



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Feb. 2, 2006

Hip-Hop Lecture Highlights Black History Month Activities

KEUKA PARK, N.Y. — Hip-hop music and its affect on society will be the focus of a lecture Wednesday, Feb. 15 at Keuka College.



Raphael C. Heaggans, assistant professor of education at Niagara University, will discuss “Have Blacks Left Their Minds in Africa? How Some Elements of Hip-hop Music Relate to Slavery” at 7 p.m. in Norton Chapel. It is free and open to the public.

The lecture is one of the events planned at Keuka to mark Black History Month (Feb. 1-28). The 2006 theme is “Community: A Salute to Black Fraternal, Social and Civic Institutions.”

“The theme honors the organizations that have been the training arenas for our leaders and providing the necessary affirmation and empowerment for us to thrive and survive,” said Montrose Streeter, assistant dean of students.

According to Heaggans, hip-hop’s “tools of oppression” may have been invented as early as 1712, when Willie Lynch, a British slave owner in the West Indies, was invited to teach his methods to slave owners in the colony of Virginia. Heaggans will compare those methods to “negative images and messages” presented in hip-hop music.

In addition, Heaggans will examine the roles and images of black women in slavery, and how today’s female hip-hop artists such as Lil’ Kim, Khia, Foxy Brown, Trina and others are recreating the objectification and dehumanization of women.

“Racism is an incubus that has haunted every culture in the United States since its inception,” said Heaggans. “Today, aspects of the hip-hop genre embody that spirit by promoting self-hate through exploitation, misogyny, greed, and denigration of who blacks are as a people.”

According to Heaggans, many hip-hop artists profess in their lyrics and videos to be simply “speaking the truth about their realities.

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“These lyrics and images do not empower African Americans,” said Heaggans. “Instead the cycle of homicides, drugs, poverty, domestic violence, and AIDS continues to manifest itself in the black community.”

Said Heaggans: “Some hip-hop artists have taken out the tools of oppression and become the oppressor by perpetuating historically negative images and messages that many whites and others still hold true about black people.”

Prior to teaching at Niagara University, Heaggans served as director of multicultural affairs at Bluefield State College in Bluefield, W.Va., and has developed and taught classes focusing on culture, language and education. He has published several articles, and presented his ideas on hip-hop music at conferences nationwide.

Other Black History Month activities include screenings of the film *School Daze*. The film will be shown Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 9 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 8 at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 12 at 2 p.m. in Jesphson 104. A discussion of the film by members of nine historically black fraternities and sororities will follow the Sunday showing.

Created by Dr. Carter J. Woodson, the son of former slaves, Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as Negro History Week, and later as Black History Month. Woodson established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now known as the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History) in 1915, and a year later, he founded the *Journal of Negro History*.

A decade later, in 1926, Woodson launched Negro History Week as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history. He chose the second week of February for Negro History Week to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.