

Why is Hip-Hop MIA

Written by Hadji Williams ID1505
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Hadji Williams is author of **KNOCK THE HUSTLE: How to save Your Job and Your Life from Corporate America** (July 2005). It's hip-hop's first success guide for business, culture and life.

Why is Hip-Hop MIA on Missing Women and Children of Color?

I wasn't stunned by the recent disappearance of Natalee Holloway the 18-year old from Alabama in Aruba; after all, literally thousands of women and children go missing every year in this country alone. I wasn't stunned when the nation of Aruba officially shut down and gave its 4,000 civil servants the day off to search for Natalee—something Aruba had never done for any of its missing native women or children and something America's never done for any foreign women that've gone missing here. I wasn't even stunned that the American media anointed yet another white woman as the cause of the moment. After all, America's made it quite clear going all the way back to Charles Lindberg's baby in the 1920s and Patty Hearst in the 1970s to the endless stream of recent cases including Laci Peterson, Adam Walsh, Elizabeth Smart, Jessica Lunsford, JonBenet Ramsey, etc. that missing white women and white children are the only ones worth looking for.

But what I am utterly stunned by is the fact that the hip-hop community has done and continues to do absolutely nothing to make the safety women and children of color a priority in our own communities. As much as NBC's, CBS's, FOX News's, etc. coverage of Jennifer "runaway bride" Wilbanks bothered me, I was more bothered by the fact that not one so-called black/urban radio station is willing to dedicate even 5 minutes of airtime to aide in searching for any of the thousands of black women and children that go missing each year. As much as MTV and VH-1's endless parade of videos that degrade black women bothers me, I'm completely outraged that BET (even under Bob Johnson) would rather show garbage like UNCUT than dedicate even one half hour's worth of airtime to profiling missing or abused black and brown women and kids. As much as Fox and WB's lack of true diversity annoys me, I'm much more heartbroken by the fact that Oprah Winfrey makes consistent efforts to celebrate missing white girls and white women while refusing to do the same for black women and children.

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What does it say about the hip-hop community when DJs would rather fill mixtapes with pimp/ho/bitch/babymama rantings than dedicate even 30 seconds of space to a lost woman or child of color? What does it say about hip-hop when our emcees would rather brag about how many women they nailed and how many men they killed than dedicate a few bars, or god-forbid-a whole-song to reminding folks that our women and children are just as valuable as mainstream America's? What does it say about hip-hop when we'll use street teams and underground networks to sell mental poison but won't use those same resources to help recover our missing children and women?

What does it say about hip-hop when, with the exception of F.E.D.S. magazine (which seems to dedicate a good 2 pages of each issue to missing children of color), not one black magazine or hip-hop publication even bothers to discuss the topic of missing/exploited women and children in our community? Not VIBE, not THE SOURCE, not ESSENCE, not EBONY, not XXL, not one single magazine ever does this. And what does it say, when most of those same publications are simultaneously lined with half-naked black and brown women being objectified and marginalized, often as part of manipulative ads designed to convince our youth to spend as much of theirs and their parents' money as possible on stuff they don't need? Speaking of which...

I think it's important to note that the acceptance of misogyny, gender bias and violence against children of color goes hand in hand with our collective indifference towards their disappearances. After all, when you consistently position black women as strippers, tip drills, chickenheads, bitches, hoes, and sexual conquests, why should you be anything but indifferent when some of them go missing or get abused? When you marginalize youth of color as gang-bangers or career crooks-in-training, having a few of them periodically vanish and turn up dead is actually a good thing. (Think of it as societal pest control, similar to what we do with roaches and rats and random wildlife that occasionally pop up in folks' backyards.)

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As far as I'm concerned, no matter what mainstream America says, they've spent the last several hundred years showing us what they really think about people of color, specifically women and children of color. So their consistent insensitivity and disregard for missing women and children of color is simply par for the course. But what does it say about us when we don't care enough to take matters into our own hands and fix this problem ourselves?

When will the black community and the larger hiphop community start taking care of its own? When will we start expending as much effort to get the word out about missing black and brown children as we spend promoting the latest album or clothing line? When will the same video directors and video channels that work so hard to find black women for degrading video roles start working just as hard find lost women of color? When will artists start speaking out on this? When will black radio step up and start doing daily segments on missing women and children of color? When will black magazines and publications start doing the same? But most importantly, when will black consumers and folks at a grassroots level within in the hiphop community get mad enough and outraged enough to demand more of ourselves, each other, our public servants (cops, politicians, etc.) and the corporations who profit off of us to start doing more?

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