

# Hip-hop stars aim to get fans to voting booths

NEW YORK (AP)—When Sean “P. Diddy” Combs unveiled his get-out-the-vote initiative, it had all the elements of a hot album release party. There was a DJ spinning cool songs. A “street team” of young kids wearing T-shirts promoting the cause. A few supermodels. Even an A-list celebrity face in Democratic strategist James Carville (well, A-list for political world, that is).

P. Diddy is just the latest rap figure this year to try and make voting cool to a hip-hop generation that Combs has dubbed “the forgotten ones.”

Hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons brought his Hip-Hop Summit Action Network to the Democratic National Convention on Monday, registering voters with hip-hop stars. The muzzled mouth of OutKast’s Andre 3000 is adorning new public service ads by the nonpartisan group Declare Yourself, with the motto: “Only You Can Silence Yourself.” And Jadakiss, who raps about drug dealing, violence and other thuggery in his lyrics, is raising political issues in his new song “Why” and giving interviews about voting and getting the minimum wage raised.

“This is the collective consciousness of hip-hop at work,” said Simmons, who over the past three years has enlisted superstars like Jay-Z, Beyonce, Eminem, Nelly and Ludacris as his group registered thousands of young Black and Latino fans to vote.

“It’s a cultural snowball effect. We want people to feel like if you don’t vote you’re an idiot,” he told The Associated Press.

The idea of rap stars as political motivators may seem opposite the image projected by many of today’s rappers—a crowd that leans toward sex, violence, partying and the bling-bling lifestyle.

However, James Bernard, who organized the Hip-Hop Political Convention in Newark, N.J., earlier this year, points out rap’s long history of political muckraking, from KRS-One and Public Enemy in the mid-1980s to the current group Dead Prez.

Although rap has been rapped plenty for its raw content, Bernard believes that “hip-hop music is getting more mature. ... I think it’s just taken time for this conversation to bubble up.”

Jadakiss and P. Diddy acknowledge as much.

Jadakiss says it was time for his music to reflect a larger view of the world: “As an artist, you’re supposed to grow. I’m just trying to show maturity and growth as an artist.”

P. Diddy, who says he hasn’t voted since the 2000 election, says running the New York City marathon last year while raising funds for charity helped him realize he could do more with his celebrity.

“I think we’re growing up, and we’re starting to recog-

nize our power, and power is responsibility,” he told The AP. “We have kids, we’re thinking about other things. We want to do other things than making jewelry hot and clothes hot.”

“The same way we made a Biggie (Smalls) album hot ... we’re going to saturate you with our message,” P. Diddy said of his new campaign, Citizen Change, which he launched last week.

There have been past efforts to get out the hip-hop vote. During the 2000 elec-

tion, Rap the Vote, an offshoot of the group Rock the Vote, used Mary J. Blige, P. Diddy, Queen Latifah and others to generate voter turnout among Black and minority youth.

But Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study for the American Electorate, says those efforts haven’t really helped much. Except for a few elections, he said, youth voting has been on a downward spiral.

“People don’t vote because of hip-hop artists or

rock stars, they vote because they think there’s something important to decide,” said Gans.

In the 2000 election, about 60 percent of those registered to vote actually did, according to the U.S. Census Bureau figures. However, among 18 to 24-year-olds, only 36.1 percent did.

A sign of the hip-hop’s latent power could be 34-year-old Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, who likes to quote Tupac Shakur and, when he was elected in 2001,

inspired a 40 percent increase in turnout among voters ages 18 to 40 from the previous mayoral race.

Some question whether P. Diddy—or any celebrity—can reverse youth voter apathy, particularly among minorities.

“Celebrities help, but it has to be combined with an organization on the ground who have people and resources who actually go out and register people and at election time reminds those people (See Vote, Page 9)



## Our Home Equity Line of Credit is loaded with pluses.

**4.00%**  
APR\*

- + No closing costs
- + Easy application & less paperwork
- + Borrow up to 125% of home's value
- + Payments as low as interest only
- + Fixed-rate loan option

Think Smart. Bank Smart.

**usbank**  
Five Star Service Guaranteed

For more information or to apply, stop into your nearest branch, call 888-444-BANK(2265) ext. 4100 or visit the #1 Internet Banking site at [usbank.com](http://usbank.com)\*\*

\*The 4.00% variable APR is available with any new or existing U.S. Bank checking account, loan to value (LTV) of 80% or less and credit limit greater than \$50,000. Higher rates apply for higher loan to values. The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) will vary at Prime Rate as published in the Wall Street Journal. As of July 1, 2004 the variable rate for lines of credit is Prime - .25% to Prime + 2.75%. The APR is 4.00% to 7.00%. There is a floor rate of 3.99% APR. The rate will not exceed 25% APR. An annual fee of up to \$90 may apply after the first year. The \$50 fixed-rate loan option fee of \$50 is waived for the first loan. Offer is effective for new applications taken by August 13, 2004 and the account must book by September 13, 2004. Offer is subject to normal credit approval. Property insurance is required. Interest on amounts exceeding 100% of the available equity is not tax deductible. Consult your tax advisor regarding the deductibility of interest. Rate subject to change. Some restrictions may apply. Home equity loans and lines of credit are offered through U.S. Bank National Association ND. \*\*As ranked by Speer and Associates. Member FDIC