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A Canadian Ban on U.S. Rapper?  
50 Cent Solutions to One Dollar Problems  
by Mesfin Aman  
Guest Commentator

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There is political opportunism, scapegoating, and desperation, but Toronto Liberal MP Dan McTeague has raised (or rather lowered) the bar with his suggestion that Immigration Minister Joe Volpe ban New York-based rapper 50 Cent from entry into Canada for a series of concerts beginning in December. What is equally surprising is that Toronto's "leftist" mayor David Miller endorses such a reactionary move.

This speaks to several issues, but first and foremost the dismal failure of publicly elected officials to adequately deal with gun violence and the associated socio-economic problems that continue to plague our communities.

The first question is: why 50 Cent? Is it because 50 Cent is one of the most successful rappers of the moment, with an empire that extends beyond music and into apparel, nutrition, telecommunications and movie productions? Surely, calling "Fiddy" out through the media would garner Mr. McTeague a few headlines and a few conservative friends as we near federal elections.

Gun violence in Toronto affects a proportionately high number of African-Canadian youth. Conversely, consumers of rap music are a proportionately high number of white youth. To try and make the linkages as Mr. McTeague attempts to do is not only completely illogical and nonsensical, but outright racist.

Furthermore, where would public officials draw the line? Would they stop at 50 Cent, or proceed to other rappers as well? Why doesn't McTeague just call for a ban on the genre of rap music altogether considering its tendencies to glorify violence, misogyny, sexism, and crime?

## The Black Commentator – A Canadian Ban on U.S. Rapper?

And just where was Mr. McTeague and the critics when Fiddy was filming his biography in Toronto this past year with Sopranos producer Jim Sheridan? It appears that the revenue that the production garnered for "Hollywood North" rendered the likes of McTeague silent as church mice.

It is a matter of public knowledge that the recent spate of gun violence is linked to the drug trade industry. Since Mr. Fiddy makes no bones about his entrepreneurial past and the associated violence of the "trade," he is said to promote the said industry. However, no one has similarly concluded that since Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones (or is it Rolling Papers) was busted on a heroin sting in Toronto, there should be an immigration order taken out to ban him from Canada. In fact, the Canadian government shelled out millions of tax dollars to pay the Rolling Stones to play at Downsview Park for a SARS benefit with not much as a whimper from the likes of Dan McTeague. Two different standards; draw your own conclusions.

Furthermore, if McTeague is vehemently opposed to the genre of "gansta-rap," then he should be equally and publicly vocal on the gangster tendencies of his own political party, since exposed for their corruption through the "Sponsorship scandal." Mr. McTeague would be tickled to find out that there are more similarities between Fiddy's "Get Rich or Die Tryin" mantra and his homies up on Parliament Hill.

Now that the manure has hit the fan with respect to gun violence, what we need are concrete solutions and not knee-jerk reactions from public officials.

Artists from Elvis Presley and James Dean to Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg have been blamed, usually by old white men steeped in their Christian Puritanism, for all the societal ills resulting from the values that they promote. That is the easy way out. However, it is far more constructive to be critical of the larger society because they have the means to imbue us with the values of the dominant ideology. It is at this doorstep that old white men decide on what artist to sign, what artists to promote, what movies to make, and what wars to fight.

*Mesfin Aman is a broadcaster in Toronto, Canada. He can be contacted at [mesfin\\_aman@hotmail.com](mailto:mesfin_aman@hotmail.com).*