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Congress Addresses Female Degradation in Rap Music *NOW-NYC Calls on Music Execs to Promote Positive Images of Women*

New York, NY - September 25, 2007 – Congress is taking the first step to formally address the widespread issue of female degradation in rap music. Today the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection is holding a hearing to examine the stereotypes and degradation of women prevalent in hip-hop. After critics have long disparaged hip-hop lyrics and music videos for their misogyny directed primarily at African American women, Congress has decided to examine the commercial practices behind this controversial content. Congressman Bobby Rush, chairman of the committee, seeks to gain voluntary support from industry leaders to end this culturally harmful degradation and misogyny.

“Music executives and artists are complicit in what has become a thriving modern-day market for sexism, homophobia and racism,” said Sonia Ossorio, President of the New York Chapter of the National Organization for Women. “Disguised as entertainment, some in the music industry promote an image of manhood rooted in the notion that denigrating women, blacks and gays is powerful.”

NOW-NYC and our Women & Girls in the Media Committee have been at the forefront of bringing attention to and demanding change in the ways in which popular media perpetuate negative stereotypes and images of women. From our protesting of Viacom, the MTV Video Music Awards, and the Virgin Megastore to our panel discussion on women in hip-hop, we are committed to combating the sexist, racist, misogynistic and homophobic messages that are regularly disseminated by the media.

NOW-NYC asks artists, producers and music industry executives to work together to transform the current culture of degradation. “I’m glad that the rap world is finally coming to terms with the power it has to shape the way African-Americans, especially African-American women, are viewed in the world,” said Ebony Ellis, head of NOW-NYC’s Women, Girls & Media Committee.

The National Organization for Women is the nation’s largest organization working to advance women’s rights and improve women’s lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is the largest chapter in the country with 7,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to protect women’s reproductive choices, end violence against women and eliminate sex discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.

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