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Calendar



Michelle Stewart of Watertown has created a website to promote self-knowledge and inner harmony.

People

CATE COULACOS PRATO

Promoting mind over matter

“It’s not need, it’s greed,” Michelle Stewart raps on her website, www.innerbling.com.

Stewart, who lives in Watertown, is not a hip-hopper, nor is she completely against buying things: The economy has to hum, after all. But this former corporate drone who has become a yoga instructor has seen the light on conspicuous consumption, and she wants to pass the torch to others, illuminating the treasures within them.

The term she coined to describe her philosophy is Inner Bling, a play on the hip-hop term “bling-bling,” which refers to expensive status items like diamonds, platinum, designer clothes, and luxury cars. Think of the sound bangle bracelets make when you shake them and you get bling-bling. Stewart believes that what sparkles and jingles on the inside is what counts.

“I want to get the idea out there to put value on what’s inside. Self-knowledge,

self-expression, is more important than that stuff,” said Stewart, 35, who is also a writer.

She does sell Inner Bling bumper stickers and T-shirts on her website, but they are made by an antisweatshop company and screen-printed by Boston’s nonprofit Artists for Humanity, www.afhboston.com, a social enterprise that gives inner-city teenagers paid apprenticeships in the arts. Some T-shirt profits will go to a yet unnamed peace and tolerance education organization, Stewart promises.

The irony of selling something to crusade against consumerism is not lost on Stewart. The idea is not to make a product of Inner Bling, she said, but to see if the concept can “organically grow through word of mouth,” prompted by the T-shirts and bumper stickers.

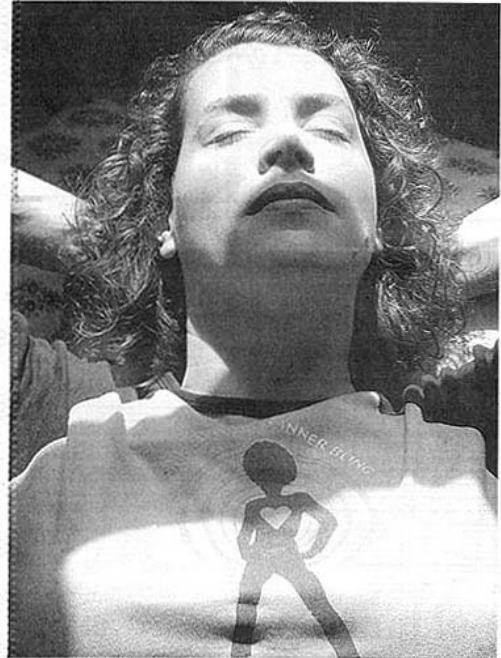
She said the Inner Bling rap song featured on the website came to her while she was practicing yoga postures. Her play on bling-bling in no way raps on rap music, she insisted.

“I’m not picking on hip-hop. Music is just one influence in a wider culture that stresses more, newer, bigger, better,” she said.

“Whether it’s buying an SUV, getting the newest cell phone, or wearing designer-label clothes, these messages find us and get under our skin. We don’t even realize they’re driving us.”

“My message is that you always have your *inner bling* on — you just have to find it.” ■

IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/ESSDRAS M. SUAREZ

Yoga instructor Michelle Stewart of Watertown has begun a campaign against blatant consumerism. She calls her approach to self-knowledge and personal growth “Inner Bling.” People, Page 19.