

# Rap: Art imitating lives and deaths of black men

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Special to Sentinel-Voice

The names of two slain Black men: James Bryd Jr. of Jasper, Texas and Amadou Diallo of Bronx, New York (via West Africa) have recently become painfully familiar.

Both men were viciously murdered by White men while unarmed at the time of their deaths. Both deaths resulted from an all too common offense reserved for Black men in America referred to as "LWB," living while black.

This abbreviation was recently coined by Earl

Graves, publisher of the Black Enterprise Magazine, in its May issue. These ongoing onslaughts directed against Black men are consistent with themes found in contemporary rap by artists like the Roots, Brand Nubian, KRS-One, Chuck D., NWA, and the late Tupac Shakur.

Young Black male rappers have been poignantly declaiming the realities of their lives in America to a hip-hop polemic that has often left them alienated from the so-called moral Black middle class because of the use of explicit language. The words, used by many of these

rappers turned story tellers, reveal a painful truth of the continued institutionalized hatred that is still being waged against Black men in America.

It has taken the recent publicized deaths of innocent Black men and the flagrant resurgence of overt institutionalized racism by various police departments, i.e. random traffic stops to create the beginnings of a renewed sense of solidarity in the African-American community.

Many middle class Black males — having had the veneer of their upward

mobility tainted by White racism — are better able to identify with themes found in rap. The attack on Black men by the dominant culture clearly illuminates the scripts found in much of the hard-core rap of the last 10 years that has been created by disenfranchised Black men of the hip-hop generation.

Unfortunately in the 90s many members of the more conservative Black middle class joined ranks with the White elites' smoke screen to wage a war against the use of angry lyrics and profanity.

Here we go again with shooting the Black rap

messengers for simply "telling it like it is." Tupac's "Living In This White Man's World" describes the ongoing oppression well. The once-banned NWA rap song "F the Police" also is now more uniformly viewed as a rapper's response to White institutionalized police brutality.

Racial profiling, although now benignly admitted to by the powers-that-be, has been around for a long time. At the turn of the century, freedom fighters, like the late Ida B. Wells, used journalism to shed light on how Black men and women were being

tortured, mutilated and lynched for false crimes.

Mary Church Terrell is another example of a strong Black woman who shaped national dialogues to combat oppression directed against Black men.

More recently books like Cornell West's "Race Matters" and Haki Madhubuti's "Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?" have arguably helped to shape the national discourse for the empowerment of Black men.

However, I have yet to hear the words of these well-  
(See Rap, Page 10)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Kimberly Howard

Newcomer Cha-Cha gave an impressive accounting of herself despite lukewarm response from the House of Blues crowd inside the Mandalay Bay.

## Ginuwine

(Continued from Page 8)

him. He then sang some of his new songs and his performance ended with a solo played by his barefoot electric guitarist. Overall, Hollister did put on a good show.

When it was time for Ginuwine to perform, the crowd who had been so lifeless before, transformed to a mob of screaming fans. All it took for the transformation was for the bachelor to grace their

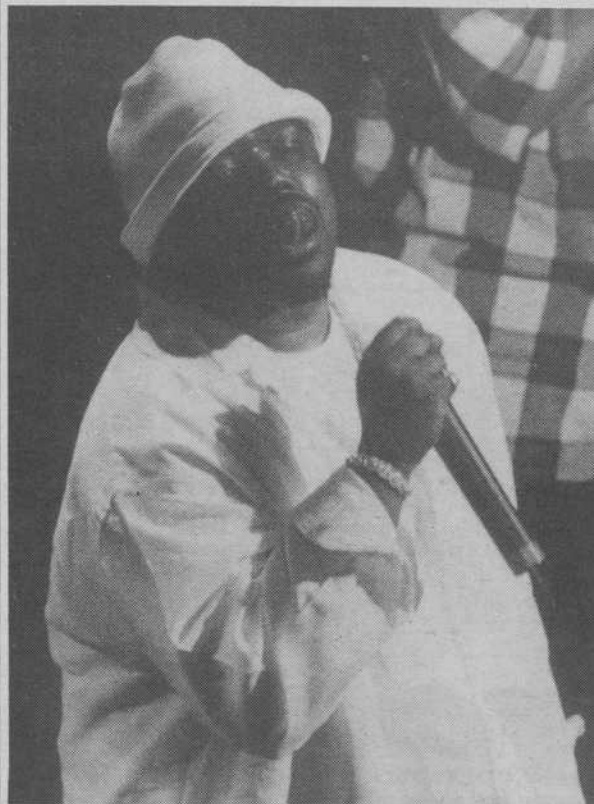
presence. Once Ginuwine slid on stage, the female fans went crazy.

Ginuwine entered the spotlight as smooth and cool as ever, wearing red leather accented with rhinestones. He immediately showed his audience why he is just as known for his dancing as he is for his singing. Accompanied by three distinguished dancers dressed in all black, Ginuwine demonstrated some of his fanciest footwork to the audience.

If one thing should be said about the performance, it should be that the energy level was off the charts. The dancers were hype and the band was jamming. And of course the megastar himself didn't hold anything back in his effort to give his audience exactly what they wanted.

He further pleased them when he appropriately gave tribute to R&B icon Roger Troutman.

Ginuwine ended the show with his latest hit, "What's So Different," and even after he left the stage the fans were begging for more.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Kimberly Howard

Former Blackstreet artist Dave Hollister touched on his days with the Teddy Riley-led group. He also sang several songs from his new album.

## Diva Search: Hal Jackson looks for Talent

John T. Stephens III  
Sentinel-Voice

Talented young ladies have an opportunity to participate in an international pageant where they can win inter-cultural, musical, and educational scholarships.

Hal Jackson's Talented Teens International (TTI), created in July 1970 in Atlanta, Georgia, was originally named "Miss Black Teenage America". Jackson changed the name to accommodate other teens

interested in the talent contest who lived outside of the U.S. They are now accepting applicants for the competition.

"I am searching for a talented young lady between the ages of 13 and 17," said Vilma Farrar, the contest's Las Vegas spokeswoman. "The contestant will travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands this summer to compete for the International Crown."

"The pageant is a fabulous opportunity for girls," Farrar

said. "To develop their innate skills as well as their performing talent."

Ce Ce Peniston, Evelyn "Champagne" King, Karyn White, Sheryl Lee Ralph, and Jada Pinkett are some of the notable contestants who competed for scholarships offered by TTI.

Denzel Washington, Michael Jackson, New Edition, Boyz II Men, Janet Jackson, Blair Underwood, and The Temptations are just  
(See Jackson, Page 20)



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