

## The hip-hop approach - tapping into bling

'I am the hip-hop generation and I am going to have an impact'

Russell Simmons

'My dream is to become the first black President of the United States'

Serena Royal

The Syracuse Hip-Hop Summit reported on by Joanna Walters in The Times (on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2004) may seem an unlikely example to include as an example of emotional intelligence. However, the approach of Richard Simmons, a 46 year old music mogul provides a consummate example of EQ in practice. Tapping into young and poor people's perceived sense of powerlessness in influencing political decisions and aiming to influence them to take part by using their votes in the presidential election, was his prime purpose for organising a 3 hour event combining rap music and debate in Syracuse, upstate New York in early 2004.

The opposite of passion being described as indifference applies as much to politics as it does to personal relationships, and Simmons effectively tapped into young peoples' feelings during the Hip-Hop Summit with a blend of rap music and evangelical fervour to inspire them into using the power of their votes. By acknowledging the struggle that he had gone through to motivate himself into, to do something better than 'just sitting around' and by speaking to them in their own language, he inspired not only those who felt previously disconnected from the process to go out and vote, but also the above quote from Serena Royal.

Recognising their perceived sense of hopelessness and wanting to persuade the next generation to use their vote when he had been too apathetic to use his, was a driving force behind his campaign. 'You can't get no bling-bling long term unless you give something to the community', was part of his rallying cry to the massed audience of young people; an assertion that endorses not only political involvement but community spirit and a sense of responsibility that fits the emotional integrity element of EQ.

The EQ process of self-awareness, awareness of others, reflection and application are all in place in Simmons's self declared 'integrationist' approach. An endorsement of his ability to reach across divides between race, religion and political beliefs by Bakari Kitwana, author of 'The Crisis in African American Culture' is testament to Simmons's effectiveness. A leadership example that no doubt, politicians of all nationalities and all levels could learn EQ lessons from!

Source:

'MINDCHANGE – the power of emotionally intelligent leadership' by Jan Childs & David Pardey, published 2005 by Management Books 2000.

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