# What We See Changes Who We Are

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## Stereotypes By WITNESS Youth Staff

In Guyana, all over the world and as long as human beings have existed, society has suffered from racism, domestic abuse, violence of all types, corruption, and a number of other social ills. I would like to live in a world where there are no stereotypes, where everyone would be respected and not have their character judged by how they look, where they live, but would rather be judged by who they are.

I believe that in Guyana, stereotypical thinking is currently the most dangerous of all our social ills. A stereotype is defined as a generalization made about all members of a distinct group, such as "all Negro men have rather large penises", "all Guyanese boys play cricket", "all Amerindians are dense" and, one of the biggest and world-renowned stereotypical statements, "all Chinese products are inferior."

How do stereotypes come about in the first place? That's actually quite simple; we do it almost every day. The brain identifies facts based on how many times we see it happen. From the late 20th century, spectacles have been branded with being the ultimate mark of a smart person. I wear glasses and I know from first-hand experience that people speculate that I'm a really smart person, a "Know-It-All" or an all-around technology wizard. The amount of times someone has asked me if I could fix their computer. install a program - and the most epic of all - setup their office network;

I mean, even if I knew you, who would ask a 15-year old kid, rather than pay a professional? I wouldn't lie that I know about technology. I can open an email, but you don't know me. Don't make a conclusion from the fact that I have a metal object on my face due to the fact I have a big eye.

So I say (myself included), don't jump to a conclusion; ask, find out, confirm your thoughts with the person, and get the truth, because you could be living your life trying to be the "Baddest 'B' on the Block". You believe you will be rich or happy, but you didn't find out what happens when you don't get a record deal and body modifications. Think before you talk, act or judge.



### Invading personal space

By WITNESS Youth Staff

There are numerous occasions when I am walking around town with my aunts or my cousins and where men would call out to us with words like "sexy" or "baby mother" and all other sorts of disrespectful names. Some men even start trying to form conversations, trying to sweet talk us and tell us that they can do a lot of things for us. One even said, "If you would be my baby mother then you could get anything you want." It's not like we're asking for attention or their opinion. It's just the level of disrespect towards women and these uneducated and unintelligent men feel they can say whatever they want to whomever they want to.

On New Year's Eve of 2012, my cousin and I were walking along the arcade in Georgetown, shopping for clothing. There was a man standing at the same stall that we were at and he started to say to my cousin that she could wear the short skirt which was displayed on the mannequin, and that it will "cup her butt." He also told her the bra would "fit her breasts right", her lips are "juicy" and in conclusion, he asked if they were ever "bitten before".

As he was saying this, the other men started to stare at us and then some of them called my cousin names like: "thick lips", "big batty", and "shorty".

These things make me very mad and upset. I wish the police were passing at that time, or even my uncle, to tell these dirty men to stop, since they clearly had no respect for us. If they could have been locked up for it then it would have served them right. But we don't have such a system in Guyana. Some men just say whatever they want, wherever they want.

I am only thirteen years old, and these men should consider me their daughter, younger sister, or niece. Are they aware of this? I hear them and see them. I witness their insolent behaviour and I am not impressed. Please become aware that young girls and women do not like to be treated this way. We will respect men more if they speak kindly and with respect.

#### reality: a reality where I frequently hear my parents, the people I love a

lot and care about, fight and quarrel, where my mother constantly gets upset at my father for wasting the only money we have on alcohol.

I am grateful for many things in my

life but one thing that helps me a lot

Music helps me escape from

By WITNESS Youth Staff

is music.

Music is never limited, and can help with many things such as thinking, emotional issues, and stress. When my parents start to quarrel and curse, my first instinct is to plug my ears. Which child would want to be around that? It's not a good experience! Can you imagine standing in the presence of two adults who are your parents and listening to the hurtful words your dad says to your mom, such as "I should have never married you; you could have gotten someone better," and of course this is after having several children together. Other times he would shout, "You can't have money for yourself, woman. Give it to me!" and then he uses it to buy alcohol. I am only 15 years old and when I hear this it makes me VERY sad and ashamed. Sometimes

my friends are there and my father, being oblivious of this, would start his daily routine of cursing my mom. Now as much as this breaks my heart, it is also humiliating.

And this is when I want to escape to another reality, to the one where music takes me...

Listening to music is said to be a good stress reliever. Research shows that when you listen to music it can reduce your heart rate and blood pressure. It also lifts your mood, especially during exercise and other activities which make us feel more relaxed. I always say music is therapy and can help people suffering from emotional problems. The lyric writer expresses his/her own feelings within a song that can help you feel better about yourself.

I am very grateful for music because of what it does for me. My choice of music depends on my mood. The two genres I like most show a more fixed attitude and the ideas that they convey are shown and explained better.

Music helps me to cope with everything happening around me, and I am very grateful for it, and the people who write the lyrics.

## Whatever happened to 'good music'? By WITNESS Youth Staff

I'm a fan of many genres of music, one of which is rap/hip hop. Today it's very hard to listen to this genre because almost all rap songs are about sex, drugs, and violence. Most artists don't eliminate it, they promote it.

It's very disrespectful when people, especially teenagers, indulge in this kind of music. Even the radio and television stations play these degrading songs, but these stations cannot change the meaning of the song, only its words. Teenagers and children know and tend to follow what is popular. People might play these kinds of songs around children, thinking that they wouldn't understand, but children are knowledgeable; they

know exactly what the rapper is talking about.

The popular rapper, Rick Ross was accused of promoting rape. In his song "U.O.E.N.O," one of his lyrics was: "I Don't Condone Rape." Was that a joke? Did he mean it? If he didn't mean it then why did he involve it in his lyrics? That simple set of words possibly insulted over 1,000 people, probably many more, and it insults those who haven't even heard it! There was also another set of lyrics that showed he had no remorse: "Put molly all in her champagne, she ain't even know it. I took her home and I enjoyed that, she ain't even know it." The drug mentioned in the song is "molly," which is a slang term for a powerful

drug, MDMA, commonly called

There are many more music artists that promote negative lyrics that target mostly women and encourage illegal acts. I think these songs are very degrading and disrespectful. There are some rappers that sing good songs and promote positive influences, and that's the music I like to hear.

People complain about these songs being publicly aired, but I think the only way to stop degrading music from being played on the airwaves is to stop listening to it. When you support their music, you are supporting what their lyrics are

#### "What we see changes who we are." - JR

Are you a witness or victim of violence? You are not alone. Make your anonymous call to Help & Shelter today and speak with a live counselor on 227-3454 or 225-4731.