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US rapper says President Bush is racist

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0509/050905-rapper.html>

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5 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

US rapper says President Bush is racist

BNE: American rap artist Kanye West has accused President George W. Bush of racism on live television. Departing from the script at a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. West bluntly said: "George Bush doesn't care about black people." His impromptu comments caught the TV studio off guard and cameras hurriedly moved back to the show's host. West accused the Bush administration of being too slow to respond to the humanitarian crisis because most of the victims are black and poor. Mr. West also slammed the media for its racial bias, declaring: "I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they're looting. See a white family, it says they're looking for food."

Mr. West is not alone in condemning the White House for its slow initial response to provide even the most basic aid to the hurricane victims. Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson fiercely attacked Mr. Bush, saying racial injustice was the root cause of the unacceptable efforts at administering relief. Reverend Jackson likened the sight of thousands of dehydrated black citizens stranded together on a flooded highway to a slave ship. He said: "There's a historical indifference to the pain of poor people and black people in this country". However, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Bruce Gordon, said it was not the time for "finger-pointing". He stressed: "Right now, the NAACP is in what I call a life-saving mode."

WARM-UPS

1. HELLO PRESIDENT BUSH: Take part in short role plays. Students A are President George W. Bush; Students B are victims of the hurricane still in New Orleans after six days. Students B are very angry with President Bush. Take turns in being President and victim.

2. RACE: In pairs / groups, talk about the following races. What images spring to mind when you think about each race?

- Black
- White
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Aborigine
- Arab
- African
- Other

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Rap / Kanye West / racism / Hurricane Katrina / black people / humanitarian crisis / poor people / media / looting / the White House / slave ships / finger-pointing

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. RACISM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "racism". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. RACIAL INJUSTICE: In pairs / groups, talk about these opinions on the role race may have played in relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina. How far do you agree with them?

- a. To say U.S. President George W. Bush is a racist is absurd.
- b. George Bush has many black people in his cabinet. He cannot be racist.
- c. If Katrina had devastated the largely white city of Boston, the relief response would have been immediate.
- d. The media seem to have used a disproportionate amount of airtime criminalizing black people instead of focusing on their desperate plight.
- e. Kanye West just wanted to be controversial. That's his job as a rapper.
- f. Race is not the reason for the slow relief efforts. Incompetent leadership is the real cause.
- g. Money is the reason for slow relief efforts. When the World Trade Centre was attacked, the Government reacted with amazing speed. New Orleans is poor.
- h. All American citizens are treated equally, regardless of skin color.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think President George W. Bush is not racist. Students B think President George W. Bush is racist. Change partners often.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. An American hip hop singer has accused President Bush of racism. T / F
- b. The accusation was made to Mr. Bush's face on TV news. T / F
- c. The rapper was allowed to speak for 35 minutes about racial injustice. T / F
- d. The rapper accused the media of criminalizing black people. T / F
- e. The rapper is pretty much alone in accusing Mr. Bush of racism. T / F
- f. A black leader said stranded black citizens resembled slave ships. T / F
- g. The black leader said America had a proud history of racial equality. T / F
- h. Another black leader also pointed the finger at President Bush. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| a. artist | unrehearsed |
| b. bluntly | apathy |
| c. impromptu | thirsty |
| d. bias | fundamental |
| e. looting | plainly |
| f. root | marooned |
| g. dehydrated | pillaging |
| h. stranded | star |
| i. indifference | accusations |
| j. finger-pointing | impartiality |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Departing | respond to the humanitarian crisis |
| b. His impromptu comments caught | media for its racial bias |
| c. too slow to | to the pain of poor people |
| d. Mr. West also slammed the | cause |
| e. the way they portray | from the script |
| f. not alone in | for "finger-pointing" |
| g. racial injustice was the root | the TV studio off guard |
| h. unacceptable efforts | us in the media |
| i. a historical indifference | condemning the White House |
| j. not the time | at administering relief |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHICH WORD? Strike through the incorrect word in the *italicized* pairs.

US rapper says President Bush is racist

BNE: American rap artist Kanye West has *accused* / *accosted* President George W. Bush of racism on *live* / *lively* television. Departing from the script at a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. West *blunt* / *bluntly* said: "George Bush doesn't care about black people." His *impromptu* / *improper* comments caught the TV studio off *guard* / *grade* and cameras hurriedly moved back to the show's host. West accused the Bush administration of being too slow to respond to the humanitarian crisis because most of the victims are black and poor. Mr. West also *slimmed* / *slammed* the media for its racial bias, declaring: "I hate the way they *portray* / *portrait* us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they're *looking* / *looting*. See a white family, it says they're looking for food."

Mr. West is not alone in *condensing* / *condemning* the White House for its slow *initial* / *sign* response to provide even the most basic aid to the hurricane victims. *Civil* / *Civilian* rights leader Jesse Jackson fiercely attacked Mr. Bush, saying racial injustice was the *moot* / *root* cause of the unacceptable efforts at administering relief. Reverend Jackson likened the sight of thousands of *demoted* / *dehydrated* black citizens stranded together on a flooded highway to a *slave* / *container* ship. He said: "There's a historical *inference* / *indifference* to the pain of poor people and black people in this country". However, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Bruce Gordon, said it was not the time for "finger-pointing". He stressed: "Right now, the NAACP is in what I call a life-saving *model* / *mode*."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'rap' and 'artist'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHICH WORD? In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the relationships between the correct and incorrect words. Were the words new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "RACISM" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the racism that exists in America and other countries.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- accused
- bluntly
- off guard
- respond
- slammed
- looting
- initial
- root
- likened
- indifference
- finger
- mode

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your initial reaction to this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What adjectives would you use to describe your feelings about this article?
- d. What do you think of Kanye West's accusation?
- e. What do you think is the reason for the slow relief response?
- f. What would you be thinking if you were still trapped in New Orleans without water after six days?
- g. How do you think this crisis will affect Mr. Bush's Presidency?
- h. Do you think the media have focused too much on looting?
- i. Do you think President Bush should meet Mr. West?
- j. Do you think there's a lot of racism in America?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. Are black people and white people viewed differently in the media?
- d. Have the pictures you have seen on television or in newspapers changed your image of America?
- e. Have you heard any good news about the rescue efforts?
- f. Do you think President Bush is a racist?
- g. Do you think this tragedy will change race relations in America?
- h. Do you think looting is a serious crime in such a tragedy?
- i. What do you think of the shoot-to-kill policy for looters?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

RACE:

In groups, spend one minute brainstorming all of the words you can think of for each of the races in the table below. Assign a secretary to write down the words.

BLACK	WHITE
CHINESE	ARAB

After you have finished, talk about the words. What do they say about your thoughts on each race? Are these thoughts fair? Do the words show any differences between the four races? Are these differences fair?

Change partners and explain your findings to your new groups.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

US rapper says President Bush is racist

BNE: American rap artist Kanye West has _____ President George W. Bush of racism on live television. Departing from the script at a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. West _____ said: "George Bush doesn't care about black people." His _____ comments caught the TV studio _____ and cameras hurriedly moved back to the show's host. West accused the Bush administration of being too slow to _____ to the humanitarian crisis because most of the victims are black and poor. Mr. West also _____ the media for its racial bias, declaring: "I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they're _____. See a white family, it says they're looking for food."

Mr. West is not alone in _____ the White House for its slow initial response to provide even the most basic aid to the hurricane victims. Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson _____ attacked Mr. Bush, saying racial injustice was the _____ cause of the unacceptable efforts at administering relief. Reverend Jackson likened the sight of thousands of _____ black citizens stranded together on a flooded highway to a slave ship. He said: "There's a historical _____ to the pain of poor people and black people in this country". However, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Bruce Gordon, said it was not the time for "_____ - _____". He stressed: "Right now, the NAACP is in what I call a life-saving _____."

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the racial mix of New Orleans. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. LETTER: Write a letter to American rap artist Kanye West. Tell him what you think of his comments about President George W. Bush. Show your letters to your classmates in your next lesson.

4. DIARY / JOURNAL ENTRY: Imagine you have been stranded on a stretch of flooded highway in New Orleans in 35-degree heat for six days. You have no food and water. You see helicopters flying overhead but none comes to rescue you. Write your diary / journal entry for one day on the highway. Read what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. F d. T e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| a. artist | star |
| b. bluntly | plainly |
| c. impromptu | unrehearsed |
| d. bias | impartiality |
| e. looting | pillaging |
| f. root | fundamental |
| g. dehydrated | thirsty |
| h. stranded | marooned |
| i. indifference | apathy |
| j. finger-pointing | accusations |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Departing | from the script |
| b. His impromptu comments caught | the TV studio off guard |
| c. too slow to | respond to the humanitarian crisis |
| d. Mr. West also slammed the | media for its racial bias |
| e. the way they portray | us in the media |
| f. not alone in | condemning the White House |
| g. racial injustice was the root | cause |
| h. unacceptable efforts | at administering relief |
| i. a historical indifference | to the pain of poor people |
| j. not the time | for "finger-pointing" |

WHICH WORD?

US rapper says President Bush is racist

BNE: American rap artist Kanye West has *accused* / ~~accosted~~ President George W. Bush of racism on *live* / ~~lively~~ television. Departing from the script at a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. West ~~blunt~~ / *bluntly* said: "George Bush doesn't care about black people." His *impromptu* / ~~improper~~ comments caught the TV studio off *guard* / ~~grade~~ and cameras hurriedly moved back to the show's host. West accused the Bush administration of being too slow to respond to the humanitarian crisis because most of the victims are black and poor. Mr. West also ~~slimmed~~ / *slammed* the media for its racial bias, declaring: "I hate the way they *portray* / ~~portrait~~ us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they're ~~looking~~ / *looting* . See a white family, it says they're looking for food."

Mr. West is not alone in *condemning* / ~~condensing~~ the White House for its slow *initial* / ~~sign~~ response to provide even the most basic aid to the hurricane victims. *Civil* / ~~Civilian~~ rights leader Jesse Jackson fiercely attacked Mr. Bush, saying racial injustice was the ~~moor~~ / *root* cause of the unacceptable efforts at administering relief. Reverend Jackson likened the sight of thousands of ~~demoted~~ / *dehydrated* black citizens stranded together on a flooded highway to a *slave* / ~~container~~ ship. He said: "There's a historical *inference* / *indifference* to the pain of poor people and black people in this country". However, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Bruce Gordon, said it was not the time for "finger-pointing". He stressed: "Right now, the NAACP is in what I call a life-saving ~~model~~ / *mode*."