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Hip Hop is Dead: The Rhetoric of Hip Hop

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Hip Hop is Dead?

The Rhetoric of Hip Hop

Final Honors Project

Kalyana Champlain

With a big "Shout out" to my sponsor

Kathleen Torrens

Whose guidance, patience, and commitment was indispensable, and who helped me locate my voice

And "mad props" to:

Tricia Rose who challenged me to "add something new to the dialogue," inspired me to pursue it, and showed me it could be done

And

Alain Philippe Durand who helped to get the project approved

And finally...

Richard Mcintyre, Deb Gardiner, Carolyn Hames and the honors program, without which this project would not have been possible....

Introduction

“Everybody sound the same, commercialize the game

Reminiscin' when it wasn't all business

If it got where it started

So we all gather here for the dearly departed”

Lyrics to Hip Hop is Dead

On December 19th, 2006 the MC Nas released an Album entitled “ Hip Hop is Dead.” The Album cover featured Nas under darkening skies with what looks like vultures circling. The photo, taken from the viewpoint of looking up from the grave, showed him dressed in black, dropping a like-colored rose into the ditch. With a solemn look on his face, underneath him lay his name and album title with lettering the color of a tombstone’s granite.

Nas announced the album’s title after a performance on May 18, 2006 in a late September interview on English DJ Tim Westwood's Radio show. When asked why he claims that Hip Hop is dead, Nas stated, "Hip-hop is dead because we as artists no longer have the power." He went on to say, "Could you imagine what 50 Cent could be doing, Nas, Jay, Eminem, if we were the Jimmy Lovines. Could you imagine the power we'd have? I think that's where we're headed." Later Nas would follow up by stating, “...basically America is dead. There is no political voice. Music is dead. Our way of thinking is dead, our commerce is dead. Everything in this society has been done.

That's where we are as a country" (Rap Central, UK).

I had been thinking about this for a while, so when Nas made this statement a part of me began to consider "What if he's right?" I had long been listening to the change within hip hop's content. Once an artistic genre with a broad range of topics and choices from the partying to the political, it seemed that only one voice was now being allowed out. I considered this voice a problem because it expressed all of the hypersexual, excessively material, and extremely racist views that I saw as damaging not only to the reputation of African American people, but Hip Hop itself. That voice reduced Hip Hop, an art form that I consider to contain extreme potential, to no more than a vehicle for hyper-americanized ideologies that were exacerbated by and further exacerbated the effects of commercialism. It appeared that Nas may have had a point in his assessment. Not only was Hip Hop dead, but its death was an actual reflection of the changing social structures within a new global economy.

Although many things have been affected by globalization, when it comes to Hip Hop there are underlying events that make it a more complex issue. The growing capitalism and technological advances that occurred during globalization are a catch 22 within the world of Hip Hop. The reason is this: the poor conditions spawned by capitalist endeavors that created the need for this outlet coupled with those technological advances (such as the turn table and mixer-- two vital elements that form the base of hip hop) are, in a sense, what contributed to this culture. However, these same ties also contribute to its decline when it comes to Hip Hop as an African American art form. Why is this? It is my opinion that, in accordance with scholars from Carter Wilson and Eric Williams, to George Lipsitz and Patricia Hill Collins, the problem lies in the fact that capitalism's foundations lay upon the roots of slavery. This is

dangerous because capital gain, which is becoming more prominent within Hip Hop's lyrics, becomes enmeshed with traditions of racist attitudes and beliefs that then become magnified as they are filtered globally.

This issue of increasing ties to capitalism is further complicated by the fact that these same dismal social conditions and beliefs that were constructed from this system have imbued hip hop culture and begun to dominate its current rhetoric encouraging more of the same rhetoric. Consequently it perpetuates a dangerous and vicious cycle that can begin to corrode, and erode, a community. My point is this: If Hip Hop is in fact "Dead," it is because the very conditions that have given rise to this art form, are now the very conditions that are causing its death.

So it is my goal to take a better look at the conditions that have formed this cultural rhetoric. If the art form is in fact on its death bed, I truly believe that the way to resuscitate it is to find out where it has been, so we can figure out where it can go. In this thesis I will begin by defining rhetoric and the context in which it will be used. I will then proceed to build a foundation for my argument by discussing the following: the historic ties of slavery and capitalism, the history of legislation and politics and their relation to the "new racism" that spawned the conditions that gave rise to hip hop, and finally, I will tie it all together by discussing the transformation of the rhetoric of hip hop within the contexts of these social conditions as they relate to the current state of its commercialism.

Rhetoric

While many have defined rhetoric with negative connotations such as empty talk meant just to persuade, or limited it to mere public speaking, nothing could be further

from the truth. I have personally defined rhetoric as the art of awakening to an idea and the energy it ignites, and then finding the best means to communicate and transmit the idea and energy to others in a symbolic fashion, with the intent of invoking and/or evoking a new perspective. This points out two elements within rhetoric that are crucial to understanding the purpose of this thesis. The first is that the "awakening of this idea" suggests that the idea has been sparked by that person's experiences. The second is that "invoking and/or evoking a response," points out that rhetoric does not just express the ends, but rhetoric invokes a continual process. Within the framework of hip hop, and more specifically rap[1], which is what hip hop has been reduced to since its cooptation, the lyrics we often hear consist of personal stories and experiences. These experiences are influenced by the social environment (family, friends, neighborhood conditions, opportunities) that have influenced this person. Once this influence is verbalized, lyrics emerge that can influence others. This is how we see rhetoric at work.

Rhetoric is often the catalyst used to open up dialogue on a subject. This view, one of rhetoric being a product as well as a producer of social conditions, has been discussed by several contemporary theorists such as Burke, Bitzer, and Bahktin. From this perspective rhetoric has been provoked and responded to, and then in turn does the same. This means that the social conditions that surround a speaker directly influence, and are influenced by, the rhetoric that occurs within that environment. This moves rhetoric from a position of passivity to one of responsibility. It also then becomes more than just "empty talk," as suddenly we have to begin to pay attention to what is driving the rhetoric that we are hearing. By understanding this art form from this vantage point, we begin to see the dance between rhetoric and the social conditions that have

[1] Hip Hop is the entire culture including all four elements of Djiing, graffiti, breakdancing, and mcing.

influenced Hip Hop. Further, by seeing these conditions through the lens of capitalism's ties to slavery, we can begin to decipher why we hear and see the messages that are within hip hop right now.

In The History and Theory of Rhetoric, Herrick quotes James L. Kinneavy who stated, "certainly one of the most overpowering concepts in contemporary rhetoric, obvious in many different disciplines, is the notion that a piece of discourse must be judged against the cultural and situational context in which it was produced and in which it is being interpreted" (222). His statement stresses the importance of understanding the social influences and structures that create this exchange.

With this theory as a foundation, several ideas help us understand the context that we should consider in regards to this cultural rhetoric called Hip Hop. We will start with James Kinneavy's idea of situation and use Murray Forman's discussion of the two ideas of "space and place" within hip hop. We are not just discussing the physical locations of space and place--but the psychological implications that these spaces and places imply. We also have to pay attention to who has created these spaces and places, as the rhetoric that has been created has given power to a select few; those few are the same white hegemonic structures that first created a constitution that deemed an African male as only 3/5ths of a person. These ideas also involve and complement Michael Foucault who studied the relationship between rhetoric, space and power structures. These theorists and social critics will form the basis for understanding the creation of the "ghetto" aka "hood" and what that implies for rhetoric itself. Through these themes we will begin to see the correlation between the negative effects of capitalism that have spanned history and their current affects on rhetoric of hip hop.

These social structures and conditions create “spaces and places,” physically and psychologically, that marginalize a community. This process leaves the community to lean totally on itself. So people create substructures in order to survive under the hegemonic ones. This brings us to a main theme within hip hop, the idea of a “crew.” This “crew” has become a way for the marginalized communities to identify with one another. These “crews” within hip hop have often been the means to help protect a person's self esteem against a society that has been trying for hundreds of years to tear you down. Therefore, the second concept that I will introduce is Burke's idea of Identification, and the way it is influenced by social conditions. This identification is particularly important to discuss relative to hip hop as it is an African American art form, and African Americans are collectivistic people. What we want to see is how this identification has changed to a more negative tone, with the social structures and conditions over time, and the subsequent impact of capitalism. Burke proposes that in order to persuade a man you first need to speak his language. I propose that in order to speak his language, you first have to understand what has created it so we can see why this dialogue is taking place. In addition, Burke argues in A Rhetoric of Motives that the most serious problem to humanity is alienation, and one of the goals of the rhetorician then was to unite alienated people. Therefore, we will look at how the African American was alienated, and how hip hop has tried to provide some sort of unification. However, we will then take it one step further and show how the effects of hip hop's emergence with hyper-capitalism is now causing it to divide.

The image of African Americans that arose out of slavery is an additional issue. This image formed through political, legislative, media, and social rhetoric cast African Americans negatively. Eventually new identities needed to be created in order to

redefine "blackness" in America. For a time, hip hop identified with these movements to put blackness in a more positive direction. It is here that I will interject a third concept, also from Burke, called symbolic inducement. In A Grammar of Motives, Burke suggests that forming symbols can shape and change not just the person themselves, but also the contexts in which they are seen or see themselves. Herrick explains Burke's idea of symbolic inducement discussing 3 elements of social existence that rhetoric helps us to understand. These are 1) the means by which we define ourselves and our communities (which is also influenced by the idea of the “space and place” created by power structures); 2) meaning being the interpretation of symbols; and 3) human motivation and action. These elements reveal the connection between current social conditions and the rhetoric of the past, and how hip hop’s alignment with hyper-capitalist ideologies undo the progress made for African Americans to define themselves.

These circumstances show that hip hop is not just a reaction to poor conditions, but, through its own rhetorical “utterances,” also creates scenarios that cause another chain of reactions. With that being said, the fourth idea that I want to consider of rhetoric is that it is a response and invites a response. In the social scenarios that I will discuss, we will see how a number of crises that have affected the African American community have greatly influenced the responses by said communities. Lloyd Bitzer developed an idea of exigencies which will be applicable here. In his essay "The Rhetorical Situation" he describes an exigency as “an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (8). In other words, the exigency is the situation inciting the response, and the history of that situation. Through understanding this we will be able to understand the social responses, positive and negative, that have taken place within Hip Hop.

Perhaps the most significant rhetorical characteristic to consider is the marginalized voice. With hip hop, this is a concern in two aspects. First, hip hop is the voice of the disenfranchised, and it is important to see not only how history has allowed this voice to become such, but also how power structures have been reinforced for it to continue. Second, as this continuation of the disenfranchised voice intensifies with hip hop's alliance with hyper-capitalism the art form itself Is stifled lyrically and stylistically. As hip hop becomes more commercial not only is the lyrical content limited, but the four elements that it used to contain are funneled into one.

Bahktin explains that though all voices may be present they are not necessarily equally valued. This is the case within the cooptation of hip hop, as corporations only want the voice that sells. Bahktin's fight, and one that I am determined to carry on through this thesis, was to undo this practice, extending the opportunity to all. Those that were silenced could then begin to enter the often constricted social dialogue. Further, Bahktin felt that meaning was made as dialogue occurred. Thus, we can begin to understand how those who are considered "less important," and express their marginalization through some of the lyrics of hip hop, embraced societal definitions such as the concept of being an outcast.

The marginalization of voice returns to space and place. If dialogue creates meaning, and the dialogue that is taking place is from only one main voice which expresses a certain group of people as "not important," this affects the symbolic inducement that follows. This message incites a rhetorical response saying, "Fine then- I'll be your outcast." We see this from slain Rapper Christopher Wallace, aka Biggie Smalls', lyrics that stated, "I grew up a fuckin' screw up," or in the slain rapper Tupac Shakur's song "Changes" when he flows, "Cops give a damn about a negro?/ Pull the

trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero/Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares? /One less hungry mouth on the welfare." Here we need to begin to ask ourselves the following: Who incited these responses? What created the voice that sent this message? Why is this the dominant voice allowed out? I believe that this questioning is what Bahktin was attempting to incite, and what we will attempt to answer here.

The idea of the marginalized voice is also relevant because what we are seeing in Hip Hop's commercial rhetoric is not representative of *All* Hip Hop, or *All* of the African American community. Rather, we see the correlation between the rise of conglomerates and laws of deregulation, and the limitation of diversity. In contrast to the marginalized voice, Bahktin uses the term "polyphonics" to describe the ability of every voice to be heard. I will refer to the term polyphonics as I compare it to the current state of "monophonics," or the marginalized voice, heard now.

Through this lens we are able to fully discuss hip hop in its rhetorical sense. In order to proceed, however, we first must take a look at the origins of these conditions that have created hip hop's rhetoric. Therefore, I will begin with Chattel Slavery and its connection to capitalism.

Slavery in the foundation for capitalism

"History is not everything, but it is a starting point. History is a clock that people use to tell their political and cultural time of day. It is a compass they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. It tells them where they are, but ,more importantly, what they must be."
John Henrik Clarke, African American Historian

"[The holocaust of enslavement and its continuing effects] stand astride every meaningful rhetorical pathway like a giant colossus...while the stated theme of a given speech may be White racism, Black pride, freedom, crime, poverty, desegregation, poor housing conditions and voting rights, the underlying issue is always the slavery experience."

Molefi Asante, Professor in African American Rhetoric

To understand the reason why hip hop's immersion in capitalism is so deadly we must first understand the ties of slavery to capitalism. One of the biggest concerns facing the hip hop generation[2], that is actually a spillover from past generations, is the fact that many Caucasian Americans still see young black men and women through the lens of slavery, and the images that are being allowed out by corporations are a modern day version of the same methods that kept the slave structure. For instance, CD cover art in the hip hop category often displays black men in threatening positions, with aggressive facial expressions. Black women rappers and artists are shown in seductive positions, many times displaying their backside, a body part exploited since the days of Sara Baartman. The primary interest to protect capital investment still holds (jn this example it would be record sales), therefore black men are seen through the slavery lens as highly dangerous and black women as sexually scandalous counterparts. In turn, social conditions perpetuated these conditions. To complicate the matter, these thoughts, attitudes and beliefs are reinforced with every new hip hop video that comes out. What the public is unaware of, however, is that these videos are from the same racist foundation that played itself out during slavery, and that the conditions that caused these images are from that same era. Therefore the ties of slavery to capitalism come with ideologies that penetrate the psychology of African Americans to the present time, sending damaging messages that we are currently hearing in the music of hip hop.

Slavery played a powerful role in the solidification of structural systems that helped maintain hegemony. Slavery was actually part of a deeper infrastructure that carried an agenda to protect a newly formed economy. So the first point is this: slavery provided

[2] Bakari Kitwana describes them as young blacks born between 1965 and 1984 belong to the first generation to have grown up in post-segregation America.

the foundation for the capitalist structures that take place today, and it was done out of measures to protect capitalistic endeavors and gain. However, the issue to be addressed exceeds slavery as a concept or institution. Instead it is the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that emerged to justify slavery's existence in regards to those of African descent.

To recognize the historical significance of the enslavement of Africans we have to look at slavery from the perspective of economics, especially since we are making a direct correlation to capitalism. Slavery was an important part in wealth accumulation in the United States. The concentration of wealth in plantation regions produced some of the wealthiest counties in the country. As slavery became a significant institution, preceding industrial capitalism, it generated the capital required to build the newly forming industries in the North just prior to the war. According to Carter A. Wilson, author of From Slavery to Advanced Capitalism, plantation slavery was anchored in a system that concentrated land wealth and slave ownership in the hands of a few. Towards the end of slavery, land ownership was more unequally distributed in the South with most of the concentration in plantation areas. Now it was these commercial farm areas of places like South Carolina where the richest 10% of the population owned about half of all the slaves and the land.

Next, let us look at how slavery became about race. Before slavery, the major means of work and production was indentured servitude. It was a contract where a person agreed to work for a set period for a landowner in a British colony in exchange for passage to the colony. Indentureship at this time involved mostly whites. Africans came into the picture as slavery became a profitable enterprise. What precipitated this divide? Simply put, it was the birth of race. Through the creation of slavery a complexion

change took place. This change, and the systems that were created to justify and support it, embedded the issue of race into this country's consciousness affecting generations of African Americans, especially the hip hop generation.

In its purest reasoning, Carter tells us that one of the reasons that the complexion change took place was because black slaves were easier to identify due to skin color (52). However, there were other conditional and situational reasons, established through the practices of slavery itself, for enslaving Africans, including that they were unarmed and easily confined to a small area (plantation), and also were *rendered hopeless with no expectations of freedom and land ownership*. This same disposition repeats itself now in the ghettos as employment rates dropped due to globalization, urban renewal and other policy strategies made decent housing impossible, and opportunities were taken away during the Reagan and Bush eras. During slavery, these instances occurred because Africans were not only taken to a foreign land where they were disarmed, but they were stolen or bought from many African tribes and mixed in so they could not have a common language. Without communication there would be less of an opportunity for uprising. Eric Williams explains in his book Slavery and Capitalism, that though the first ethnic group to be enslaved was the Native American, they could not keep up with the work load as needed and were extremely susceptible to disease. This placed the African at the highest demand. It is here the African further becomes a commodity.

Slavery became more prosperous and convenient than indentured servitude, allowed for more direct control over laborers, and had no limit to the amount of work that the master could extract from the slave except time to eat and sleep. Slavery was also valued because it was more productive for demographic reasons. Black women worked

in fields with their children while indentured servant women did not work in fields and her children were free.

I would like to begin to now look at the physical and psychological effects that slavery had on the African (soon to become African American) community. I do this because these effects have become embedded in a system (both tangibly and intangibly), and create and impact the future "spaces and places" as well as identities of African Americans for generations to come. Therefore, in this section I will discuss the way that slaves were "kept" and conditioned.

Slaves were kept in place by physical and psychological constraints that depicted certain images, and linked them to certain behavioral assumptions. First, I will discuss the physical as it is the physical means that eventually breaks down the psychological resistance. Physical restraint included whipping and castration of black men if they tried to run away or strike (or attempted to strike) a white person. Women were controlled also by this same physical abuse, and were further abused by the tool of rape. Shackles were frequently employed to keep slaves subdued.

The physical means used to keep them in place also had psychological repercussions. For instance, as John Blassingame discusses in his book Slave Community, the tool of rape not only destroyed the self esteem of slave women, but also emasculated slave men because they were not able to protect their women. Tools like whipping, hanging, and castration also greatly emasculated men, leaving them feeling helpless and unworthy. This accompanying psychological component is the most detrimental and harmful of all.

The psychology did not just go in one direction however, as the public needed convincing that slaves deserved this treatment. Public images emerged from what Joan

Morgan refers to as myths. She states that though myth was once the African's way to explain how the world began, whites now used myth to "make sense of us [African Americans] and the perversions of their institution" (94). These images included, in particular, the women as Jezebel/mammy/sapphire, and men as the Rapist/Dangerous Nigger/Sambo. These images show how gender was used as one of the main tools to degrade, divide, and dominate.

According to this new mythology, black women were either whores, field hands, or the good "house caretaker." An article by Marilyn Yarbrough with Crystal Bennett from the University of Dayton best describes each of these roles:

> First, Mammy, everyone's favorite aunt or grandmother, sometimes referred to as "Aunt Jemima," is ready to soothe everyone's hurt, envelop them in her always ample bosom, and wipe away their tears. She is often even more nurturing to her white charges than to her own children. Next, there is Jezebel, the bad-black-girl, who is depicted as alluring and seductive as she either indiscriminately mesmerizes men and lures them into her bed, or very deliberately lures into her snares those who have something of value to offer her. Finally, Sapphire, the wise-cracking, balls-crushing, emasculating woman, is usually shown with her hands on her hips and her head thrown back as she lets everyone know she is in charge.

In her book Black Sexual Politics, Patricia Hill Collins further discusses the use of gender politics. Collins confirms this dual identity of African American women viewed as jezebels, yet, expected to carry out the work of men and viewed as mules. Because African Americans were a "commodity," women's bodies became a production site- they

were not mothers or wives -- but manufacturers of a product condemning them to a life of sexual slavery and spending years being brutally raped by white masters (even though it was not considered rape because you cannot rape a "Jezebel"). Further, the "strength" portrayed by the Sapphire image allowed for a climate that excused all heinous behavior that was committed by white men on African Women. Morgan tells us that "Before long the Black Woman's mythic 'strength' became a convenient justification for every atrocity committed on her" (98).

Theses myths of African American women would be the starting point for myths of black men. One of the myths created characterized Black men as overly sexual to the point of being animalistic and unable to restrain themselves, in other words it was the image of the rapist. For example in D.W. Griffith's "American classic" Birth of a Nation, that used this image of the bestial black rapist to give birth to the Ku Klux Klan who would protect the defenseless white community and its women. This view came from the perception that a Black man must be this fierce sexually in order to keep up with the Jezebel. Morgan refers to an analysis by Paula Giddings, author of Where I Enter, stating "even the Black Man's alleged impulse to rape was the back woman's fault... He would have to be potent, the thinking went, to satisfy such hot-natured women" (98). This further assisted the image of Black men as bucks that were dangerous, needing to be tamed and "whipped" into shape, or lynched. Black men were objectified as big strong bodies, but stupid. Ultimately, white elites reduced black men to their muscles and penises (56-57).

Other images and mythologies include the lazy but obedient house Negro "Sambo," the good docile slave "Jack," who set his own pace and would work as long as well treated, and "Nat" the total rebel reflecting the real abolitionist who was feared by

whites (Blassingame 224). Physical maltreatment such as public displays of whippings and hangings became psychological tools that enforced these characteristics, while theses images steadfastly maintained these stereotypes. According to Blassingame, the "psychological repression" was augmented by public acts to relieve anxiety; complemented by efforts to keep the slaves in awe of the "power of whiteness" and ignorant of their own potential power" (223).

In total, these images made it possible to help keep Africans seen as bestial "things," perfect to sustain the growth of a nation, for as Collins suggests, "The objectification of people of African descent as chattel, the commodification of objectified Black bodies as property, and the exploitation of Black people as property and as workers are all closely linked" (55).

Additional tools beyond sexuality and gender constrained the community. For instance, the separation of the black family and the domineering presence of the white slave master replaced black men as fathers and husbands. This is discussed by Blassingame in his chapter "The Slave Family" as he tells us that the "most brutal aspect of slavery was the separation of families. This was a haunting fear which made all of the slave's days miserable..." (173). Blassingame continues to explain that even if we were to look back upon old marriage records that state that the marriage was "unbroken," we need to question that definition since legally a white master could separate the slave family and declare it as fair and therefore "unbroken. From a strict sociological standpoint, through, we would find that in truth only 13.6 percent of the unions were actually unbroken, while 66 percent were in fact dissolved by the masters.

Perhaps the most well documented use of psychological slavery appears in the Willie Lynch papers. These papers were written in the 1600's by a white colonizer

named Willie Lynch and were speeches given to fellow colonizers. In these papers he outlined the way that you psychologically break down your slave using fear, distrust, and envy "for control purposes." He discussed how to confuse slaves within their gender roles, and properly rape the women to infest them with "good white seed" until you get the color you desire. He said to use the tools of pinning the light skinned slaves against the dark skinned slaves, female against male, and young black male against old black male. His message was simple: keep the body, take the mind. He stated that if successfully inculcated for one year, eventually the slaves would not only be controlled for at least 300 years or more, but also would begin to enslave themselves.

Because these treatments were so harsh there had to be means to justify them. They had to be justified so that they could be used, because as long as they were used slavery was fool proof, and as long as slavery was fool proof we had a nice plump economy. Here is where we see politics and legislation step in.

First, politically, social acceptance of Africans as a slave class allows for greater unity among other European classes and puts the European classes higher up on the totem pole. Also during this time revolution rhetoric, rhetoric aimed at getting people hyped up to unite for war, changed to defend the institution of slavery, meanwhile other economic elite dominated the 1787 Constitutional Convention and created a government that legitimized and protected this institution.

Laws are, at this time, put into place to help fuel this mind state. The foundation for the African American community to become marginalized is being laid. According to Wilson, white men of property elite created a constitution that legitimized and protected the institution of slavery. For example, a Slave is to be considered 3/5ths of a person and blacks cannot vote. Now, remember what was stated above as far as rhetoric:

Bahktin argued that meaning is made when dialogue takes place, therefore having no say in the nation that you belong to takes away your ability to make any meaning.

Following suit, local public policies reflect and promote racism. These rules purposefully foster contempt for African Americans. The laws separated the slave from the indentured servant, beginning the process of pitting white against black and reinforcing racist ideologies.

Other laws allowed for unruly slaves to be dismembered, but prohibited masters to whip white Christian servants naked without a court order, and white servants had laws that protected property but denied slaves any right to property. Laws began to make clear distinctions between black slaves and white indentured servants in order to support conditions that lead to more per capita growth. The effect is that these white indentured servants are elevated in their position in comparison to black slaves and they soon get ownership of slaves, increasing their status and net worth.

Other rules were raised in relation to power, such as forbidding education of slaves. Slaves were not allowed to read or write, with few exceptions. As such they could not engage in an effective societal dialogue without the proper education. And when legislation did work for a slave, the urgency to deter this highly profitable structural system from being tampered with, usually won in the end. A good example of this was the Dred Scott V. John F.A. Sanford Case. In this case Dred Scott sued for his freedom and won, only to have the verdict reversed by Chief Justice Taney. Taney declared that "Blacks were not citizens and were not guaranteed protection of the federal government or courts" (pbs.org). This decision did not just have a legislative impact, but fed into all of the psychological messages that slavery had managed to create. Once again, blacks were not human beings but commodities, and whites, in their superiority, remained in

control.

What is the final result of the aforementioned issues and conditions? Blackness becomes the symbol for slavery and wretchedness. African Americans become associated with savagery, paganism, immortality, ignorance, and primitiveness as racism becomes institutionalized through this process. If you dehumanize someone: it becomes acceptable to enslave him.

Chattel Slavery not only owned, traded, and sold African Americans, but objectified them. Even during the "freeing of slaves" a "contraband act" put in place by Lincoln arrested any slave that had attempted to escape to union lines. If we look at the rhetorical implication of "contraband" it is currently a term that is used to describe goods imported or exported illegally. African Americans were never people, but tools used to increase a country's capital investments. As a result, African Americans were now seen as inferior as well as animalistic, making slavery acceptable, and inferring that African Americans did not deserve the same rights that were afforded to white people who were considered more human. So severe of an impact was this time that Collins tells us, "The debates continue but several facts remain. Chattel Slavery established the economic, political, and ideological framework for the treatment of Black people" (60). Collins also argued, "Chattel slavery was crucial to the founding of U.S. Capitalism because the buying and selling of human beings of African Descent formed a template for the economic and racial oppression of Black Americans" (55).

Now let us turn to the Reconstruction period in which slavery was technically abolished, but actually transformed with help from those chattel constructs. Here we begin to experience the "new racism," the first dose of which would take the form of legislation; a legislation built on the chattel foundation of a certain people being "less

than". This legislation continues racial segregation. Although the overt racism that we witnessed was "outlawed," the ideology lived on. The continuation of legislative and political practices undermined the amendments made for equality, sabotaging any progress made. This new racism straddled the line of the past and the present, faithful to the rule of the past, yet developing something unique. As African Americans made major political gains (such as succeeding in electing Black Public Officials to state office), Collins confirms that "white backlash challenged this new, multiracial democracy by passing laws that mandated racial segregation of blacks and whites" (61).

An example of such laws and conditions would be the case of Plessey versus Fergusen[3] and the Jim Crow laws which, as Collins tells us, "introduced mechanisms of social control that built upon those established during chattel slavery" (63). So Chattel slavery laid a foundation for all laws that were enacted within and upon this structural system.

Once again (or perhaps as a continuation) there was a new level upon which American capitalism had to be protected, and legislative, political, and social reforms would be put into place for that purpose. And while many immigrants at this time would also face some sort of alienation and disparagement, in alignment with history, it would be African Americans who would take the hardest hit.

Three of these examples took place during the "New Deal" era of the 1930's and 1940's. First, the Wagner Act, which Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom state that the "industry successfully lobbied to limit public housing to the poor" (128). It is here that the government was given a choice whether to participate and locate such housing, and

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[3] This form would find itself a home in the 1892 case of Plessey versus Fergusen in which Plessey would defy the Louisiana law that required railroad companies to provide "separate but equal" accommodations for White and Black Americans. In this case the U.S. backed Louisiana law and thereby "legalized racial segregation"(61). Essentially it overturned the 14th amendment.

soon after the progressive social housing programs were cancelled. Second, the Social Security act, which Lipsitz summarizes from Kenneth Crabgrass: “[they] excluded farm-workers and domestics from coverage, effectively denying those disproportionately minority sectors of the work force protections and benefits routinely afforded whites (Possessive Investment)” (5).

Third is the Federal Housing Act of 1934 when the government began underwriting mortgages in an attempt to increase home ownership. But William Julius Williamson tells us in When Work Disappears that “the mortgage program was selectively administered. Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and urban neighborhoods considered risks were redlined--an action that excluded virtually all the black neighborhoods and many neighborhoods with a considerable number of European immigrants” (46). Dreirer, Mollenkompf and Swanstrom confirm that racial discrimination was not only common but often supported by the government in the first half of the 20th century (119).

We must keep in mind the purpose of these laws. Remember, at this time, America is growing in commercial status with further investment being made in business. With attention turning to commercial development, new rules and rhetoric are used to set the stage to destroy poor areas to build businesses. The mass destruction of urban areas for the spread of commercial enterprise would later be termed "urban sprawl[4]."

Around the 1940’s and 50’s terms such as “blight” and “slums” were used by federal housing commissions in response to the ghettos created from their agendas and social policies. These terms of “blight” and “ghettos” shaped the context of the ghetto

[4] Sprawl is a form of metropolitan growth that is a response to often bewildering sets of economic, social, and political forces and to the physical geography of an area.

from a place where the underprivileged are suffering, to mere moles on the city's skin. Once again, people are objectified as this terminology is actually motivated by the desire for urban sprawl.

These new government plans advocated suburbanization in order to push people out of the city, freeing it up for development. Part of this development was a new movement for highway construction. The purpose of highway construction was two-fold, both of them business-oriented. The first was to transport more people into the heart of the city for employment and other services, and to also make moving to the suburbs more enticing by promising easy transportation in and out of the city. The problem is that this highway development would make for further destruction of the areas filled with "blight" exacerbating the already poor conditions of those living in the slums and ghettos.

For example, consider the Cross Bronx Expressway put into effect by the city planner Robert Moses. The place that would catch the brunt of this change would be the Bronx, New York, the birthplace of hip hop. The Cross Bronx Expressway which was begun in 1959, cut directly through the heart of the South Bronx, with the goal of connecting New Jersey to New York mainly with the purpose of assisting suburban commuters into New York City. This location would be one of the "unexpected side effects" of "Urban Renewal," as Tricia Rose, author of Black Noise, points out. This was not a gradual period of transition allowing people the ability to gain viable footage to insulate itself, but, instead, "a brutal process of community destruction and relocation executed by municipal officials..."(30). And while he could have chosen a different route he refused. Robert Caro explains in his book The Power Broker: *"But Moses wouldn't listen to the city's officials....'It had to be straight" (547).*

With this highway came the deconstruction of countless inner city areas that were already suffering from poor social and economic conditions. These were residents that were poor and could not afford to relocate. Consequently a color divide occurred again, just like during slavery, as opportunities arose for some to relocate (those that most mirrored the physical appearance of the hegemony), while others (mostly African Americans and Latinos) were forced, through stealth legislative policies and political practices, to stay. Whites could live together, but not with Blacks.

It was here that another form of segregation took place. Segregation could now be done residentially. Lipsitz shows us that in the decades that followed World War II, this idea of Urban Renewal actually was helping" construct a new 'white identity' in the suburbs by helping to destroy ethnically specific European American urban inner-city neighborhoods " (7). Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom confirm "local convenants" on deeds that forbade homeowners to sell to blacks, Jews, and other minority groups. They further describe real estate organizations that included ethics to sanction any organizations that assisted Blacks in any relocation to white neighborhoods (120).

Dreier, Mollenkompf, and Swanstom tell us in Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century, with regards to public housing acts such as the Wagner Act, that between the 1940's and 1960's business and political leaders who served on local public housing authority boards "sited public housing developments in segregated areas and adopted tenant selection policies that reinforced racial separation" (129). Even low income housing was residentially segregated. According to Dreier, Mollenkompf, and Swanstom, those housing projects that were high in black tenants were concentrated in "high-poverty areas," while those with mostly white were concentrated in "working class areas" (129).

In an attempt to continue urban sprawl the rhetoric of “urban renewal" was used frequently, and eventually displacement hit record proportions, further creating the foundation for unsuitable environments inhabited by Blacks. Dreier, Mollenkompf, and Swanstom confirm that between 1956 and 1972, urban renewal and freeway construction “displaced and estimated 3.8 million people” nationwide, and that some would eventually call it “negro Removal” because of its “focus on black neighborhoods” (131).

Ultimately, what we are seeing here is the same legislative and political pattern creating the same social constructs as during slavery. And how could we not, the system upon which this strategy was embedded was never removed. This practice of institutionalizing slavery would continue into the Civil Rights era, directly affecting African American’s opportunities for education, employment, and community building. We will discuss this next as it will provide our foundation to understand much of what has been referred to as nihilism, crime, and "gangsterisms" that we are hearing stressed within commercial hip hop today.

The Civil Rights Era

Institutionalized racism took away the impact of legislation made during the Civil Rights era. The affects of this institutional racism, referred to by Lipsitz and Collins as the "new racism," would greatly affect the opportunities afforded the hip hop generation. I am now going to talk about the development of this new racism and the effect on the African American community.

As we approach the Civil Rights era, the new racism is taking place underneath the already difficult struggle for blacks to fight the traditional racism. Though Civil Rights brought about significant changes that would challenge the traditional forms of racism

under the surface was this new racism brewing to take its place through more covert strategies. Alongside and driving this new racism, were the ideologies that accompanied a historical investment that was to use race as a tool to protect the "investment of a nation."

The problem facing the hip hop generation is that many of the laws provided through the Civil Rights movement were either not upheld or did not prevent whites from finding ways around them. For example, the Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education decision took hold in 1954. This law only targeted one specific area of segregation and was not accountable for the residential segregation that could take place by whites simply relocating and there being a socio-economic divide created that could prevent "others" from being able to follow, i.e. "restricted areas." Lipsitz argues that "the decision provided no means for dismantling the structures that crafted advantages for white students out of the disadvantages of students of color" (34). Another example was the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This act gave the Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship Training responsibility for ending discrimination in the building trades unions. But Lipsitz informs us that the bureau did not take it seriously. Therefore many complaints that had evidence of discrimination went ignored.

Once, again, this exigency created by government and businesses used the inner city to expand for politics and production, and therefore were pushing for "suburbanization." Unfortunately, as seen above, due to the structural systems in place, this opportunity was only afforded mostly white middle class and up.

This is the turn that brings us to the Post Civil Rights Era and into the "Reagan Years" which consequently would be directly on the heels of the breaking of Hip Hop's amniotic sac. With the ghetto stage set for disparity and neglect it would be the left

behind blacks and Latinos that would suffer. I will explore this new racism under the Reagan/Bush administration and explore how the historical pattern of social marginalization affected the African American community, and in particular the hip hop generation, creating the condition that is now heard within hip hop's rhetoric, and also the conditions that are being exploited by the current cooptation of hip hop.

Post Civil Rights

At the end of the Carter years, with thanks to Robert Moses and the Cross Bronx Expressway, and going into the Reagan years, the Minority community had once again officially been "boxed out" of America's equation. As vacancy rates increased through nervous landlords selling property to professional slumlords and as shopkeepers established businesses elsewhere, Rose states that "'newly relocated' black and Hispanic residents in the South Bronx were left with few city resources, fragmented leadership, and limited political power." (33)

She also quotes Marshall Berman from <u>All That is Solid Melts into Air</u> as explaining the effect this would have on the community when he states, "...Thus depopulated, economically depleted, emotionally shattered, the Bronx was ripe for all the dreaded spirals of urban blight" (31). It is the hip hop generation that would feel the brunt of this the most.

After a history of laws to protect African Americans being instated only to later be rescinded or turned over, the pattern was formed for any laws created afterwards to also not be taken seriously and the community's situation worsened. By the 1970's, social programs that had once helped the disenfranchised were either removed or replaced by corporate structures which further exacerbated the already distressing situation. As Tricia Rose puts it "the poorest neighborhoods and least protected had the smallest

safety nets" (27).

It would be these post industrial conditions that would, for the urban youth, leave virtually no trace of the Civil Rights movement. Rose adds that as blue collar manufacturing was abandoned for a corporate climate and funds dwindled, the ghetto now became the place for slumlords (as landlords sold buildings quickly for self preservation), drug rehabilitation centers, toxic waste dumps, and inadequate transportation. The laws that had been put in place to provide support to these communities could not contend with such a hostile climate, therefore, they became highly ineffective (30).

If we reflect on Lipsitz's arguments in regards to the invisible financial restraints on access to loans and housing assistance, as well as residential segregation, one can further see how this would cause problems for relocation into suburban neighborhoods, and an inability for the poor, especially blacks, to relocate.

It was not until the blackouts of 1977 that the effects of these city policies would be brought to light through lootings and vandalism that, according to the New York Times, made the blackout of 1965 "peaceful by contrast" (33).[5] The Bronx would eventually become the poster child for "America's Woes" (33).This negative imaging would then be used in movies and new coverage that would color the Bronx, and most importantly its inhabitants, as a backdrop for "social ruin." For Michael Ventura, these "depictions rendered silent the people who struggled with and maintained life under difficult conditions" (33), and "In roughly six hours of footage--Fort Apache, Wolfen, and Koyaanisqatsi--we haven't been introduced to one soul who actually lives in the South

[5] The Northeast Blackout of 1965 was a significant disruption in the supply of electricity on November 9, 1965, affecting Ontario, Canada and Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New York, and New Jersey in the United States. Around 25 million people and 80,000 square miles (207,000 km²) were left without electricity for up to twelve hours.

Bronx. We haven't heard one voice speaking its own language. We've merely watched a symbol of ruin: the South Bronx [as] last act before the end of the world"(33).

It is in this wounded womb of the South Bronx that Hip Hop culture was born. It would reveal itself through the partnership of this new racism and post industrialization, and most importantly the perseverance of the marginalized voice. You see, even while the rest of the world lost hope, and cut art programs and the like, the youth refused to do what the rest of the nation had done: give up on themselves.

<u>The New Racism and Postindustrialization.</u>

"Broken glass everywhere
People pissing on the
stairs, you know they just don't care
I can't
take the smell, I can't take the noise
Got no
money to move out, I guess I got no
choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the
back
Junkie's in the alley with a baseball
bat
I tried to get away, but I couldn't get
far
Cause the man with the tow-truck
repossessed my car

Don't push me, cause
I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to loose
my head
It's like a jungle sometimes, it makes
me wonder
How I keep from going
under"

(excerpt from Grandmaster flash and the furious Five's "the message" released in 1982)

By reading the evidence provided thus far, what we are seeing is not a decline of racism, but instead an altering of its form. Racism went from being overt and in your face to more covert, dressing stealthily in legal reforms not upheld, unspoken residential policies, and the creation of financial institutions (and tactics carried out within them) that did not provide for the lower 20% of the population (who were coincidently the 20% most disenfranchised). The new racism was maintained as the tool to protect the investments of a nation.

By the time President Carter exits and the Reagan Administration comes into office the stage has been firmly put in place for the creation of the “Bronx Zoo,"[6] a fitting title for the consistent years that animal-like rhetorical comparisons had been made for African Americans since slavery. However, the voice of hip hop emerges in its most powerful sense letting society know that things are not "OK." African Americans were still living in poverty, being segregated, discriminated, and were “close to the edge.”

While the previous generation saw its moves as helping the next ones along, the aforementioned occurrences abruptly truncated these opportunities. In addition, the middle class had left, providing little opportunity for economic growth through rebuilding.

Some of the population was in the position to take advantage of the opportunities created by the Civil Rights Movement, but many were not. Although the Civil Rights movement made it possible for a heterogeneous Black middle class to arise for the first time, it also required an assimilation of White norms and Values. However, even though the Census Bureau reports that from 1980 to 2000 residential racial segregation declined for African Americans, it was still higher than any group. Further, should the circumstances of those left behind in the ghetto have improved to be able to take

[6] The Bronx zoo was a phrase used to describe the Bronx’s current situation.

advantage of those rights, there was only a slim window of opportunity to do so. Collins explains that it was four back to back recessions in the 1970's, a growing white backlash against equal opportunity, and the ascendancy of conservative Republican administrations under Ronald Reagan (1980-1988) and George Bush (1988-1992)-- and later the election of George W. Bush to the presidency in 2000-- would combine to shatter this expectation (78).

The election of Ronald Reagan solidified the neglect, hopelessness, and destroyed any chance for the rebuilding of the ghetto. Lack of opportunity fed the decline of the condition of the people that inhabit these areas, particularly youth. In the 1980's, at the start of the Reagan administration, moves began being made to destroy all efforts for equal opportunity. With Reagan came the cutting of urban programs, growing prison rates, and budget cuts. William Julius Wilson explains in his book When Work Disappears that the Reagan and Bush Administration were "proponents of the New Federalism" (49). He explains how they sharply cut spending on direct aid to cities, including transportation, public service jobs and job training, compensatory education, social service block grants, and economic development assistance to name a few (49). A lack of support by legislature and programming cut backs within the scholastic programs, things that at one time had increased youth's education and opportunity and helped keep them out of trouble and stay in school (.i.e. sports programs, music, debate teams and the like), destroyed any hope for getting ahead.

In Savage Inequalities, Jonathan Kozol discusses public education in New York through a visit to both Riverdale, located in the northwest end (rich and white) and Public School 261 (P.S. 261) located in the southeast end of the Bronx (poor and black and Latino). Both of these schools are part of District 10, yet there are severe

discrepancies that take place. Along with P.S. 79 receiving what the principal described as the 10th best teachers in comparison to Riverdale who receives top educators, and textbooks being scarce (students actually have to share their social studies book, so how can you do homework), technologically there are differences as well.

As Kozol describes the environment we begin to see the makings for prison culture as early as kindergarten. Kozol explains that as you enter there is "a guard that sits by the door, the lobby is long and narrow. The ceiling is low. There are no windows."(85). When he asked a teacher if the students are aware of the quality of their surroundings she responded, "All these children see T.V., they know what suburban schools are like. Then they look around them at their school. This was a roller rink, you know....They don't comment on it, but you can see it in their eyes, they understand."(88). Later, when visiting Public School 79, another elementary school in the same district, he talks with principal James Carter who states,

> "Will these children ever get what white kids in the suburbs take for granted? I don't think so. If you ask me why, I'd have to speak of race and social class. I don't think the powers that be in New York City understand or want to understand that if they do not give these children a sufficient education to lead healthy and productive lives, we will be their victims later on. We'll pay the price someday-in violence, in economic costs." (89)

These neighborhoods have been left to fend for themselves. According to Lipsitz, "failure to enforce Civil Rights laws banning discrimination in housing, education, and hiring, along with efforts to undermine affirmative action and other remedies designed to advance the cause of social justice, renders racism structural and institutional rather than private and personal." (46).

These are some of the effects of the new racism. But what else does this "new racism" entail and how does it affect the urban community? According to Collins, this new racism has certain characteristics: (1) new patterns of corporate organization have made for an increasingly global economy. In particular the concentration of capital in a few corporations has enabled them to shape many aspects of the global economy. One outcome of this is that poverty now tends to be radicalized on a global scale toward anyone of African descent. (2) Local, regional, and national governmental bodies no longer have the pull they once did, making it so the new racism is transnational, meaning there can be racial inequality that does not appear to be under control by the state. (3) It relies more heavily on the ideas produced by the mass media.

These new techniques present hegemonic ideologies that racism does not exist, and they undercut antiracist protest. She sums it up by stating that it is this "Globalization, transnationalism, and the growth of hegemonic ideologies within mass media [that] provide the context for a new racism that has catalyzed changes within African, Black American, and African-Diasporic societies" (54). She states that it is this process that leaves black youth everywhere, deemed as problem children. Collins further explains that though the civil rights and Black Nationalist generation expected this generation to use the previously provided routes to gain social mobility, artists like Tupac Shakur reminded us that doors to economic opportunity and social mobility had been closed. If we recall the aforementioned lines I used from Biggie and 2pac earlier, you can see the point made.

Through there was more room for opportunity, the new developments in socio-political structures, such as Dred Scott and Plessey vs. Ferguson, had done its best to prevent these opportunities from being accessed. These changes taking place, many

on a global scale, influenced a whole new generation in an entirely new way.

One of the biggest impacts on this new generation was the rise of a global economy. The biggest effect of globalization is in the employment market, and it would be the lack of employment that would become concentrated in the marginalized places and aid social decay and disparity. This state of despair, coming from another plan to protect capital that was still invested in the tools used during the times of slavery, eventually found its way in to the rhetoric of Rap and what has now become Hip Hop.

The changes into a global economy had a large impact on African American communities as it would move employment overseas, making it so that the blue collar jobs that were afforded to people in urban areas, were now unavailable. In his book The Hip Hop Generation, Bakari Kitwana states that in the mid 1970's to mid 1980's corporations exporting jobs became commonplace and that as this happened national youth unemployment rates, especially in the African American community, skyrocketed (33). Now, If we are to consider the fact that the nation had been in the process of cutting urban funds for black youth to get a decent education to be able to go to college to get better jobs (as touched upon by Kozol), we can see why this affected the black community more than others. Like slaves were forbidden to read as a tool to keep power, Black inner city youth have been denied the proper education, thus maintaining the same power structure. Therefore, "Limited job opportunities and residential segregation combined to produce a new form of prison, racially segregated black urban neighborhoods that became known as 'ghettos' and that are the precursors to the contemporary 'hood'." (69) The effects of this would also help to breed another side effect: The rise of prison culture.

Prison Culture and the Prison Industrial Complex

You know they got me trapped in this prison of seclusion
Happiness, living on tha streets is a delusion
Even a smooth criminal one day must get caught
Shot up or shot down with tha bullet that he bought
Nine millimeter kickin' thinking about what tha streets doto me
Cause they never talk peace in tha black community
All we know is violence, do tha job in silence
Walk tha city streets like a rat pack of tyrants
Too many brothers daily heading for tha big penn
Niggas commin' out worse off than when they went in
Over tha years I done a lot of growin' up
Getten drunk thrown' up
Cuffed up
Then I said I had enough
There must be another route, way out
To money and fame, I changed my name
And played a different game
Tired of being trapped in this vicious cycle
If one more cop harasses me I just might go psycho
And when I gettem
I'll hittem with tha bum rush
Only a lunatic would like to see his skull crushed
Yo, if your smart you'll really let me go 'G'
But keep me cooped up in this ghetto and catch tha uzi
They got me trapped....
-2Pac "trapped"

" There appears to be no place for young black men in labor markets, but there is one in jails and prisons." (80).
-Patricia Hill Collins

1984: The time of the Reagan/Bush administration's "War on Drugs," conveniently, running parallel to the crack cocaine explosion of the 80's,[7] which were part of the attempts to finance Reagan's Nicaraguan war. With abundant hopelessness (the same that provided easy captivity with slaves) and no visible means of escape, many urban

[7] The crack epidemic refers to a six year period between 1984 and 1990 in the United States during which there was a huge surge in the use of crack cocaine in major cities, and crack-houses all over the USA. Fallout from the crack epidemic included a huge surge in addiction, homelessness, murder, theft, robbery, and long-term imprisonment.

black men and women either turned to using crack cocaine to self medicate and became addicts, or selling crack cocaine to make ends meet, ending up in jail. This explosion robbed many urban African American communities of leaders, mothers, and fathers. It also became one of the greatest times of economic disparity for African Americans, as Reagan cut the budget by more than a third for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

This environment produced the ills that we see within the government-made ghetto, and in particular what has become the "Bronx Zoo." The process up until this point has now concentrated high rates of minorities, mostly African American, in marginalized spaces for the purpose of "urban Sprawl," i.e. economic and municipal expansion. In turn, these disparaged communities receive no attention or assistance since, though they have intentionally been left out of America's equation, they are not considered contributors to the capital of our country. It is here that we see the effects of this neglect. There is a direct correlation between lack of opportunity, unemployment and the rise of crime.

At a time where the global market is also expanding, we see a decline in jobs as they go overseas. When work is unavailable people find other ways to cope and make ends meet, some illegal, and this has social as well as behavioral repercussions. Wilson confirms that the issues and effects of work disappearing is one of the "legacies of historic racial and class subjugation in America is a unique and growing concentration of minority residents in the most impoverished areas of the nation's metropolies" (15). The conditions that created the ghetto must be understood and repeatedly "underscored in order to appreciate the particular adaptations to chronic subordination in the ghetto" (Wilson 53). We can thus remove the common thought pattern that blames

African American unemployment on “laziness” and lack of desire to work. While these reasons are not totally untrue, for the most part, these issues have been fueled by lack of opportunity to take initiative. As globalization continues to occur, the only jobs that are left behind are skilled jobs: those needing training and education in order to be able to become gainfully employed.

This lack of employment starts to break down the possibility of forming solid community structures. Wilson refers to this as the “Social Organization” factor (20). Now if we look at Maslows[8] Hierarchy of needs, we will notice that employment helps us to provide for our basic needs as income allows us to be fed, clothed and housed. If we are not only lacking employment but the programs that helped to make ends meet during this lack of employment are cut, then our basic needs cannot be met. If, on an individual level, our basic needs cannot be met, then the community’s needs take a back seat. Hence, Wilson argues that in neighborhoods with high social organization (places where the basic needs are able to be met, allowing community participation to be possible) adults are empowered to “act to improve the quality of neighborhood life,” (21) which may be exemplified by becoming involved and/or concerned in the activities (or lack thereof) of youth. However neighborhoods plagued by high unemployment rates (therefore, basic needs not met and lack of ability to participate in community) will more than likely experience low levels of social organization as “the two go hand in hand” (21).

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[8] Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who believed that human needs formed a hierarchy, meaning that in order to to progress to the next need you need to meet the one before it. These needs were organized as the following, starting from the most immediate: Physiological needs (food clothing shelter), safety needs, Belongingness, self esteem needs, self actualization (realizing your fullest potential). (Adler, Procor, Towne, 9)

What then happens is that high rates of unemployment trigger anxiety, depression and or apathy/ and make community members go into survival mode. This affects the second need which is that of safety. This in turn breeds more problems for the community such as addiction, the selling of drugs, gangs (to provide a new method of belonging that is centered around criminal activity used to "provide" for self and families), and the offspring of both of those things which is violence. In Health and Healing for African Americans, Salimah Majeed, a licensed clinical social worker and executive director of African American Family Services states the following: "Lots of our clients use drugs to medicate the shame and anger and rage they feel from racism and the oppression that Blacks often inflict on each other" (123). Dr. John Robertson, executive director of the National Black Alcoholism and Addictions Council in Washington, DC., states, "In the Black Community, the health consequences of alcoholism are often more severe, entanglements with the justice system are more profound, and linkages with domestic violence are more visible" (7).

As liquor stores replace schools and community centers in the ghetto and the basic needs are taken away, eventually we hear from rap groups called "the Alkaholiks," and verses like the one above from 2Pac that state, "Over tha years I done alot of growin' up/Getten drunk thrown' up," or one of the most popular rap songs to date, Biggie Smalls "10 Crack commandments," which tell how to succeed in the drug game.

"I been in this game for years, it made me a animal

It's rules to this shit, I wrote me a manual

A step by step booklet for you to get

your game on track, not your wig pushed back'[9]

[9] To get shot

One of the largest arguments against hip hop today is its seeming celebration of crime and drugs. However, artists are sharing an identity that has been influenced by their environment, and that this environment was created through governmental systems that provided the content of the music. It is here that I would like to discuss the conditions that have created the deviant content that rap music is often accused of.

As stated previously, Crack Cocaine became popular for two reasons: It was cheap to make and produced a rapid high, making it that much faster to escape your reality. The NIDA Research Report on cocaine abuse and addiction states, "Because crack is smoked, the user experiences a high in less than 10 seconds. This rather immediate and euphoric effect is one of the reasons that crack became enormously popular in the mid 1980s."

Crack cocaine by far took the hardest toll on the African American community, and, once again, there was a system that was not only right there to help instigate it, but also support it. The combined growing capitalistic need for cheap labor would help to support these efforts to aid in the growing prison industrial complex.

It was at this time that the practice of minimum sentencing that had been rejected in the 1950's (due to the fact that small time dealers were getting the big fish's charges) would return full force and haunt the African American community. It began in 1973 with New York's Rockefeller drug laws.[10] Other states began to follow suit setting their own minimums. It would be a series of federal laws passed by Congress during the time of this administration that brought the country to the federal mandatory sentencing for drug crimes. These laws were the Comprehensive Crime Control Act and the Sentencing

[10] requiring that anyone who possessed more than 4 ounces of a controlled substance to a minimum of 15 years in jail.

Reform act, both established in 1984, followed by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act (1986).[11]

In an article entitled "Coming to terms with Prison Growth" in Corrections Today, Jane Browning explains that the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was the law which focused on crack cocaine, establishing a 100 to 1 sentencing ratio between crack and powder cocaine. She states:

> Sentencing guidelines set forth in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 mandate a minimum incarceration of five years for possession of five grams of crack cocaine, the same penalty that is triggered for the sale of 500 grams of powder cocaine -- 100 times the minimum quantity for possessing crack. A consequence of this disparity is disproportionate minority sentencing. While drug use rates are similar among all racial groups, black drug offenders have a 20 percent greater chance of being sentenced to prison than white offenders, according to U.S. Sentencing Commission statistics.(n3) In 2005, more than 80 percent of crack cocaine defendants were black.

With these laws in place, soon the prison industry, like the plantation and the ghetto, became the home of mostly African Americans. This is especially true for the hip hop generation. As the crime rates increased, as well as black on black crime, so did police brutality (which scored record highs in the 1980's as secret military style militia were set up to terrorize young black youth).

Racial disparities in the justice system became the new Civil Rights movement, as the African American community was losing its next generation. According to S. Craig Watkins, author of Hip Hop Matters, Blacks and Latinos combined, by June of 2003,

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[11] casted 5 year minimums for drug crimes, with 15 year minimums (if these included possession of a gun if a previous record for burglery was held)

made up roughly 25 percent of the general population but made up more than 60 percent of the prison population. He goes on to state that 12 percent of all black men ages 25 to 29 were in prison at the end of 2002, and California was the highest of all states for the most incarcerated overall.

One must keep in mind that most disadvantaged youth are victims of homes with either 1 or no parents (including fathers and mothers absorbed by the penal system), addiction, and domestic violence, and where (like in New York City) there may be 1 counselor per 900 students). We can, therefore, see the correlation when Watkins states that, like the adult counterpart, the majority of youth incarcerated in California are either black or Latino men. With voting rights taken away upon release, and their new identification taking place among gang members and other criminal, they are subjected, psychologically and physically, to a way of life that leaves them enslaved all over again.

Also, as mentioned above, to further complicate the issue, high prison rates are also happening during globalization, making prison labor a highly valued commodity. The privatized prison industry is capitalizing on the war on drugs through providing the cheap prison labor that the industry needs. In 1979 (around the same time that globalization started to take hold), Congress Prison Industry Enhancement certification program, giving private companies permission to use prison labor. With rates of pay as little as 50 cents an hour, or in some cases $3 a day, corporations have realized that mandatory minimum sentencing greatly works to their advantage. This has created a captive, non-unionized labor pool where benefits, vacation time, unemployment, minimum wage, and human rights and anti-sweatshop activists are non issues. Kitwana explains the parallels to American Slavery:

> The majority of the inmates in question are Black or brown-skinned

> people; in some cases, private prison laborers are accompanied by a guard or overseer; the jobs of free laborers are threatened by prison laborers as their wage significantly undercuts the minimum wage; and the wave of the future seems to suggest that private prisons will hire out laborers in the same way that plantation owners hired out slaves. (73).

Just like in slavery, young black men are becoming a commodity. Upon release many are left with no opportunities to join the general population and either return to the same lifestyle or are forced to low paying jobs, if they are available. As frustration sets in the community is in another vicious cycle. There is no need to wonder why hip hop is so angry--this is the reason.

Ultimately, it is clear that what we are witnessing here is the structural re-enslavement of the African American through a system that has been designed to always keep a status quo of the oppressor and the oppressed.

So, perhaps it is not just the prison structure that is to be paralleled to the times of chattel slavery but also the commodification of Black human life and the dissolution of Black families. Black Men are not the only ones suffering both inside and outside of the prison system. Women, considered the backbone of the community, had to carry the weight of the family and the community with many men incarcerated. Further, women also entered prison in large numbers during this time. The Black family suffered.

This cycle then becomes like this: the structural changes affect the quality of life in these black urban neighborhoods causing changes in the working-class culture. If we recall the onslaught of drugs and guns in the 1980's, neighborhoods became more dangerous as they were increasingly bombarded with drugs and crime, the community then began differentiating between "decent families" (those with traditional blue collar

jobs) and “street families” (Those who have fallen out of the ‘formal market’ and into the ‘informal’ one of the global drug economy). Those under the heading of “street” families would lose connection to school, employment, and other things that make you a member of society. In addition, due to fluctuating employment opportunities with the blue collar work and fluctuating opportunities with “street pharmaceuticals,” both would fall in and out of welfare. The difference, however, is that since the latter had long fallen out of societal grace they had “little hope of ever being “decent” or wanting to become “decent” (Collins 81).

Kitwana summarizes the long-term effects on the community of the “warehousing” of Blacks in the criminal system. Prison Culture’s effect on young Black youth culture can best be seen in the transformation of Black street gangs from the mid 1970’s through the 1990’s. The imprisonment of gang members has led to organized structures within prisons, and many individuals first joined gangs while in prison, mostly for protection. This in turn has sparked what experts call “gang migration”, which induced the sprouting of homegrown gangs throughout American Cities in the 80’s and 90’s. Through this, the line of street gangs and prison gangs blurs--therefore so does prison culture, street culture, and black culture (76). Kitwana points out this change would be reflected in hip hop as the culture progressed.

In Rhetoric in Popular Culture, Barry Brummet argues:

> If there had been a Great Convention of Racists in, say, the mid 1970’s, and those people had sat around and noted the strides made in the 1960’s for civil rights and civil liberties, especially for people of color, and if those people had decided they had better do something quick to restore the spirit of racism into the United States, especially among white folks...well, I

> do not think they could have done a more effective job than to invent what has turned into hip-hop (247).

Brummet defends his statement by announcing that Hip Hop has allowed all of the "appalling racist attitudes that we have all heard but know that we cannot and should not express." While, I agree with his surface critique, my response on a deeper level is, who is to say that this "Great Convention" is not exactly what has happened? Corporate America is made up of mostly middle aged white men perpetuating a system that has been built upon the foundations of chattel slavery. Therefore, since globalization is then an amalgamation of these corporations and their doctrines as well as infrastructures--I do believe that, in fact, we have our "Great Convention of Racists" provided through a system that has been hell bent on truncating the opportunities as well as, for purposes of keeping them as a subset of the hegemony, debasing the culture of African Americans for hundreds of years.

But what is an argument without proper representation of the accused. Therefore, "Your honor, I would like to call to the stand my first witness: Hip hop."

Hip Hop and you don't stop: Understanding how it all ties in

A Brief History

As businesses and the community were destroyed, music programs were removed from schools, and the new nickname of the Bronx Zoo--which would prove to become a self-fulfilling prophecy--took hold, there was only one thing that could communicate this angry and wounded being: A ground shaking bass, flailing legs, walls assaulted (or enhanced depending on where you are from) with names to claim their piece, and

eventually a voice that would evolve out of toasting and boasting to a verbal force to be reckoned with.

From the turmoil of urban renewal, the new racism, the prison industrial complex, and globalization a new generation would rise. A generation that some would say could be a reflection of the guerrilla slave that was sent to the West Indies: it was NOISE, yet somehow organized and it was LOUD and AGGRESSIVE. It just WASN'T SAFE. Yet for many it became the very opposite of that accusation. For many hip hop became exactly what would keep them safe.

With the aforementioned cuts (i.e. afterschool art programs, debate teams, music classes etc.) inner city youth had no outlet. Also, a cultural shift was taking place, as with all African American Vernacular, that demanded a new outlet for these voices to be heard. Consequently, this outlet had to be feasible as well as able to handle the anger and frustration that was rising out of this community.

When DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) arrived on the scene in the late 70's it was toward the end of the disco era and amidst the urban social exigencies that were taking place. Herc was from Jamaica and brought with him the idea of the Jamaican mobile sound system. Herc would ride around in his car with speakers blaring music, and he also be the focal point for the "block parties" that would ensue as a way for the community to get together and "get away" from the madness. Though it would seem that Herc could be considered an "outsider" not originally from this soil, nothing could be further from the truth. You see, Herc was still part of the larger picture and connection that African Americans have and maintain-- that of the African Diaspora.

During this time technology was also increasing and not only were turntables growing in popularity but also the idea of using two turn tables at once, which had been

introduced during the disco era to allow for extended play of the music. Since the Bronx had actually become a dumping ground for the city's trash, youth would find these thrown away turn tables and repair them, along with anything else that could be added to this new art form that was growing: The art of DJ'ing. Herc learned to extend the "breaks" on cuts, especially James Brown (still one of the most sampled artists in hip hop and therefore often referred to as the "godfather of hip hop"), and DJ Grandmaster Flash (with assistance from DJ Grandmaster Theodore) later brought the technique of scratching to a whole new level.

During the break beats dancers would come in with a martial arts type style. They came to be known as your Break-boys and Break-girls (B-boys and B-Girls for short) because they danced on the "break." Herc had always "toasted" and "boasted" over the mic, but soon MC's (not just masters of ceremonies, but later what would come to mean "mic controller") began to extend their rhymes over the beats. Afrika Bambaataa, a reformed gang member, formed the Zulu Nation[12] and taught youth how to use these new art forms to peacefully battle in an effort to stop the black on black crime and gang violence that was increasing. Bambaataa, an MC (sometimes spelled emcee) in his own right, also took hip hop to an international level. Through this all, there was a colorful and funky lettered backdrop to help announce this new generation's voice, an aerosol art form that came to be known as Graffiti. And there you have it: The three founding fathers of hip hop (Herc, Flash, and Bam), as well as the four elements (Djing, Break dancing, emceeing, and graffiti).

Therefore, the first thing to note here is that hip hop is not just the product of pathology. Yes, the cultural formation of hip hop, like its predecessors of African

[12] An organization by Bambaataa promoting the culture and heritage of African Americans and make a direct correlation of "returning to things African" as we saw reflected in their dress and names

American musical vernacular, has been assisted in its birth by a structural system that rarely included African Americans, and also as a method to cope with the stresses of not belonging to the European descendent hegemony as well as of the environmental conditions. However, we must also be sure to give hip hop its solid right as an artistic form that, like other artistic forms before it, was also born out of a new generation's need to communicate and celebrate themselves. In this way Hip hop becomes a personal affirmation, as well as a release--and serves to claim its right as a legitimate art form that deserves to be highly commended as it rode the waves of its own evolution that absorbed previous African American art forms, persevered to lend the voice to the marginalized, and engaged a changing world through its base of technological advances.

However, we cannot, and must not, ignore the fact that music is a form of communication inherently carrying the message of its sender. Therefore, while we deter from reducing this art form to a pitiful minimized position of victim-hood and product of mere pathology, we shall still be sure to bring attention to the fact that it is sending us messages and those messages need to be investigated. An old book on lyricism stated 'If you want to know whether or not a community is alright or floundering, just listen to the songs." Here we take the step to see what the music is telling us, and further, what the "powers that be" are allowing this music to tell us.

Therefore, in this final section what I would like to do is begin to make the correlation between hip hop and the danger of its ties to hyper-capitalism. This danger occurs in three ways:

1) The social conditions that hyper-capitalism has created have had a negative effect on the image of the African American community that is detrimental to the identity formation

of the youth that inhabit these spaces. This includes the lasting psychological effects that slavery has induced.

2) The values of hyper-capitalism (based on maintaining a system of slavery) are in conflict with the values of the African American community and, consequently, do not have in mind our best interests. Therefore, as this "American ideal" is embraced, our own culture becomes compromised.

3) The rise of conglomerations carry the main focus of "this is what sells," and if our community concerns are not deemed as "important," then there will be no reflection on the message behind what sells and how it is affecting the community. Further, with the rise of monopolies comes the limitation of voices allowed out (detrimental to a polyphonic system). With globalization happening at a fast rate, the effect is that not only is there solely one voice now representing the African American Community, but this one voice, and the images it is creating, is being taken in around the world and only giving African Americans ONE face. This face is the hyper-capitalized, over sexed, dangerous black man/scandalous black woman, ideals that are in line with the same images produced during the days of slavery.

The ways that I am going to categorize these three points are going to be through the following: Identity, Value systems, and Media Commodification. The process of this, however, will be ebb and flow as each one of these aspects influences the other.

Identity: The I of We to the I of Me:

"If you have to ask me why I am the way I am, if you can't understand there's no way I can tell you. It comes with this."
Member of Dead Prez (beyond beats and rhymes)

There are three areas of identity that I would like to discuss: 1) the identity in relation to self and location 2) The identity in relation to others, or group identity, and 3) identity in relation to gender.

Identity and Location:

So you think that hip-hop had it's start out in Queensbridge/ If you popped that junk up in the Bronx you might not live/ Cause you're in... South Bronx, the South South Bronx (4X)
Lyrics to Boogie Down Production's "South Bronx"

"Individual and collective Identities are connected to place..."
Murray Forman *<u>The Hood Comes First</u>*

Now that we have explored the conditioning of the ghetto as a continuation of slavery practices, we can now move to how social conditions created by hyper-capitalism have negatively affected the identity of African American Community that is detrimental to the identity of youth that inhabit these spaces. Remember that in the beginning of this thesis we accessed Burkean theories in order to understand identification. One of the ways that we unify with each other is to identify with each other.

Slavery accomplished a feeling of alienation within the African American Community. This feeling of alienation has a tremendous effect on the self esteem of African Americans, especially youth. One way that this alienation was continued and exacerbated was in relation to space and place, possibly one of the greatest effects that capitalism and slavery had on the black community today.

When we discuss the idea of location, however, we are doing so from the idea of "space and place," This is not just from a physical standpoint of "you're there and I am

here," but from a standpoint of "what are the rhetorical means and beliefs that put you there and me here." So we need to move from the physical to the psychological and back again. It is the laws, thinking and language that created the space you are in, and that space kept you to a smaller place within this frame, physically, symbolically, and mentally. Murray Forman, author of The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip Hop, explains that we have to get beyond thinking of space in its "commonsense" status. According to Forman, space is defined in relationship to power and subordination and it interrogates "the potential meanings and values that are ensconced in the language and logic of capitalist societies [including patriarchal and racist tendencies...] and their particular mechanisms for the maintenance and extension of power and authority" (6). Place is more local and is the immediate area that connects individuals both in body and mind, e.g. the hood. It involves recognition, affiliation, and closeness (25).

It is these two elements of space and place influence identification and discourse. While rhetoric from slavery helped to create the space that is now the ghetto, with it comes all of the psychological implication of "blackness being unimportant," as well as dangerous. The Space and Place created from slavery catalyzed marginalization. With this comes a stronger sense of identification, not just to where you live, but to who lives with you. This "space," both physical and psychological, informs who you are. In terms of identification it then informs you of whether or not you are part of the hegemony, and if not causes you to find who and what you are a part of.

The space created from previous existing policies and structures have marginalized the African American community. By pushing them to the outskirts they can constantly be seen as less important. As discussed, it was done during slavery with

slaves being kept in pens and small confined areas, often with animals. This brings us back to African Americans begin treated like animals, showing the persistence of the ideologies that accompanied slavery. Now we see it in the “hood.” This not only helps to maintain the hegemonic structure, but it creates a need to immerse yourself in capital gain in order to get out. Remember, it is survival of the fittest. This need can become so strong that you would forsake your community, or “place” in order to get into the hegemonic structure, or “space.” As we have seen up until this point, “space” has been used by Government and Corporate structures in order to keep the poor, and in particular the African American communities, in their “place.”

In other words, because the "powers that be," or current government structures, are still functioning from old structures and ideals that have a root in slavery and therefore that ideology of, as Lipsitz would say, the “possessive investment of whiteness,” the hegemonic structure has not altered its primary concern of protecting their capital investment, this also involves creating power structures that help keep a hegemony. With these old ideals and motives their operations have created a certain space in which African Americans now inhabit, physically and psychologically. This space has had a tremendous effect on the rhetoric of Hip Hop. Chen and Startosta, argue in Foundations of Intercultural Communication that “spatial contingencies refer to static attributes such as ones position, status, and the communication” (25).

So with space comes the idea of “status.” Space is a constant partnership between the physical and the psychological. If you have abundant and well kept space, then you must be of relevance and deserve to be protected and valued. If you have limited and disheveled space, then you must lack worth and the need for investment. So when a place like the Bronx is destroyed to created a highway to help the middle to upper class

travel from the suburbs, and your ”home” literally becomes a garbage can for all of the outside communities’ trash-- a very clear message is sent that you are not worth it. Just as slaves were kept in pens with farm animals, so were African Americans kept in “pens” to become animals.

Forman discusses space according to Henri Lefebvre who says that it is “produced” and that social space is, in fact, a product. In addition, he quotes Lefebvre who states that produced space “also serves as a tool of thought and action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control” (4).

Much of this control is then seized through legislation. Forman confirms that ways in which this space is used as control governmentally comes in some of the forms that I have already mentioned including housing policies and localized politics of urban development. Space works to the advantage of the hegemony as it can create a separation of the “haves” and the “have nots.” In the same way that slaves were confined to plantations for better control, so are blacks now confined, through these social constructs, to “the ghetto.” Remember, that the reason for the plantation and the pens where slaves were kept was the convenience of control to keep the hegemony’s “investments safe.” Forman tells us that “spatial relationships are also organized along the lines of subordination and domination--relationships of power--that are consensually and, when deemed necessary by those in positions of authority, coercively maintained” (6).

One of the earliest terms used to describe these spaces was that they were “blighted.” This rhetoric conveyed that these areas were somehow damaged and deficient. These “blighted” areas then were knocked down for commercial business. The symbolism that this created not only further alienated the existing community, but

further created the message that these inhabitants were “less important” than those who lived in “unblighted” areas. Therefore, why should we provide them with jobs, education, and opportunity.

“Evil feeds /Off a source of apathy/Weak in the mind/And of course you have to be/Less than a man/More like a thing/No knowledge you're nothin'/ Knowledge is king”
“Knowledge is King” by Kool Moe D

Marginalized spaces illuminate those who wield power. In turn this also helps to influence who you identify with. Michel Foucault explains this relationship between power and discourse in his work Power, Truth and Strategy that power and knowledge go hand in hand. Interested in how language affected knowledge, meaning, and power, he argued that the more you know the greater control you have over the environment. For African Americans, who have been systematically locked out of a dialogue intended to shape a nation--this means that you have no power. Ultimately, others have created your space for you and will determine what that space will be e.g. marginalized communities being pushed into the ghetto. These structures than control how you are seen within that space be it through media, or other forms of rhetoric, or just as a “blight” on the face of a nation. Finally, those socially constructed structures will then determine what that space can and cannot receive (opportunity--employment and education) and, therefore control what the people in this space become, or believe they are, capable of. Foucault referred to this tactic of disempowering a community through preventing their participation, as “excluded discourse;” Bahktin referred to this as the marginalized voice, in which all voices were present, but not equal. It is the Marginalization of communities that creates this sense of alienation.

Being unable to be active participants in society affects the self esteem of those who inhabit these communities that are “forgotten.” As that teacher stated in “Savage

inequalities," they [the children] may not see it directly [how society has neglected them and considered them less important], but they know." We also saw evidence of this in the verse from Tupac's song "Changes" in the intro when he flows,

"I see no changes wake up in the morning and I ask myself is life worth living should I blast myself?/ I'm tired of bein' poor & even worse I'm black/Cops give a damn about a negro?/ Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero/Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares /One less hungry mouth on the welfare."

In this one verse we are given a glimpse into his feelings as a young black male growing up in an urban setting. It also shows the use of space through law enforcement, which as was also noted above has enforced unfair laws that have been detrimental to the black community.

The message of inferiority and competition with "whiteness" is so interwoven within our culture that it does not even have to be stated, just implied. Through the government and corporate creation of certain space, we now see how this implication of being "not good enough" (or not human enough if we were to refer back to the ideologies of slavery) has taken form. As George Lipsitz argues "Whiteness is the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations."(1). With this subtle implication comes all of the past stereotypes and degrading images that settle in the souls of African Americans as they attempt to navigate through a society that avoids the African American image to represent its majority or an important piece of the majority. From "nappy headed ho's," to "thugs" the black image is tainted with the past of slavery and ideals of "you are just not good enough."

What these actions from the hegemony have caused, from the creation of

plantations to the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway and the cutting of programs, and the subsequent emergence of psychological space that has been created for African Americans through these actions, is what Bitzer calls an exigency, or that "imperfection marked by urgency." Bitzer tells us in "The Rhetorical Situation" that a rhetorical situation is defined by 3 elements: an audience, an exigence and constraints. Chen and Starosta tell us that one major mechanism accounting for cultural changes is disaster. Here we see how social cataclysm created the space" that becomes "place," and provides a response.

For African American youth born after 1968, one means for that response emerged within their smaller communities and groups, and one avenue that created that was hip hop. Therefore, because language is influenced by your environment (which is created by the space of the hegemony), the messages that we hear within hip hop music, tells us of police brutality, crime, and always borderlines on hope and nihilism; determination and despair. The depression and drug addiction that went unaddressed in these communities, however, would soon imbue the people and their culture with its poison. As survival takes over, people become trapped in the state of "animality." Therefore, as conditions worsened, the line was crossed and hope and determination through present began to relinquish its power to despair and nihilism. Since the community was not "worth saving" in the eyes of the capitalist system one of the ways to deal with this is through cultural discourse. Hip Hop served as an outlet, and became the shock absorber and release for emotions pent up in the community. Hip Hop became a response to a rhetorical situation that would eventually invite a response from the broader culture. It is the idea of place and group identity that I would like to turn to next.

Identity and group/community

While space is the larger component, place is the smaller component that personalizes space and helps to form the community itself. Forman explains that place is the "immediate locale of human interaction," defined by its "closeness and proximity to individuals and groups and by its localized character of abstracted space or of other distant places" (25). Place allows for more intimacy between groups and also makes for a strong investment in those places that have the greatest personal connection for you. Forman also tells us that a "sense of place as a site of significance may be grounded in the immediate environments of personal experience, such as the home or near neighborhood" (26).

What this means is that "place" has a deep emotional connection to who you are, what you talk about, and how you see the world. It also means that it is here that you are going to identify with those that share your same "place." It is within these "places" that communities, as part of those places, have responded. Hip hop is an expression of place. One such way that it has responded is through Hip Hop, and one of the main features of Hip Hop is the "crew."[13] However, this idea of a crew is rooted in deeper cultural practices and therefore carries deeper connotations than often acknowledged.

African Americans are collectivistic, meaning that they form and are formed by the community itself. As stated in Communication and Identity, "In collectivistic cultures a person gains identity by belonging to a group" (Addler, Procter, Towne 61). For a collectivistic group, an exigency (like the social conditions experienced by African Americans) that would bring people closer together by nature seems to have even greater effect within already marginalized populations.

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[13] "crews" Groups of young urban men and/or women that are formed of a group of peers that share your same interests and similar characteristics.

With a history of African Americans being outcast due to race, eventually the United States saw a backlash. This began to happen in the 1960's and 1970's with the black power movement. Jackson explains in African American Rhetoric, "Naturally, when the 'I/other' dialectic is socially devised to evaluate worth and value, such as is in the case of the White/Black dichotomy, it is critical to self-assess the mental and spiritual condition of those who are being affected--hence the impetus for the Black liberation psychology and sociology movements in the 1970's" (116). As the psychological leftovers from slavery created environments and conditions for increasing self hatred--the identity of the African American had to be re-conceptualized. These pro-black movements not only provided the physical defense from this abuse (such as the condemnation of Jim Crow Laws), but also they began to provide psychological defense as the movements formed a new black identity that was rooted in Afro-centrism.

However, due to the social conditions mentioned above, as the community's situation worsened and leaders moved out of the ghetto, programs that the leaders who stayed were cut, and values changed from the "I" of "we" to the "I of Me" due to people going into survival mode and the growing influence of European/ American ideals encroaching upon African American values, other things changed as well. Soon the leaders became drug lords as money was seen as the only escape, and the community now riddled with crack and unemployment succumbed to a new collectivism centered in survival. Location, or place, as territory becomes very important for power. As the Bronx youth battled Brooklyn, things did not seem to let up. As the community's conditioned worsened and black on black crime increased at drastic rates, rappers saw the need to take action.

So the idea of the black movement was adopted by the hip hop generation as we

saw in reference to Afrika Bambaataa. However it really became salient during the time that is referred to as "the golden age of hip hop," 1986-1993. These are the approximate years during the Reagan and Bush Administration and before the commercialization hits, and West Coast Gangster Rap takes over (circa 1991). The artists and movements after Bambaataa also explored this sense of needing to redefine blackness. One of the most prominent groups in this effort was Public Enemy who arrived on the scene circa 1987.

Man you ain't gotta
Worry 'bout a thing
'Bout your daughter
Nah she ain't my type
(But supposin' she said she loved me)
Are you afraid of the mix of Black and White
We're livin' in a land where
The law say the mixing of race
Makes the blood impure
She's a woman I'm a man
But by the look on your face
See ya can't stand it

Man calm your ass down, don't get mad
I don't [want] your sistah
(But supposin' she said she loved me)
Would you still love her
Or would you dismiss her
What is pure? Who is pure?
Is it European state of being, I'm not sure
If the whole world was to come
Thru peace and love
Then what would we made of?
From “fear of a Black Planet”

In this piece chuck D, of Public Enemy, not only comments on the left over old fears and stereotypes of black men coveting white women during slavery, but also makes a very clear proclamation of the rejection of the white identity as the “supreme” identity. Chuck D, declared rap “Black America’s CNN.” (Murray and Neal 141).Public Enemy was militant, on stage with fake weaponry and fatigues, declaring a nationalistic

black pride. Public Enemy's goal was to never let anyone forget the importance of African Americans or our history. Here we see an additional form of symbolic inducement challenging the ideologies of the hegemony and rhetorically renegotiating space. Public Enemy began to state that this was the African American's country just as much as everyone else. If that right could not be granted to us (as history had proven), then we were going to take it.

During the "golden age of hip hop[14]" artists began to open their eyes to the self destruction that was taking place and decided that they had to use their voices to reshape the community. Hip hop culture became a tool and grounded itself in Afrocentricity[15] and Black Nationalism.

At this stage (circa 1986-1993) Hip Hop reverses the exigency. In other words, the conditions that helped to place African American people as "the wretchedness of the earth" were now exposed through this once marginalized voice, and now this exigence of the negative effects caused by social conditions that were formed from a desire to protect capital investment that included slavery as a stage in the accumulation process, becomes a response that invites a response.

This is seen in additional movements to protect the community at that time, such as the "stop the Violence" movement started by KRS-One in 1989. KRS-One was a member of Boogie Down productions. The content of their first album reflected the street, so much so that not long after its release his partner was shot. Being affected by black on black crime, Krs-One decided to use hip hop as a political tool. Krs headed a

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[14] Considered Hip Hop's "golden age" as many variaties of artists came out including this rise of consious hip hop.

[15] Afrocentrism is a term used to refer to the belief that ancient Africa was the source of cultural and intellectual achievements that have been systematically denied or suppressed by Europeans. It is, in this respect, an inversion of the perceived racial hierarchies of Eurocentric history.

1989 movement with the song “Self Destruction.”

[KRS-One]
Well, today's topic, self destruction
It really ain't the rap audience that's buggin
It's one or two suckas, ignorant brothers
Trying to rob and steal from one another
You get caught in the mid
So to crush the stereotype here's what we did
We got ourselves together
so that you could unite and fight for what's right
Not negative 'cause the way we live is positive
We don't kill our relatives
“Self Destruction”

A call was being made for African Americans to value their own lives. Notice how KRS-ONE states that the goal is to unite, and Burke tells us that this is one of the main intentions of rhetoric. With the use of samples such as James Brown “Say it Loud, I’m black and I’m proud” and excerpts from speeches by Malcolm X embedded in the music, a new black movement arose.

Another factor of this idea of identity between self and group also showed itself in two other movements: The 5 percent movement and the Native Tongue movement. The 5 percent movement arose at the same time as Black Nationalism (approx 1986-1993). both movements attempted to reinstill pride within the African American community. The hope was to restructure the mind that had been enslaved, and free it like the body that had been claimed to be unchained by the 13th amendment. Along with these movements, African American women began to redefine their participation in the art form and in society. An example of this growth Is Queen Latifah; refuting their history of being “jezebels,” her presence instilled dignity and pride,

Derrick X (Sadat X)

You have to stand as a black man
Brand Nubian

From the Sudan plus I never ran
I'm from Africa, the central region
There I grew and formed a legion of my force
See me riding on a jet black horse at any cost
Brand Nubians will rise up and be the boss and show it
All fairness if you're black and show awareness
You can rally 'round the flag
Stand tall, or don't stand at all
You're with the three and the three won't sag to the floor
Besides picture that I'm painting I can draw
See me work nine to five on my easel
My physical is strong and my mind is cock diesel
Brand Nubian function in conjunction with the three
Brand Nubian--From the album one for All

Coming up on the heels of Brand Nubian was the Native Tongue movement. This was the collective efforts of 3 groups: The Jungle Brothers, De La Soul, and A Tribe Called Quest. Their lyrics were still Afrocentric, yet less nationalistic. The Native Tongue movement was also the first movement that sparked the interest in hip hop on college campuses, while bringing attention to Africa as a positive frame of reference. It was also their innovative infusion of hip hop and jazz that brought the art form to a new level, as well as further solidifying it in the pride of being and African American Art form, as it reunited with an important, powerful and historical piece of African American vernacular.

As this type of Afro-centric rhetoric expanded within hip hop, it created a new identity for African Americans-- one where the image of African Americans became redefined from a place of “black wretchedness” to one of “inherent dignity.” The redefinition occurred symbolically, not just the verbal messages, but also through the symbols such as African dress. We can see how nationalistic and Afrocentric ideas and principles influenced human motivation and action to help re-establish a positive sense of identity by validating the symbols of shared history. In turn the collectivistic value of

community is restored and the positive identification that has taken place begins to take hold to rebuild some of the structures that had been broken down.

This sense of identity and empowerment, however takes a turn as not only do external conditions stay the same or worsen, but also the original symbolic structure stayed embedded, creating a negative self fulfilling prophesy. Below the surface linger all of the structural, and therefore psychological, issues relative to slavery. Notably, at this height of self awareness and community redefinition that corporations begin to realize that "rap sells." Therefore, before the community has anytime to begin a substantial healing, capitalist enterprises intervene. One of the largest problems that would be exacerbated by concerns gender, particularly masculinity. Therefore, we will cover that now in order to proceed with the final point.

Identity/Gender

"Bitches aint shit but hos and tricks" Dr. Dre

"aint no fun if the homies can' t have none" Snoop Doggy Dog

While 1986-1993 was a pinnacle and value-creating time within hip hop, we cannot paint this romantic picture of the good old days. Hip Hop has always had its materialism and misogyny as with many forms of music, especially those of its ancestry like the blues. However, prior corporate America's embrace of hip hop there was a higher potential for balance. The other important factor is the history of this sexuality in relation to slavery and the black physical image. So in order to see the role that sexuality is playing in hip hop now, we first must touch on the psychology of the role of gender historically. In addition, in order to understand the underlying messages that always existed and why, we first have to discuss African American Masculinity and its

relationship to American White masculinity.

The first thing we should re- establish is that when slavery was in effect, black men were stripped of their masculinity as one of the tools used to keep the African community weak. If you can break the man, then the woman has no protection. Within this breaking of the black man another image became prominent: That of the powerful white slave master. This slave master showed his manhood in brutality, harshness, and control. This control extended not just to slaves, but white women as well. With this as a model, and the extreme need to reclaim of manhood, the slave master's behavior was emulated by the black male slaves and transformed into a hyper-masculine state that said "I can keep up with you--you cannot enslave me anymore." There was very much this idea that you have taken everything from me, but you cannot take my "manhood." In the documentary "I am a Man," by Byron Hurt, Richard Meyors tells how masculinity became important simply because it was so difficult to obtain in [the African American male's] past.

"I was raised, a little young nigga doin' bad shit,
Talked much shit, 'cause I never had shit.
I can remember bein' whooped in class,
And if I didn't pass, momma whooped my ass.
Was it my fault poppa didn't plan it out?
Broke out, left me to be the man of the house.
I couldn't take it, had to make a profit,
To the block, got a glock and I -- cocked grips.
Makin' G's was my mission,
Movin up for the shit to get my momma out the kitchen.
And why must I sock a fella,
Just to live large like Rockafella."
Tupac "I wonder if Heaven Got a Ghetto"

This idea of having to "prove yourself," has extended into today, and also is an example of "space." When Byron Hurts asks college student Anthony Williams, an African American Male, if he thinks white boys go around discussing guns, bling and

women he says that white boys “could be nerdy all their lives...but when it comes to brothers its always an issue...I guess its cause we never had nothin’." Another gentleman said that when a young lady asked why black guys are always holding their penises, his friend stated because they had “been stripped of everything they can identify with as a man-their education, their self worth, their dignity, their morality, their religion. Everything has been stripped from them. The only thing left is their penis, so they hold onto it.” We also see guns used as explained in the film: Beyond Beats and Rhymes, as an extension of manhood. On top of this the whole idea of “street credit” becomes a way to gain respect, and if you gain respect then you are safe.

“Got younger niggaz pullin the triggers bringing fame to they name
and claim some corners, crews without guns are goners”
Nas “N.Y. State of Mind”

The social conditions have also robbed men of their masculinity, creating another type of "space." In this "space" you are confined within your identity to what the conditions have created for you. Without education, you can't get a good job. Now, if unskilled jobs are going overseas due to globalization, then a man is left without work. This means that he cannot provide for his family. He either turns to selling drugs or doing them, both ending up in jail time, both re-enslaving him. Upon release he is angry and the cycle replays. In turn this “angry black man” becomes what sociologist Gail Dumes states “a major threat to suburban life.” So we have to keep him contained and locked up. As Bell Hooks stated, there then becomes a need to “put the black man in check.” This "lock up" also creates not just the physical space, but also the psychological space. For example, many black men upon release, end up going right back in because they cannot assimilate to the normal societal "space," and being free, so they return to what is familiar.

These stereotypes stay because of additional factors. Two of those factors are that black men once again become the scapegoat, and white men are kept “safe” so they do not have to admit their own insecurities in relation to the black man’s body, an attitude that is carried over since slavery. Jackson Katz explains that white men are still very intimidated by the black male figure, physically and sexually. Again we see the historic role of slavery and its images being played out in the psychology of today.

So what is the “space” created for women within this frame? With this protection of “hypermasculinity” in order to stay “safe,” all things that are not considered “manly” go under attack; from women to homosexuals. Words and phrases like “Bitchass,” “pussy,” and “faggot,” are the worst things you can be called. Why? All of these connotations attack your manhood. Consequently, Black women taking the brunt of Black men’s frustration, and either are not considered, or only allowed in certain “space.” In this space they are reduced to stereotypes of the modern day jezebel in order to protect this idea of “masculinity. Strong women are often not welcome by the wounded.

In turn, sexism is used as a tool by black men to feel better about themselves, more powerful, and less inferior. Black women become their scapegoat. Teacher Kwame Ndzibah states, “Sexism justifies us being men, because what it in fact does is it justifies and it supports all the whacked out thinking that men have.... We already know there is a pecking order, we know every day that there is someone above us...so we have to maintain that pecking order by stepping on someone else’s neck.”

Further, the idea of women being “wily and cunning,” as part of the man needing to “watch his back”, was another theme that would penetrate their thinking. This created solidarity would be formed between men (meaning men of all ethnicity) before the

trusting of their own women. As Willie Lynch stated, trust is the key to getting the slaves to enslave themselves. If they trust you, they will not trust anyone else--not even their own. As one young African American male stated in the video “I am A Man,” “You can let them [women] run all over you... and they will if you let them...you can’t be weak. You have to be the backbone.”

While it may seem contradictory that this idea existed already during hip hops incubation (1986-1993), when Queen Latifah and MC Lyte stepped on the scene, we must remember that they were not only extreme exceptions, but also that they arrived during what has been referred to as the golden era of hip hop. This was the time when the African American community began to recognize the seriousness of their situation and the need for action. That does not mean however, that the underlying issues had been resolved. These issues attacked some of the values that for a long time had held the African American Community together. To understand this we should discuss what African American values consist of in order to answer that question.

The dual Identity: A clash of Value systems

Here I will discuss African American Values from the standpoint of Collectivism, tradition and its rhetorical connection, and spirituality. This will then lead into the final piece of how all of these issues I have discussed thus far are compromised and affected by commercialism. It is essential to understand these values to make the connection of how capitalism threatens them.

The hub of African American values lies in their collectivism. Remember that collectivism is a sense of community and the responsibilities it takes to help uphold that community. In collectivism our identity depends upon those around us, and therefore the conditions of those around us. As we have read so far, African Americans are

collectivistic. Now, if a collectivistic culture shifts into an individualistic culture (i.e. American culture and individuality), values are lost. An example would be in how we use the "space" that we inhabit. Chen and Starosta argue that in regards to using space, "Individualistic cultures tend to be distant and remote, while people in collectivistic cultures tend to be interdependent and proximally close" (102). If we look at the history of African Americans within the United States, a condition of marginalization would already force a collectivistic community to acquire even tighter bonds, as we saw with the civil rights movement. Unfortunately, if capitalistic individuality infiltrates this community destroying its social cohesion, as Wilson explains, then things start to, as the Roots tell us "Fall Apart."[16]

What this means is that African Americans as a traditionally collectivistic culture, have had a past of leaning on and providing for one another. Because of the history of oppression African Americans have high identification with each other and a historical tendency to trust only each other. This move often keeps the white man out of "family business." David Matsumoto argues in Culture and Psychology that the groups become an "integral part of each individual's self-concept and identity" (407). Since this value of collectivism has been the greater value, it is only natural that their rhetoric also has supported, and helped create, that environment.

"Speech is my hammer, bang the world into shape-Now let it fall."

-Mos Def

In order to understand hip hop, and the inherent values of those who have created it, we need to understand the community's vantage point or their rhetorical lens. When

[16] Hip hop band that is highly socially conscious using live music. Their album titled "things Fall Apart" was taking from the book by Chinua Achebe. The cover a young African American girl running from the cops in the 1960's.

these ways are tampered with we have a disruption within the culture itself. A large part of the African American Collective ideal lays its foundations in tradition. In Understanding African American Rhetoric by Jackson and Richardson, the authors explore African American tradition within its ties to original African tribes and teachings that have proven to hold ground and make patterns over time. Tradition for African Americans is constantly presenting itself, moving, and evolving. While at first glance this may seem like a paradox, it is not, for it all stays footed in the value of a collectivistic ideal, and therefore seems to adapt rather than change. Molefi Asanti states that African American tradition is the source of "codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals as a valued frame of reference for acquiring and examining data" (5-6). Jackson and Richardson explain that tradition is the core source out of which the materials, methods, and methodologies of rhetoric and other communicative practices are made" (5). In African American culture one of the strongest traditions is the oral tradition. It is a tool that has had its most powerful base rooted in community. Understanding the importance and influence of the oral tradition on the African American community/ can help us understand why the lyrics of hip hop cannot be taken so lightly.

African American rhetoric is tied to the condition of the community. With the exigencies that took place within the African American community, from the holocaust of slavery to the formation of Jim Crow laws and eventually the ghetto, this rhetoric has been greatly rooted in a call for freedom and self empowerment. Jackson and

Richardson explain the tradition from the foundation of Kawaida philosophy.[17]

This philosophy affects all areas from history and ethics, to social/political organization, and creativity. According to this philosophy African American Rhetoric has four qualities: 1) It is rhetoric of the community 2) it is rhetoric of resistance 3) it is Rhetoric of reaffirmation, and 4) it is rhetoric of possibility (5-6). For this reason when hip hop aligns itself with capitalism, which is based on an individualistic culture, this current clash of values is detrimental.

Most importantly, through these situations that we see that one of the strongest qualities of African American rhetoric is its hope. African American rhetoric could always see the sun, especially when clouds were the heaviest, be it through Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream," or KRS-One's stop the violence movement which occurred a the height of crack addiction and black on black crime. It is this hope that has retained the community's resilience. Jackson and Richardson argue "It is not simply to persuade, but to share, to inform, to question, and to search for and explore possibilities in the social and human condition"(6).

The recent effects of commercialism on hip hop have only allowed out the voices that are stuck in the past, and a self destructive past at that. What many do not realize is that African American Rhetoric has always greatly relied on faith, hope, and the future. So what happens when this hope dies, and is replaced by a cynicism that creates more consumers as it commodifies, and in turn objectifies, the ills of a wounded community?

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[17] Created by Maulana Karenga the philosophy of Kawaida is a African thought that is in constant dialogue with the world. It states that culture is central to a who a human being is. Kawaida is constantly asking questions, therefore into the condition of African American Community and Humanity as a whole. It is a practice of self actualization as it continually attempts to define and become the best of what it means to be both African and human in the fullest sense.

The spiritual aspect of African American Rhetoric will help answer that question. With African Americans the spiritual is the dimension that often helped them keep their reliance. Through sermons, folktales, decorative arts and speeches, the spirit has often been roused. In particular, it has been music that has roused the African American spirit the most. When this music is disrupted, say through something like cooptation, and replaced with a contradicting value, that sustainability is weakened and the community begins to deteriorate. When this music is tampered with, so is the spirit.

Music can have either positive or negative results. If the messages that the community are fed are nourishing then the community will grow, by contrast if the messages are degrading, and nihilistic then it will crumble. So it either takes the turn of continuing to sustain their spirit in positive ways that reinforce the ideal of community, or it begins to corrupt this community. This is particularly true of a collectivistic culture, since one relies on the other heavily for its identity.

Anthony B. Pinn tells us in the book Noise and Spirit that according to the theorist Levi-Strauss, music is a tool that has a physical effect as well as a psychological effect. This is why it has the capabilities to rouse the spirit. For African Americans it first began with the slave songs that helped to give resilience against such harsh conditions. Later these spirituals would be redone to fit the cause of the civil rights movement. It would also be during the time of the civil rights and Black Power movement that music would be used to rouse concern for the community and redefine self (Sam Cookes 'A Change is Gonna Come", Marvin Gayes "Inner City Blues, and James Brown "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud.") More recently for many youth today Hip Hop has become their "Bible."

Pinn takes this idea of musical emotion and uses it to validate three points that

then clarify the claim that for many hip hop has become their spirituality, as well as explains how music for African Americans is such a powerful tool in the community in its ability to arouse the spirit. The first is that it is rap is music of liberality. Like the slave songs of the past, rap music is a contestation with entrapment. The second is that Rap as liminal, meaning it becomes the bridge between two states. It is a state of the "now" and the "not yet" (122). For rap the two states have to do with identification. This was also touched upon by W.E.B. Dubois who discussed this issue of the Dual consciousness that African Americans hold in America. In this idea of dual consciousness (or what Burke refers to as identification), African Americans struggle between being a part of the Nation and of being outcast. Rap and Hip Hop assist with this process. The final context is rap as integrative, or its desire to make unity, which we discussed earlier on. These points coincide with many of the theories that I have discussed thus far. Rap has become a source of connection as well as expression.

As we see many of these values are also supported by the characteristics inherent in African American rhetoric, meaning that these values can be corrupted in the same way by getting entwined in hyper-capitalism. The difference is that with the spiritual component there is not only a more detrimental effect on the internal being, but also a more severe affect when arousing a negative or self destructive spirit within the community. Once again, it is a response that invites a response. If that response has been imbued with addiction, depression, and suppression and then new values that are rooted in materialism, hopelessness, and nihilism, then the community suffers greatly.

Within these frames of Collectivism, tradition and the rhetorical connection to it, and spirituality, we begin to decipher some of the value systems of the African American community. In the case of the social cataclysms that happened within the ghetto, these

values have suffered greatly. Through the steps to globalization and hyper-capitalism the ghetto has been neglected, leading to this decay. We hear these wounds in the music. So while the "golden era of hip hop" was a time when the African American community began to recognize the seriousness of the situation and that there had to be something done about it, it wouldn't last long enough to be able to take hold and begin the necessary healing. What happened? Why was this period truncated? Hip Hop began to sell.

Globalization and the convenient rise of the west coast: The dangers of capitalistic ideals and Hip Hop

Like all Americans, African Americans are influenced greatly by the images of comfort and convenience, machismo, femininity, violence, and sexual stimulation that bombard consumers. These seductive images contribute to the predominance of the make-inspired way of life over all others and thereby edge out non-market values--love,care, service to others--handed down by preceding generations. The predominance of this way of life among those living in poverty-ridden conditions, with a limited capacity to ward off self-contempt and self-hatred, results in the possible triumph of the nihilistic threat in Black America."
Cornel West, Race Matters

"We commute to computers
Spirits stay mute while you eagles spread rumors
We survivalists, turned to consumers"
Talib Kweli, "Get By"

We are witnessing the structural re-enslavement of the African American through a system that has been designed to always keep a status quo of the oppressor and the oppressed with the ultimate goal of the protection of capital. Capitalism has one goal and one goal only: To gain capital, making any concern for the people that get hurt along the way secondary, especially if those people historically have been deemed as unimportant. We cannot expect those who are in positions of power to stop and think

about what the message are doing to the community. Their only concern is how much money the message is making.

Here we will explore how this conflict and clash of values is detrimental to hip hop's alliance to capitalistic values. I will discuss this through the three realms of: (1) Media Consolidation (2) Transnationalism and (3) Globalization

"A fucked up childhood, is why the way I am
It's got me in the state where I don't give a damn, hmm
Somebody help me, but nah they don't hear me though
I guess I'll be another victim of the ghetto
Ain't no escapin, cause I'm way too young
Pops is dealin
, and on top of that got moms sprung

Screamin off the top, pops never figured
That he'd go down by the hands of another nigga
Now my pops is gone and that ain't no good
Got to follow in the foot steps of the homies from the hood
And where's the role model?
Niggaz putting brew in my fuckin baby bottle!
Damn, and through all the motherfuckin pain
They done drove my moms in-sane
So I guess I gotta do work so I ain't finished
I grow up to be a streiht up menace, yeah
Uhh, come on y'all
Streight up menace"

MC Eight, west coast, "Streight up menace" 1994

Most have comfortably blamed the West Coast for helping to incite the gangster rap that has been held responsible for the community's decline. As you can see from my thesis, however, roots of decline extend deeper involving a cocktail of corporate mega-mergers and social constraints that formed the community's current hangover.

First, California inner cities were suffering from the same social conditions as New York, and in some cases worse, as we read previously from Watkins. California is also the home of the Bloods and the Crips, two gangs that were formed with the CIA's

destruction of the Black Panther Party as youth no longer had leaders and were facing alienation. The location may be different, but the process is frighteningly the same as conditions in New York: no work, no schools, high addiction and crime rates, severe police brutality, and a legal system that began to follow the historical pattern of marginalizing people and then using them for their industry. It was only a matter of time before there was a response. By the late 1980's Hip Hop had migrated-- and Cali wanted in on the rap game.

West Coast rap opened up with Ice T, who was an avid reader of Iceberg Slim, and self proclaims participant of pimping and gang banging. Ice T wrote the highly controversial Cop Killer, and provided the theme song to the movie COLORS, a movie based on Gang affiliation and the problems with crooked cops. In this track he gives a vivid depiction of the process of gang affiliation, why it is held close (collective value), and the social conditions that help to create it.

I am a nightmare walking, psychopath talking
King of my jungle just a gangster stalking
Living life like a firecracker quick is my fuse
Then dead as a deathpack the colors I choose
Red or Blue, Cuz or Blood, it just don't matter
Suckers dive for your life when my shotgun scatters
We gangs of L.A. will never die - just multiply

You see they hit us then we hit them
Then we hit them and they hit us, man
It's like a war, ya know what I'm sayin'
People dont even understand
They don't even know what they dealing with
You wanna get rid of the gangs it's gonna take a lotta work
But people don't understand the size of this
This is no joke man, this is real...
My colors, my honour, my colors, my all
With my colors upon me one soldier stands tall
Tell me what have you left me, what have I got
Last night in cold blood my young brother got shot
My home boy got jacked

My mother's on crack
My sister can't work cause her arms show trax
Madness insanity live in profanity
Then some punk claimin' they understandin' me
Give me a break, what world do you live in
Death is my sect, guess my religion

Yo my brother was a gang banger
and all my homeboys bang
I don't know why I do it man, I just do it
I never had much of nuffin man

From ICe T's "Colors" 1988

Next up: N.W.A. aka Niggas With Attitude. This group consisted of Ez E, Dr. Dre, and Ice Cube. One of their most controversial tracks was Fuck The Police. Enraged, suppressed, fearless, and highly misogynistic--it would be N.W.A. and the solo products that came out of this group that would be some of the first to hit it big in the mainstream.

On the East Coast Hip hop began to get a face through M.T.V. and started gaining some radio play on independent stations. Eventually white suburban males began to engage in the historical activity known as slumming[18] that hip hop would begin to be "picked up" as a sellable commodity. Suddenly it became important. It was not important to the capitalist global structure when it was screaming the cries of impoverished African American youth at the top of its lungs, no. It was important only when it was profitable.

While in the East Coast, Run D.M.C. had merged for a duet with Aerosmith remixing "Walk This Way", proving that hip hop had crossover appeal. They proved (through the hype that their unlaced Adidas caused-and the trend that it set--) that hip

[18] Slumming was what whites used to do especially during the Harlem renaissance. They would usually go to Harlem on a Saturday night and see what the "Negroes were up to" and then return back to their homes in the suburbs. It became a reference to those that "visit "the culture, but have no other investment in it beside immediate entertainment.

hop could not only be bought, but it could further help to sell in other venues.

But it was when Dre went solo on the West Coast and began producing beats that relied on samples from Parliament funk, tagging it the "G-funk," that hip hop really gained hold. The melodic disposition of the music made it more "airplay friendly" (even though the content was loaded with drug references, misogyny, and violence) and it continued to appeal to white audiences. At this time that something else was occurring: Media Consolidation.

Kitwana explained that there were several factors that influenced these economic shifts and led the path to globalization. They were: 1)The growth of multinational corporations in size, wealth, and power, 2) The deregulation of international banking and financial markets (in conjunction with technological advances that allowed for the move of large sums of money across markets), and 3) a Federal Reserve that switched its priorities to lowering inflation and slowing growth. These things all contributed to the decline of union influence and with these changes came automation, privatization, corporate mega-mergers, and downsizing- the steps to globalization (34). Globalization is the same process that helped enforce a prison industrial system and took away employment opportunities for urban youth, dispelling the polyphonic system that they had used to express their frustrations.

Carmen Ashurst Watson, ex president of Def Jam, states in Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes, that there was a switch to gangster music at the time that the major market began. The music became less geared toward uplifting the community and more toward pure profit. This is also when the same label representing and producing for Public Enemy that was producing songs for Ice Cube (also ex member of NWA, and

while he still had political material much of it was gangster charged and misogynistic), as well as a female group whose intention was to mirror N.W.A. They went by the name of B.W. P. aka Bitches With Problems.

As the “over producing” as Watson puts it, became worse the voices became more and more narrowly portrayed. The polyphonic messages that we could hear during the Golden Age of Hip Hop had now been reduced to one voice expressing all of the capitalistic values of the hegemony. Consequently, the messages also realigned with the stereotypes of the dangerous black man and rifling black woman that had been embedded through history. In conjunction with this, the four elements of hip hop now get reduced to one as rap becomes the most highly commodifiable market. As rap and hip hop became more popular the major corporations not only merge, but then go in and buy up the independent labels and stations that were hip hops only polyphonic outlet left. Soon the number one hit on hot 97, a New York station, is the same hit on HOT 106, a Rhode Island station. How? Both become owned by Clear Channel. BET (Black entertainment television) originally shied away from hip hop or allowed limited degrading content, until Viacom bought both MTV and BET. Soon BET was showing all of the degrading images that previously were limited.

Rappers soon realize that hip hop can become the way to “get paid,” and since money is the new value in the community, hip hop and its imagery are directly affected. Now because it was the violent misogynistic black male (you know-- the dangerous rapist from “Birth of a Nation”) who helped to keep portraying the black jezebel, who were the ones that sold--well Corporate America does not want to stop using what obviously works. So as hip hop begins to sprout up around different locations each with its own sound--the message does not change. Because these images and ideologies

are so embedded, no one questions them. Unaware of what is taking place we no longer pay attention to the words and phrases being used or what it is doing to the community. We have completed Willie Lynch's enslavement.

In turn, the message exacerbates already simmering issues. This is where the once innocent turf beefs turn into all out wars. Take, for example, the East and West coast beef that started out between Tupac Shakur (Death Row Records) and Christopher “Notorious B.I.G.” Wallace aka Biggie Smalls (Bad Boy Entertainment). This feud ended up in a bicoastal war that not only skyrocketed violence between youth, but ended with the two rappers murdered within six months of each other. This industry-fueled dispute was fanned by the Media. But when the deaths occurred, suddenly everyone wanted to place blame, but no one addressed the root of the problem.

“Since the music industry holds maximum sway with adolescents it must bear much of the blame for the state of young black culture. It's the industry with a hole in the middle that created the format called ‘gangsta rap.’ It has sold artists’ Gotti dreams as reality without regard for how the aesthetic gets absorbed into the community. With fewer and fewer veterans working in black music, interacting with fledgling acts, the information needed for growth isn’t being exchanged.”

Nelson George, 1996,26

Soon rappers go from being the consumer to the product being consumed (and eventually become both the consumer and the product), and with years of unresolved underlying issues, they carry the negative messages that are now being exploited by America's corporate climate. Transnationalism helps spread the new racism with the deregulation of International banking and financial markets that Kitwana talked about, enabling consolidated companies to move globally. With the hegemonic ideal leading

the way, there is no real origin of these racist images, and no discussed history. Therefore, "racism" no longer exists with the illusion of financial success for African American artists. The problem begins to mirror slavery or indentured servitude with promises of great profit that never come through. You sign a contract and the corporations own you. In the meantime, you continue to produce all of the negative messages that keep your community in a vicious cycle, because brings in the money. Soon labels are allowing records to be made from jail, and the message is getting worse and worse.

Complicating matters, a marginalization is taking place within the industry themselves, as African American Artist Representatives and VP's that were once hired to head "special interest projects"[19] for the label are either not promoted, are demoted, or are only called upon to initially get the artist in. Once the artist is successful they are dismissed, be it their department is removed, or they are fired. So now African Americans have no safety within the label. No one is there to keep checks and balances.

In the wake of globalization these hegemonic ideologies blossom to the point where the monophonic voice is broadcast across the nation and becomes the predominant face of African Americans everywhere. The world watches as those "black people in the U.S. seem pretty well off to me." Meanwhile the prison rates climb, drug addiction grows, education continues to decline, and the African American community suffers. When we are not seen as well off, then we are seen through the eyes of the media as "American's problem children." Once again, we see the dual identification.

Conclusion

[19] A term used to describe industry areas that would particularly attend to black artists

I might've failed to mention that this chick was creative
But once the man got to her he altered her native
Told her if she got an image and a gimmick
that she could make money, and she did it like a dummy
Now I see her in commercials, she's universal
She used to only swing it with the inner-city circle
Now she be in the burbs lickin' rock and dressin' hip
And on some dumb shit, when she comes to the city
Talkin' about poppin' glocks servin' rocks and hittin' switches
Now she's a gangsta rollin' with gangsta bitches
Always smokin' blunts and gettin' drunk
Tellin' me sad stories, now she only fucks with the funk
Stressin' how hardcore and real she is
She was really the realest, before she got into showbiz
I did her, not just to say that I did it
But I'm committed, but so many niggaz hit it
That she's just not the same lettin' all these groupies do her
I see niggaz slammin' her, and takin' her to the sewer
But I'ma take her back hopin' that the shit stop
Cause who I'm talkin' bout y'all is hip-hop

Common: "I used to love H.E.R.

So while some would like to believe that America is done with her race woes, I would beg to differ. Slavery has not only provided the structure for capitalism, but perpetuated an ideology that has kept African Americans as second class citizens for over 300 years. In turn, that ideal has managed to enter the gash of a community and infect its wounds, with commercial hip hop representing the pus of a nation. With such a strong investment in protecting an institution that protected this nation's capital, we would be foolish to believe that it would just "go away" on its own. Slavery is alive and well, now just changing its mask with each new capitalistic endeavor that arises, slithering its way into "bling" and "rims," making the have nots think they have, just long enough to bleed their soul. America has taken advantage of and manipulated the condition of African Americans for years. Here we see it played out through organized social constructs, embedded ideologies, and a cooptation of culture, with no regard for the community from which it emerged and for whom hip hop held such promises. Our

men are reduced again to their penises, and our women made sexual objects. Our children are considered burdens by a society that never bothered to know their names.

The first slave rebellion, The Stono Rebellion, occurred in 1739 in America. To ensure that the slaves would never rebel again, the slave masters did two things. First they took away our rights to read, the same way that they are taking away the education of the youth today. The second thing they did was take away our drums to deter our spirit from becoming roused--in the same way that they are now taking our music.

W.E.B. DuBois, discussing the double consciousness of African American's stated:

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. ..The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. ..."(3).

It is within hip hop's current state that we are seeing these two souls go to war. A realm where blackness is loved and hated simultaneously. It is within this confusion that if we are not careful we can lose our way. If we do not ask ourselves "loved for what?" or "Hated for what?" and instead blindly align ourselves to ideas and ways of life that contradict our very essence, then we will continue to be "Pimped" by America--because, to borrow some words from Jay-Z, she's "a hustler, babe. I just wants ya to know."