

An Open Memorandum

To: Bob Pittman
CEO, Clear Channel Communications
Lifetime Member, American Privilege & Power Structure

From: Michael T. Smith
Citizen of Goodwill
Lifetime Member, American Privilege & Power Structure

RE: Follow-up Appeal for Change in Broadcast Policy

Date: February 2, 2014

CC: Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Sheriff Thomas J. Dart, Mayor Mitch Landrieu, Sheriff Marlin N. Gusman,
Mayor Alvin Brown, and Sheriff John Rutherford

Dear Mr. Pittman:

Until you are ready to play...

...music that glamorizes school shootings in Newtown,

...music that celebrates theater shootings in Denver, and

...music that glorifies terrorism in New York City

...can you PLEASE stop playing music that glamorizes, celebrates, and glorifies the murder/criminalization of young black males in Chicago, New Orleans, and Jacksonville?

I am well aware that it's "normal" in America to create/broadcast music in which young black artists celebrate degrading, devaluing, and destroying other blacks, but I wonder if you have ever paused to ask WHY it is so "normal." Have you ever considered that the "normalcy" of this content on your stations that target black youth (especially when compared with the absence of comparable content on your stations that target white youth) reveals something ugly about the dark underbelly of our American cultural expectations? And have you further asked yourself whether Clear Channel should continue to be complicit in perpetuating a "norm" that we so desperately need to change?

I write these things to you from one white man to another, because I suspect that there is no voice among popular "black leadership" that could point out the hypocrisy of Clear Channel's race-biased toxic programming in a manner that you or your board would respect. You and I both know that if a "black" voice were to make this appeal, it would most likely be relegated to, "There 'they' go again." Please do not view this as "black" appeal. Though there are literal millions of people from all races/ethnicities that share these sentiments, it is not a minority voice that speaks to you today. This appeal is from one part of the American privilege & power structure to another part of that same privilege & power structure. I am appealing to you based on my knowledge (and hope) that the soul of the power structure in our nation is not completely lost. I appeal to your conscience as an individual, not the findings of your market research or your "responsibility" to your shareholders.

There is a strong possibility that you might take a financial hit if Clear Channel opts out of the "young blacks are sex-crazed criminals" programming trend in America. And yes, other broadcasters may increase their market share by continuing to tailor their most toxic and violent programming to their youngest black audiences (like Clear Channel has done for years). Don't worry about that. The intentional portrayal of black men/women as criminalized and hyper-sexualized sub-citizens is a remnant of a bygone era. Such content/programming is a relic of an old, outdated American cultural script, one that (hopefully) won't survive into the next generation. Eventually, even entertainment leaders like Viacom and Universal Music Group will have to join you in their decision to abandon the race-biased content "boon" of the past 20+ years. They will follow you, IF you have the moral courage to lead them.

I am well aware that neither Clear Channel nor any of the aforementioned companies originated the American idea that most young blacks are nothing more than violent, sexually deviant, drugged-out criminals. Although these negative portrayals, perceptions, and expectations regarding young blacks (especially males) did not originate at Clear Channel, you (and others) have certainly figured out a way to capitalize on them. The race-biased toxic nature of your daily radio content/programming proves this to be true.

Mr. Pittman, this is the hour to take control of the broadcast content of your empire. Please make it your *personal* mission to see that your company is no longer complicit in the broad spectrum, disparate portrayal of black young people as criminalized, hyper-sexualized deviants. It's time for us white folks to do everything within our power to tell a new American story *about* and *to* our fellow black citizens (especially young people). The age-old tale of white innocence and black abstraction must cease in our generation, and every "master" in business, media, education, religion, and entertainment must do everything possible to ensure this lie dies with us. It must not survive to the next generation. I am exercising my power by writing this letter and assembling other citizens of goodwill for what (I hope) will be the final push toward a fully realized dignity and equality for blacks (and all people) in our nation. All I can do is write letters and organize. You can do more. And you can do it today. A simple memo from your desk like the following would change it all:

Clear Channel is expanding its commitment to making a positive impact on the communities in which we do business by eliminating certain content from our radio programming. Effective immediately, Clear Channel will no longer broadcast music in which artists glory in:

- Narcotics Sales and Trafficking
- Criminal Activity
- Assault, Gun Violence, and Murder
- Hyper-sexualization and Misogyny

In addition, Clear Channel is committed to drastic reductions in songs that contain profanity, glorying in binge alcohol/drug consumption, and explicit sexual references.

Mr. Pittman, you can and should write this memo. You are the largest radio broadcaster in the nation and our undisputed leader in race-biased toxic programming. Such programming goes directly against the stated company values on your website. Your employees and our communities need to know that these values are more than just words. We need to believe that these values are the driving force behind your business policies and practices. At present, you are falling dreadfully short of this aim.

Mr. Pittman, I encourage you to make these changes as a matter of conscience and moral courage and not as a matter of market force (as will eventually happen). The reality is that one day very soon, citizens of goodwill across America will begin to question why your company and your advertisers believe that an inordinate focus on black aggression, black crime, black materialism, and the "denigration" of black women is considered the best "black bait" for catching young black customers. When that happens, this deplorable programming (and its profitability for Clear Channel) will be over. It is only a matter of time. In fact, the proverbial handwriting is already on the wall.

I am, graciously, inviting Clear Channel to lead the way into the next era of American racial responsibility and corporate consciousness. I am asking you to employ the same sensitivities and sensibilities you exercise on your white youth stations and apply them to your black youth stations. Americans at large already embrace a skewed perception of the value of black life and the standard of black morality. We are not served well by Clear Channel using its mighty power and reach to further perpetuate these misconceptions and lies *about* or *to* young blacks in America. Mr. Pittman, you are already a leader in celebrating, glamorizing, and glorifying the behaviors associated with the problem. I'm inviting you to lead the way toward the solution.

In closing, let me say that there are only two groups of people that cannot see the self-evident nature of what I have written here. The first are those that are blinded by the hatred/taught self-hatred of blacks that has existed in this country for centuries. The second are those who profit (directly or indirectly) from the race-biased toxic programming/content that is supported by this hatred. I counsel you to not consult with either of these groups on this matter. From white man to white man, I ask you to search your own heart. I do this full well knowing there is a good chance that you fall into one or both of the above groups. Nevertheless, my appeal to you and to your conscience remains. Can you explain why the substance (not style) of your youth audience programming is split along racial lines? When you have walked where I have walked and looked into the pain-filled eyes that I have, you will quickly discover that your greatest responsibility as an American business leader is not to your shareholders, but to the generation in which you live and the one that is to come.

Mr. Pittman, this is your invitation to #DoBetter. It's time for a new normal in our nation. The hour is NOW! Many are counting on you to have the moral courage to break the mold and be ahead of the curve as a broadcaster. Your company can be a part of America's #NewBlackHistory.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully & Sincerely,

Michael T. Smith
Citizen of Goodwill
904-414-0127 (cell)

PS: Have you ever noticed that the only stations in these cities on which you daily glamorize, celebrate, and glorify the murder of/violence toward police officers, judges, and cooperating witnesses are the ones you brand as black and market toward your youngest black audiences? I have a feeling that there are more than a few people that have some words to say to you about that, not the least of which are the families of fallen officers/judges along with many families of murdered black children who desperately need SOMEONE to come forth with information to help solve the crime. If you cannot show us comparable content on your white youth stations, then this practice should also cease immediately.

To learn more about race-biased toxic programming and the need for us all to #DoBetter, please visit www.DoBetterNow.org