Media Scapegoat

A Feminist Reclaiming of Hip Hop Culture

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Introduction

“I remember those days when we was dead broke and I could barely find a dollar for a token, hop in the train just to get where I’m going, po po’s after me I’m running like I’m smoking. Remember those days when I went to bed hungry, all I ever ate was white rice and honey. Big dreams in my head, empty my tummy, might crack a smile but ain’t nothing funny. I remember playing over needles in the street, everywhere I go a man want some part of me. Dirty, dirty, those hookers and ho’s on 11" avenue sellin’ bodies for dope. I remember crying saying that will never be me, gonna make it some day, gotta be somebody. Say ‘mommy don’t worry, it’s just you and me, but one day we will get out of this misery.’ … Here’s my ghetto story, here’s my survival story…” -Baby Cham and Alicia Keys, Ghetto Story Chapter 2

“I write what I see, write to make it right. Don’t like what I be…” -Lupe Fiasco, Hip Hop Saved My Life

I began the incredible task of writing on hip hop music in hopes of saying something new and revolutionary that hadn’t been said before. I hoped that my take on my particular interest in hip hop would be fresh and new and at the same time pay tribute to the other ways hip hop has been spoken about in past and present dialogues, all the while remaining true to the ways in which hip hop has influenced me. I hoped to write what I call ‘my pseudo-feminist-hip-hop-manifesto’ heavy with lyrical references, stylistic organization, and culture-specific rhetoric and still have it be as academic as possible. I hoped that I would situate my discussion of hip hop within a specific epistemological framework so that my likely readership would deem my argument enlightened,

1 Hip hop music is beautiful, distinctive music because of the lyrical content of course but is equally as influential and beautiful because of the delivery of lyrics by the artist and the beat its set to. I will cite several lyrics here but I am not just citing the content in the lyrics but the music its set to as well as the way the artist delivers the lyric. For the full impact, the song needs to be heard and not just read.
worthy, and persuasive. After reading a very inspiring book *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* by Tricia Rose, a feminist hip hop professor who came of age at hip hop’s birth, I recognized that I was not alone in my plans. While I do want to talk about hip hop and the ways in which women of color have been simultaneously both active agents and victims of damaging language, imagery, and ideologies put forth by and about black women in hip hop music, I no longer seek the approval of academia who might wish to push my work to the margins and render it too colloquial. Rather I do want my work to remain true to the fact that hip hop was one of the only things that saved my life – not academia. For my voice and my subjectivity has been molded by my hip hop upbringing. I recognize that many of the days when I was wondering why life had to be so hard – because ‘from the cradle to the grave, life ain’t never been easy living in the ghetto’² – I was theorizing and contextualizing my experience way before I had the theoretical language to do so. It was only listening to, writing, and re-performing hip hop music that allowed me to escape. And while I do cherish the “higher” education that I have been able to attain through the triumphant feat of much diversity, my loyalty lies with hip hop.

My hip hop life is deeply rooted in the context of my social situation, the politics of my location, my socioeconomic status, and the multiple consciousnesses that the intersections of gender, race, and class produce. I was raised in several ghettos on the Southside of Chicago throughout the 90s, graduated high school at the turn of the century, and went away to college thereafter and thus my relationship to hip hop is always changing because of my shifting social and geographic positions. And as I have evolved, my yeaming to protect hip hop was solidified bit by bit. In that way the specificities of my own relationship with hip hop is indicative of the political nature of hip hop music. There is always a political, social, and cultural climate that drives hip hop

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² Tupac and Thug Life – *Cradle to the Grave*
culture and vice versa so that the relationship is reciprocal and intertwined. Before I ever learned about Hegel, Marx, or Foucault, and then learned the work of black feminists like Audre Lorde and the Combahee River Collective, Barbara Christian, and Toni Morrison, I grew up listening to the likes of Outkast, Jay Z, Tupac Shakur, Lil Kim, and Lauryn Hill to name a few. But what does it say that the first rap song I remember knowing by heart was Wreckx-N-Effect’s “Rump Shaker” (I would have been 9 at the time), while the first hip hop song I really felt was “Keep Ya Head Up” by Tupac, and by high school, Jay Z’s albums “Vol. 3: The Life and Times of S. Carter,” and “The Blueprint” were the first entire hip hop albums I knew song by song, lyric by lyric and really shaped my entire high school experience? My friends and I in high school, and still now recite lyrics all the time, whenever necessary. Even in class when I hear a particular theory or a sophisticated line written by a published author in some scholarly journal I recite a lyric in my head that corresponds to or contests that theory perfectly. I could never expect to know every socially conscious hip hop song and as a hip hop feminist I would not even go so far as to describe myself as a connoisseur of all female hip hop artists, and as much as I know that hip hop is really “a boys club,” (as most clubs are) I know that my gender really taints my ability to analyze this culture authentically. But I could care less. I love hip hop and all things not considered, a good song is really just that – a good song, all female artists don’t have feminist aims, and if respect is not given in my wealth of knowledge about hip hop culture and music then it will be taken, because it’s “ladies first, ladies first” as Latifah insists.

That said, I seek do several things here. First I will flesh out my definitions of hip hop, hip hop culture, and hip hop generation. Subsequently I wish to talk about the ways that hip hop has been critiqued by media (both within hip hop culture and outside it) in the aftermath of certain

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3 Queen Latifah featuring Monie Love – *Ladies First*
current events, the problems I have with those critiques, and how a new contextualization of hip hop is necessary. By honoring hip hop in all of its vast difference, its failures, its successes, I will then offer my own critique of hip hop from a feminist perspective, but within limits. By this I mean that I can only critique hip hop music and artists for so long before my critique shifts from a critique of hip hop to critiques of the dominant structures that drive any system within America: patriarchy, capitalism, racism, misogyny, gendered discrimination, heteronormativity, and “the trope of the family” (Gilroy 305). Throughout this writing, I will offer examples of hip hop lyrics and artists that diverge from the ways the mainstream media posits hip hop as stranded within a sea of misogyny. I wish to give a well-rounded look at hip hop and hip hop artists that offers an alternative to the linear picture and monolithic narrative that now exists.

Insomuch as this is a hip hop generational work, it is also a feminist one. It is extremely difficult for me to define my feminist politics because the ways in which the term has been used throughout time has never really fit within my own set of politics. It is much easier for me to describe what this work is not when I think of the feminist aims I seek. I will not attempt to gain membership in a cult of domesticity or speak in terms of gaining a politics that are traditionally respectable to ‘women,’ conservative white culture, and religion as Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham describes in *The Metalanguage of Race* (272). More plainly, I am uninterested in promoting monogamy, heterosexuality, a traditional heterosexist nuclear family, and (other) Christian values; I wish to challenge these notions and how the promotion and influence of these values come at the expense of poor, black, female, and/or queer bodies. I do not wish to transfer all the benefits (white) men have within systems of patriarchy and capitalism to women (of color). I do not wish to say ‘well since hip hop is a part of black culture and since it is often hypermasculine and misogynistic that all black men and women are misogynistic.’ My feminist aim is to de-
essentialize gender and race. By doing this I make it difficult for anti-hip hop haters to draw connections that do not make sense and place hip hop artists between a rock and a hard place – fixated within a limited set of possibilities that are actually impossible to exist in or to transcend.

Although these are my explicit goals I expect the resonance of this work to be multilayered and multifaceted much like hip hop music. My implicit purpose is to redefine what is dominantly deemed as authentic knowledge, proper language, theory, or culturally valuable. I want to say hip hop has always been and continues to be a site where both men and women of color and people outside of privileged groups creatively voice their concerns, express diversity, entertain themselves and each other, and of course make money. And so literature is to feminist Barbara Christian, what hip hop music is to me and many hip hop artists,

“…what I write and how I write is done in order to save my own life. And I mean that literally. For me literature is a way of knowing that I am not hallucinating, that whatever I feel/know is. It is an affirmation that sensuality is intelligence, that sensual language makes sense,” (Christian 21, author’s emphasis).

Hip hop artists drop knowledge, theorize, and philosophize all the time; for all of the lyrics I cite in this work illustrate this point. As a self-defined African American feminist, hip hop head I want to draw lines where lines need to be drawn, to highlight the struggles that most hip hop music is born out of – ugly, drug infested ghettos, economic destitution, racial inequalities, racial profiling, violence at the hands of state apparatuses and unequal access to education, healthcare, and employment. I intend to make visible all the sneaky, seductive (and sometimes overt) ways power and privilege seek to make hip hop villainous. And so like Lupe (and Christian), I write what I see, and I write to make it right.
From then to Now, The Birth of the Hip Hop Generation

“Whether we dribble out this muthafucka, rap metaphors and riddle out this muthafucka, work second floors hospital out this muthafucka, somehow we gotta get up out this muthafucka” – Jay Z, Some How, Some Way

Hip hop was born and reared in the midst of several social, political, and economic crises throughout the late nineteen sixties and early seventies. Deindustrialization and “white flight” contributed to the growth of inner-city ghettos, as well as lack of adequate employment for the black population, substandard housing and the birth of the housing project, run down schools and inadequate healthcare services. After the deaths of the Civil Rights movement, and then subsequently the Black Nationalist and Black Power movements through the administration’s successful COINTELPRO operation, there left a void for political and social change for the African American community through an organized movement. Also after senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan released the report “The Negro Family: The Case For National Action in 1965” that not only blamed the black community’s or the “Negro family’s” lack of progress on black women through the reversal of patriarchy in the black community, Moynihan suggested that the best way

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4 COINTELPRO (an acronym for Counter Intelligence Program) was a series of covert and illegal projects conducted by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation aimed at investigating and disrupting dissident political organizations within the United States. The FBI used covert operations from its inception; however the formal COINTELPRO operations took place between 1956 and 1971. The FBI motivation at the time was "protecting national security, preventing violence, and maintaining the existing social and political order." Targets included groups suspected of being subversive, such as communist and socialist organizations; people suspected of building a "coalition of militant black nationalist groups" ranging from the Black Panther Party and Republic of New Africa, to "those in the non-violent civil rights movement," such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and others associated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and other civil rights groups (Churchill, et al.)
for the administration to help the African American community was through “benign neglect” (Moynihan). And so it pursued, benign (or malignant) neglect. Several administrations from Nixon to Reagan adopted this strategy and pulled funding from housing, education, employment, and land and business development in the inner cities maintaining the idea that in America, the land of opportunity, if poor black people couldn’t help themselves it was their own faults and no one but them could alleviate all their financial and social difficulties – neoliberalism at its worst. The hip hop generation was born.

“Broken glass everywhere, people pissing on the stairs you know they just don’t care. I can’t take the smell, can’t take the noise. I got no money to move out I guess I got no choice…Don’t push me ’cuz I’m close to the edge. I’m tryin’ not to lose my head. It’s like a jungle sometimes that makes me wonder how I keep from going under.” – Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five, The Message

Rap song’s like “The Message” epitomized the struggle of growing up in housing projects jobless and therefore penniless for young African American men and women. Specifically,

“Rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music. It began in the mid-1970s as a part of hip hop, an African American and Afro Caribbean youth culture composed of graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music. From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America,” (Rose 2).

I would add that hip hop culture also included djaying/sampling and fashion, and therefore collectively hip hop culture allowed youth to not only enjoy themselves but to carve their own identities. While the overarching idea is that hip hop consumers are always young, according to hip hop activist Toni Blackman, “really contrary to what the media presents, the hip-hop generation is really now fifteen to forty-five” (Richardson 63). The hip hop generation thus can be described as

5 Released in 1982

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anyone living or born after the birth of hip hop culture in the mid 1970s who were involved in the
culture in one way or another. Hip hop culture then, including graffiti, breakdancing, rap music,
djaying/sampling, and fashion and hip hop culture now, mostly consisting of hip hop music and
fashion (although breakdancers and other forms of popular dancing and graffiti artists still exist)
were and are ways that African Americans express themselves and “bring together a tangle of
some of the most complex social, cultural, and political issues in contemporary American
society” (Rose 2). Furthermore, although hip hop music often reflects contradictory articulations of
life, it is not a sign of lacking intellectual clarity, as Rose stresses, but are a part of discourses that
“offer more than one cultural, social or political viewpoint” (2). It is only when these polyvocal
discourses of the hip hop generation are ripped from the social contexts in which they are
embedded that they seem irrational and unarticulated (2).

“I was just a little girl. Skinny legs, a press and curl. My mother always thought I'd be a star. But
way before the record deal, the streets that nurtured Lauryn Hill made sure that I never go too far.
Every ghetto, every city, and suburban place I've been make me recall my days in the New
Jerusalem.” – Lauryn Hill, Every Ghetto, Every City

But hip hop is not just about politics, mobilizing against organized forms of power and
stating “what’s real” about life as a black man or woman. Hip hop culture is also about having fun
and enjoying life even within the direst situations. All the things that have to do with a generation
also work to define, shape, and influence it. In this sense hip hop culture appeals to all the senses,
not just sight and sound. Region dictates a lot of hip hop culture, meaning the language, songs and
styles of music, and fashions that are popular in Chicago aren’t necessarily the same ones popular
in Atlanta or Los Angeles. Outside of the music, my Chicago hip hop experience went a little like
this: Bright colored, candy-painted cars with large chrome wheels come out in the summer since
Chicago weather could do serious damage to your ride in the winter months. Loud beats from rap and R&B songs that use 808 drums rattle the streets and even your house windows as cars ride up and down the block. Guys and ladies would meet up in a local White Castle parking lot (White Castle is the hot spot after the parties let out since it is one of the few restaurants to stay open all night) to parking-lot pimp (or hang out). The car doors would open and the sounds would blare louder and Black Gold car freshener (a fragrance found specifically at South Side car washes) would tickle our noses – a must have for any car on the South Side. Back in the day (which would be early nineties for me) O.P.P. jackets, Jodeci boots and bamboo earrings were all fashion items born out of specific songs or by specific hip hop groups and to belong to hip hop culture meant to have some version of these items. Today, Air Force Ones, Dolce and Gabbana (or any designer) shades, and any fitted, most likely ones that rep your city would suffice. Elaborate hairstyles for ladies and haircuts for men were and are still ways that hip hop heads express creativity. Hip hop also appeals to the taste buds because most people in Chicago know what Flamin’ Hot Cheetos with cheese and/or hot sauce tastes like or Doritos with meat and cheese and/or jalapeno peppers dumped directly into the bag form cheap versions nachos. Tootsie Roll’s two-cent Frooties can still be found in most black neighborhood corner stores and the purchaser would say something like “Lemme get a dollar’s worth of Frooties mixed,” (meaning mixed flavors) or “Lemme get 50 cent worth of fruit punch Frooties.” Hip hop food in Chicago can also consist of succulent chicken wings from Harold’s Chicken Shack predominantly on the South Side or Uncle Remus on the West Side and mild sauce is a must have at either place! These are staples that are born out hip hop culture and are parts of it. Lauryn Hill’s Every Ghetto, Every City is a fun tale of hip hop culture that talks about the ways to have fun in the ghetto, her ghetto.
Discussing hip hop culture that appeals to all the senses does much to debunk the idea that hip hop is solely a black genre because while hip hop is a predominantly black medium—meaning that the artists are mostly African American, does not mean that any and everybody can’t participate in hip hop culture. I recently saw a NBC news piece on a white male, stock broker who collects kicks—specifically rare Air Force Ones and Dunks. His tiny, expensive upper East Side Manhattan apartment was full from top to bottom of tennis shoes of every color and style—the rarer the better. His story was juxtaposed with considerably less wealthy Japanese American and African American kids who had the same shoe fetish—a part of hip hop taste culture. Although the white guy’s shoe fetish is supported by his six figure salary in ways that make him more available to belong to hip hop culture through its commodification that doesn’t mean he isn’t at least a small part of it, and it doesn’t mean that hip hoppers from the ghetto like myself are any less a part of it because we can’t afford to buy hundreds of pairs of shoes if we wanted to. The point here is that anybody of any race can live in and come from a ghetto as the “hood” Japanese American kids in this piece depict, although the people who most often inhabit them are disproportionately African American; ghettos are the predominant places where hip hop rhymes and careers are born out of because economic plight is the usually artists’ main platform. Hip Hop culture transcends race, class, and gender at the same time that it is fixated within those identities. This struggle to transcend racist, gendered, and economic ideologies are always at the heart of hip hop music and culture. Hip Hop is everything it needs to be and so much more. Sometimes you have to search hard for the message you want to hear that includes material that discusses aspects of your own subjectivity, but it’s always out there. If it isn’t create it.
Media Are... Hip Hop is Media

“Since I’m in a position to talk to these kids and they’ll listen I ain’t no politician but I’ll kick it wit ‘em a minute. See they call me a menace, and if the shoe fits I’ll wear it but if it don’t then y’all will the swallow the truth, grin and bear it...maybe its hatred I spew, maybe its food for the spirit, maybe its beautiful music I made for you to just cherish. But I’m debated, disputed, hated and viewed in America as a muthafuckin’ drug addict. Like you didn’t experiment? Now now, That’s when you start stare at you in the mirror and see yourself as a kid again and you get embarrassed and I got nothing to do but make you look stupid as parents you fuckin’ do-gooders, too bad you couldn’t do good at marriage. And do you have any clue what I had to do to get here? I don’t think you do so stay tuned and keep ears glued to the stereo ’cuz here we go....never been afraid to say what’s on my mind at any given time of day ’cuz I’m renegade. Never been afraid to holler about anything - anything.” – Eminem, (Jay Z and Eminem) Renegade

“Let’s free the people from deception. If you’re looking for the answers then you gotta ask the questions. And when I let go my voice echo through the ghetto. Sick of men trying to pull strings like Geppetto. Why black people always be the ones who settle? March through these streets like Soweto – uh.” – Lauryn Hill, Forgive them Father

“I am the American Dream, the rape of Africa, the undying machine, the overpriced medicine, the murderous regime, the tough guy’s front and the ones behind the scenes. I am the blood of this city, its gas, water and electricity. I’m its gym and its math and its history. The gunshots in the class and you can’t pass if you’re missing G. I taught them better than that. I taught them aim for the head and hope they never come back. I’m glad you’re daddy’s gone baby, hope he never comes back. I hope he’s with your mother with my hustlers high on my tracks. I hope you die in this trash. I can’t help it, all I hear when you cryin’ is laughs. I’m sure somebody find you tied in this bag behind this hospital – little baby crack addicts had. Then maybe you can grow up and be a stripper, a welfare receiving, prostitutin’ gold digger. You can watch on TV how they should properly depict ya. The river shall flow with liquor. Quench your thirst on my elixirs.’ I am the safe haven for the rebel, runaway and the resister. The trusted misleader. The number one defender. And from a throne of their bones I rule. These fools are my fuel so I make them cool. Baptize ‘em in the water outta Scarface pool and feed ‘em from the table that held the Corleone’s food. If you die tell ‘em that you played my game. I hope your bullet holes become mouths that say my name cuz I’m the...(sound of gunshot).” – Lupe Fiasco, Put You on Game

All of these artists discuss media in one form or another, however there needs to be a redefining of the many categories that fall within media first. The dominant ways media is

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6 See Appendix for entire song
discussed is as if they were an ‘it’- this one, huge orbiting mass that seeks to misrepresent, sensationalize, or paint pictures – whose ever pictures they wish to paint. But be aware – the media are that and so much more. To talk about the impact of media and their hold on society is valid but to talk about media in this singular, monolithic manner and to constantly assign them the pronoun ‘it’ is language that lets slide so many different forms of media that contribute to those misrepresentations, re-presentations, or tainted evidences. Also media as ‘it’ doesn’t allow room for instances where media work well for the good of culture. Media as an ‘it’ makes one think mostly of journalism, as purely informative and nothing more: TV news programs, magazine and newspaper articles. But what about the narrative sitcoms, or the television docudramas, or hip hop music for that matter that are also under the umbrella of media? The possibility to entertain does not precede media. For me, media are anything that speaks to the masses on a global stage. In that sense, articles one would find in a scientific journal that retracts the notion of race and tells the story of how race is a myth is not media since the masses don’t have access to it, unfortunately – since those disenfranchised, marginalized bodies cannot readily access it. And since most American people have access to a television, radio, and computer, the most salient mediums here in America are televisions, radios, and computers. It really doesn’t matter to me what information is out there, floating around in space in whatever form, it matters who has access to that information and who actually accesses it. Furthermore, the last time I checked the media are made up of people – people with subjectivity, a place in relation to the rest of the world that is dictated by race, class, and gender etc., people with specific taste cultures and people who drive, reinforce, and reiterate the dominant messages received. To talk about media as an “it” is to talk about patriarchy as an “it”. How do we talk about structures without talking about the people that embody those very structures and who play the roles that the structures demand they play?
That said the three lyrics preceding this section give different representations of media in all their shame. Eminem wants to talk about his own personal relationship with media and how he has been demonized by them. Linking his argument to hip hop artists abroad supports the claim I make in this writing which is that artists are scapegoated at times when they shouldn’t be. And Lauryn Hill. The infinitely talented Lauryn Hill never explicitly names media as villains but I infer that she wants to use media, specifically music, to speak to ‘the people’ and incite a revolution, active political participation in “freedom from deception.” By insisting that we ask the right questions if we want answers Lauryn upholds my belief that there is some form of misguided going on here. ‘Get involved’ is her message. However I want to spend the most time talking about Lupe’s personification of the “American Dream” and we can connect this to the struggles hip hop artists and the hip hop generation are having contextualized through the events (both media events and national crises) I speak of later. Because again, my intention is not to spend time discussing media through an academic lens, if hip hop music is the culprit then let hip hop music speak.

Lupe’s the three minute and six second song *Put You on Game* (of which I quote only one minute and twenty four seconds of above) on Lupe’s latest album “The Cool” is one of the most political songs I’ve heard in a while. The inflection in his voice, the intonations and the rage he delivers certain parts with, emphasis on certain words, the speed with which he delivers certain lines or the slow pace he delivers others leaves me feeling so many emotions and adds to his message. His purpose indeed. In this one short song, Lupe ‘puts us on game,’ meaning he tells us a story that isn’t often told. In this sense Lupe is shifting focus back towards the real messages given by the American Dream – of which we, the hip hop generation, more specifically the black community are fed through various media outlets. I had to listen to the song several times to understand what he was actually talking about, the *I* in this song is hard to follow and easy to miss.
because at first of course the listener must think the I in this case is the rapper himself especially since he began the song with the line: “Don’t you know that I run this place.” The listener is led to believe at first that this is yet another one of those boastful, ego-ridden hip hop songs. But the signified is the American Dream, the American way, America itself at times. If the listener keeps this in mind throughout the song, the messages are quite different.

But what to say about the personification used here? Why use “I” instead of “it”? His use of “I” does a few things. The exact ways in which media becomes the media, and not the people who produce media images, or the ways we talk about the government and not the ways that individual people within the structured state apparatuses of government, and their choices effect the victims who pay the price of those choices, most often poor, racialized, gendered peoples – makes the use of “I” here appropriate. It shows us that these structures have faces, we hear their voices. The use of “I” also gives us someone to blame and not just something. Taking the actor(s) away from the social crimes that Lupe talks about in “Game” would not be as powerful but pejorative. Often times because the focus is away from people and onto structures we don’t know how to combat those structures. Lupe wants us to know that there is someone to blame – America as a body, as a voice, personified through structures. Because “we have limited tools of analysis that force us to dismiss everything about someone we find to be racist or sexist,” (emphasis mine) as E. Frances White states in The Dark Continent of Our Bodies, we don’t know what to say or when to say it or whom to say it to when we feel blighted by the systems – the people that limit us, rape us, take us, shake us and place us in these sets of impossible possibilities (89).

Lupe talks about several current issues in his 2007 release “The Cool.” They range from the rape of black women in Intruder Alert to the ways in which the fast food industry and unhealthy food is killing the black community at disproportionate rates in Gotta Eat. He also talks
about war from the perspective of the kids who fight them in African countries and in America in *Little Weapon*. If we want to talk about real hip hop, about music that makes us move *and* think, talk about artists like Lupe, save 50 Cent and Snoop for the club. He talks about issues that no one wants to talk about all without ever using the words “bitch” or “ho” (without complicating its use).
Misguided Critiques of Hip Hop Music in Media within Contemporary Racist Disaster Sites: Naming and Representation

“My people was poor before the hurricane came, but the downpour poured is like when Mary J sang. Everyday it rains, so everyday the pain. But ignore them and show them the risk was to blame. But life is a chain: cause and effective. Niggas off the chain because they affected. It’s a dirty game so whatever is effective: from weed to sellin’ ‘caine gotta put that in effect, shit. Wouldn’t you loot, if you didn’t have to loot? Baby needed food and you stuck on the roof, and helicopters swoop down just to get a scoop through his telescopic lens but he didn’t scoop you? The next five days no help ensued. They called you a refugee because you seek refuge. And the commander-in-chief just flew by, didn’t stop, know he had a couple seats, just rude...You can’t say we’re better off then we was before, in synopsis this my minority report. You can’t say we’re better off then we was before. In synopsis this is my minority report.” – Jay Z, Minority Report

“He’s checking water making sure its safe enough for his daughter to float across in the boat he built hopefully strong enough to support her. Praying border patrols don’t catch her ass, process and deport her before she reach the shore of the Land of the Free where they feed you, treat you like equals, deceive you, stamp you and call you illegal and as an.....intruder.” – Lupe Fiasco, Intruder Alert

Here is where I can go off on a tangent citing lyric after lyric, lyrics from recently recorded songs, that situates men and women of color within a state of emergency – the same state of emergency that rap pioneers like Public Enemy declared throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s – by today’s hip hop artists but instead I have to spend time talking about how media themselves are on a tangent. By situating hip hop music within in a discussion that is solely about misogyny – black men disrespecting their own black women through hip hop music and videos, contemporary critiques of hip hop culture is diverting attention from the ways artists have cried out and are still crying out for change. I think it is deceptive and disruptive that there has been a shift of the discussion about contemporary racism within media turning the attention toward hip hop culture that is attempting to overshadow the real, dominant structures at play right now contextualized through events like Hurricane Katrina and the trial of the Duke Lacrosse players.
This diversion does several things. First, it attempts to render hip hop music and the hip hop generation as lacking real voices and interests in social change. We, the hip hop generation-ers become voiceless and ambiguous when the focus is away from the messages found in rap that are not misogynistic. All the times when rappers talk about things other than *bitches and riches* get effaced because there is no real attention paid to the cries. Second, it totally eclipses the fact that there are so many institutional, contemporary instances of racism blatantly occurring right now and specifically over the past three years. Let’s talk instead about the recent immigration legislation that demarcates specific bodies as useless and worthless. Let’s talk about actress Angelina Jolie playing the role of a black woman in the Hollywood film “A Mighty Heart” or Robert Downey Jr. starring in a movie as a character in black face that was originally written for a black man. What does this say about the usefulness or the uselessness of black bodies in media? Let’s instead talk about the screenplay writer of *Juno*, a 2007 Oscar nominated film, who is a white woman, used-to-be-stripper and juxtapose her media attention with that of the black woman, college student, and stripper who accused players on the Duke Lacrosse team of rape. The ways in which the latter woman is demonized and portrayed as a liar, a sexualized object who couldn’t have been raped and the ways in which the former woman can transcend her sexualized position to now be an Academy Award nominated writer show the ways that race and class attribute to gendered constructions and forces the black woman (all black women) in a pit beneath a pendulum: the pit is the manifestation of stereotypes; the pendulum is the manifestation of media images that eventually kill her.

Third, the scapegoating of hip hop music displaces blame away from the institutional, hierarchal instances of racism and misogyny that are responsible for the media tirades by Don Imus and Dog the Bounty Hunter, and that fuel the rage of the black community like Hurricane

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7 A Mighty Heart (2007) and Tropic Thunder (release date August 15, 2008)
Katrina and the acquittal of the officers involved in the murder of Sean Bell. When Dr. Tukufu Zuberi, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, says in response to the Don Imus slurs that called a group of African American female basketball players “hardcore,” “rough,” “jiggaboos,” and “nappy-headed ho’s,” that “if people want others to respect them, they have to respect themselves,” he is shifting focus to hip hop music (Banjeri). Never mind the reality and complexity of Imus’ slurs – the ways that he situates African American women in a gendered rhetoric of masculinity because they are “rough” and “hardcore” within a context of organized sports and not on display sexually as normally seen in media, all forms of media. Zuberi doesn’t realize that in his attempt to talk about hip hop music, which could be a valid discussion in a different context on a different day, he loses the significance of Imus’ statements and renders the real victims of his statements, black women, invisible. First there should be a discussion of Imus’ specific words and the effects they have on black women as well as the effects they have on the dominant view of black women. Then there needs to be a discussion of racism as a structure and how racism coupled with gendered discrimination disproportionately affects black women.

Fourth, the displacing of blame on hip hop culture creates a divide intraracially based on gender differences that prioritizes one, identifiable oppression over another without recognizing the ways that race, class, and gender intersect. Zuberi’s point above also glosses over the fact that Imus uses race to connote then denote a set of possibilities for gender forcing the members of the Rutgers basketball team to fit within their racialized role as hypersexual and/or ironically asexual women. How can black women ever transcend the effects of racialized gendered stereotypes if they constantly have to rip them from each other and discuss them separately as if they act separately? There is no critical, complex way to combat racism and gendered discrimination by having to point fingers to one group at a time and not recognizing the ways that all groups are complicit in their
racialized, gendered discrimination. By this I mean that by talking about race without the discussion of gender doesn’t really account for the ways that black men themselves demean black women through racialized sexualized images. Because black men (and women) also work within and use these same images doesn’t mean that they are not making assumptions about women based on race. Or because white men (and women) talk about black women in racialized terms, gender gets erased and the focus becomes race so that there isn’t a real account for the way that white men view race through gender. Gender has been constructed through race and vice versa. “Like gender and class, then, race must be seen as a social construction predicated upon the recognition of difference and signifying the simultaneous distinguishing and positioning of groups vis-à-vis one another,” (Higginbotham 253).

Fifth, demonizing hip hop and hip hop artists creates a discourse that seeks to discount contemporary ways to incite social change and that pits historical, more organized ways as preferred and more effective. This means the leaders of the black community are Martin Luther King Jr. (still) and Al Sharpton (arguably) whereas Tupac Shakur, the most influential rap artist ever is posthumously remembered in media as a misogynist and hypermasculine gangsta’, whereas civil rights leaders’ shortcomings are invisible and unknown. This generation, the hip hop generation, gets labeled as lazy, uncaring and uninvolved. Tupac doesn’t get remembered for his social and cultural knowledge, his complexities and the ways he talks about the past in order to enlighten the masses or change the future are made invisible. He talks about miscegenation and the intricate ways that race is constructed within the black community in America and is bound up with the perils of slavery and the rape of black women by saying one line: “some say the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice, I say the darker the flesh then the deeper the roots.”8 Can we

8 Keep Ya Head Up - Tupac
recognize this as being political, a discourse surrounding the ways that black is beautiful but at the same time black is also convoluted? This is just one line that is ingenious to me, that resonates in my mind still but there are lyrics upon lyrics in songs that Tupac wrote that are political. There classes taught on his poetry, I could write a book on it, someone could, someone did, Michael Eric Dyson, Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur. Here, I am making the distinction that Tupac Shakur is one of the black community’s leaders regardless of his shortcomings, all of which were put on display for the entire world to see. Martin Luther King’s and Al Sharpton’s hidden, unknown shortcomings that we know exist scare me much more.

Finally, and most important with regard to my analysis here is that talking about hip hop music as misogynistic and nothing more essentializes race and gender by attempting to conflate specific songs, viewpoints, and representations of masculinity and femininity to an entire ethnic and cultural group. What can be said when we replace hip hop music for meaning black and then demonize based on that? “Rap music, because of its association with African American culture, is judged through the tainted lens of a Black stereotype which includes such traits as violence, hostility, and aggression,” (Fried 707). I would add to that misogyny and materialism. But by forcing race into this discussion, allowing the public to believe that black men and women disrespect each other and themselves works within racial stereotypes, does more to render black men and women as having the same values and beliefs, having little intellectual capacity to think beyond these limits, and as lacking the agency to change the images brought about. Let’s not force the fixity of the messages within a text onto its reader, since “readers too create meanings, and in the process they may rework a text’s dominant messages. In other words, meaning is not hermetically sealed by the text, and interpretation can become the site of cultural resistance or opposition (though it does not necessarily do so),” (Henderson 174). Here, Henderson is making an
important claim which I also want to make. Never have I listened to a song that talks about black women in such a way that I disagreed with that I did not openly state I disagreed with it and how it should be changed. Also, every time I, and almost all the female hip hop heads I know, hear a song by a male artist that discusses a female in any way, switch out all the pronouns and nouns of her, she, lady, girl, woman to he, him, guy, boy, man. It’s poetic justice. In fact sometimes we would re-do entire songs or verses so that it fits what we want it to say…we like the beat the song is set to, we like the idea, we like delivery, we just don’t like the actors. Doing this recognizes that we are the signified in the text but that we want to be the signifier so we recreate the songs when we sing them out loud to take that power back. It may seem like a small part to play but it does larger work to undermine the ways that masculinity seeks to dominate and define femininity.

I’d like to dig a little deeper here, to go a place I haven’t seen any of the several authors on hip hop I’ve researched for this work go. But first I need to illustrate the importance of naming. A black woman’s ability to define herself is paramount to her survival, but her ability to recognize when she has been named is equally as important. I prescribe to the Combahee River Collective’s statement that “if black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression,” (168). Because these women recognize their place at the bottom of the patriarchal hierarchy that pits white before black and male before female, they are able to see their freedom from dominant structures that allow such naming to occur, through the radical destruction of oppressions. So do I and I will talk about the problems within hip hop culture. As a black feminist, there is no way I can deny the misrepresentations and conflations that occur within hip hop since I also agree with Hortense Spillers powerful line: “We might concede, at the very least, that sticks
and bricks might break out bones, but words will most certainly kill us (author’s emphasis) (63). But I will say something I think no hip hop feminist wants to say.

When we discuss rap artists we expect a certain amount of something – we expect them to live up to this standard as if they are the voice of the black community (more on the limits of community later) so that when they use the word “bitch” or “ho” they are speaking in communal terms. But when they do talk about issues that are certainly supposed to be political, to start a discussion, to voice the atrocities of living within a racist society they are no longer leaders, their voices are less important. Are they leaders or aren’t they? My biggest issue here is that the complexities, and I use the word complexity much in this piece because it is best fitting, of rap artists and hip hop generation-ers no longer matter. It is largely because hip hop music and culture are so fixated within the parameters of race and the stereotype of race as being the deciding factor of how one feels, thinks, looks, acts. Oh contraire, there is no one way to feel, think, look or act if you are a member of a specific racialized group, that’s first and foremost. I don’t think everyone has gotten that memo yet! There are several markers that contribute to the way one thinks: their class, their location, their gender, their race, their color, etc., and all of these identities work together at the same time to create a consciousness or sets of consciousnesses that shape our thoughts about ourselves and others.

Next, saying one thing does not and should not mean you automatically prescribe to a certain set or sets of values and that you can’t hold another set of seemingly contradictory values. By this I mean to call a woman a “bitch” or “ho” (as if hip hop artists are the only people to use these terms), to degrade her in the worst possible terms you can degrade her in does not necessarily mean, dare I say it, that you hate women. To use these terms in hip hop music means several things at once and there is no straight line that can be drawn that most critics wish to draw. There is no
one woman to which the term “bitch” or “ho” applies. Here is where gender gets isolated so that if you are a member of a certain gender you automatically think, act, feel, look a certain way. Unfortunately, the ways in which gender (within racialized contexts) has been constructed in America dictate that men define women and at the same time live among them, love them, marry them. Is it possible to say that if you use the word bitch or ho along with the demeaning sets of values that exist within the parameters of race or class that that means the other things you speak about at the same time (or different times) are worthless? To me it is not. If this is the case stop the presses! Down with the politicians, teachers, preachers, judges, and leaders who all at one time or another work(ed) within stereotypes that produce and reproduce ideologies that are damaging to women – women of color most specifically. Here I want to say that we shouldn’t negate everything else a hip hop artist says if he or she uses demeaning, limiting terms. There other things that should be done, but stripping away the voice that counts to punish the voice that degrades is regressive.

If hip hop artists, subsequently black men and women are on trial for degrading themselves then everyone else needs to be to as well. Degrading images of black women permeate the culture we live in. We see them everywhere, manifested in everything. They are so embedded within the structured hierarchies that are foundational to America. And so my position is similar to that of Dr. Leith Mullings who denounced the scapegoating of hip hop music and culture and redirects the discussion to racism and sexism by saying that they have been fundamental to the building of the country, and slavery – not stereotypes – gave rise to the specific rationalizations about racialized and gendered bodies, not rap music and videos (Banjeri).

There are several hip hop texts that do not address fully the ways that women are depicted in hip hop music, so there has been a lot glossed over in relation to what can or can’t be said about black men hip hop heads and the way they speak about women. It is not enough to say that hip hop
artists shouldn’t use demeaning images. We have to talk about the structures that allow those images to exist. Nas’ new song “Be a Nigger” and unreleased controversial, formally-titled album *Nigger*, now Nas has this same message (Reid). He raises the question: how can we talk about doing away with the term *nigger* and not about the ideologies that allow that term to exist? The word has no meaning without the idea behind it. And so let’s talk about “bitch” and “ho” and the ways those names and representations limit black women. There needs to be less focus on the words themselves and more on the ideas that give those terms meaning.
What can we do: The ‘He’s-Not-Talking-About-Me Syndrome,’ The Real Issues within Hip Hop

I get especially aggravated whenever I hear a black woman hip hop lover, not necessarily feminist, defend rap artists use of demeaning images depicted through lyrics by saying something to the effect of “He’s not talking about me.” Enter here Jay Z, whom I have quoted heavily in this piece for several reasons. One being that he is one of my favorite lyricists of all time, another that his lyrics are what are embedded in my head and he has had so many albums that there is almost no topic that he hasn’t talked about. Third, and I borrow this quote from an interview with Toni Blackman,

“Jay Z being one of the most intelligent, one of the most influential, one of the most powerful. And he’s one of those who has the capacity to come wit it, and he doesn’t share it. And so what it is about him is he lacks the courage to actually step outside his comfort zone and really come with who he is as a man, and to be a Black man and to step up into those shoes that Malcolm left for yo ass, and quit bein’ a punk about what you doin,’” (Richardson 67).

While I disagree with the fact that Bambara wishes he display his masculinity in a better way, adhering to any form of masculinity is limiting, I agree that Jay Z is an artist who goes back and forth between consciousness-raising when it comes to issues within the hip hop community to writing whatever music that will sell. He has created a brand name out of himself for the sake of economic gain and that’s fine but the platform he has, the amount of power and respect he has in the hip hop industry makes his images more salient and damaging. As an African American woman, how can I ever listen to a song like *Bitches & Sisters* by Jay Z and expect him not to be talking about me?  

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9 See full song lyrics in Appendix
The song sets up the difference between a bitch and a sister: bitch being the bad version of femininity and the sister being the good version of femininity. He uses binary terms to fixate black women within a group of characteristics that are extremely limited. However when he gets to sexuality, specifically, the only thing that both bitches and sisters do that overlap is have sex. “Bitches give up the ass, sisters give up the ass.” I remember first hearing this song and loving it. I loved it for its creativity and its wordage. It wasn’t until I heard it and critiqued it with a feminist lens that I saw all the issues embedded in this song.

There are several things that, according to Jay Z, bitches do that I do myself, and there are several things that sisters do that I don’t do. Does that mean that I’m not sister and that I’m a bitch? What about the ways identities overlap or shift overtime? Is a black woman perpetually a sister or bitch, or is it possible to transcend and become a sister after being a bitch, or is it possible to descend and become a bitch after being a sister? Furthermore who gave Jay Z (or anyone else) the authority to specifically list and define what makes a sister? A bitch? Also, this song is doing exactly what is impossible to do: separate identities that work together to create multiple consciousnesses. You’re either a sister, black or a bitch, female to him. Overall, Jay Z is saying denounce being a woman and let race transcend in order to do good for black men. ‘Sacrifice yourself for me,’ is his message. “Sisters hold you down, bitches hold you up, sisters help you progress, bitches’ll slow you up.”

It’s this same sentiment and mode of thinking that is discussed in Aishah Simmons “NO! The Rape Documentary.” One victim of intraracial rape by a prominent black man on a racially hostile, predominantly white college campus chose not to tell authorities about her rape because she didn’t want to further victimize black men and contribute to the stereotypes of black men as rapists (Simmons). While I recognize the problems with allying with the state that is historically
racist and sexist and that telling the police would only add to the victim’s stress as a black woman in a racist town and not relieve it, the idea that black women sacrifice themselves for ‘the good of the race’ is troubling. Black women thus are forced to be women and fight for the end of gendered oppression at the same time that we are forced to fight racism. Here is where community and the trope of the family fail feminism and where we can offer the largest critique of hip hop.

Paul Gilroy discusses the limits of discussing blackness within terms of family,

“This is where the trope of the family begins to look like a disaster for black feminism – that those definitions of authenticity are disproportionately defined by ideas about nurturance, about family, about fixed gender roles and generational responsibilities. What is authentic is also frequently defined by ideas about sexuality and patterns of interaction between men and women that are taken to be expressive of essential, that is, racial difference. This authenticity is inseparable from talk about the conduct and management of gender-based conflicts, which is not recognized as essential to familial, racial and communal health,” (307).

Here Gilroy knows that there is really no way for black women to transcend any demeaning gendered identities if we stick to the notion of family and community. To put Gilroy’s argument more simply, the essentialized raced and gendered body cannot exist if black women want authority, equality, humanity. Popular socially conscious artist Common’s famous line in the Grammy nominated song “The Light,” “I’ll never call you a ‘bitch’ or even ‘my boo’. There’s so much in a name and so much more in you,” is fitting but his naming of black women as queen throughout much of his music is troubling as well. Here is where Gilroy’s limits of authenticity fit. If black women are queens then what does that mean black men are? And furthermore, patriarchy being undone by matriarchy is equally as bad. To ally with the Combahee River Collective again, “we reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human,
levely human, is enough,” (166). If we all are queens we seek to emasculate black men and fall into the trap that Moynihan sets for us.

“Niggas don’t fuckin’ call me baby like I’m related to Weezy, some of them call me R, none of them call me easy...Found out I’m fuckin’ her man now this bird is callin’ me screaming. Chicken wait, bitches I be fryin’ they just call me greasy. See I know he got a main but I’m cool being the other one, cuz he can’t get tight when he hear I piped anutha one. I don’t fall in love with them, come and then I’m done with them. Most they get from me is wet pussy and some bubblegum” – Remy Ma, Where the Cash At

I’ve talked at length about the anti-feminist terms “bitch” and “ho” but not about the ideologies of femininity and sexuality that the terms denote. The term “bitch” now is unfortunately interchangeable with female or a feminized body but its resonance is inferiority, femininity, lesser than man. A lot of times female artists like Remy Ma use the term to denote female because the term is now so interchangeable with the words ‘female,’ ‘woman,’ or other feminized characters. Often times the terms “ho” is also interchangeable with ‘woman,’ etc. but its history is rooted within a woman’s sexuality and connotes specific sexual looseness. At the most basic level these are profane terms; the use of profanity in hip hop is old, and frequently profane words substitute standard words because they sound better. A lot of times, incorrect lyrics either grammatically or impossible lyrics are used in hip hop songs just because they sound better. I can’t deny the many clever ways I’ve heard the terms “bitch,” “ho,” or some variation of the two delivered in rap music.

10 Remy Ma’s reference “Most they get from me is wet pussy and some bubblegum” is a response to Jay Z’s lyric in ‘Show You How,’ “Don’t let him give you hard dick and bubblegum make him cop the Lex Bubble 2001 hun.” By making reference to this popular lyric by Jay Z she is redefining for herself what Jay asserts should be acceptable behavior for a woman,

11 Enter Keith Murray’s hit song and album - ‘The Most Beautifullest Thing in This World’ and Jay Z’s lyric in the song ‘It’s Hot (Some Like it Hot),’ “.38 revolve like the sun ‘round the Earth.” Most beautiful is the correct term and the sun does not revolve around the earth but enter in the correct lyrics and the songs lose their aural appeal.
But on a much deeper level we can revisit Nas’ discussion of the term “nigger” as talked about in the previous section and focus not on the profane terms themselves but on the social situations that allow the terms to exist. To simply discuss these names and their damaging effects on hip hop culture and the hip hop generation would be pointless, as “bitch” and “ho” are terms that are salient in American culture and are not only used in hip hop. You can’t turn on primetime television without hearing the term “bitch,” either to demean a man or to signify woman. Tackling these terms on a much broader level is necessary.

In the above lyric Remy is specifically talking about her own sexual agency and to limit the analysis of her lyrics to her demeaning usage of the terms “chickens,” “birds,” and “bitches” would be a tragedy as here she is actively working to redefine her sexuality. Most of her lyrics involve her sexuality and the complex ways that black women’s sexuality is defined. In this lyric she knows that it’s an incredibly bad thing to be called ‘easy’ so she points out that she is not easy, a person (read woman) who has sex with anyone. However she defines for herself what is fair game as a sexualized subject, no longer object. It is ok for her to sleep with a man who is in a relationship with someone else, in fact she prefers it. It is also okay that she only enters a relationship for sex; a trait Jay Z thinks should be coupled with gold-digging (see footnote 7). And so Remy is the feminist writer that Spillers talks about in Interstices: A Small Drama of Words,

“That the feminist writer challenges certain symbolic formations of the past in correcting and revising them does not destroy the previous authority, but extends its possibilities. By reopening the lines of a prior closure, feminist writers at once define a new position of attack and lay claim to a site of ancestral imperative,” (167).

Female hip hop artists like Remy Ma too have feminist aims and seek to redefine themselves in a world where everyone else but black women has rights to those naming abilities. We take them...
back, we have our own voices and contrary to what mainstream media think – that hip hop
demeans black women at a greater rate and to a greater degree than mainstream media actors – we
know it is you who first defined us and bound us and created the rhetoric that allow us to be less
than, and as you say, minority (of a minority).
In this piece, I wanted to be original, to be new, to be an individual in the face of so much collectivity. I love being black (as much as one can be black), I love where I come from (as much as one can love being from an impoverished ghetto), I love uniting in the struggle (as much as one can love lacking uniqueness) but at the same time I want to be me, I want the same amount of individuality that white privilege allows. I can’t help but yearn for my own voice in the midst of, and behind the veil of a society that seeks to efface, erase, and deny all my complexities for the sake essentializing race and gender. I want to be hip hop, to embody it, to personify it. These characteristics and so many more are central to hip hop artists, hip hop culture, and the hip hop generation: creativity, originality, individuality and at the same time collectivity. These are things that hip hoppers yearn for – their own voice, access to the same privileges whiteness allows, a creative outlet. Regardless if my reader thinks my work is original, new, creative, persuasive, worthy – it is mine. This work is hip hop’s. I take what I am not given. Hip hop doesn’t care what you think of “it” – why should I?

12 I could have written this entire paper using lyrics from all of Kanye West’s three albums, *College Dropout, Late Registration*, and *Graduation*, all of which talk about his struggles with academia and not feeling worthy enough to just be hip hop, to just be him without college. I didn’t use his work here because since Kanye is the most well-known Chicago artist and since I am from Chicago the connections were too easy; his work almost mirrors mine too much. My last referenced lyric is his because it wraps up my work. But it goes without saying that he is one the greatest of all time.
While there are problems within hip hop, those issues are much more deep seated within dominant ideologies that drive America than media want us to think. I reject the idea that hip hop is violent, misogynistic, and materialistic simply because the traits that I characterize hip hop with are different. I think about the positivity hip hop brings me and others: a black woman able to see myself beyond the possibilities that have been set for me, a way to envision my life differently, to own the sexuality that I have been stripped of having, to talk about the ways that life sucks and the ways that life is good. I have always defined myself regardless of whatever or whoever seeks to define me. I work within my own set of possibilities, which for me are endless. I strive to have a life that is free from racism and gendered discrimination, but I don’t start with hip hop in my efforts, that battle starts elsewhere. I create situations in which I am the victor. I survive to tell my ghetto story. I save my own life. I am hip hop.

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13 There are several issues I would have liked to discuss here but which are unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. For example, the ways that hip hop culture is a world-wide phenomenon and moves beyond the misogynistic, hypermasculine narratives that dominate the mainstream. Artists like Las Crudas, a Cuban, female rap group, or M.I.A, a popular female rap artist in the U.K. just now gaining attention in the States, Deep Dickollective, a group of educated, queer, male, hip hop artists all move beyond those stereotypical notions of hip hop culture that garner most attention, are most commodifiable and most of the time use lyrics that are the most demeaning. These artists are very much a part of hip hop culture and deserve recognition. Also I did not include a discussion here on the influence of hip hop in white culture and the ramifications of such an influence. These topics and others are important but did not fit within my mission here. In the future I hope to explore these subjects with greater detail.
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Appendix

**Put You On Game** Lyrics, Lupe Fiasco

Lemme put you on game [gunshot]
Lemme put you on game

Don't you know that I run this place,
And I've begun this race,
Must I rerun this pace?
I'm the reason its become this way
And their love for it is the reason I have become this praised
(lemme put you on game)
They love my darkness,
I make them heartless,
And in return, the have become my martyrs,
I've been in the poem of many a poet,
And I reside in the art of many a artist
(lemme put you on game)
Some of your smartest have tried to articulate
My whole part in this
But they're fruitless in their harvest'
The dro’ grows from my footsteps
I'm the one that they follow,
I am the one that they march with
(lemme put you on game)
Through the back alleys
And the black markets,
The Oval Offices,
Crack houses and apartments
Through the mazes of the queens,
The pages of the sages
And the Chambers of The Kings
(lemme put you on game)
Through the veins-es of the fiends,
A paper chaser's pager,
Yo, I'm famous on the scene
One of the oldest, most ancient-est of things
Speak every single language on the planet, y'naiah mean?
(lemme put you on game)
I am the American dream,
The rape of Africa
The undying machine,
The overpriced medicine,
The murderous regime,
The tough guy's front,
And the one behind the scenes
(lemme put you on game)
I am the blood of this city,
It's gas, water, and electricity,
I'm it's gym, and it's math, and it's history,
The gunshots in the class
And you can't pass if you're missin', G.
I taught them better than that
I taught them aim for the head
And hope they never come back
I'm glad your daddy's gone, baby,
Hope he never comes back,
I hope he's with your mother,
With my hustlers high on my tracks
(lemme put you on game)
I hope you die in his trash,
I can't help it all I hear when you're crying is laughs
I'm sure somebody find you tied in this bag,
Behind the hospital little baby,
Crack addicts had
(lemme put you on game)
Then maybe you can grow up to be a stripper,
A welfare-receiving prostitutin’
Gold digger,
You can watch on TV,
How they should properly depict you,
The rivers should flow with liquor,
Quench your thirst on my elixirs,
(lemme put you on game)
I am the safe haven for the rebel runaway and the resister
The trusted misleader,
The number one defender,
And from a throne of their bones I rule,
These fools are my fuel
So I make them Cool
(lemme put you on game)
Baptize them in the water out of Scarface pool,
And feed 'em from the table that held Corleone's food,
If you die, tell them that you played my game
I hope your bullet holes become mouths that say my name,
'Cause I'm the... [gunshot]
**Bitches & Sisters** Lyrics, Jay Z

{Let's describe A certain female}
{Let's describe A certain female}
{Let's describe A certain {scratching female fe-fe-fe-fe-fe-fe-fe-fe-female}

BITCH!

[Jay-z]: You know my name and the company I own {*BITCH}
You like my style, and you smell my cologne {*BITCH}
Don't try to act like my track record ain't known {*BITCH}
You probably gotta couple CD's in your home {*BITCH}
Don't make me say it twice you actin' all uptight
Or siddity like, like you ain't a {*Scratching bitch}
I ain't no ballplayer you ain't gon’ get pregnant and get hit off with paper
You gon' get hit off and slid 'fore the neighbors take off to go off to work
So just take off your shirt
Don't hit me with that church shit {*BITCH}
I got a sister who school me to shit you chickens do trickin' fools gotta
whole Robin Givens crew that I kick it to they be hippin' dudes how you chickens move, I be
listenin' to {*BITCH,BITCH,BITCH}
Don't make me say it THRICE you actin' all uptight, all siddity like, like you ain't a {*BITCH}
You ain't no betta, cause you don't be Fuckin rappers you only Fuckin with
Actors you still gettin' Fucked BACKWARDS {*BITCH}
Unless you Fucked a dude on his own merit, and not the way he dribble a ball or draw lyrics your a
{SCRATCHING
BITCH,BITCH,BITCH} Blow My-you're A{SCRATCHING BITCH}That's Real
{SCRATCHING BITCH}Chiyeah

{Let's describe A certain female}
{Let's describe A certain female}
{Let's describe A certain {JAY-Z TALKING}SAY JAY-Z WHY YOU GOTTA GO
DISRESPECT THE WOMEN FOR HUH?
Sisters get respect, Bitches get what they deserve,
Sisters work hard, Bitches work your nerves,
Sisters hold you down, Bitches hold you up,
Sisters help you progress, Bitches'll slow you up,
Sisters cook up a meal play they role with the kids, Bitches in the street with they nose in ya biz,
Sisters tell the truth, Bitches tell lies,
Sisters drive cars, Bitches wanna ride
Sisters give up the ass, Bitches give up the ass
Sisters do it slow, Bitches do it fast
Sisters do they dirt outside of where they live, Bitches have niggas all up in your crib,
Sisters tell you quick ‘you betta check ya homie,’ Bitches don’t give a fuck they wanna check for
ya homie,
Sisters love Jay cause they know how Hov is
I LOVE MY SISTERS I DON'T LOVE NO BITCH
{SCRATCHING BITCH}

BITCH!!!!!!