

FAMU Students Angry About Hip Hop Posters

Contributed by Matthew Richardson - Black College Wire
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Big Koon & Hollywood's signs create controversy

Posters and CD's that promote rap duo "Big Koon & Hollywood" were plastered on trees, poles and rails all throughout the University. The name "Big Koon" caught the attention of students and caused some to have mixed feelings about the situation.

"There are so many posters around campus, it doesn't matter. They're trying to be big one day," said Cory Young, a junior criminal justice student from Palm Beach County.

While some students were OK with the name and multitude of posters, others were not.

"It's ignorance. It's like Nas' new album [that is titled a racial slur]," said Jim Gedeon, 20, a junior political science student from Palm Beach Garden. "I'm not surprised. It's freedom of speech but it should not be placed up."

Electoral Commissioner Marva Butler explained the policy to place up posters in the University.

It has to be approved by the Office of Student Union and Activities, and there must be an approval stamp, said Butler, 23, a fifth-year MBA student from Washington, D.C.

The Big Koon and Hollywood promoters did not request approval, therefore making them illegal to place on the premises, but even if requested, would the college approve?

"I'm sure OSA would not approve of the poster," Butler said. "I would have a lot of mixed reactions. Why would you use that to portray anything? It is very disturbing. People are still trying to live by those stereotypes. It's sad, where's our progress?"

But as far as Charles Wakeley, promoter of the rap duo, is concerned, the posters were taken the wrong way and no harm was done.

"Nobody said anything to us about taking them down," Wakeley said. "A student did tell me that later on someone was going to take all them down by the end of the day, but if my job is to place the flyers up and allow people to see them -- mission accomplished."

Wakeley, who owns his own promoting management, claimed that he was never notified of any backlash and that in the process of placing the posters up, nothing was done to stop his action. He was just doing his job.

"When I'm promoting the label, I utilize my team to promote. I make flyers, posters and distribute CDs," Wakeley said. "If management came up to me and told me about the posters, I would have not placed them up."

One student who was offended by the posters, claimed to have had a confrontation with Wakeley last week when the student was caught taking down the posters. The student alleged that Wakeley made a threat.

"I'm a stand-up guy and a very nice person, but I have a system that I manage with," Wakely said. "I never threatened the student."

As for the term Big Koon, Wakeley said the name was a misunderstanding on the students' behalf. He said the name Koon is the last name of one of the rappers' family members.

"Why put so much emphasis on this? Why not check into whom they are before you judge?" Wakeley said. "Big Koon was class valedictorian at his school and was accepted into West Point Military Academy. He calls himself Big Koon because his uncle's last name was Koon."

Although the posters were placed around the campus in great numbers, Wakeley simply calls it good promoting.

"When I do a promotion, you see it in a different way. I make sure it gets seen. I create ways that it can be seen," Wakeley said. "And this is not the first time we have received this complaint."

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Matthew Richardson wrote a version of this article for the Florida A&M University student newspaper, The Famuan.
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