

Sharpton: Music attacks image of Black women

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The Hip Hop Summit Action Network, while discouraging radio stations and other media from the airing of racist and misogynistic lyrics that particularly degrade Black women, has a board that is top heavy with chief executives that financially benefit from the record industry.

"They are funded by the record companies," said activist Al Sharpton, who vowed to hold record companies accountable for degrading lyrics after he led protests that got talk show host Don Imus fired.

"There are many people on the board who are in the record companies who could make the decision to stop using the words rather than pressuring people not to play the words that they're using and manufacturing."

Sharpton, has begun leading marches and pickets on multi-million dollar record companies in New York, including Sony, Warner and Universal in an attempt to force them to stop recording and selling songs with racist and misogynistic lyrics.

"We're going at all of them," he said.

In response to pressures after Don Imus' firing for calling the Rutgers University women's basketball team "nappy-headed 'ho's," the HSAN has called for the hip-hop industry, including radio and television stations, to stop airing lyrics that include the three words "bitch," "ho" and the n-word.

"We have recently been involved in a process of dialogue with recording and broadcast industry executives about issues concerning corporate social responsibility," said a statement issued by Chavis and his HSAN co-chair Russell Simmons.

"HSAN is concerned about the growing public outrage concerning the use of the words 'bitch,' 'ho,' and 'nigger.' We recommend that the recording and broadcast industries voluntarily remove/bleep/delete the misogynistic words 'bitch' and 'ho' and the racially offensive word 'nigger.' Going forward, these three words should be considered with the same objections to obscenity as 'extreme curse words.'"

But, Sharpton says the HSAN request has no teeth because they have no lever-

age to make them comply. "Ironically, the march that we're having will be on companies that many [HSAN] board members are heads of. It would be totally a moot point if their board members say we're not going to put their records out," says Sharpton.

The current HSAN board members are: Russell Simmons, co-chairman, Rush Communications; Ben-

jamin Chavis, president and co-chairman, Hip-Hop Summit Action Network; Kevin Liles, Warner Music Group; Damon Dash, Dash Music Group; Sean 'Diddy' Combs, Bad Boy Entertainment; Jermaine Dupri, Virgin Records; Lyor Cohen, Warner Music Group; Johnny Furr, Anheuser Busch; Manning Marable, Columbia University; Rich Slomovitz, Rush Communi-

cations; Hillary Rosen, former president, Recording Industry Association of America;

Baleisha Butterfield, managing director of the HSAN, and Ellen Haddigan, the Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation.

Butterfield, who is also a full-time staff member, is the only Black woman on the board of eight Black men, two White men and two White women.

The HSAN statement describes the offensive words as "utterly derogatory and disrespectful of the painful, hurtful, misogyny that, in particular, African-American women have experienced in the United States as part of the history of oppression, inequality, and suffering of women" and the n-word as "a racially derogatory term that disrespects the pain, suffering, history of racial oppres-

sion, and multiple forms of racism against African-Americans and other people of color."

Chavis tells the NNPA News Service that HSAN has gotten strong indications that radio, television and video companies will comply with their request.

He also stressed that the HSAN board was not connected with the statement re- (See Music, Page 7)

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