

## Hip Hop Summit Action Network Statement on Don Imus Hip Hop

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Russell Simmons, Chairman, and Dr. Benjamin Chavis, President of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network have released a statement regarding the distinction between Don Imus and Hip-Hop.

The following is the Statement by Russell Simmons, Chairman and Dr. Benjamin Chavis, President of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network

### Differentiating between Don Imus and Hip-Hop

"Hip-hop is a worldwide cultural phenomena that transcends race and doesn't engage in racial slurs. Don Imus' racially-motivated diatribe toward the Rutgers" women's basketball team was in no way connected to hip-hop culture. As Chairman and President of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN), respectively, we are concerned by the false comparisons some in the media are making between Don Imus and hip-hop. We want to clarify what we feel very strongly is an obvious difference between the two."

"HSAN believes in freedom of artistic expression. We also believe, with that freedom, comes responsibility. Don Imus is not a hip-hop artist or a poet. Hip-hop artists rap about what they see, hear and feel around them, their experience of the world. Like the artists throughout history, their messages are a mirror of what is right and wrong with society. Sometimes their observations or the way in which they choose to express their art may be uncomfortable for some to hear, but our job is not to silence or censor that expression. Our job is to be an inclusive voice for the hip-hop community and to help create an environment that encourages the positive growth of hip-hop. Language can be a powerful tool. That is why ones intention, when using the power of language, should be made clear. Comparing Don Imus' language with hip-hop artists' poetic expression is misguided and inaccurate and feeds into a mindset that can be a catalyst for unwarranted, rampant censorship."