

African American Community Delima "Stop Snitching"

In most communities, a person who sees a murder and helps the police put the killer behind bars is called a witness. But in many inner-city neighborhoods in this country that person is called a "snitch." "Stop snitchin'" is a catchy hip-hop slogan that embodies and encourages this attitude. You can find it on everything from rap music videos to clothing. "Stop snitchin'" once meant "don't tell on others if you're caught committing a crime. But as CNN's Anderson Cooper reports for 60 Minutes, it has come to mean something much more dangerous: "don't cooperate with the police - no matter who you are." As a result, police say, witnesses are not coming forward. Murders are going unsolved. Reluctance to talk to police has always been a problem in poor, predominantly African-American communities, but cops and criminologists say in recent years something has changed: fueled by hip-hop music, promoted by major corporations, what was once a backroom code of silence among criminals, is now being marketed like never before. The message appears in hip-hop videos, on T-shirts, Web sites, album covers and street murals. Well-known rappers talk about it endlessly on DVDs. It is a simple message heard in African-American communities across the country: don't talk to the police. "When I was growing up, kids used to talk about snitching.... It never extended as a cultural norm outside of the gangsters," says

Geoffrey Canada, a nationally recognized educator and anti-violence advocate. "It was not for regular citizens. It is now a cultural norm that is being preached in poor communities." Canada has been working with children in Harlem for more than 20 years. He grew up poor in a tough New York neighborhood, but says the message kids are getting today is very different and dangerous. "People are walking around with shirts. People are going out making, making music. People are saying things that if you're a snitch it's like being an Uncle Tom was when I was growing up," Canada says. "It's like you can't be a black person if you have a set of values that say, 'I will not watch crime happen in my community without getting involved to stop it.'" "growing up," Canada says. "It's like you can't be a black person if you have a set of values that say, 'I will not watch crime happen in my community without getting involved to stop it.'" The message appears in hip-hop videos, on T-shirts, Web sites, album covers and street murals. Well-known rappers talk about it endlessly on DVDs. It is a simple message heard in African-American communities across the country: don't talk to the police. "When I was growing up, kids used to talk about snitching.... It never extended as a cultural norm outside of the gangsters," says Geoffrey Canada, a nationally recognized educator and anti-violence advocate.

"It was not for regular citizens. It is now a cultural norm that is being preached in poor communities." Canada has been working with children in Harlem for more than 20 years. He grew up poor in a tough New York neighborhood, but says the message kids are getting today is very different and dangerous. "So this slogan, this 'stop snitchin'.' It now extends to rape, robbery, murder, really any crime?" Cooper asks.

"Any crime," Canada says. "It's like we're saying to the criminals, 'You can have our community. Just have our community. Do anything you want, and we will either deal with it ourselves, or we'll simply ignore it.'" Canada could no longer ignore it on Feb. 5, 2006, when Israel Ramirez, a student he had mentored and loved like a son, was shot to death outside a soundstage in Brooklyn. Ramirez was working as a bodyguard for the rap star Busta Rhymes, who was making a music video. A person who was there told 60 Minutes Ramirez was shot in front of Busta Rhymes. He died at the scene two days before his 29th birthday, leaving a wife and three children behind. "You know, I just think of him, being shot, falling down, probably thinking, 'This might be it.' And I just wonder, who held his hand? Who caressed his head? Who told him, 'I'm gonna be here?' Who stayed with him? Who made sure this man just didn't die alone for nothing?" Canada wonders. New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly says there were at least 25 people who may have witnessed the shooting. But he says nobody has come forward to testify. "The people that we've located, either were inside and didn't see anything. Or you'll get a version of, 'I have to work in this business. Ask Busta Rhymes what happened,'" Commissioner Kelly says. The police would like to ask Busta Rhymes what happened but, even though he talked vaguely about the killing on a cable TV show, he refused to talk to investigators, or to 60 Minutes. Geoffrey Canada believes it's because Busta Rhymes doesn't want to jeopardize sales of his music and videos; Canada says being labeled

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VOTE WALTER SESSION COUNCILMAN, DISTRICT II

Hello citizens of district 2. I am asking you to vote to re-elect me for city councilman. I have been your councilman for many years and with your help have accomplished many goals and worked out many issues. I am proud of our community and our town and will put it second to none. Some of the many accomplishments made over the years, just to mention a few are:

1. More paved streets
2. Removal of the eye sore railroad trestle
3. Establishing & naming I.C. Conley Park
4. More fire hydrants/bigger water lines
5. Naming of M.L. King Blvd.
6. Eight new homes without cost
7. Many renovations of homes/rental property
8. 1st. black police officer
9. 1st. black clerk hired at city hall
10. Safer streets for our citizens
11. Curtail drugs in our town
12. Kept taxes at a minimum
13. Maintaining the name Bradford Campus at Rusk Primary
14. Voted to keep the city bus in operation
15. Voted to keep the swimming pool open
16. Voted removal of junk cars/property cleanup and
17. Removal of 22 dilapidated houses in District 2 alone



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