

Activists Transcript:

Reverend Conrad B. Tillard, Marcia Harris and Kenyon Farrow all voice their opinion from an Activists perspective of how the n-word has been used as a marketing to tool for the entertainment industry to profit from and how the black community and the leaders of the world need to come together to stop this hateful term from being used.

CT: When I was growing up, I always heard the n-word, but I couldn't turn on the radio and hear it, I didn't hear it on television, if I wanted to hear it, I had to go to the margins of society. Or it was in the closet. The airways never bombarded me with it. I was never under the false and misimpression that it was okay to say, that it was acceptable. The problem with these young people today is there are two educations going on, MTV, Hot 97 and all the public airwaves.

MH: In a 50 cent song you hear, "Oh, there that "n" go, there that ""n" go, let's go kill that "n"!" Pow, Pow Pow, gunshots, homicide. How is that a term of endearment? That's just a duality of confusion if you ask me.

KF: You know hip-hop is so pervasive in our society. Most of the music is bought by non-black youth. I think we consume it as well. I think that historically through American popular culture, black culture has always represented the exotic other. Through Blues, and through Jazz and through Rock n' Roll, and now through Hip-hop you have primarily white youth that there way of rebelling was to go to the Blues club, or listen to Chuck Berry out of earshot of their parents. Black people are positioned as the entry point into sexuality, the entry point to rebel against sort of whiteness.

CT: If you look at a point-by-point comparison in special interest groups or protected minority groups in this society, if you did that about Jews, you wouldn't be able to do that and make money. If you did it about Gays you wouldn't be able to do it and make money. But when you do it to African Americans, it's okay and this is troubling to me. How can all the leaders together make a change if we're not even on the right track, which we're not, I'm admitting that, but there are some that are. But when you have a music industry, and an entertainment industry, that has said to these young people, placed a value on the word that says, when it comes to Jewish people, you have to respect their dignity. When it comes to Gay people: you have to respect their dignity, but when it comes to African Americans, anything goes.

MH: Their green lighting this word, when it should just not be done. Because you have to ask yourself why was Michael Jackson, in his song, "They Don't Care About Us", when he used the word kike, he was completely shut down and was told to re-do that song. Who were the green lighters in that? You know, who told him, you have to re-do this. So, it's just a level of respect.

CT: We can't blame mainstream society, they can't determine what this word means to us. They take their cues from us. I love Spike Lee, I respect him as one of the true great filmmakers and great visionaries, but I agree. Several years ago, Quentin Tarentino took

him to task. Spike took him to task for the use of the n-word in his movie Jackie Brown. He came right back on Spike and said well you use it in your movies. We have to be clear, the problem with African American people is that we are no longer clear. We don't have center anymore, we turn on the television, we look in celebrity magazines, and we take our cues from celebrities.

KF: Bell Hooks used to say part of what's changed for us before television and to some extent before desegregation, because to some extent those things happened at the same time. We had separate spaces to protect our children from or to reaffirm our children of who they were in the world, even though the outside world dehumanized and devalued them. Because of television and mass media that has saturated us, we don't have those separate spaces to protect what are children take in.

CT: We used to know as a community family was very important to us and central to who we were. We've gotten away from that. It's not really that accidental, that it's young people in these multi-cultural environments that are the number one offenders of this. Because the traditions that were so important to us have not been passed down. We have placed a value on them going to integrated schools, multi-cultural schools and becoming quite sensitized about other people and learning a lot about other people but not learning a lot about themselves and their own culture.

MH: What America is trying to do is have people lose history. Africans were enslaved here in this country for 246 years and then a 100 plus years of Jim Crowism. Why aren't the kids taught that?

CT: We need to be equally the world, people of good will of every race need to join responsible African American people in saying corporations can't profit from this hateful and degrading term. Children by definition are ignorant. There's an old saying, "Youth is wasted on the young." That's an education process. But it's another process of the society allowing people to profit from the misery and degradation of a people.