

Ghetto meets suburbs, results vapid in depraved film

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

"The Cookout" must have been what Samuel L. Jackson had in mind when he said he wasn't going to make any more movies with rappers-turned-actors. For the only thing that makes this otherwise forgettable blaxploitation flick noteworthy are its unfortunate contributions from hip-hoppers both in front of and behind the camera.

In this regard, the relentlessly offensive film merely reflects a recent cinematic trend, ala "Soul Plane" and "Barbershop 2," towards relying heavily on rappers to resurrect crude, cringe-inducing stereotypes in an indiscriminate quest for a laugh.

Given the base nature of the average rap video, I sense that these artists have become popular with the studios because they have already proven themselves to have no problem promulgating insulting images of African-Americans.

"The Cookout" was produced by Queen Latifah who was also responsible for its cliché-ridden script. And it

was directed by Lance Rivera, CEO of Entertainment Records, which he co-founded with the late gangsta icon, Notorious B.I.G. Besides her highness, the movie features fellow rap artists like Ja Rule and Eve in an expanded ensemble cast which includes Danny Glover, original "Charlie's Angel" Farah Fawcett, SNL alum Tim Meadows, Frankie Faison, Vincent Pastore, and a host of others.

In a nutshell, the ghetto-meets-suburbia plot line reads as follows. Rutgers basketball phenom Todd Anderson (Storm P) is the first person picked in the 2004 pro draft. Before the ink is even dry on his \$30 million dollar contract, this boy from the 'hood hires a butler for his parents, buys his girlfriend, Brittany (Magan Good), some expensive diamond jewelry and treats himself to a Hummer.

His conspicuous consumption continues with a 7 bedroom, 10 bathroom mansion in Garden Ridge Estates, located in a posh New Jersey suburb. Todd's arrival in this upscale oasis is regarded as ruining the neighborhood by



Despite loads of star power, "The Cookout" quickly fizzles.

the gated community's security guard (Latifah) and by his new next-door neighbors, the Crowleys (Glover and Fawcett).

Basically, every joke rests on the idea that you can take a Black man out of the ghetto, but that you can't take the ghetto out of a Black man. For not only does Todd exhibit terminal bad taste, but so does the menagerie of friends and relatives who arrive for the big barbecue.

As a result, we are treated to dumb dialogue like, "A cookout ain't never been a

cookout without chitlins," during an unending contrast of poor and polite society. Far worse are the guests' depraved behaviors, which range from overindulging in drugs and alcohol to inappropriate sexual references to brandishing weapons to auto theft to armed robbery for sneakers to kidnapping to addressing women with misogynistic monickers.

That's a whole lot of wrong.

Poor (0 Stars). Rated PG-13 for profanity, sexuality and drug use.

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Book teaches women to celebrate menopause

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

*The Black Woman's Guide to Menopause,
Doing Menopause with Heart and Soul*

By Carolyn Scott Brown with Barbara S. Levy, M.D.;
SourceBooks, Inc.; University of California Press;
256 pp., illus.; \$14.95
ISBN#: 1-57071-933-0

"I wrote this book for African-American women who, like me, are trying to find a way to age gracefully and achieve a new kind of success at midlife... There are many things I wish someone had told me about this journey before I started my transition so that I could have found my way in a more conscious manner. Now I want to take you on this journey and share with you the lessons I learned." — Excerpted from Introduction

I supposed it's sort of natural for most of us to ignore some of the signposts associated with advancing age. And for women this inclination is likely to be more pronounced, especially in a culture which tends to overvalue youth. But ignoring biological symptoms amounts to a form of denial, since knowledge is power, and there is a wealth of information available to help us meet the challenges of getting older.

One of the best sources for African-American women approaching midlife is *The Black Woman's Guide to Menopause*. This handy how-to handbook combines practical medical advice with a spiritual component specifically designed with the Black female in mind. The text is a collaboration of Psychologist Carolyn Scott Brown and Dr. Barbara S. Levy, a gynecologist.

The authors present 8 steps, arranged sequentially, which, if mastered, ultimately enable one to celebrate menopause. The first involves developing a new, positive attitude about it. The second calls for self-education in order to benefit from the latest, "strategies for coping with the medical conditions that Black women are prone to develop." Next, the text suggest the development of a meaningful relationship with a medical caregiver.

(See *Menopause*, Page 13)

