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Kanye, Serena and Dumb Sh*t Between the Lines

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Now I'm gonna say, right out the box, this might not be a column you want your children to read—or maybe you will. I know my publishers usually don't like profanity laced commentary, and Lord knows black people have had a reason to cuss lately, but I've always been one to push my First Amendment rights (as well as push the love my papers have for me) so hear goes...The last couple weeks has been a little much as it relates to our "confrontation culture." I've never been one to tolerate a bunch of dumb sh*t, and really hate watching it play out. I hate even more the residual conversation about it.

It's okay to confront legitimate issues in our society if it goes to benefit the betterment of society. But to confront stuff just to confront stuff really irks me. The "shock" culture has lost its shock value. It's like listening to people who like to hear themselves talk, or people who complain just for the sake of complaining. When there's really something to talk about or when a legitimate complaint surfaces, you have heard so much dumb stuff that really don't pay attention to what is being said. There are bigger problems in the world than sports and entertainment. In fact, sports and entertainment offer a release from the troubles of the world—or at least they are supposed to. That's when dumb sh*t becomes really aggravatin'.

Last week was dumb sh*t overload when Serena Williams threaten a lineswoman and Kanye West snatched the microphone from an award winner because the person he thought should have won, didn't win. Now, I consider myself a rebel, and I rebel with the best of them, but what was Serena's and Kanye's objection to, at the end of the day? It was all much ado about nothing. Serena didn't even challenge that her foot

crossed the serving line. So, was she mad that she did it, or mad that the lineswoman saw it? And was it enough to forfeit the game over? I've seen Serena Williams come from two sets down to win a match. One point down (with her serving) wasn't anything.

I really think Serena was having a bad day, and her reaction appeared real out of character. Still, her reaction to the call, though in the heat of battle, amounted to some real dumb sh*t. We have never been disappointed when either Williams sister lost, because they play their hearts out and some days it's just not their day. But I was real disappointed with *the way* Serena lost that match because it was so unbecoming of her. No match was worth tarnishing her image. Yes, Serena is a rebel. She rebels in her dress, her intensity and her ability to overcome unwarranted criticism. Yelling at the linesman "John McEnroe" style doesn't become her. Hell, it didn't become him. It was dumb sh*t when he did too. You just shook your head and hoped it would be over soon. I hope I never see Serena act that way again. I like her too much.

Kanye West, on the other hand, has made a career of saying dumb sh*t and doing dumb sh*t. I think I'm at my dumb sh*t limit with Mr. Kanye. I think he's a very talented artist and I even like *some* of his stuff. He's edgy and his reverse psychology on the education advocacy was original. His "matter of fact" outspokenness in an industry that tends to mute artists, even hip-hoppers, is to be commented. As Frederick Douglass once said, "Truth is proper and beautiful at all times and in all places." Kanye's unforgettable outburst during Hurricane Katrina, about President Bush's failure to respond and his perception of the President's feelings about black people, was priceless and right on point. Kanye said what everybody else was thinking. It was a truth that was proper and beautiful at the right time, about the right place. Other Kanye "truths" have been more opinion than fact, particularly as it relates to who he thinks should win awards—himself included. That stuff is entertaining, and may have its merits, but doesn't really represent a "truth" in the context of what is really important in the world. Any kind of conversation about who won award shows or beauty pageants is a subjective engagement in visceral rhetoric. Whether Taylor Swift deserved a video award more than Beyonce is no more of any consequence than whether Denzel Washington deserved to win the Oscar in the years he did Malcolm X or Hurricane Carter than in the year he actually won it for playing a rogue cop in *Training Day*. At the end of the day, in either year, it didn't make the world a better place. In fact, it was just another diversion to take our minds off the world.

What made Kanye look stupid, because I surmise that he is not a dumb man, is that nobody really cared and he took a moment from someone, a moment that significant to them, *for some dumb sh*t*. I haven't found one person yet that thought what Kanye did was pertinent nor relevant to anything anybody really cared about. If Kanye wants to have a public conversation about the integrity of award shows, have it before the show or after the show. Or boycott the show like Marlon Brando, the *ultimate* rebel, used to do—whether he won or not—if you want to send a message. But just when I thought Congressman Joe Wilson had "sshole of the year" locked up, along comes Kanye to snatch it from him just like he snatched the mike from Taylor.

Wilson deserved it because what Wilson did shocked the Congress and a national television audience with the one of the greatest "disses" of all-time (to use Kanye's analysis) on a subject that mattered in the context of our President trying to change the state of the nation's health. Yet, Kanye West now gets my vote—and he should hold up the "sshole of the year" award. What Wilson did was more indignant than what Kanye did because he disrespected that nation's Chief Executive on national television over the issue of the day, health care reform—where it was distasteful even to his own

party—but what Kanye did was absolutely repugnant because he did it over something that means absolutely nothing in the larger scheme of things. Dumb sh*t personified. Kanye not only embarrassed himself-he embarrassed his industry at an improper time with an absolutely irrelevant truth, if it was a truth at all.

There is never a proper time for dumb sh*t. Shock television and other forms of rude and crude behavior have lost their shock value. It's all just a bunch of publicity grabbing dumb sh*t now. And now that dumb sh*t is reaching an all-time low, it's the proper time to call it out and put a stop to it.

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