

respect

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT LAW AND DIVERSITY

Hate Lyrics—Rebellion or Revulsion? *by Jodi L. Miller*

The problem is as old as music itself. Whether it's jazz, Elvis Presley or Marilyn Manson, the older generation never seems to understand the younger generation's music choices. But have today's artists gone too far? Are they promoting intolerance and hate with their lyrics?

Recording artists such as Eminem are said to push the envelope of hate by being openly offensive, often targeting homosexuals and women in their lyrics.

While Eminem is probably the most popular controversial artist to come along in a while, he is not alone. Lyrics from other artists such as Kid Rock and DMX have also been described as offensive to women.

Eminem's intentions remain a mystery. In interviews he often claims that his lyrics are a joke, while at other times he states that he means everything he says. Whatever the case, his message is clear—it is okay to degrade women and homosexuals for the sake of art. Regardless of the offensiveness of his lyrics, Eminem has enjoyed million-dollar record sales. What does this say about our society? And, how far will the next controversial artist have to go to be noticed?

Give Me a Beat

Admittedly, it can be hard to tell what some rap artists are singing about without a lyric sheet in hand.

That's not the case with Eminem and most likely one reason that he receives so much attention. Along with his complicated rhyme schemes, he delivers his music with near perfect diction, making it hard, it would seem, to ignore his message. So, what effect does this have on his listeners?

Alissa Gittens, a student at South Plainfield High School, says that some of Eminem's messages are disturbing to her, but she echoes what many of her peers say, "I don't pay attention to the lyrics. I just listen to the beat."

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Remembering Identity

by Caitlin Nish

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 have forever changed America. Like the Japanese-Americans discussed in the following essay, Arab-Americans in the United States are experiencing similar incidents of discrimination and hatred. This essay is a reminder to us all that we should not pre-judge anyone based on his or her religion or ethnicity.

Most children grow up with pride in their heritage, knowledge of their culture, and firm ties to their ancestry. I was in my teens before I openly admitted to being a Japanese-American. My Japanese ancestry has always been a hidden part of my personality. I learned at an early age how to smile so that my almond-shaped eyes seemed larger, and later on I became skillful at using eyeliner to hide any trace of Oriental features. Like any child, it was not inane that I hid this one part of my heritage. I was taught by the examples set by many family members whom I loved and respected.

My grandfather and his three brothers are Japanese. They were born in the United States in the early 1900s and returned to Japan during their formative years. They settled permanently in the United States in the late 1930s, at the beginning of

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Flying Confederate Flag Provokes Controversy

by Roberta K. Glassner, Esq.

Until last year, what was the only state in this country to fly a full-sized Confederate flag above its state capitol building? Clue: It was the first state to secede from the Union at the start of the Civil War in 1862. The answer: South Carolina.

In 1962, the 100th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, South Carolina decided to mark both the historical importance of the war and its state's role in the conflict

in a special way. The state government voted to fly the "Southern Cross," the official flag of the Confederate states, below both the American flag and the state flag above its statehouse in Columbia.

The colors of the Southern Cross are the same as the American flag—red, white and blue—but the design is different. It has 13 white stars on diagonally crossing blue stripes and a red background. And, of course, what each flag represents is vastly different.

Two Views of the Confederate Flag

The Confederate flag streaming over the South Carolina statehouse provoked two opposite, but equally strong, reactions.

For many South Carolinians, the Confederate flag is a symbol of pride in their historical and cultural heritage. It represents their state's independent spirit and honors those, including many of their ancestors, who

Remembering *continued from page 1 <*

the anti-Japanese sentiment which swept the nation for over two decades and still affects people like me today. This anti-Japanese feeling invaded the American mind, leaving long lasting ramifications on the Americans who were unfortunate enough to have a Japanese heritage, at a time when having almond-shaped eyes was enough to make bypassers spit upon them in the street. The discrimination felt by my grandfather and his brothers, all American citizens, was enough to make them abandon their Japanese names for American names. This was their first step in their extermination of their culture.

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, the lives of not only my relatives, but of all Japanese-Americans were drastically changed forever. Japanese-American citizens were treated as aliens in their own country. They were seen as spies even if they had no connections to Japan. These people were outcasts in their towns and were blamed for the

actions of a country millions of miles away. While the United States watched in horror as Nazi Germany marched men, women, and children to concentration camps for being Jewish, the United States was relocating thousands of American citizens to internment camps, solely for being Japanese. Over 110,000 Japanese-Americans and Japanese natives were relocated from coastal states such as California and Washington. They were forced to leave their homes and families. Many were allowed to take only what they could carry and some were given only a few days notice of their relocation. My grandfather and one of his brothers were two of the Japanese-Americans interned in Oklahoma. The United States Army jailed them after they had enlisted to fight for the United States. The Army believed at that time that Japanese-Americans could not be trusted as American soldiers. They were interned until the government could figure out what to do with them.

fought and died for that independence in the Civil War.

To others, the flag is a painful reminder of slavery and the racism that still exists in the South. The battles have been fought and the Civil War is over. Many believe the Confederate flag, the symbol of that bloody conflict, does not belong on the South Carolina statehouse or any other official state building.

The Southern Cross flew over the capitol building in South Carolina for almost 40 years. But protests against it never let up and on July 1, 2000, the South

Carolina state legislature voted to remove the Confederate flag from the top of the statehouse and from all offices inside.

The Compromise

But that was not the end of the Southern Cross in South Carolina. Although the rebel banner would no longer fly atop the statehouse, it was officially moved to a new location. A smaller version of the flag was mounted on a pole on the front lawn of the capitol building, still highly visible, next to a monument of a Confederate soldier.

Pro-flag South Carolinians felt the anti-flag group had won a victory. The anti-flag group felt it had made a point, but was dissatisfied because the Confederate flag still had an honored place on state grounds.

Georgia and the Confederate Flag

While South Carolina was the only state flying a full-sized, separate Confederate flag, two other states, Georgia and Mississippi, displayed smaller versions of the Southern Cross on their state flags.

In 1956, Georgia added the Confederate banner to its state

flag. The state seal appeared on one-third of the flag, the Southern Cross filled the remaining two-thirds.

As in South Carolina, the Georgia people who supported the state flag regarded it as a symbol of their ancestry, Southern heritage and pride. And, as in South Carolina, those opposed saw it as a symbol of racism and segregation.

In January 2001, almost 50 years after the flag bearing the Southern Cross had first been raised, the Georgia legislature voted for a new state flag. The new design displayed the state

The conditions in the internment camps were far from comfortable. As internees were moved from their homes to the camps, they were held at staging areas made from old horse stalls. They were given communal bathrooms and showers in converted horse showers, with no partitions or privacy. This robbed many people of their dignity and pride. The camps were located in deserts. Barbed wire surrounded the barracks that housed the internees and armed guards were stationed at intervals along the fences. Most



of the people there had no idea how long they would be held, or why.

It was in February 1943 that the Army began running out of soldiers. In an effort to draft more men, interned Japanese-Americans were offered the opportunity to free their families from the camps by volunteering to join the Army in the European theatre. With that, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was created. It was comprised of Japanese-Americans whose motto was, "Go For Broke." These men, including my grandfather and two of his brothers, knew that they had to prove to our country that they were just as devoted to

America as any other American citizen. The 442nd ended the war as the most highly decorated team for bravery and valor. Yet, they were still seen as expendable by the Army and as foreigners by those people they fought to protect.

When Japan was defeated in 1945, the internees were finally released and what remained of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team returned home. Instead of being treated as the heroes they were, these Japanese-Americans were still insulted, alienated, and taken advantage of. It was because of mistreatment by our government and their neighbors that my grandfather and his brothers buried their heritage. They practiced no Japanese customs, pretended that they could not read nor speak Japanese and refused to date or marry Japanese women. The mistreatment they suffered made them ashamed of their culture. They never spoke of or acknowledged their

seal in the center of the flag, with the Confederate flag included in a ribbon of five historic banners running along the bottom.

As in South Carolina, both sides were unhappy. Supporters of the Southern Cross felt they had lost an important symbol of Georgia's history; opponents continued to assert the symbol had no place on the flag at all.

Mississippi Goes Its Own Way

In Mississippi, the Confederate battle emblem had appeared in the upper left-hand corner of the state flag for the past 107 years.

In April 2001, Mississippi voters were given two choices—keep the 1894 flag with the Confederate emblem or adopt a new flag. The proposed new flag replaced the Southern Cross with 20 white stars on a blue square, symbolizing Mississippi as the 20th state to enter the Union. By a vote of nearly 2 to 1, Mississippi voters chose to keep the 1894 flag as its official state banner.

Civil rights groups were outraged and the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) threatened a boycott in Mississippi, affecting its \$6 billion tourism industry.

In a statement after the vote, NAACP National President Kweisi Mfume said, "The NAACP will not give up its fight to remove from public property any and all symbols that celebrate the twisted philosophy of bigotry and hatred in this country."

Where Do You Stand?

As with many important issues, each side in this dispute over

displaying the Confederate flag has clearly opposite views about the symbol's meaning.

Should a state display what some consider a major symbol of its cultural and historical heritage, even though many others see it as a symbol of hatred and racism? Where do you stand?

Roberta K. Glassner is an attorney in New Jersey.

Japanese ancestry. When my father was five years old, an elderly woman called him a Jap. She told him to go back to his own country. He was a second generation American citizen. Spurred by this incident, and hoping to achieve better lives for his family, my grandfather legally changed his last name from Nishimura to Nish. He hoped that this change would make his name less ethnic. And so, I grew up hiding my culture, just as my father did, and just as my grandfather did.

I realize now, by doing research on the history of the treatment of Japanese-Americans, that I have no reason to hide who I am. I am not ashamed of my ancestry, and I am proud that my grandfather and his brothers so valiantly served my country. I am ashamed that the United States hurt so many of its own people, and I am outraged that few schools include the internment of Japanese-

Americans in their history curriculum. It is sad that my great uncle, at 85 years old, still refuses to speak Japanese. Yet, I know that I will never again be afraid to show who I am. I am proud of what the Japanese-Americans in this country have endured, and I will make sure that my children grow up knowing that the shape of their eyes is a key into who they are, one which should not be hidden, but worn with confidence.

Caitlin Nish is a graduate of Westfield High School and is currently a sophomore at the University of Michigan. This essay first appeared in the special diversity issue of The Legal Eagle.



Catch Us on the Web

Visit the New Jersey State Bar Foundation's Web site at www.njsbf.org.

Check out interesting and fun stuff in our Students' Corner. There is also useful information for teachers about other Foundation school-based programs.

Hate Lyrics *continued from page 1*

Can you separate the toe-tapping, head-bopping beat from the offensive lyrics? Dr. Eliot Garson, a psychologist, says you can. He argues, however, that what kids are more likely saying is not that they don't pay attention, but that they don't take the lyrics seriously.

"There are plenty of good kids that may listen to the music, but have strong enough positive values to override the negative aspects of the lyrics," Dr. Garson says.

Michael Solar, a student at South River High School, contends that people shouldn't put too much stock into what Eminem or any artist says. Solar, who doesn't agree with Eminem's views, thinks that the rap star puts a lot of feeling and emotion into his music and that is what makes him so popular.

What about kids that haven't been given strong values and don't possess a positive self image? Dr. Garson says that an impressionable teenager could be influenced by a favorite artist to hate a particular group of people.

"At the least, it may make it less likely for an individual to stand up in defense of other victimized individuals," he says. "At the worst, any person may be persuaded to accept the apparent beliefs espoused by someone he or she admires."

Christine Martinez, a student at South Plainfield High School, believes that it is up to parents to give their kids a strong moral base and teach them values. Gittens agrees and says that people shouldn't look to entertainers for role models or to teach them right from wrong.

Women as Victims

Much of today's popular music refers to women in a **degrading** manner. While Gittens finds these references offensive, she says that she knows who she is and the woman she wants to be. Neither she nor Martinez see themselves in these lyrics.

Martinez again points out that it is up to parents to set an example for their kids and says that her mother makes sure that her younger brother knows it is wrong to refer to women in a degrading way. While it may be up to parents to teach their kids, Gittens believes that there will always be some that follow the crowd and disrespect women.

Degrading terms do have some effect on young people according to Dr. Garson. "Language and how it is used does affect people even if only on a subtle level," he says.

Dr. Garson notes that when someone accepts a negative term about him or herself, it is a form of identifying with the "aggressor" or speaker. In doing so, he says, a person may believe he or she "gains some level of power and safety from the hostility behind the words."

Hate Free?

Can society ever be free of hate? Solar believes getting rid of hatred is an unrealistic goal. Gittens thinks that the controversy over offensive music lyrics sparks a much-needed dialogue about hate speech, while Martinez believes that protesting, as the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) did over Eminem's Grammy nominations and performance, is a waste of time.

"You're just egging him on," Martinez, an admitted fan, says. "Every time there is a controversy, Eminem gets another million dollars."

GLAAD, an organization dedicated to eliminating **homophobia** and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, disagrees. Their contention is that, although Eminem has a First Amendment right to express himself as he chooses, his music should not be rewarded with such a prestigious honor as an Album of the Year nomination. The reason GLAAD and other such organizations demonstrate and rally against hate is to bring attention to the issues of tolerance and diversity, sparking the dialogue that Gittens speaks of.

Some indication that the efforts of these activists groups are not futile is the venture that MTV entered into at the beginning of this year. As a station that provides exposure for many controversial artists, including Eminem, MTV entered the fight to promote tolerance by launching a year-long campaign called *Fight For Your Rights*. The campaign began with a film titled, *Anatomy of a Hate Crime*, about the life and death of Matthew Shepard, the victim of a hate crime who was killed because he was homosexual. The film was followed by a half-hour news forum on hate crimes and a 17-hour, commercial-free marathon in which the music station scrolled the names of hundreds of hate crime victims across the country and the circumstances of those crimes. The visibility for young people that a station such as MTV brings to this issue could be invaluable to the fight against hate.

So, will we ever live in a world without hatred? Probably not. Do Eminem and other artists like him have a right to put out hateful lyrics in their music, adding to that hatred? Absolutely. Do they have a greater responsibility to their fans and society not to do so? You decide.

degrading—reducing something or someone’s importance.
 or treatment. homophobia—an irrational fear of homosexuals.
 in times of war. discrimination—prejudicial outlook, action,
 interment—to confine, especially

Hey Teachers!

NJSBF Offers Tapes that Explore Tolerance

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation stocks more than 200 titles on a variety of law-related topics in its free Video Loan Library. The following videos target tolerance and diversity issues.

Beyond Hate (2-part series) In these two programs, Bill Moyers attempts to take us beyond hate by exploring its origins and dimensions through the eyes of world leaders, human rights activists, Arabs and Israelis, high school students, youth gangs, and an American white supremacist group.

The Heart of Hatred (grades 7–12)—This program features conversations with a variety of people who have explored the heart of hatred. (52 minutes)

Learning to Hate (grades 7–12)—In this program, Moyers focuses on how children learn to hate, and how attitudes toward hatred differ from culture to culture. (39 minutes)

Crimes of Hate (grades 6–12)—In an era when bias crimes are increasing in frequency and intensity, this documentary reveals the twisted thinking of perpetrators, the anguish of their victims, and how law enforcement deals with these crimes. The video consists of an overview of hate crimes in three segments—the crime of racism, the crime of anti-Semitism and the crime of gay bashing. (27 minutes)

Eye of the Storm (grades 6–12)—Iowa teacher, Jane Elliott, conducts an eye-opening test of prejudice in her classroom. In a two-day experiment, third-graders are separated into “superior” blue-eyed children and “inferior” brown-eyed children. On the second day, the roles are reversed. This documentary explores the behavioral effects, attitudes and classroom performance of the children as they suffer from the segregation, discrimination and prejudice of the experiment. (25 minutes)

A Class Divided (grades 6–12)—A follow-up to Iowa teacher Jane Elliott’s original experiment where she taught her third-graders about the effects of prejudice by dividing the class on the basis of eye color. In this PBS Frontline documentary, filmed 15 years later, she meets with some of her former

students to analyze the experiment and its impact on their lives. (60 minutes)

Heil Hitler: Confessions of a Hitler Youth (grades 7–12)—Alfons Heck, one of the millions of impressionable German children, recalls in this video how he became a high-ranking member of the Hitler Youth Movement. While all societies try to influence their youth to follow their values, what makes things go out of control? Students will be encouraged by this video to think more critically about the dangers to society from pressures to conform. Archival footage depicting Nazi violence may be upsetting to some viewers. (30 minutes)

The Truth About Hate (grades 6–12)—Hosted by Leeza Gibbons, this program explores the origins of hate through the eyes of today’s teenagers as they come face-to-face with their own racism, ethnic bigotry, religious hatred and sexual discrimination. (32 minutes)

What’s Hate All About (grades 7–12)—This video helps young people understand the dynamics underpinning this most dangerous of human emotions. Using an MTV-style format, the program examines through the personal stories of real teens the many reasons people hate and the stereotypes that hate fosters. The program helps students recognize their own negative feelings toward others, and shows them that they can make a difference by speaking out against hate in all its varied forms. (24 minutes)

Videos are loaned for a period of two weeks. There is no charge to borrow the videos, but a **\$50 refundable security deposit check** for each video, made payable to the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, is required. Requests must be made in writing.

For a complete list of available videos visit our Web site at www.njsbf.org or call 1-800 FREE LAW. Requests with checks may be sent to the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, Video Loan Library, One Constitution Square, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1520.