

Roundabout for May 16, 2023

Next Week's Program

We'll meet in the Georgian Room and on Zoom for our final club assembly of the year. Be ready for discussions on the many opportunities for you to get involved in the club – the committees you can participate in, and other important (and hopefully inspiring) aspects of our club.

This week's new

Stephen A. Clark, a guest of **Alain Barker**, is from the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Disaster Recovery. He made a short presentation about low-interest loans available to people affected by severe storms on March 31 and April 1 that resulted in a federal disaster declaration for Monroe, Owen, Morgan and Sullivan counties. For more information, go to disasterloanassistance.SBA.gov.

Vivien Bridges fell two weeks ago. After two surgeries in Chicago, she's looking forward to returning to the club.



The Habitat for Humanity Celebration for Laura's home dedication will be Saturday, May 20, from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. You can park at 1400 W. RCA Park Drive and walk over to Osage Place. The home for Laura, her mother Juana, and her children Zoe (12) and Eric (6) is supported by the Bloomington Rotary Toast in honor of **Charlotte Zietlow**.



On June 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. we will have our Spring Celebration at WonderLab, 308 W. Fourth St. This will replace our lunch meeting. The cost is \$20. Families are welcome, and children under 18 are free.

President Alain shared some polio numbers that showed only two environmental cases reported in the world this week.

Anyone with program ideas is asked to send them to **Michael Shermis**.

This week's program



Judy Schroeder introduced our speaker, Kyle Adams, the chair of music theory at IU's Jacobs School of Music. He is an expert in the unlikely pairing of 16th-century music and hip-hop.

His presentation was on the latter – Rap Music on Trial.

Kyle took us through his and others' research on how rap music lyrics are being used unfairly in criminal cases. He stressed that in these cases the defendants may be guilty of the charges against them, but that lyrics from rap music are not proof of their guilt – and are totally irrelevant.

He talked about three case histories in which rap lyrics have been used as evidence of guilt in violent crimes.

He said his research's central claims are that the legal focus on rap is racially motivated and that to understand rap you must understand lyric formula, which in the case of rap music includes bravado and aggression.

He showed a slide of these violent lyrics with a photo of a black man whom audience members assumed was the rap artist:

"I know I'll die for what I'm about to do,
But it don't matter, I'm a dead man anyhow.
This gun will buy back the pride they took from me
And also end this life of mine that's worthless now.
By the time you tell the cops it'll all be over
He'll find me at their big house on the hill
He'll find a note explaining why I killed us all,
Now it's time to go I've got someone to kill."

The photo then changed to be the song's real author, Johnny Paycheck, and some of the twangy song written by the very white country singer was played.

Kyle cited research by Carrie Fried that found most people rated lyrics as much more offensive, threatening, and in need of regulation when they thought they were rap – even though they might be country or folk. She also found when consumers thought artists were black, they believed their music was more likely offensive, threatening, and in need of regulation. (For more information, see <https://endrapontrial.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Fried-1996.pdf>.)

He noted the racial implications revealed in the research.

Possible reasons? Rap music, like the blues, started in poor and marginalized society. Rap rose in communities with deep mistrust for law enforcement, was improvised (included free-styling), and relied on bravado. Rap music is built on characters who are bold, aggressive and extremely confident.

Rap characters represent the idea that “I’m the best” ... or “I’m better than you” ... or “I’m better than everybody.” The lyrics always have used lots of metaphors, such as a pitbull vs. a chihuahua. Rappers use violent metaphors to pump themselves up. Although metaphors of violence have become much more realistic as time has passed, they’re still just metaphors, not realty.

Kyle said market forces made rap very popular. Another researcher noted that people who use the techniques of rap want to brand themselves as being from the world they are rapping about. Researcher Tricia Rose said this phenomenon has parallels in the path of Taylor Swift, who left her Connecticut mansion for Nashville to brand herself as a farm girl and start her career in country music.



Kyle concluded:

- Rappers may be violent, but their lyrics don't provide evidence of that.
- Legal focus on rap has deep and disturbing roots in racism.
- A lot of the content is based on boastful lyric formulas that have characterized rap from its earliest days.

We should not assume rap artists mean their lyrics literally any more than that Johnny Cash shot a man just to watch him die ... or Carrie Underwood took a Louisville Slugger to both headlights ... or Eric Clapton actually shot the sheriff.

Our May 2 Celebration of Service

President **Alain Barker** opened the meeting by thanking club members for their generous support of the scholarship program.

Our reflection came from **Peggy Frisbie** who noted that we were meeting on the International Day of Light, the International Day of Living in Peace, the International Day of Do Something Good for Your Neighbor, and the International Day of Loving a Tree. She said those designations all line up with Rotary's mission. She also talked about how Foundation Grants have been used in our district.

Winston Shindell was our greeter.

Hank Walter introduced our in-person guests:

- Vladan Jovanovic, guest of **Traci Jovanovic**;
- Winston Shitandi, guest of **Traci Jovanovich** and **Alain Barker**;
- Whitney Cordoba, Daniela Cola, and Forrest Gilmore, guests of **Jim Bright**;
- Rotary Global Grant Scholar Megan Gearhart, guest of the club;
- Traci Nagle, guest of **Alain Barker**;
- Jim Johnson, guest of **Hank Walter**; and
- Sarah Slover, guest of **Amy Osajima**.

Birthdays this week: **Theresa Claire**, May 15; **Marcus Whited**, May 17; and **Alyce Zollman**, May 20.

No club anniversaries this week.

Joy Harter was our Zoom host.

Tylar Martin-Nichols was our Zoom audio and producer.

Michael Shermis was camera/mic operator.

Roundabout reporter: **Bob Zaltsberg**