

PORTRAYAL & PERCEPTION

AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN & BOYS

Episode 3

Game Changers

Mass media's depiction of African American males too often focuses on negative or unrealistic imagery of sex, drugs, violence, and the glorified gangster lifestyle.

In this episode, WQED host Chris Moore profiles **One Hood Media Academy**, an organization that works to combat these negative images by urging young men to define themselves using available media, rather than allowing others to do it for them. One Hood uses guerilla music videos to highlight current issues and events that affect the community through what they describe as "hip-hop with a conscience." The organization also strives to teach young people to create their own online media on the internet through social media, blogging, and video creation.



FOR TEACHERS

These guides are intended for use in sociology, information technology, media literacy, and social studies classes. Questions are geared for high school students, grades 9-12.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Portrayal & Perception: African American Men & Boys is a series of community-based television programs produced by WQED Multimedia showcasing positive media profiles of successful African American men. Sponsored by The Heinz Endowments, this series strives to inspire discussion, elevate portrayal, and clarify perceptions of African American men and boys in the community. This guide provides further information, discussion questions, and resources for students or groups to explore the topics highlighted in each episode.

This is the power that you have. You can make something, we can put it online, and you can really touch the entire world. – Jasiri X

Biography



Jasiri X

Neighborhood: East Liberty

Occupation: Hip-hop artist, activist

Current Organization: One Hood Media Academy

Has the show impacted your work since airing? Yeah, definitely. We have expanded, we moved to Alloy Studios in East Liberty. I feel like we have a larger class now, we got a lot of good attention off of the show.

What do you think are the greatest challenges and opportunities African American men face in the world today?

The challenge is that we are constantly being defined by mainstream media in such a very narrow way as criminals, thugs. There is a Pew Research Center and Heinz Endowments study that found that of local television newscasts linked to African American men and boys, 86% involved crime. That definitely presents a huge challenge, whether you're going into an interview or just walking down the street. Being a young Black man means you're often automatically criminalized just for being a Black man. The opportunity that we have, that we showed in the episode, is that because of the way technology is now, we have the opportunity to change that narrative and tell our own story. We can now begin to shape our own narrative because we have the access to it. Whether it is social media or technology, it's a great opportunity that we have going forward.



Part of the issue when it comes to mainstream media destinations is they are almost always going to go for the stereotypical view of a Black man. So in their mind, people are comfortable. They're used to a Black man being a criminal or coming out of a criminal element, or a hustler or a drug dealer. Those are things that are comfortable. But when you start talking about Black people as normal, regular human beings with regular jobs then it becomes unreliable or some type of fantasy. That's why we started creating our own media. That's why we started creating things for ourselves because we heard - even me as an independent artist - major labels say, "We don't know how to market you." You don't know how to market me? Why? Because I'm not talking about that same narrative? *If I was talking about criminals, thugs, and making it rain in the club, all of a sudden you know how to market that. But if you're talking about a more complex story, now you don't know how to market it.*

What responsibility do you think African American male leaders have to the next generation?

To empower them. We started One Hood Media Academy because we wanted to give young Black men a voice. The media portrays them in a particular way and then it's like we never get to hear them tell the other side. And you know, that's where the responsibility, where "leadership" has the voice. We don't want to necessarily speak for the younger generation. We would rather put the microphone in front of them, put the camera on them. That way you hear directly about how they feel. So to me, leadership should always be taught to recreate itself, not to be in a type of situation where you want to hold on to some power or build some organization where someone looks to you as the "leader" now. *You should empower everyone to become leaders in their own right.*

Behind every form of media is someone who is trying to influence you to do something or to think something.
- Paradise Gray

Discussion Questions

When you teach media literacy to a young person, it's like getting them off the bench and into the game.

– Paradise Gray

CREATE YOUR OWN MEDIA!

Teachers, help your students create their own media. Download the [Media Guide](#) and [Common Resources](#).

1. In what ways does One Hood Media Academy believe it can change the perception of African American males in the media? Are there organizations in your community that are like One Hood?
2. Describe Charles X's philosophy about the perception of African American men. Do you agree or disagree with his philosophy?
3. Can you name a person in your community who you believe deserves media attention for his positive contributions? Describe what that person does.
4. We all have an "online" identity via social media. What does your social media tell us about you? Are you in control of the way you're perceived online? Why?
5. Several of Jasiri X's music videos are featured in this episode addressing a number of different issues. Pick one, watch the video in its entirety on YouTube and discuss the topic addressed in the video.
6. Why do you think the media chooses to focus on a narrow image of African American males? What can and should change?
7. 21st century technology offers you a tremendous opportunity to tell a story. Name one way you can affect people through media in the next six months.



FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS

One Hood Media Academy: www.1hood.org

One on One Personal Training and Fitness:
www.oneononepgh.com

Jasiri X on YouTube:
www.youtube.com/user/jasirix

Resources

Black Youth Project: Diverse online resource focused on knowledge, voice, and action on issues and current events that affect black youth in America — www.blackyouthproject.com

Hip-Hop Education Center: Organization whose goal is to advance the field of hip-hop education and inform the larger education reform movement on how to integrate hip-hop into the curriculum www.hiphopeducation.tumblr.com

Hip-Hop On L.O.C.K.: Pittsburgh-based arts education and mentoring organization that employs hip-hop as a tool to educate and empower youth K-12 through leadership development, organizational skills, cooperative economics, and music business knowledge — www.hiphoponlock.org

Project HIP-HOP: Project that teaches the hip-hop generation how to use hip-hop as a cultural tool to educate and motivate a community — www.projecthiphop.org

Hip-Hop Caucus: Organization that mobilizes, educates, and engages young people, ages 14 to 40, to be active in elections, policymaking, and service projects that directly impact their lives and communities www.hiphopcaucus.org

Hip-Hop For Change: Non-profit that uses grassroots activism to create music events that educate people about socio-economic injustices and advocate solutions — www.hiphopforchange.org

Hip-Hop Project: Award-winning arts-based education organization that engages and empowers the voice of young people through innovative programming, multimedia activism, mentorship, and community service projects — www.thehiphopproject.org

Hip-Hop Archive and Research Institute: Online archive located at Harvard, establishing a new type of research and scholarship devoted to the knowledge, art, culture, materials, organizations, movements, and institutions of hip-hop — www.hiphoparchive.org

Restoring Media Images and Public Opinion about Black Men and Boys: Study initiative of The Opportunity Agenda to combat negative media images and improve black men's and boys' opportunities — www.opportunityagenda.org/black_male

MEDIA

Hip-Hop - Beyond Beats & Rhymes: *Independent Lens* documentary that takes an in-depth look at masculinity and manhood in rap and hip-hop, where creative genius collides with misogyny, violence, and homophobia, exposing the complex intersections of culture and commerce www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop

Black Culture Connection - Hip-Hop: Special collection of videos and web-exclusive features from trusted producers and PBS member stations — www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/hip-hop



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WQED Multimedia.
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