancers." It's an opportunity to hear their feedback and share your own thoughts and experiences.

For the record, my girls thought that it "was strange" and inappropriate. They were embarrassed for the girls. I agree.

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