

FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO HIP HOP: TOWARD A NEXUS OF IDEAS

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The most radical ideas often grow out of a concrete intellectual engagement with the problems of aggrieved populations confronting systems of oppression.¹

The preceding quotation from historian Robin D. G. Kelley captures the manner through which socially and politically conscious (SPC) Hip Hop emerged from the social, economic, and political experiences of black youth from the mid- to late 1970s.² Hip Hop pioneers such as Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, among others articulated the post-civil rights generation's ideas and response to poverty, drugs, police brutality, and other racial and class inequities of postindustrial U.S. society.³ In many ways, early hip hoppers were not only the progenitors of a new form of black social critique, they also represented the voice of a new generation that would carry on and expand upon the ideas and ideology of the civil rights generation.⁴

Since the early years of Hip Hop, SPC hip hoppers have continued to espouse many of the ideas and ideology of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and Black Freedom Struggle (BFS), but in a language that resonates with many black youth of the postindustrial and post-civil rights integrationist era.⁵ For instance, on Michael Franti's 2001 compact disk (CD) *Stay Human*, Franti uses rap and reggae-style lyrics to critique U.S. capitalism, imperialism, racism, and globalization and to offer analyses of discrimination, prejudice, and oppression similar to those of activists and theorists of the CRM and BFS. In his song "Oh My God," Franti lays out what he believes are the hypocrisies of U.S. democracy by pointing out its discriminatory practices against the poor and people of color, its use of the death penalty, its indiscriminate bombing of other countries, and its counterintelligence activities that subvert the rights of U.S. citizens. He states:

Oh my, Oh my God,
out here mama they got us livin' suicide,
singin' oh my, oh my God
out here mama they got us livin' suicide. . . .

Listen to my stethoscope on a rope,
internal lullabies, human cries,
thumps and silence, the language of violence,
algorithmic, cataclysmic, seismic, biorhythmic,
you can make a life longer, but you can't save it,

you can make a clone and then you try to enslave it?
Stealin' DNA from the unborn
and then you comin' after us
'cause we sampled a James Brown horn?
Scientists whose God is progress,
a four headed sheep is their latest project,
the CIA runnin' like that Jones from Indiana,
but they still won't talk about that Jones in Guyana,
this ain't no cartoon, no one slips on bananas,
do you really think that that car killed Diana,
hell I shot Ronald Reagan, I shot JFK,
I slept with Marilyn, she sung me "Happy Birthday."⁶

The lyrics in "Oh My God" and other songs on *Stay Human* are potent, analytical, and reminiscent of the critiques and ideas of such black leaders as W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Kwame Toure, Angela Davis, and the Black Panthers. Franti's ideas as expressed in "Oh My God" and *Stay Human* regarding U.S. imperialism, racism, discrimination, and the usurpation of individual rights are similar to those expressed in Du Bois's essay, "The Freedom to Learn"; King's book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*; Gil Scott-Heron's song, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"; and Angela Davis's numerous writings on the prison-industrial complex. Other socio-political rappers and hip hoppers, such as Public Enemy, Sister Souljah, KRS-One, MeShell Ndegeocello, Goodie Mob, The Coup, Blackalicious, Jurassic 5, Kanye West, dead prez, Mr. Lif, Mos Def, Immortal Technique, Hieroglyphic, and Ms. Dynamite are among the many artists of the SPC genre of Hip Hop who offer cogent analyses and commentary on race, poverty, and discrimination that build on the ideas and ideology of CRM and BFS.

Despite the shared ideas and ideology of Hip Hop and the CRM and BFS, the two generations have, for the most part, been skeptical, if not outright suspicious of one another, and scholars have tended to portray them in opposition and conflict. For instance, some activists and scholars of the civil rights era criticize the Hip Hop generation for failing to carry on the struggles of the CRM.⁷ Moreover, some scholars of the civil rights generation, such as Martin Kilson, believe that Hip Hop is devoid of a sound intellectual activist tradition. Kilson declared that,

The "hip-hop worldview" is nothing other than an updated face on the old-hat, crude, anti-humanistic values of hedonism and materialism. . . . It is ironic, in fact, that black youth in poverty-level and weak working class families, who struggle to design a regime of self-respect and discipline in matters of education and interpersonal friendship, get no assistance whatever in these respects from hedonistic, materialistic, nihilistic, sadistic, and misogynistic ideas and values propagated by most hip-hop entertainers.⁸

Activists and scholars of the Hip Hop generation, in turn, often criticize the civil rights generation for being out of touch with contemporary "real

world" problems of black youth, for failing to reach out to black youth, or failing to understand the complexities of the postindustrial society in which black youth live.⁹ According to cinema scholar Todd Boyd, the disconnect between the civil rights and Hip Hop generations has made civil rights seem largely irrelevant and has made Hip Hop the primary voice of contemporary black youth. He argued that, "Hip Hop has rejected and now replaced the pious, sanctimonious nature of civil rights as the defining moment of Blackness."¹⁰

As a child of the civil rights era who came of age during the formative years of Hip Hop, I understand the conflicts between the two generations, but I can also see the largely overlooked commonalities between them. While Hip Hop has not dramatically changed oppressive institutional structures or organized itself at anywhere near the level of civil rights organizations, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), or the NAACP, it shares with the CRM a critique of the problems that plague U.S. African Americans and other oppressed people throughout the world. These shared ideas and common ideology present possibilities for an improved discourse between the two generations.

This inquiry, therefore, illuminates this common ground by examining four ideas that Hip Hop carries on from the CRM and the larger BFS. I argue that SPC Hip Hop reinvigorates and expands these four ideas and ideologies of the CRM and BFS and in doing so presents a cogent and intellectually engaged analysis in a language that resonates with contemporary black youth. In making a case for the shared ideas and ideology of these generations, I will also show how SPC Hip Hop has roots in the CRM and BFS. My aim is to help the Hip Hop and civil rights generations recognize their common ideology and goals and help facilitate a discourse grounded in a history of ideas found among both generations.¹¹

IMAGING, SAMPLING, AND SCRATCHING: TRANSCENDING LINEAR NOTIONS OF TIME IN HIP HOP

The fact that the Hip Hop generation of today is thirty-five or more years removed from the CRM has made it difficult for either generation to recognize the commonalities in their ideas. In addition, linear approaches to examining history have reinforced a temporal disconnect between Hip Hop and the CRM. Such approaches obscure the ideological connections between the civil rights era and Hip Hop, disguise the fluidity of ideas between the two generations, and conceal the influence of past ideas on Hip Hop.¹² As a result, it is more difficult to see, for example, how the ideas of Martin Delany, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr., to name a few, are reflected in and similar to the ideas proposed by rappers such as Public Enemy, Sister Souljah, Michael Franti, and dead prez.

SPC Hip Hop, however, attempts to address these temporal limitations through techniques that morph time and provide a wider lens for seeing the

organic, metaphorical, symbolic, and concrete connections between Hip Hop and the CRM and BFS. Many hip hoppers, for instance, employ techniques such as imaging, sampling, and scratching to transcend space and time and to place their ideas into closer temporal proximity to the CRM and BFS. *Imaging* is a general term I use to describe the process by which hip hoppers reproduce or evoke images, events, people, and symbols for the purpose of placing past ideas into closer proximity to the present. Hip hoppers employ imaging by appropriating, for example, the voices and images of civil rights figures and events in their music or videos.

Sampling is a type of imaging in which hip hoppers digitally replicate sounds or voices into a song, performance, or video. Sampling is typically practiced by DJs through the use of sampling machines (via keyboards and computers) that lift sounds from one source and place them into another. James Brown's songs and Malcolm X's voice, for instance, have been appropriated by many SPC hip hoppers as means of promoting and capturing the ideas and aura of Malcolm and Brown's day. Sampling, therefore, has provided a way for the Hip Hop generation to rethink the temporal barriers that separate them from the CRM, and it provides an opportunity for scholars to reconsider how we conceptualize the relationship between these two generations. Hip Hop scholar Eric Perkins provides further insight into sampling as a means of transcending time, noting that, "sampling was and is hip hop's ongoing link with history and tradition, including all of the African and African American musical genres; so one can say that hip hop generates its own history by recycling music and reintroducing the previous musical genres to new audiences and markets."¹³

Scratching is another type of imaging that complements sampling. Using two or more turntables, DJs employ this technique by sliding the needles on their turntables back and forth across the surfaces of records as a means of lifting snippets of songs and sounds and transporting them to another source (i.e., record, tape, compilation, or live performance). Over time, the scratching sound itself became a musical form and part of the songs. The art of scratching is taking on new forms as digitized music becomes widely used. Many purists, however, continue to develop the art of scratching by using albums. Like sampling, scratching allows the DJ to image the past onto the present, creating a greater awareness of the relationship between the past and present-day problems of the African American community.¹⁴

Public Enemy has been one of the most visible rap groups using imaging, sampling, and scratching to connect the Hip Hop generation to the CRM and BFS. In their music, Public Enemy has consistently explored contemporary problems of urban strife, poverty, and discrimination in the context of the black experience, and articulated their ideas in relationship to the long history of black struggle. In their video for "Fight the Power" in *Fear of a Black Planet*, for instance, marchers carry cardboard placards with pictures of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Paul Robeson, Marcus Garvey, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X,

and Jesse Jackson.¹⁵ Public Enemy's purpose is to visually connect Hip Hop to the larger BFS and to show Public Enemy as the progeny of previous black leaders. Front man Chuck D asserts that Public Enemy's link to icons of the CRM and BFS is not happenstance, but rather the product of his upbringing in an activist family during the 1960s:

My parents were young in the 1960s, and had radical ideas. My mother wore an Afro, and I remember wearing an Afro myself, as well as singing the "Free Huey Newton" song. My crucial developmental years took place right smack-dab in the middle years of the Black Power movement.¹⁶

In 1999 the Atlanta-based, Hip Hop and rap group Outkast forged further connections between Hip Hop and the CRM and BFS with their controversial song "Rosa Parks" on the CD *Aquemini*. Simply using Rosa Parks's name as the song's title connects Hip Hop to the CRM. As an icon of the movement, Parks has become known as the "mother" of the CRM and her name has come to symbolize the birth of the movement. Moreover, although Outkast does not explicitly discuss Rosa Parks, they allude to her participation in the CRM by stating, "Ah-ha, hush that fuss, Everybody move to the back of the bus. Do you wanna bump and slump with us? We the type of people make the club get crunk."¹⁷ The use of Parks's name and the simple refrain in the song provides Outkast with a way of imaging the CRM into Hip Hop. Moreover, the song, though subtle, illuminates Parks's participation in the CRM and preserves her legacy for a new generation. Nevertheless, the tension between the two generations emerged even in this effort, as Rosa Parks and her attorney viewed Outkast's use of her name not as reverence, but as the wrongful manipulation of her name and story for their own profit. Eventually, the lawsuit was settled and Outkast agreed to perform on a CD tribute for Parks and help produce a nationally televised broadcast of Parks's role and participation in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.¹⁸

Hip Hop activist and rapper Common, formerly known as Common Sense, consistently and consciously uses imaging to illuminate the ideological connections between Hip-Hop and the CRM and BFS. In "A Song for Assata" on *Like Water for Chocolate* (2000), Common and Cee Lo, formerly of the socially and politically conscious rap group Goodie Mob, recount the life of civil rights era activist and Black Panther Assata Shakur. The precision and detail in Common's lyrical narrative and composition evoke a vivid image of Assata's participation in the BFS. Common's opening words in "A Song for Assata," however, provide imagery that fuses Hip Hop to its ancestral and spiritual roots in the BFS:

In the Spirit of God,
 In the Spirit of the Ancestors,
 In the Spirit of the Black Panthers,
 In the Spirit of Assata Shakur,
 We make this movement towards freedom,
 For all those who have been oppressed,
 and all those in the struggle.¹⁹

Common expresses gratitude for Assata's activism and commitment to her cause and metaphorically places himself in her era when he repeats the refrain, "I wonder what would happen if that woulda been me? All this shit so we could be free."²⁰ Common completes the imaging of Assata and the CRM and BFS by sampling Assata's voice in the refrain and at the end of the song. Her message to the Hip Hop generation is that freedom is the "right to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do."²¹ Assata's advice to Common and his generation reflects that of a sage of an earlier era who provides wisdom to the Hip Hop generation.

Another song from the same CD that poignantly connects Hip Hop to the CRM and BFS is "Pops' Rap . . . All My Children." This song is extremely effective because Common's father, whom Common calls Pops and who sings on the song, uses the imagery of the Underground Railroad to connect Hip Hop metaphorically to the CRM and BFS. Pops informs hip hoppers that Hip Hop is the "language of the Underground Railroad." Pops utilizes the imagery of the Underground Railroad through which numerous people helped enslaved African Americans escape from the South to freedom in the North and Canada.

Pops visualizes African Americans' struggle for equality as an Underground Railroad in which various generations of African Americans take responsibility for guiding their people to freedom. He commends the Hip Hop generation for taking responsibility for carrying on the struggle, for "feeding the children" of their generation knowledge in a language they can understand, and for preventing "99" in the year 1999 from turning upside down to become the year 1966. Pops also credits Hip Hop with carrying on the tradition of self-determination and knowledge dissemination.²² Pops's use of the Underground Railroad metaphor and his inversion of "99" to "66" is highly effective in showing the connections between the Hip Hop and civil rights generations. He goes even further by pointing to Erykah Badu, Cee Lo, Jazzy Jeff, A Tribe Called Quest, and De La Soul as conductors on the modern-day Underground Railroad.²³

Rhythm and Blues (R & B) artist MeShell Ndegeocello, a member of the Hip Hop generation who infuses rap into her socially and politically conscious music, has been another potent force in simultaneously merging and critiquing Hip Hop and the CRM. Since entering the music scene during the early 1990s, she has consistently evoked images and symbolism of the CRM to connect it to the circumstances of her generation. In her song "Hot Night" on *The Anthropological Mixtape*, Ndegeocello samples Angela Davis's CD, *Angela Davis: The Prison-Industrial Complex*.²⁴ In Davis's own words we hear her critique of capitalism as a force that exploits single black mothers by keeping them dependent on government welfare. The juxtaposition of Davis's voice with a driving Hip Hop beat is highly effective in educating hip hoppers about a 1960s black revolutionary such as Angela Davis. It also illuminates the problems of the 1960s that persist for the Hip Hop generation. Ndegeocello

completes the connection in the song's chorus by proclaiming herself the heir to Davis, as a "revolutionary soul singer" for her own generation.

The Philadelphia-based rap group The Roots also provides civil rights era imagery to connect Hip Hop to the CRM in their latest CD, *The Tipping Point* (2004). A picture of the young Malcolm X graces the cover, conveying the nature of the CD's content. In addition, in the song, "Why? (What's Going On?)," the Roots borrow from the theme of Marvin Gaye's civil rights and anti-Vietnam War anthem "What's Going On" to deliver a critique of the war in Iraq. For instance, front man Black Thought declared, "Young teen joins the Marines, said he'd die for the corps. Inducted in the government's war, is it for land or money or oil?"²⁵ Just as Du Bois, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King raised questions about African Americans' participation in the U.S. armed forces in Vietnam, Black Thought raises questions about their participation in the U.S. war in Iraq, which he asserts is being fought for the acquisition of land and money. In raising such an issue, Black Thought and the Roots renew the concerns of activists of the CRM and BFS and carry on a tradition of exposing the oppressors of African Americans within the U.S., even as U.S. politicians claim to be liberating the oppressed abroad.²⁶

While Hip Hop lyrics are replete with connections to the CRM and BFS, a number of rappers also attest to an even more direct and personal influence of the CRM and BFS on their ideas and music. In an interview with "underground" Atlanta rapper John Lewis, Jr., son of civil rights leader and icon John Lewis, Sr., Lewis, Jr. provides a firsthand account of the organic ideological connections between Hip Hop and the CRM.²⁷ In discussing the influence of his father and the CRM on his ideas and work, Lewis, Jr., recalled that:

With me, I grew up around it [civil rights]. Like all I knew really was what was out here. Both of these worlds [civil rights and Hip Hop] was [sic] together within me. You know it's hard as hell growing up in the house and, you know, you got pictures of your pops getting hit with billy clubs and getting dogs sicked on him, that shit goes into your head.²⁸

Lewis asserts that the stories he heard about the movement from his father are etched into his mind and have profoundly influenced his lyrics as a SPC rapper. John Lewis, Jr., admits that while his father does not listen to his music, he carefully and consciously listens to the music of his father's generation and merges both the music and ideas of the CRM into his ideas and music for the Hip Hop generation.²⁹

The Witchdoctor, a rapper and member of the Atlanta-based Dungeon Family (DF), which includes Outkast and Goodie Mob (which stands for the "Good Die Mostly over Bullshit"), and others, points out the strength of the ideological connections between Hip Hop and the CRM. He believes that, "we [the civil rights and Hip Hop generations] are basically pretty much the same, it's just the timing is different. Martin saying some of the same things we

saying now, Malcolm saying some of the same things we saying now."³⁰ The Witchdoctor, however, offers a critique of the civil rights leadership model and suggests that the Hip Hop generation must address leadership differently. He suggests that, "the time we living in now, it's not a time where we gonna have just one Martin Luther King, one Malcolm X, and everybody following behind one leader. That way our enemy can't say 'there go the enemy, let's get the enemy.'"³¹ According to the Witchdoctor, the Hip Hop generation must serve in a "mass" leadership role that is not as easily identifiable or vulnerable to forces such as the police, politicians, and government agencies that brought down black leadership during the CRM.³²

Khudjo, a member of the Dungeon Family and Goodie Mob, echoes the sentiments of the Witchdoctor. Khudjo pays much reverence to activists of the CRM and sees Hip Hop as part of the same continuum as the CRM and BFS. Sounding strikingly like historian and former civil rights activist Vincent Harding, who describes the BFS as a winding and tumultuous river on which each generation must take its turn to navigate, Khudjo describes Hip Hop's relationship to the CRM and BFS:

We [the civil rights and Hip Hop generations] are on the same page. Those guys [civil rights activists] just got a little more gray hair than what we got . . . The only difference is that we just doing it to music. It was a lot of struggle going on in Marvin Gaye's times, Smokey's . . . times, it's the same struggle though. We all living in the same struggle. It's just different times and it's almost time for our deliverance right now.³³

These are only a few examples that illustrate the ideological connections between the civil rights and Hip Hop generations. Through imaging, sampling, and scratching, SPC Hip Hop attempts to make a seamless connection between the past and present struggles and experiences of African people. Through an analysis of Hip Hop's language and techniques we can observe four shared themes between Hip Hop and the Civil Rights Movement—self-determination, economic solidarity, liberatory education, and Pan-Africanism.

CONNECTIONS: HIP HOP, THE CRM, AND THE BFS

Since its emergence in the late 1970s, SPC Hip Hop has explored such themes as police brutality toward African Americans, black incarceration, the need for black leadership, black nationalism, black love, and African American solidarity. A comprehensive examination of socially and politically conscious themes and ideas in Hip Hop is beyond the scope of this essay. However, the following sections examine several of the ideas espoused by SPC hip hoppers to illustrate how their messages in many ways echo those of earlier generations, while also resonating with the socio-political issues of their own generation.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Historically, African Americans' desire to control their own destinies can easily be traced to the first Africans who resisted enslavement during the Middle Passage and later in North and South America. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, and Denmark Vesey were only a few of the many Africans and African Americans who sought to gain freedom and to control their social, economic, and political destinies. The quest for freedom has been perhaps the defining struggle for people of African descent worldwide during the past three centuries. In *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of African American Resistance*, historian V. P. Franklin points out that whether through politics, education, religion, or violent and nonviolent resistance, self-determination has been a central goal of African Americans throughout their history. Moreover, African Americans' quest for self-determination, Franklin argues, is not merely the story of great men, but a narrative encompassing the struggles of the masses.³⁴

Historians Lawrence Levine and Sterling Stuckey have provided cogent analyses of black culture and language that testify to the history of African Americans' pursuit of self-determination.³⁵ In his work on African American folk thought, Levine departs from the "traditional historical practice" that presents black southerners or the "folk" as inarticulate and illiterate observers of their own oppression who are acted upon by others. Instead, Levine presents African Americans as a group that actively developed religion, music, art, and other cultural forms that serve to chronicle their oppression and resistance, and express their hope for a better future. Through Spirituals and secular songs, African Americans have always articulated a quest for greater certainty about and control over their lives. Developed within the confines of slavery and Jim Crow laws, black songs provided a means for African Americans to convey their hardships and express their desires in a dialect and language that was often foreign to whites.³⁶

Like African American Spirituals, the Blues also emerged from the racial caste system and discrimination of the U.S. South and developed into an epistemology for understanding and articulating black oppression. According to Blues scholar Clyde Woods, the Blues evolved out of the black working-class experience of the plantation and sharecropping system of the late 1800s and early 1900s. In addition to providing an analytical cultural framework, the Blues represented an ontology as well as a response to the horrendous conditions of plantation life and Jim Crow segregation. Woods points out that the Blues "provided a sense of collective self and a tectonic footing from which to oppose and dismantle the American intellectual, cultural, and socioeconomic traditions constructed from the raw material of African American exploitation and denigration."³⁷ For rural black southerners, the Blues was both a way of interpreting their experience (explaining reality and change) and a means of coping successfully with the oppressive conditions of

their lives. Other examples of black self-determination expressed through culture and language are the Gullah and Geechee peoples of South Carolina and Georgia, respectively. Their languages, perceived by many whites as "bad English," provided a means by which these African American cultures could express themselves within an oppressive situation. Merging English and African words and dialects, Gullah and Geechee provided a cryptic but socially empowering way for African Americans to communicate with one another.³⁸

Ultimately, self-determination focuses on African Americans' quest to control their own lives and communities and has historically been articulated through their culture, religion, language, and music. Spirituals, Gullah and Geechee dialects, and the Blues, during early periods of their development, were viewed by the dominant culture as inept, corrupt, and illegitimate, but over time each has become a recognized means for African Americans to articulate their pain, struggles, and hopes for the future.

Hip Hop, like the Spirituals, the Gullah and Geechee languages, and the Blues emerged from the oppression of African Americans and people of color. During the early 1970s, many black residents in the North were crowded in urban areas with deteriorating economic infrastructures, with a cultural void left by the large number of black men fighting in Vietnam. Hip Hop photographer and griot Ernie Paniccioli, who witnessed and photographed the early years of Hip Hop, described the social environment of the early 1970s:

Pain, oppression, and art, and in this case Hip Hop, came not only from the Vietnam War, but from the oppression of the streets, the oppression of not being able to get a job, the oppression of not being able to have a stake in your own future. It came from the oppression of not getting a proper education. What happened was that these young kids created their own language of the streets.³⁹

Artists such as Afrika Bambaataa and Kool Herc used the burgeoning advancements in recording technologies along with the potent "language of the streets" to create a bombastic and gritty response to their conditions. Their response appealed to many youth because it reflected the mood, feel, and ideas of urban youth culture. Such an environment fostered the emergence and development of a language and cultural form that offered a response and resistance to the conditions of black life during the period.

By the mid to late 1980s, black nationalist and other groups inspired by the teachings of the Nation of Islam, the Five Percent Nation of Islam, and the resurgence in the popularity of black nationalist icons such as Malcolm X were weighing in on the black condition and espousing a philosophy of self-determination. Front man Grand Puba of Brand Nubian, for instance, explicated the conditions in which many African Americans lived during this period and provided them with a mantra for self-determination. In "Wake Up" (Reprise), Puba exclaimed, "Drugs in our community (that ain't right), Can't even get a job (that ain't right), Lying who is God (that ain't right)."

Puba, however, provides a solution: "Knowledge of self to better ourself 'cause I know myself, that we can live much better than this." The conclusion of the song leaves an echoing message of self-determination: "Move on black man, move on, you gotta move on black man move on. . ."⁴⁰

Even Gangsta rap of the late 1980s and early 1990s, as nihilistic and misogynistic as it often was, sometimes advocated self-determination by illuminating problems of police brutality, deterioration of black urban schools, and unjust political and judicial systems, and then provided strategies for addressing these problems. Gangsta rappers such as NWA and Ice-T critiqued the structure of capitalism, the judicial system, and the consignment of African Americans to overcrowded ghettos as attacks on black self-determination. They called for African Americans to resist "the man," oppressive institutional entities, particularly the police; to take control of their own communities; and to use the capitalist system to improve their economic and social conditions.⁴¹

"Knowledge of self" as a means of bringing about self-determination for African Americans was a consistent theme throughout the 1990s, as artists such as Mos Def and Talib Kweli demonstrate on their classic Hip Hop CD and treatise *Black Star*. As two of Hip Hop's most politically aware rappers, Mos Def and Kweli called themselves "Black Star" after Marcus Garvey's 1919 Black Star Line, the first black-owned steamship line. Just as the title of the album and the duo's name signify an advocacy of self-determination, so do the CD's contents. On "Black Star-K.O.S. (Determination)" (1998), Kweli extols the importance of black emcees in African Americans' quest for self-determination and outlines the role they can play in fanning the flames of self-determination among those in their generation:

So many emcees focusin' on black people extermination
 We keep it balanced with that knowledge of self-determination
 It's hot, we be blowin' the spots with conversations,
 C'mon let's smooth it out like Soul Sensation
 We in the house like Japanese in Japan, or Koreans in Korea
 Head to Philly and free Mumia with the Kujichagulia TRUE
 Singin' is swingin' and writin' is fightin', but what
 they writin' got us clashin' like titans it's not excitin'
 No question, bein' a black man is demandin'
 The fire's in my eyes and the flames need fanning (3x)
 With that what (Knowledge of Self) Determination.⁴²

Kweli then points out the contemporary impediments to black self-determination and encourages African Americans to take control of their destiny:

Inner-city concentration camps where no one pays attention
 or mentions the ascension of death, 'til nothing's left.
 The young and dead are black, and sprung addicted to crack
 All my people where y'all at cause, y'all ain't here

And your hero's using your mind as canvas to paint fear
With broad brush strokes and tales of incarceration,
You get out of jail with that Knowledge of Self-Determination
Stand in ovation, cause you put the Hue in Human
Cause and effect, affect everything you do,
And that's why I got love in the face of hate.
Hands steady so the lines in the mental illustration is straight,
The thought you had don't even contemplate,
Infinite like figure eight there's no escape,
From that what (Knowledge of Self) Determination.⁴³

Throughout the song Kweli acknowledges the material needs of African Americans, but preaches that it is knowledge of their history that ultimately prepares them to determine their own future.

Similarly, throughout their work Outkast has asserted that "knowledge of self" is critical to black self-determination because it helps free black people from "mental slavery." In "Liberation" in *Aquemini*, Andre and Big Boi join Erykah Badu and Dungeon Family members Cee Lo and Big Rube to provide an historical odyssey of black oppression and express hope for a brighter future. Ultimately, "Liberation" is a call for African Americans to become aware of their conditions and to use whatever means are necessary to improve their situation. Hip Hop philosopher Big Rube delivers a message that is cryptic, yet profound:

I must admit, they [the oppressors] planted a lot of things
in the brains and veins of my strain,
Makes it hard to refrain, from the host of cocaine,
From them whores from the flame,
From a post in the game,
Makes it hard to maintain focus.
There from the glock rounds, and lockdowns, and berries,
The seeds that sow, get devoured by the same locusts.⁴⁴

Big Rube argues that black liberation and self-determination have historically been thwarted by the oppressors planting misinformation in the minds of generations of African Americans. This misinformation is further entrenched through a subculture of deadly vices such as cocaine addiction and illicit sex. Such vices, Rube posits, make it difficult for African Americans to "maintain focus" on their own self-preservation. Rube's advocacy of black self-determination is buttressed by the words of Big Boi, who informs African Americans that they have a choice in determining their future:

Now [you] have a choice to be who you wants to be. It's left uppa' to me, and my momma n'em told me (yes she did). I said I have a choice to be who you wants to be. It's left uppa' to me, and my momma n'em told me.⁴⁵

"Liberation" catalogues the litany of problems faced by African people in the Diaspora and ultimately calls on them to take control of their own destinies.

For instance, Big Rube advocates a philosophy of self-determination by evoking the imagery of Latin American liberation movements through simply stating *Libertad*, meaning "freedom" or "liberty" in Spanish.

dead prez is one of the most recent and popular underground groups to call for black self-determination. Discovered by Lord Jamar of Brand Nubian, in 2000 this duo released *let's get free*, its groundbreaking treatise on black self-determination. In the tradition of other SPC rappers such as Public Enemy and KRS-One, dead prez see themselves primarily as activists who use music as a platform to deliver their message of black self-determination. On *let's get free*, they devote considerable time to assessing the problems in the black community (illegal drugs, racism, police brutality, self-hate, sexism) and call for African American and other oppressed people to lead a revolution for freedom, liberation, and self-determination. In their song and video "hip hop," dead prez advocate for African peoples to prepare themselves mentally, physically, and emotionally to resist and liberate themselves from oppression. The video is replete with messages and symbolism of blacks' historical quest for self-determination. Groups of black men and women hold placards bearing words and phrases such as "food," "clothes," "shelter," "freedom," "I'm an African," and images of the Black Power fist and the African continent. In the video, dead prez intermittently display maxims and pictures pertaining to poverty, revolution, and solidarity.⁴⁶

Public Enemy, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, the Dungeon Family, and dead prez are only a few of the many SPC rappers who promote an ideology of self-determination. While these hip hoppers continue to promote self-determination, currently their music and videos receive little to no airplay on mainstream radio or television.

LIBERATORY EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY

The acquisition of a liberatory education as a theme in Hip Hop is rooted in the long history of African Americans' quest for self-determination.⁴⁷ Scholars have thoroughly documented that within the U.S. slave system of the 18th and 19th centuries, African Americans educated themselves despite laws forbidding them to obtain literacy or "book knowledge," and the harsh punishments that often resulted from any attempt to do so. Under oppressive conditions and threats of punishments such as flogging, whipping, and sometimes death, enslaved Africans and their African American-born children strove to develop educational institutions and pedagogies of resistance that countered the brutality and ignorance perpetuated by the slaveocracy.⁴⁸ Philosopher Stephen Haymes argued that enslaved African Americans developed an elaborate existential philosophy of education and a pedagogy of resistance that helped them resist the "dehumanizing project of American slavery."⁴⁹ Under harsh conditions, Haymes asserted, enslaved African Americans not only continued to educate themselves, but taught themselves

that they were "a Chosen People" and that their existence had meaning and purpose.

After the end of U.S. slavery, African Americans continued to strive to take control of their education away from whites, who propagated educational institutions and practices that reinforced existing social and economic hierarchies. Through the Freedman's Bureau and white philanthropic organizations such as the Slater Fund, black southerners were often subjected to a curriculum designed to reinforce a social order that relegated them to the lowest position. A survey of U.S. history reveals that despite the hardships African Americans faced, they attempted to control their own education, from the secret schools in slave communities, to the Sabbath schools of the postbellum period, to the freedom schools of the 1960s, and to the independent black schools of today.⁵⁰

In the midst of external control of black schooling, W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and Anna Julia Cooper were only a few of the many African American educators who developed pedagogies that called for African Americans to become self-sufficient and take control of their own futures. In his *Mis-education of the Negro*, for example, Woodson pointed out that African Americans remain enslaved mentally when they attempt to imitate the education of whites instead of developing curricula that reflect their own culture, history, and economic reality. Echoing the sentiments of Du Bois, Washington, Cooper, and others, Woodson argued that education for African Americans should be pragmatic, rigorous, critical, and grounded in the culture and historical experiences of African peoples.⁵¹

Hip Hop artists from the late 1970s have also criticized the U.S. educational system and argued that the public schools often perpetuate "mis-education." Perhaps the most influential and well-known rapper to criticize the educational system and its practices, and to advocate for a liberatory pedagogy, is Hip Hop artist KRS-One, also known as "The Teacher." Since emerging on the Hip Hop scene in the mid-1980s, KRS-One has offered a scathing critique of the American educational system and its curricula, while calling for more historically accurate portrayals of African Americans in textbooks and other classroom materials. In particular, "The Teacher" has been concerned about what he sees as a "Eurocentric" version of history in U.S. public school curricula, which ignores the contributions of African-descended people. He raps, "It seems to me in a school that's ebony, African history should be pumped up steadily, but it's not and this has got to stop."⁵² KRS-One further educates his generation about their "real" history: "No one told you about Benjamin Banneker, a brilliant Black man [who created an] almanac. . . . Granville Woods made the walkie talkie, Louis Latimer improved on Edison, Charles Drew did a lot for medicine, Garrett Morgan made the traffic light, Harriet Tubman freed the slaves at night, Madame CJ Walker made a straightening comb."⁵³

KRS-One's advocacy of a liberatory education and pedagogy continues to impact and educate a new generation of hip hoppers. Washington, DC-born,

but Georgia-based rapper Ishues, who has toured with KRS-One, also sees himself carrying on the tradition of black educators of previous generations. His moniker hints at his concept of educating the masses about issues in contemporary society. Ishues's CD *Reality Flow* (2004) is part autobiography and part political and historical lesson. Ishues holds a view of formal education similar to that of Carter G. Woodson; he believes that education and schooling as practiced in the United States denies students access to the truth and provides them with illusions rather than an understanding of reality.⁵⁴

As a "rapper of the streets," Ishues sees himself as a teacher whose job is to bring reality and truth to the masses, no matter how painful that reality and truth might be. In "Game Time" on *Reality Flow*, Ishues expresses his problem with what he believes is mis-education perpetrated by schools:

The only lesson teachers taught me in school
Was propaganda and pictures of Jesus on the cross. . . .
So, I despise what you teach me,
I despise you completely.⁵⁵

Ishues argues that curricula in U.S. schools offer sanitized and inaccurate information about black history that denies "truth" to children. Such mis-education, Ishues believes, emanates not only from formal educational institutions such as schools, but also from informal education sources such as the media.⁵⁶

Education for liberation is also a dominant theme in the music of dead prez. In "they schools," dead prez offers a scathing critique of one of the most important battlegrounds in the Black Freedom Struggle: the education and schooling of African American children. They announce, "They schools can't teach us shit. My people need freedom, we trying to get all we can get. . . . Tellin' me white man lies straight bullshit. They schools ain't teachin' us what we need to survive, they schools don't educate, all they teach the people is lies."⁵⁷ Throughout the "they schools" video, dead prez shows images of nooses in the background to equate U.S. education with slow death for students who are subject to it. dead prez, however, does not merely offer a critique of U.S. education, but also encourages African Americans to take control of their own education and urges students to think long term about their future.⁵⁸

Rapper Nas has consistently served as an educator and teacher from his first CD, *Illmatic*, to his most recent, *Street's Disciples*. Nas's most popular treatise on self-determination in education is his song, "I Know I Can." Like Woodson with the *Negro History Bulletin* and Du Bois with the *Brownies Book*, Nas educates black children about their rich history to show them that they can succeed in life:

Be, be, 'fore we came to this country,
We were kings and queens, never porch monkeys,
There [were] empires in Africa called Kush, Timbuktu, where every race came to get books,
To learn from black teachers who taught Greeks and Romans.

Nas further explains the role that education can play in helping black children achieve the greatness of their ancestors:

Read more learn more, change the globe
Ghetto children, do your thing,
Hold your head up, little man, you're a king.
Young Princess when you get your wedding ring
Your man is saying "She's my queen."⁵⁹

While Hip Hop is far from perfect in addressing the problem of education in black communities, it has carried on the tradition of calling for African Americans to take control of their education and to obtain the educational tools that will enable them to improve their lives. KRS-One, Ishues, Nas, and dead prez are only a few of the rappers who have been in the forefront of calling for a more liberatory education. Hip hoppers and rappers such as A Tribe Called Quest, Lauryn Hill, Poor Righteous Teachers, and Sister Souljah have also put forward an educational philosophy for liberation in their work.

ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The quest of African Americans to control their economic future is a prevalent theme in Hip Hop, the CRM, and the BFS. Since the Reconstruction era of the 1860s and 1870s, African Americans have promoted economic solidarity and entrepreneurship as means of gaining civil rights. Grounded in a philosophy of self-determination and self-help, many African Americans believed that building strong economic bases within their communities would inevitably bring about political equality within the capitalist and democratic society of the United States.⁶⁰

One of the earliest promoters of black economic cooperation was the Episcopal priest and leading black intellectual Alexander Crummell. Crummell stated that African Americans should collaborate "not for idle political logomacy, but for industrial effort, for securing trades for youth, for joint-stock companies, for manufacturing, for the production of the great staples of the land . . . for mental and moral improvement."⁶¹ Similar economic agendas were promoted from the late 1870s through the 1890s by educators such as Robert Terrell, Charles Purvis, Anna Julia Cooper, and Kelly Miller.⁶²

The themes of economic solidarity and entrepreneurship are particularly central to the ideas of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. Despite the antithetical manner in which the ideas of Washington and Du Bois are often portrayed, both men believed that economic security would provide leverage for African Americans to achieve greater social and political

advancement. For Washington, social progress would come about more quickly if African Americans focused their efforts on developing industrial and agricultural skills that would help them build a solid business class. This business class would eventually move into higher areas of industry and should strive to own land and enterprises that would employ black workers. By building a strong laboring class and obtaining land and businesses, Washington believed, African Americans would eventually gain greater civil rights.⁶³

While Washington adopted an entrepreneurial philosophy of black economic empowerment that often emphasized the individual's acquisition of wealth, Du Bois called for a communal approach to building strong economic communities. In 1898, for instance, Du Bois pointed to Farmville, Virginia as a model city of communal economic cooperation in which black southerners successfully pooled their resources to build a strong local economy. In Farmville, a black man owned and controlled the entire brick-making business, while other African Americans owned several grocery stores, all the barbershops, and the only steam laundry business in the county. Du Bois's study of African Americans in Farmville was one of the first instances in which he emphasized the potential of separate black business institutions. Du Bois would later point to other instances of successful business enterprises in places such as Durham, North Carolina.⁶⁴ Throughout much of the 20th century, African Americans promoted ideas of economic solidarity and entrepreneurship as means of building economic strength. Individuals and groups such as the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and Martin Luther King, Jr., at various points all stressed that economic power could play an important role in improving African Americans' lives and status.

The economic conditions out of which Hip Hop emerged made the artists receptive to the ideas of economic cooperation and entrepreneurship advocated during the BFS. The mid-1970s was a period of high inflation and economic stagnation, and the deterioration of black urban centers was well underway. While the black middle-class expanded as a result of social advances during the civil rights era, the economic status of the black poor continued to lag disproportionately behind that of the vast majority of white Americans. Deindustrialization encouraged companies to move factories out of urban areas and into the suburbs and eventually into parts of South America, Southeast Asia, and other less developed areas. African Americans were negatively affected by deindustrialization, and the black poor and working classes' chances of earning a living wage decreased. At the same time that the federal government was abandoning urban centers, the proportion of African Americans residing in metropolitan urban centers increased from 33 percent in 1970 to 50 percent in 1990.⁶⁵

Juxtaposed against the backdrop of the economic problems of the 1970s were poverty and crime, which were often concentrated in urban areas and black housing projects. For many African Americans, a sense of hopelessness set in as they felt they had lost control of their destinies. African American

sentiment about these conditions was expressed in the exploding rap music of the period as early rappers responded to the dismal economic conditions. In "The Message," for example, rapper Grandmaster Flash stated:

Broken glass everywhere, people pissing on the
stairs like they just don't care,
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise,
Got no money to move, I guess I got no choice.
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back,
Junkies 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.⁶⁶

Hip Hop responded to the economic conditions of the times by advocating economic solidarity and entrepreneurial strategies that would empower black communities both economically and politically. Rappers such as dead prez, KRS-One, the Coup, Hieroglyphic, Public Enemy, and Mos Def called for African Americans to "give back" to their communities and build strong economic institutions. M-1 of dead prez articulates a strategy of economic cooperation:

Mostly I envision justice. A just system which will share the resources of the world which come from the earth and belong to no one. I envision those resources being shared equally amongst the masses of the people—including white people—who will only have it after working for it, the same way we all do. I see a system that's classless. Erasing the ruling class and the middle class that leave the lower classes—which is about 90 percent of the people—with little or none, and the ruling class—2 percent of the people—with everything. I envision a place which recognizes this land was stolen from the indigenous people and they have a right to it. Whatever should happen to this land should be the determination of the people who this land was stolen from—and I mean stolen in the most vicious way. Ultimately, [I support] social justice, economic development, and a standard of freedom in life.⁶⁷

dead prez's economic perspective on black liberation is similar in many ways to those of Du Bois, sociologist Oliver Cox, and other social theorists who have written about the social and economic conditions for African peoples. Clearly influenced by a Marxist analysis of their economic condition, dead prez points to unbridled capitalism as the culprit in black poverty and advocates a cooperative, communal, and classless economic system as a viable solution. Their economic philosophy reflects views similar to those of Du Bois in the 1930s and 1940s and the Black Panther Party of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The late rapper Tupac Shakur offered a dialectical critique of black economics that reflected the ideas of several thinkers of the CRM and BFS. As the son of a Black Panther, Tupac was influenced by the Marxist analyses that exposed the evils of capitalism and the negative impact it has had historically on the black masses. At the same time, Tupac did not dismiss capitalism as a means of improving his life. In an interview, Tupac's friend

and former publicist, Talibah Mbonisi, provides some insight into Tupac's ideas about capitalism. She noted that, "he [Tupac] was sporting bling bling and everything else and participating in a system that he certainly had been taught was destructive to us. So there's that contradiction."⁶⁸ Mbonisi explains Tupac's struggle as someone who had grown up poor, with the contradiction of embracing a capitalistic ethos while understanding how unbridled capitalism and greed often harmed black communities.

Mutula Shakur, Tupac's mentor, helped him reconcile this "two-ness" through the social and economic philosophy of "Thug Life," which stands for "The hate u give little infants fucks everybody." Mbonisi explains Mutula's efforts:

What Mutula did was to work with them [Tupac and his friends] to build a set of principles around it. Kinda the underlying principle was that there is this underground economic structure that will always be functional as long as we are an oppressed people. You will have pimps, drug dealers, and everything else because people gotta feed their families and they can't do it because they are not allowed to participate in the capitalist structure in the United States.⁶⁹

Mutula taught Tupac that the contradictions of embracing capitalism and wanting to help his people were an understandable reflection of the contradictions inherent in a capitalist-driven economy. Mutula, however, believed that those contradictions had to be mediated by principles, which included not selling drugs to pregnant women or schoolchildren and not involving civilians (those not involved in the drug trade) in these affairs. As an economic perspective, Thug Life incorporates both economic solidarity and entrepreneurship into its philosophy. Tupac referred to the Thug Life as a "contemporary version of Black Power."⁷⁰

Originally advocated during the BFS and then during the CRM, black entrepreneurship has been an appealing strategy for Hip Hop artists to adopt as a means of overcoming black poverty. Perhaps the best example of the Hip Hop entrepreneur and mogul is Russell Simmons. During the 1970s and 1980s, Simmons embraced the burgeoning art form of Hip Hop and saw its potential as both a tool to organize African Americans and a means of making money. Embracing the entrepreneurial strategy of Booker T. Washington, he has used this strategy in the political manner in which Du Bois believed African Americans should use economic power. By the mid-1980s, he had founded his own management company, Rush Productions, and co-founded Def Jam Records, which over the years has represented LL Cool J, Public Enemy, the Beastie Boys, DMX, Method Man, Jay-Z, and other highly successful recording artists. Today, Simmons uses much of his political and economic clout to fund socially and politically conscious causes such as Def Poetry Jam and his Hip Hop Summit.⁷¹

In the December 1999 issue of *Black Enterprise*, Hip Hop moguls Master P, and Sean (P-Diddy) Combs are presented as entrepreneurs of Hip Hop.

Through their savvy economic moves and shrewd negotiations, the article states, these hip hoppers use the medium of Hip Hop culture to help build a stronger black business class while also working to ameliorate the social, economic, and political conditions of black communities. For instance, in the 2004 elections, Simmons and P-Diddy used their economic and social clout to help register thousands of Hip Hop generation youth to vote for the first time in their lives.

Since the late 19th century, the theme of economic freedom and independence has often manifested itself in pro-capitalist and communal ideologies defining the nature of black economic life. SPC hip hoppers are still developing their thinking in this area and continue to draw from ideas of the past to make sense of their present economic status and to formulate strategies for future economic development.

PAN-AFRICAN CONNECTION

Since African people arrived in North America over four centuries ago, many African Americans have called for a spiritual and intellectual recognition of and connection to African people throughout the Diaspora. While the origins of Pan-Africanism can be traced to the 17th and 18th centuries, it gained much recognition at the Pan-African Conference in London in 1900, which was attended by such notable leaders as W. E. B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, and others. This conference added Pan-African perspectives to the liberation agenda for African peoples in the 20th century. The ideas of Pan-African solidarity and placing the BFS within the context of a global struggle were major themes throughout the CRM and BFS. Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Ella Baker, and Martin Luther King, Jr., each saw the CRM and BFS as parts of a larger African and global struggle to alleviate the oppression of people of color. Michael Franti also sees the connection between Hip Hop and Africa. Illuminating the artistic connections, Franti states that Hip Hop is "the African tradition of talking over rhythm. And you know hip hop music has all of the traditional elements of African storytelling: . . . braggadocio, dissing, . . . humor."⁷²

Hip Hop from its beginnings called for a spiritual and cultural connection among African-descended people throughout the Diaspora. In fact, Hip Hop itself represents an art form that is spiritually connected to Africa and its people. Afrika Bambaataa was one of the first hip hoppers to make the spiritual connection between Hip Hop and Africa. He recalls that growing up in the South Bronx, many young blacks lacked a sense of pride and gravitated to gangs and violence as a means of dealing with oppressive conditions. As a young child, he saw a television show about the Zulu tribe and was impressed with the Zulu's resistance to the British. He began to think about the Zulu's concept of community and cohesion as a way for African Americans to deal with contemporary problems in the United States:

Just to see these Black people [Zulus] fighting for what was theirs against the British, that always stuck in my mind. I said when I get of age, I will start this organization and put all these ideologies together in this group called the Zulu Nation. So what I did, with myself and a couple other of my comrades, is get out in the street, start talking to a lot of the brothers and sisters, trying to tell them how they're killing each other, that they should be warriors for their community.⁷³

The 1980s witnessed the zenith of Pan-African idealism in Hip Hop. During this period, artists such as Public Enemy, X-Clan, Poor Righteous Teachers, KRS-One, and Queen Latifah exploded onto the rap scene promoting culturally positive images of African and African American culture. Many sported African Adinkra necklaces, leather necklaces of the African continent, and kinte cloth. Queen Latifah, aka Dana Owens, called for African Americans to embrace their African culture and led the way by wearing African inspired headdresses and clothes. Her moniker, Queen Latifah, she said came from other "Muslim sounding" names she heard in her native Newark, New Jersey. Latifah explains that she uses her name to pay homage to her African ancestors: "The African queens have a unique place in world history. They are revered not only for their extraordinary beauty and power, but also for their strength and for their ability to nurture and rule the continent that gave rise to the greatest civilizations of all time."⁷⁴

Similarly, the Fugees exploded on the scene during the mid-1990s, calling for a spiritual connectedness among African peoples in the U.S., Africa, and the Caribbean. The group represents a Pan-African connection, with an African American, Lauryn Hill, as its lead singer and group members Wyclef Jean and Pras Michael claiming Haiti as their homeland. The group's name, the Fugees, is a derivation of "refugees," which refers to the Haitian refugees. Pras Michael explains his existence as a Pan-African refugee: "As people of African descent, we are all refugees. . . . Everyone came to this country on a boat at one time or another." They also reflect their Pan-African ethos and the rhythmic feel of African music by blending elements of R & B, Jazz, rap, and reggae.⁷⁵

Other hip hoppers also promote a Pan-African philosophy of self-determination. French female hip hoppers Helene and Celia Faussart known as Les Nubians, released in 1999 their Pan-African musical treatise *Princesses Nubiennes*. Like the Fugees, Les Nubians integrate an eclectic blend of musical genres from throughout the Diaspora, including Jazz, R & B, Soul, reggae, and rap music. Of their Pan-African philosophy, Helene Faussart declared:

One of the things we're trying to do with our music is to show that black people are united. We are one! Even though blacks have developed different styles of music in the different places they've ended up, we are one and the same people. That's why we chose to call ourselves "The Nubians"—it's a way of talking about blacks without using labels like Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, Ghanaian and what have you. We're talking about one people coming together and using the process of getting in touch with their roots to move forward into the future.⁷⁶

dead prez also espouses a Pan-African philosophy in their music that is comparable to Les Nubians':

No, I wasn't born in Ghana,
but Africa is my momma
And I did not end up here from bad karma
Or from B-Ball,
selling mad crack or rappin'.
Peter Tosh try to tell us what happened.
He was sayin' if you black then you African. . . .
A-F-R-I-C-A, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and J.A.
New York and Cali, F-L-A
No it ain't 'bout where you stay, it's 'bout the motherland.⁷⁷

Perhaps the most comprehensive and compelling example of Pan-Africanism is the Hip Hop generation's CD tribute to legendary Nigerian musician and political activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti, who died of AIDS in 1997. Titled *Red Hot + Riot: The Music and Spirit of Fela Kuti*, the purpose of the CD was to pay homage to Kuti and his ideas of activism and Pan-African unification. Hip hoppers needed to call attention to the AIDS epidemic that has killed so many African people in Africa and throughout the Diaspora. Fela Kuti is popularly known for developing what was called "Afrobeat" in the early 1970s. Inspired by the music of James Brown, Kuti's "Afrobeat" was a form of "politico-funk" that merged elements of African American funk with traditional African beats and drums. His music addressed the social and political issues of Nigeria and of African people throughout the Diaspora.⁷⁸

The combination of artists on *Red Hot + and Riot* demonstrates the Pan-African connections in Hip Hop. Fela's son, Femi Kuti, who is himself recognized as a socially and politically conscious musician of the Hip Hop generation, is featured on the CD with a host of SPC hip hoppers, including dead prez, Blackalicious, Talib Kweli, MeShell Ndegeoshello, Common, Macy Gray, and Les Nubians. This ensemble is joined by Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango, Senegalese singer Baaba Maal, and Nigerian-born Sade. The titles and content of the songs call for Africans around the globe to unite. The first song, "Fela Mentality (Intro)," appropriately introduces the Afrobeat genre of music, while songs such as "Shuffering and Shimiling," "Years of Tears and Sorrow," "Gentleman," and "Colonial Mentality" speak to the contemporary problems and challenges faced by African peoples.⁷⁹

The idea of African-descended people across the globe recognizing their common ancestry, cultural threads, and historical struggle has not been lost on the Hip Hop generation. While the concept has not reached a mainstream U.S. audience in any substantive way, SPC hip hoppers are making significant strides in collaborating with other black artists throughout the Diaspora. Artists and groups such as Roots Manuva, Ms. Dynamite, Tego Calderon, K-Os, Dizzee Rascal, and Booba, to name only a few, hail from throughout the

Diaspora and their music has helped build Pan-African and global connections. Hip-Hop is ripe for Pan-African and global movements given the utility of present-day technologies that transcend space, time, and geographical boundaries. Advances such as computers, satellites, e-mail, the Internet, and other technologies provide the Hip Hop generation with opportunities for significant Pan-African and global unification that were not possible for previous generations of African peoples.

CONCLUSION

In an interview with Cleveland Sellers, a civil rights scholar and former SNCC program director, he acknowledged the tensions between the civil rights and Hip Hop generations and offers a cautionary critique of many hip hoppers for failing to develop a vision for their generation. However, he also notes the failure of his generation in reaching out to the Hip Hop generation. Sellers observed, "We did not assure the Hip Hop generation of their ability to learn from the struggle of our generation. We left the teaching of that process and that methodology to others."⁸⁰ Despite the mistakes on behalf of both generations, Sellers sees the potential for greater dialogue and collaboration between them. To help facilitate such discourse, he has worked with the Boston-based Project Hip Hop, which introduces Hip Hop generation youth to the geographical sites and stories of the CRM. Programs such as Project Hip Hop, he argued, brings the two generations together, opens lines of communication between them, and helps them begin to see the commonalties between the struggles of both generations.⁸¹

Initiatives such as Project Hip Hop and recent Hip Hop summits that bring together people across generations represent steps in the right direction. However, such efforts must only be the beginning if we hope to build a bridge between the civil rights and Hip Hop generations. Hip Hop historians can play a role in facilitating a discourse of common ground by illuminating the historical linkages and shared ideas of the two generations. In doing so, we help build a solid base from which the two generations can more easily see their commonalties, engage in a historically contextualized discourse, and move toward greater collaborative efforts to ameliorate contemporary social problems.

Like Carter G. Woodson and other historians of the BFS, and as Hip Hop historians, we must provide understanding and analyses of the social, economic, and political issues that confront the Hip Hop and civil rights generations. The civil rights generation must seek out and connect to the Hip Hop generation and recognize their similar and divergent views. The Hip Hop generation, in turn, must continue to seek knowledge and information about their social circumstances within the context of the larger BFS. Members must also critique their actions by promoting positive messages to youth and helping ameliorate the problems of their generation. Only when both generations heed these concerns will we have the collective strength to "fight

the power" of discrimination, racism, and poverty that continues to impede the progress of African American communities.

NOTES

¹Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, 2002), 9.

²I use the term *Hip Hop* in this essay to denote the alternative black art form that emerged in northern urban areas during the 1970s. The elements that compose Hip Hop include graffiti writing, breakdancing, rapping (MCs), and dj-ing. For the purposes of this essay, I focus primarily on the element of rap. For a thorough analysis of rap as a form of Hip Hop, see Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middleton, CT, 1994).

³In this study, I define Hip Hop and rap as socially and politically conscious, or "socio-political," when they focus on the social, economic, and political situation of oppressed people—in this case African Americans. This genre of Hip Hop or rap examines historical problems within black communities, such as racism, police brutality, crooked politicians, greed, poverty, and substandard education. Socially and politically conscious Hip Hop and rap often espouse racial solidarity, community empowerment, and liberatory education as ways to ameliorate problems in black communities. A few of the groups and individuals who promote this genre of Hip Hop and rap include Public Enemy, Poor Righteous Teachers, and Blackalicious. It should be noted that other rappers who may not identify with the socially or politically conscious genre of Hip Hop sometimes have socially and politically conscious lyrics or messages in their music. Such artists include Jay Z, T. I., and Trina, among others. For an informative definition of "message rap" and a discussion of other categories, see Ernest Allen, Jr., "Making the Strong Survive: The Contours and Contradictions of Message Rap," in *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*, ed., William Eric Perkins (Philadelphia, PA, 1996), 159–191.

⁴According to Hip Hop scholar Bakari Kitwana, the Hip Hop generation is comprised of those born between 1965 and 1984 who identify with the language, culture, and music associated with Hip Hop. For a discussion of the Hip Hop generation, see Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (New York, 2002), xiii, and Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (New York, 2002), 99–130. Also, see Derrick P. Alridge, "Hip Hop As a Social Movement and Radical Pedagogy of Resistance." (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Orlando, FL, October 2002).

⁵Historians typically periodize the CRM as occurring between 1954 and 1968. Historian Vincent Harding and others suggest that this periodization is too restrictive and excludes many significant people and events that lie outside these dates. Instead, he argues that the BFS dates back to when the first blacks landed in North America and continues to this day. This broad and inclusive periodization includes people and events beyond the 1954–1968 time frame. See Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Freedom Struggle in America* (San Diego, CA, 1981), xi–xxvi.

⁶See Michael Franti, "Oh My God," *Stay Human*, Six Degrees Records (2001). For a discussion of Franti's activism that is reminiscent of the CRM, see Michael Franti, interview by Amy Goodman, 31 August, 2004, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/08/31/1455236&mode=thread&tid=25>.

⁷See Julian Bond in Michael Hurd, "Civil Rights vs. Hip Hop: Chasm of Disrespect Separates Two Generations." *The Southern Digest*, online edition and Stanley Crouch, "Hip Hop's Thugs Hit New Low," *Daily News*, <http://www.nydailynews.com/08-11-2003/news/story/108046p.97644c.html>. Also see discussion on rap by Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago, 2001), 76–82.

⁸See Martin Kilson, "The Pretense of Hip-Hop Black Leadership," *The Black Commentator*, <http://www.blackcommentator.com/50/50-kilson.html>. To a certain extent, the views of Kilson and others of his generation are understandable because they have been exposed primarily to "party rap" and "gangsta rap," which have received more airplay than SPC rap in mainstream media outlets. In his essay, Kilson does not include SPC Hip Hop in his analysis.

⁹See Todd Boyd, *The New H.N.I.C.: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop* (New York, 2002). For a response to Boyd, see Derrick P. Alridge, "Hip Hop Versus Civil Rights?"; Essay Review of Boyd's *The New H.N.I.C.* in *The Journal of African American History* 88 (Summer 2003): 313–16.

¹⁰Boyd, *The New H.N.I.C.*, xxi.

- ¹¹See Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*. Kitwana has written an excellent book examining some of the core beliefs of the Hip Hop generation. His book acknowledges the tensions between the generations. My essay hopes to connect the ideas of both movements.
- ¹²See Derrick P. Alridge, "Teaching Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Movement in High School History Courses: Rethinking Content and Pedagogy" in *Teaching the American Civil Rights Movement: Freedom's Bittersweet Song*, eds., Julie Buckner Armstrong, et al. (New York, 2002), 3–18.
- ¹³William Eric Perkins, "The Rap Attack: An Introduction," in *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*, ed., William Eric Perkins (Philadelphia, PA, 1996), 9.
- ¹⁴Many identify Grandmaster Theodore as the originator of "scratching." Other early DJs also credited with the development of scratching are Grandmaster Flash and Kool Herc who popularized a technique that was the predecessor to scratching, called "cutting."
- ¹⁵Public Enemy, "Fight the Power," *Fear of a Black Planet*, Def Jam (1994).
- ¹⁶Chuck D with Yusuf Jah, *Fight the Power: Rap, Race, and Reality* (New York, 1997), 26.
- ¹⁷Outkast, "Rosa Parks," *Aquemeni*, La Face (1998).
- ¹⁸See "Outkast settles suit by Parks; Duo to help on TV, CD Tributes," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 15 April 2005, p. 1G.
- ¹⁹Common, "Song for Assata," *Like Water for Chocolate*, MCA (2000).
- ²⁰*Ibid.*
- ²¹*Ibid.*
- ²²Common, "Pops' Rap . . . All My Children," *Like Water for Chocolate*.
- ²³In his most recent work, "The Corner," Common continues to connect Hip Hop with the CRM and BFS by collaborating with 1960s era poets, The Last Poets. At the print time of this essay, the video may be viewed at <http://www.common-music.com/>.
- ²⁴Angela Davis, "The Prison Industrial Complex," *Prison Industrial Complex* (Alternative Tentacle, 1999).
- ²⁵The Roots, "Why (What's Goin On?)," *The Tipping Point*, Geffen Records (2004).
- ²⁶The Roots have consistently connected Hip Hop to the CRM and BFS. On their 1996 CD, *Things Fall Apart*, the Roots use the title of Chinua Achebe's seminal 1958 book about the colonization of Nigeria. On the cover, the Roots use black and white pictures that evoke images of colonial oppression and blacks living in a police state; see, The Roots, *Things Fall Apart*, MCA (1999).
- ²⁷Underground Rap is an unconventional form of Hip Hop typically not heard on mainstream media venues such as MTV, BET, or VH1. This genre does not typically embrace the glitz of mainstream Hip Hop, but retains its connections to the streets, masses, or alternative communities—what Marx called the proletariat and lumpenproletariat. Some, but not all, underground artists lose their underground appeal when they receive heavy airplay on mainstream venues. SPC underground artists, at the writing of this article, include Ishues, Immortal Technique, Mr. Lif, and Aceyalone, to name a few. For discussions and references on underground Hip Hop, see *Hip Hop: The Definitive Guide to Rap & Hip Hop*, eds., Vladimir Bogdanov et al. (San Francisco, CA, 2003), x.
- ²⁸John Lewis, Jr., interview by author, tape recording, Atlanta, GA, 10 May, 2004.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*
- ³⁰The Witchdoctor, interview by author, tape recording, Athens, GA, 21 February, 2004.
- ³¹*Ibid.*
- ³²The Witchdoctor did not assert that his leadership model for the Hip Hop generation was influenced by the work of others who advocated a group model of leadership. However, the concerns he expressed about the reliance on a single leader were similar to those expressed by W. E. B. Du Bois in the 1940s and Ella Baker and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s.
- ³³Khujo, telephone interview by author, 21 January, 2005.
- ³⁴See V. P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of African American Resistance* (Brooklyn, NY, 1992). Also, see Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (1982; reprinted Louisville, KY, 2002).
- ³⁵Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1978) and Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York, 1988).
- ³⁶Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 8–15.

- ³⁷Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: Race, Power, and the Blues in the Mississippi Delta* (London, 1998), 29.
- ³⁸Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 146–49.
- ³⁹Ernie Panicioli, telephone interview by author, 13 March, 2005.
- ⁴⁰Brand Nubian, "Wake Up" (Reprise), *One for All*, Elektra/Asylum (1990).
- ⁴¹NWA, "Niggaz 4 Life," *Niggaz4life*, Priority Records (1991). For an excellent discussion of "gangsta rap," see "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: 'Gangsta Rap' and Postindustrial Los Angeles" in Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York, 1994), 183–227.
- ⁴²Mos Def and Talib Kweli, "Black Star-K.O.S. (Determination)," *Black Star*, Rawkus (1998).
- ⁴³Ibid.
- ⁴⁴Outkast, "Liberation," *Aquemini*, La Face Records (1998).
- ⁴⁵Ibid.
- ⁴⁶dead prez, "Hip Hop," let's get free, Loud Records (2000). At the writing of this essay, the video may be viewed at www.mtv.com/bands/az/dead_prez/artist.jhtml.
- ⁴⁷Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), 32–34.
- ⁴⁸Thomas L. Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831–1865* (New York, 1978).
- ⁴⁹Stephen N. Haymes, "Pedagogy and the Philosophical Anthropology of African American Slave Culture," *Philosophia Africana* 2 (August 2001): 63–92.
- ⁵⁰See, James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988).
- ⁵¹Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (Trenton, NJ, 1990).
- ⁵²KRS-One, "You Must Learn," *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip-Hop*, Jive (1989).
- ⁵³Ibid.
- ⁵⁴Ishues, interview by author, tape recording, Athens, GA, 15 January, 2005.
- ⁵⁵Ishues, "Game Time," *Reality Flow*, Attica Sound (2003).
- ⁵⁶Ishues interview.
- ⁵⁷dead prez, "they schools," *let's get free*, Loud Records (2000).
- ⁵⁸See dead prez, "they schools."
- ⁵⁹Nas, "I Can," *God's Son*, Sony (2002).
- ⁶⁰John Silbey Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help among Black Americans: A Reconsideration of Race and Economics* (Albany, NY, 1991).
- ⁶¹Quote from August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880–1915* (1963; reprinted Ann Arbor, MI, 1988), 45; see also V. P. Franklin, "Alexander Crummell: Defining Matters of Principle," in *Living Our Stories, Telling Our Truths: Autobiography and the Making of the African American Intellectual Tradition* (New York, 1995), 21–58; Gregory U. Rigby, *Alexander Crummell: Pioneer in Nineteenth Century Pan-African Thought* (Westport, CT, 1988); Alfred Moss, Jr., "Alexander Crummell: Black Nationalist and Apostle of Western Civilization," in *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*, ed., Leon Litwack and August Meier (Urbana, IL, 1988), 237–51; and Wilson J. Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York, 1989).
- ⁶²V. P. Franklin, "They Rose or Fell Together: African American Educators and Community Leadership, 1795–1954," *Journal of Education* 172 (no. 3, 1990): 39–63.
- ⁶³See Booker T. Washington, *Working with the Hands: Being a Sequel to "Up from Slavery" Covering the Author's Experiences in Industrial Training at Tuskegee* (New York, 1969).
- ⁶⁴See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia: A Social Study," *Bulletin of the Department of Labor, Washington, DC* (January 1898): 1–38; and "The Upbuilding of Black Durham: The Success of Negroes and Their Value to a Tolerant and Helpful Southern City," *World's Work* 23 (January 1912): 334–38.
- ⁶⁵Joe William Trotter, Jr., *The African American Experience* (Boston, MA, 2001), 605–606.
- ⁶⁶Grandmaster Flash, "The Message," *Message from the Streets: Best of Grandmaster Flash*, Rhino Records (1994).
- ⁶⁷M-1, interview by Chris Witt, *The Knitting Factory*, http://www.knittingfactory.com/articles/get_feature.cfm?feature_num=50&head=M-1%20.

⁶⁸Talibah Mbonisi, telephone interview by author, 7 January, 2004.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰See *Tupac Resurrection: In His Own Words*, co. prod., Dinal Lapolt and Michael Cole, Paramount Video, 2003, videocassette.

⁷¹Kevin Chappell, "The Half-Billion Dollar Empire of Russell Simmons," *Ebony* (July 2003), 168–78; Christopher Vaughn, "Simmons' Rush for Profits," *Black Enterprise*, December 1992, 67–70.

⁷²Interview with Michael Franti in Ishmael Reed, Michael Franti, and Bill Adler, "Hiphopripsy," *Transition*, (No. 56, 1992): 155.

⁷³Afrika Bambaataa quoted in "Afrika Bambaataa and the Mighty Zulu Nation," in *Yes, Yes, Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade*, eds. Jim Frick and Charlie Ahearn (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 44.

⁷⁴Queen Latifah quoted in James G. Spady, "Queen Latifah Expands the Boundaries of the Rap Artist through Mega-Media," in *Street Conscious Rap*, eds. James G. Spady, et al., (Philadelphia, PA, 1999), 74.

⁷⁵Edwidge Danicat, "Hanging with the Fugees," *Essence*, August 1996, 86; and Bogdanov, *Hip Hop: The Definitive Guide to Rap and Hip Hop*, 182.

⁷⁶Helene and Celia Faussart, interview by Loic Bussieres, http://www.rfimusic.com/siteEn/cd_semaine/cd_semaine_7072.asp

⁷⁷dead prez, "i'm a african," *let's get free* (Loud Records, 2000).

⁷⁸See *Red, Hot, and Riot: The Music and Spirit of Fela Kuti* (MCA, 2002). For a discussion of Fela Kuti and "Afrobeat," see Michael E. Veal, *Fela: The Life and Times of an African Music Icon* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), 10–15.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Cleveland Sellers, interview by author, tape recording, Columbia, SC, 16 December, 2004.

⁸¹Also, in March 2004, a group of rappers and hip hoppers met with 1960s civil rights activists at the National Hip Hop Summit in New Jersey to discuss what could be done to bridge the gap between their generations. The group recognized the tensions between them and called for more discourse aimed at building bridges of communication. Within the past year, such conversations have been occurring throughout the U.S.

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