

**The Hip Hop Lectures**  
**(Volume 1)**

**By:**

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## Chapter 1

### African Music History: The Originators

Historically, Hip Hop culture is known to have started in New York; during the early 1970s. However, controversy surrounds which specific area in New York created the cultural phenomenon, called Hip Hop. The history concerning which part of New York created this influential and multi-billion dollar movement is documented in 1985. The battle rap included rappers from Queensbridge (MC Shan & The Juice Crew) versus rappers from the South Bronx (KRS-One & Boogie Down Productions). Even though, New York, is noted as the birthplace for Hip Hop culture, Hip Hop's roots were developed before one city or state declared ownership of the cultures' creation. Hip Hop's founding dj's, breakdancers, and mc's all have roots that can be traced back to Africa.

No one knows who specifically created the first musical rendition in history; however, the impact of African drumming and dancing is essential to Hip Hop culture's birth. Africa has a rich history rooted in dance, music, and song. Typically, when discussing African cultural history, the documentation and perspective of the author is normally written by non-Africans (specifically Anglo-Saxons and Europeans). Possible reasons for *why* Anglo-Saxon and European narratives were primary sources for African history, in America, could be based on the assumptions that:

- 1) African tribes limited cultural traditions and history to their tribes only. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon and European narratives of understanding African culture and history becomes essential.

- 2) Most Africans (before slavery) did not read, write, or have resources to publishing African history locally or abroad. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon and European narratives of understanding African culture and history becomes essential.
- 3) Because most African tribes preferred to tell their history orally, the written form of history and experiences was not considered as pertinent. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon and European narratives of understanding African culture and history becomes essential.
- 4) African culture and history was loss, during the slave trade. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon and European narratives of understanding African culture and history becomes essential.
- 5) Once Africans were enslaved in America, the slave codes prevented slaves from reading and writing. As a result, no first-hand accounts during and immediately after slavery were written. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon and European narratives of understanding African culture and history becomes essential.

Anglo-Saxons and European narratives often focused on selective experiences of Africans. For example, Anglo-Saxon and European narratives about Africans and tribal rituals often limited the intellectual abilities of Africans, but highlighted Africans natural affinity for physical activities such as drumming and dancing. Narratives would also discuss the frequency by which Africans danced. Because the perspectives on African culture are primarily part of an oral tradition, when Anglo-Saxon and European narratives were written, the possibility of language being a barrier rendered some of the writings to be inconsistent with the fullness of African life. Also, the language barrier, most likely caused aspects of the African experience to be misinterpreted and some African concepts to be taken out of context.

Despite the limited narratives from Africans before, during, or directly after slavery, one particular African perspective was documented. Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797); also known as Gustavus Vassa, managed to document and publish his first-hand experiences, after being part of the West Indies slave trade and transitioning to American states like Virginia and Georgia (Equiano, 2005). Equiano's historic narrative and selective comments about his experiences and those of African people, during and after slavery, serves as validation for first-hand experiences. Equiano, in his self-published narrative, written in 1789, asserted, "We [Africans] are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets" (Equiano, 2005). Equiano's assertion about Africa being a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets, is concept that is quoted often, in other Anglo-Saxon and European narratives. Unfortunately, this quote has dualistic intention. The quote can be perceived as being both complimentary as well as potentially damaging for Africans and eventually African Americans. An old adage says, "First impressions last a lifetime." Equiano's impression on African history, from a first-hand account (as an African) is intriguing. The complimentary side of Equiano's assertion is that Africans appear to have a natural affinity towards dancing, music, and poetry. However, the potentially damaging part of his assertion is that Africans greatness may only be limited to dancing, music, and poetry.

The limitations of Equiano's statement can be interpreted in different ways, just as a rapper's lyrics can be interpreted. However, the coincidence of Equiano's wording may not be as easy to ignore; especially given the potential options for success for African Americans, in America. Equiano's, 1789, summation-describing African as a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets has prophetic relevance to how current success can be achieved. For example, the

popular and influential 1990's rapper, Notorious B.I.G., in the song, *Things Done Changed* (1994), says:

If I wasn't in the rap game/  
I'd probably have a knee deep in the crack game/  
Because the streets is a short stop/  
Either you're slingin' crack rock or you got a wicked jump shot/

Notorious B.I.G., in these rap lyrics, presents an alternative and evolved version of Equiano's description of African people. Instead of being a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets, Notorious' lyrics claim that "the nation" is now a nation of rappers (entertainers), drug dealers, and athletes. Is this perception by Notorious B.I.G. from the 1990's currently relative, negative, positive, or truthful? Or, are Notorious' lyrics irrelevant, because the beat, in the song, makes your head rock back-and-forth; overshadowing one's ability to even process the words?

Equiano most likely did not intend on limiting his own African culture to three categorizations; however, his statements created the foundation for stereotypes surrounding current Africans and future African Americans. In other words, Equiano's first-hand account of Africans validates all of the second-hand accounts about Africans (African Americans) that some Eurocentric people have about the African people then and current notions about African Americans. One particular stereotype that would become prominent is that African people have a natural proclivity for entertainment and not education. The people of Africa were much more than entertainment for travelers visiting Africa.

When Equiano affirms the thoughts of Eurocentric people, by stating that Africa is a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets this stereotype seems more than just an outsider's (Eurocentric) perception of African peoples' limitations, but also appears to be a premonition for how some Africans may perceive their cultural worth. Therefore, when visitors come to Africa, they expected to see Africans entertain them, because that is what Eurocentric narratives and the African, Equiano, says happens. Do you see the irony in this scenario? Words can transcend moments and time in un-imaginable ways. Equiano spoke many words, regarding his experiences; however, his words describing Africans as a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets continues to have a lasting impression and impact on future generations; especially the Hip Hop culture.

### **African Dancers (Original Breakdancers)**

If the drummer (and eventually the Dj) is considered the backbone of African culture and Hip Hop music, then the dancers serve as muses for the drummer. In African culture, traditional tribal dances could last for days at a time, depending on the purpose of the ceremony or ritual. Traditional African dancers dance without hesitation and are not easily persuaded to dance on a singular beat. In fact, African dancers are polyrhythmic dancers, which means they dance on multiple beats. Drummers, in Africa, have an innate ability to play beats, which allows dancers to express their emotions freely without having to worry about being on a specific beat. The dancers' movements can inspire the drummers' beats, just as the drummers' beats can inspire the dancers' movements. Dancing on any beat (upbeat or

downbeat) is considered a gift in African culture, because just as beats vary in sound and tempo, so does one's emotions and experiences. African dancing is *not* meant to be stylish or cool, but created to encourage everyone to dance freely without restrictions or inhibitions.

To encourage everyone to dance freely, Africans typically organize drumming and dancing events from a hierarchical perspective. In African culture, dancing is organized based on a specific hierarchy: 1) married men 2) married women 3) young men and 4) young maidens (Equiano, 2005). The hierarchy, in African culture, allows each group to adequately express themselves, while dualistically identifying cultural status, preserving order, and establishing unity within the culture. Outside the celebratory events that involve everyone, African culture dancing is based on gender, age, and status. The married men often danced for specific purposes, in African culture (Welsh, 2004). War, hunting, and agriculture are key events that evoke married men to dance (Gates and Appiah, 1999). Married women often danced for specific purposes, which included weddings, funerals, baby tooth loss, births, pregnancies, and fertility (Gates and Appiah, 1999). Young men often danced for hunting and agriculture, as well, but often is celebrated during coming of age ceremonies (Gates and Appiah, 1999). The young maidens danced for weddings, funerals, baby tooth loss, births, and menstruation (Gates and Appiah, 1999). The drummer and dancer(s) are intertwined and the multiple variation of beats allow for non-stop dancing.

Each group (married men, married women, young men, and young maidens) is allowed the freedom of expression individually, while still maintaining a collective unity. Because each group gets an opportunity to dance, no one person or group feels limited in their expressions or



experiences. Oftentimes when married men dance, the dances include weapons and aggressive behavior and mannerisms. Any of the emotions expressed by men, during African dancing events, could be harmful to women, because women have differing experiences, behaviors, and mannerisms than men. Therefore, there is no need to have the two groups (females and males) dance together and inhibit one another's expression of emotions. Additionally, separating the groups (females and males), when dancing, can preserve one's marital and virginal status. Married males, in the tribe, should not be dancing with the young maidens (single women). If married men began to dance with young maidens the tribal community would no longer be unified, but become disjointed; resulting in continual arguments and endless infidelity issues.

Traditional African dancing still has purpose and relevancy today. Although men and women, in American culture do not dance in separate groups or hierarchies, the desire to express one's self freely in dance is universal. When discussing how to look cool or un-cool, when dancing, people often refer to dancing as being "on beat" or "off beat." Dancing "off-beat," typically, includes having a fast and non-rhythmic tempo, while dancing "on-beat" is normally includes having a slow and rhythmic tempo. Dancing "off-beat" is synonymous with moving without thinking or feeling and "on-beat" dancing is synonymous with thinking and waiting to feel the beat. In other words, stereotypical lenses would say that all people of European descent naturally dance "off-beat" because as soon as the music comes on (the 1, 3, 5, 7), they dance. However, stereotypical lenses would also say that all people of African

descent *naturally* dance “on-beat” because they wait to feel (the 2, 4, 6, and 8) the music before just dancing.

Discussions about the natural ability to dance “on-beat” versus “off-beat,” continues to promote stereotypes. Stereotypes, such as, “All African American people have natural rhythm.” This stereotype is untrue, but is often promoted in society and culturally as being a definitive truth. For example, the television show, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, which premiered on September 10, 1990, starring Will Smith and Alfonso Ribeiro (who played Will Smith’s cousin Carlton) revealed that all African American people *do not* have natural rhythm. In just a few episodes, television viewers quickly learned that Will and his cousin Carlton; although both African American lived two separate lives and had different experiences (TvGuide Online, 2014). Will was urban and Carlton was suburban. Will danced “on-beat” and Carlton “off-beat,” despite both being African Americans. In fact, Carlton, danced “off-beat” (on the 1, 3, 5, 7) frequently and proudly often to Tom Jones 1965 song, *It’s Not Unusual*. Carlton’s love for Tom Jones’ song destroys any notion or stereotype that says all black people or people of African descent have a natural ability to dance. Carlton’s excitement and dance was unusual, if you are looking at him through stereotypical lenses. However, if looking from historical lenses of relevancy to African cultural music, one immediately realizes that dancing is not about being “on-beat” or “off-beat,” but inspiring one to be free. Even though, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* was a television show, the story line of Carlton’s dancing, as an African American, is realistic, because dancing is not something that is relegated to timed steps or looking cool; especially in African culture.

Hip Hop culture, however, may publically emphasize and promote the idea of dancing “on-beat” (the 2, 4, 6, 8 beat aka the downbeat/cool beat); but ironically, the 1, 3, 5, and 7 (aka the upbeat/off-beat) beats are prevalent in certain Hip Hop dances, such as *Krumping*. *Krumping* was popularized around the mid-1990s and includes dance movements that are similar to African male tribal dances, which includes dancing on multiple beats and tempos. Another similar African tradition that is currently practiced by people (unknowingly) who dance on the “on-beat or off-beat,” is the dance formation. Have you ever noticed how at dance or party venues, when people begin to express themselves (in dance, song, or performance) the crowd immediately disperses into a circle to watch the person. As a society of “on-beat and off-beat” dancing people, we naturally move into a circled position of observation and support enthusiastically. Notice that those watching the dancer(s), do not form a triangle, square, a rectangle, or have someone directing the crowd on how to surround the dancer(s) to watch the performance. People naturally form a perfectly structured circle to watch people dance, which is the same dance formation that Africans used called, the ring circle.

### **The Drummers (The Original Dj’s)**

There are other valuable instruments, in African culture, such as the bougarabou, the tama talking drum, ngoma drums, water drums, xylophones, flutes, and bells (Blanc, 1997). However, no other instrument is more sacred than the drum. In African culture, the drum is considered the “heartbeat” of the African people. Not only are the drums the heartbeat of the culture, but every drum is named according to its purpose. For example, the Djembe drum is

used to gather everyone; Dje=gather and BE=everyone (Blanc, 1997). Not only are drums names accordingly, but emphasis is also placed on how drums are made. In African culture, the drum is comprised of three important elements: the animal skin, the wood, and the spirit of the drummer (Blanc, 1997). In other words, the drummer and his drum are one truly one-in-the-same. The elements of the drum reveals why some drummers may sound different from other drummers, even if the drummers appear to be playing the same drum the same way. Because writing and reading came late to parts of Africa, music (specifically drumbeats) were a main form of communication. African drummers have an uncanny ability to create beats that can talk, which is similar to the call and response technique that is used when someone is speaking or singing to a crowd. For instance, have you ever noticed when you hear an instrumental (beats) to a song, you have a natural ability to decipher the mood of that song, before you hear the lyrics? The instrumental dictates the purpose and intention of a song before any words are ever spoken over the beats. The drummers' beats has its own story, which is why beats are more than just music for celebrator events and dancing, in African culture. Depending on the tribe, certain beats were not just for entertainment or expression purposes, but also served as a tool to warn tribes of the arrivals of visitors or indicate the invasion of enemies approaching.

When providing entertainment or a beat for dancers, African drummers dictate the mood of dance, by changing the pace of a beat and using variations of sound (polyphonic). Typically, in African culture when music is played, the drummers and dancers are aligned in a ring circle. The ring circle is significant because the circle represents a sense of unity and community.

Within the ring circle, there is always a minimum of two drummers. The purpose of having a minimum of two drummers allows each drummer the opportunity to incorporate multiple rhythms (polyrhythms) that can be played endlessly. Drummers typically play two standard beats: 1) upbeats and 2) downbeats. The discussion of upbeats and downbeats can be difficult to understand, depending on educators, musicians, and dancers. Even though both beats (the up and down) are considered part of the 8-count, the upbeat is described as 1, 3, 5, and 7 and the downbeat as 2, 4, 6, and 8. However, the two beats are not permanently defined and are actually considered interchangeably. Some music theorists suggest that if a person were to stand up and lift his or her foot up in the air that would be considered the upbeat (the upward lift of the foot). Then every time the same person's foot goes back down towards the ground that would be the downbeat (the downward motion of the foot).

Despite the downbeat being affiliated with rhythm, style, and coolness; in Hip Hop and popular culture, those practice traditional African culture do not preference one beat (upbeat or downbeat) over another. In fact, music in African culture is an expression that does not have limitations, but inclusiveness regarding one's dance preferences. Dancing, in African culture, serves as a means to express one's self without being inhibited to rhythm, style, or who is watching. In African culture, people are free to dance and express themselves by dancing on any beat; the downbeat, upbeat, or both beats. The reality that both beats matter and both beats are equally regarded is an essential aspect of African music. Being aware that music is primarily for self-expression without judgment or regret takes the pressure away from anyone

who is trying to look cool or be “on beat.” The beat that one likes is the beat that one should dance on without concern.

In African culture, the drummer can create the mood, pace, and influence the style of dance. In Hip Hop culture, the Dj operates in the same manner as the African drummers operate in while in the ring circle. Traditional Hip Hop Dj’s often functioned using a turntable, which played a minimum of two albums/songs at a time. Traditional Dj’s often pieced music together, by using turntables, taking two different albums, and blending, mixing, and connecting those two distinct songs to create one massive and continuous beat, which would eventually become known as the breakbeat. The breakbeat is considered the most popular part of an album. Just as African drummers would go back-and-forth between drumbeats, traditional Dj’s (using turntables) would go back-and-forth between breakbeats allowing the audience to enjoy their favorite part of different songs, non-stop, which would encourage people to keep dancing and expressing one’s self all night long. The excitement and non-stop dancing is similar to the African drum and dancing. The African drummers became Hip Hop Dj’s, which is considered the backbone of Hip Hop culture. Interestingly enough, many of the Hip Hop Dj’s that helped build the dj’ing culture of Hip Hop, have evolved beyond the turntables and have become music producers.

### **The Griots (Original Mc’s)**

Most cultures have someone who often serves as a story-teller or historian for the community. In African culture, this individual is called the griot. The griot was an important part

of African culture and was respected like a king and treated like royalty. The griot is considered a master and is invaluable to African culture. Many people, including Alex Haley (writer and producer of the series entitled *Roots*) asserts, "When a griot dies, it is as if a library has burned to the ground" (Chang and Terry, 2007, p.13). The griot was a position of esteem. Griots memorize the history and traditions of their tribes and then transpose that history into music by identifying all that is relevant, important, and inspiring. Griots would often share the history of the tribe's origins and victories in war to entertain, celebrate, and motivate the tribal leaders, warriors, and members of the community. The griot often told stories (in the ring circles, just like the drummers) and would improvise realistic and fictional stories about daily occurrences and life-lessons. The call and response technique was often used by griots to engage and interact with members of the audience, while simultaneously playing instruments.

Positions of esteem, in African culture are male dominated. Despite the depth of knowledge, wisdom, talent, and reverence associated with the griot, in African culture, the griots' position is limited only to men and male apprentices. Gender roles exist throughout history and often dictate the roles and responsibilities of women and men. Therefore, knowing that drumming and becoming a griot were both male specific roles, one should not be surprised to see why women throughout history; specifically female rappers, struggle to become equal to their male peers. Despite the gender roles, the similarities between the griots and rap mc's are identical. For example:

- Griots often told stories about their tribes/tribesmen, while mc's/rappers tell stories about their hoods or environment.

- Griots would often form circles when sharing stories and playing music, while rappers often form cyphers (rap circles where mc's/rappers take turns rapping).
- Griots also improvised (came up with stories on the spot), when around live audiences, while rappers/mc's often free-style (come up with rap lyrics on the spot).
- Griots often told realistic and fictional stories of tribal life and experiences to invigorate, motivate, and share to audiences, while mc's/ rappers typically rap about true and false stories.

The griots legacy is intertwined within the history that he knows and shares with the community. Each of these aspects of African culture (drumming, dancing, story-telling) are all foundational to Hip Hop's culture. Music in African culture was a 24/7 event. In other words, music in African culture was like having your own musical soundtrack following you wherever you go; before mp3 players were created. Because Africa is vast and includes various regions, the music of Africa included an assortment of dance styles and beats, which were some of the main aspects of African culture that could be preserved and practiced while in America.



## Chapter 6

### Rock-N-Roll Ain't Just White People's Music

Rock-n-Roll is an important part of American history and influential to Hip Hop culture's history. Rock-n-Roll's local and international popularity would begin to develop in the early 1950s. What made Rock-n-Roll appealing and relevant was the accessibility of a diverse sound of the music. Rock-n-Roll music, in the early 1950s, was a hybrid of many genres of music: spirituals, hillbilly, folk, jazz, blues, country, rhythm and blues, rock, and rockabilly music. Rock-n-Roll artists while innovatively creating new sub-genres of music. In addition, Rock-n-Roll musicians had an amazing ability to sing different styles of music, which aided in their artistic diversity; eventually garnering popularity internationally.

When some people think of Rock-n-Roll; especially those who may have a limited scope of Rock-n-Roll's diverse history, one may assume that Rock-n-Roll has and continues to be a primarily white genre of music. However, for some people the idea of Rock-n-Roll being an exclusively white genre of music may have some merit, because of the racial history of America and the delayed accessibility of Black artists in the music industry. The route to becoming a Rock-n-Roll hall of famer differed for each artist; however, race was a determining factor that impacted many artists career; especially Black artists. Because Black artists were not initially accepted by the Rock-n-Roll community, Black artists had to find innovative and creative ways to promote music and establish a fanbase.

The establishment of the Chitlin' Circuit would serve multiple purposes for a Black artist; not just potential Rock-n-Roll artists. The Chitlin' Circuit was a combinational vernacular term established among Black artists that had historical and controversial significance. Chitlins (aka chitterlings) are the small intestines of a pig. Chitlins were often a food eaten originally by slaves and made from the left-over scraps of the pig that the slave masters did not want to eat. Slaves took the leftover scraps and turned the small pig intestines into a delicatessen. The inability for Black artists to perform on traditional circuits, like White Rock-n-Roll artists revealed why the Chitlin' Circuit was essential. For many, the Chitlin Circuit was a strategic attempt of Black artists to make "something beautiful out of something ugly," just as slaves did during slavery (Lauterbach, 2011). Even though, Black artists were initially excluded from touring opportunities at white venues or alongside their white counterparts, the contributions of Black Rock-n-Roll artists are undeniable.

The establishment of pioneering record labels like Memphis, Tennessee's Sun Records, established by Sam Phillips and people from Atlantic Records, like Gerald "Jerry" Wexler, who coined the term "Rhythm and Blues," which was inspired by melodic sounds of Ruth Brown. The evolution of record labels to include Black artists was both a triumph and a challenge for many artists. Just like artists, during the Harlem Renaissance, sought to maintain their racial integrity and artistry, so did Black Rock-n-Roll artists. Because Black musicians had limited rights in life and even more musically, conflictions would arise over sound, album covers, radio play, stage presence, performance locations (segregated venues versus integrated venues), stealing, copyright infringement, travelling and hotel accommodations, and royalties.

Checking facts and conducting one's own research, while exploring such controversial topics can be essential to understanding what is truthful and what is fictional. Despite the racial divisions of artists, during the Rock-n-Roll era, many artists who created this genre of music were more alike than different. Many artists like the Rock-n-Roll artists listed in this section, as well as many artists not listed, have dualistic similarities rooted in church and sexual innuendos. Take some time and research unknown information about each artists. Be mindful of their experiences, life-changing decisions and outcomes, and how their legacies may be perceived today. In addition to conducting research on these artists' life experiences, research the song lyrics or video (or both) listed next to the artists names as well.

- Ruth Brown (*Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean*, 1953)
- Elvis Presley (*Take My Hand, Precious Lord*, 1957)
- Ritchie Valens (*La Bamba*, 1958)
- Big Joe Turner (*Shake, Rattle, and Roll*, 1954)
- Chuck Berry (*My Ding-a-Ling*, 1972)
- Ray Charles (*I Got A Woman*, 1954 & *Georgia On My Mind*, 1960)
- Lil' Richard (*Good Golly Miss Molly*, 1958)
- Jerry Lee Lewis (*Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*, 1957)
- Tina Turner (*Fool in Love*, 1960)

Being a successful Rock-n-Roll artists was controversial, during the 1950s, because segregation and racism prevented a lot of artists; specifically artists of color, from being accepted and acknowledged, by society at large.

Part of being accepted and acknowledged includes being given an additional name or title. For example, Elvis Presley is accepted and acknowledged as “The King of Rock-n-Roll,” by his fanbase. The title, “King,” is given because of his overall success, which includes record sales locally and internationally. The title “King of Rock-n-Roll” will never be duplicated or given to another artist, because when people accepted and acknowledged an artist with a title, that title is considered uniquely sacred. Unfortunately, not every artist, during the 1950s, was able accepted or acknowledge, during this era; therefore, to combat any notions of irrelevance. Some artists would provide their own self-affirming titles, rather than wait or rely on people to accept and affirm their relevancy in Rock-n-Roll. For example, Lil’ Richard is the self-proclaimed architect of Rock-n-Roll. The title may be questionable to some people, but logical for others, because Rock-n-Roll for decades only accepted and acknowledged White artists. Therefore, the titles given to artists, like “The King of Rock-n-Roll,” may have to be reconsidered; especially if *only* White people were being considered.

To be successful, during the 1950s, most minority artists; specifically Black Rock-n-Roll artists, had to be constantly mindful of how to position themselves for the best success. Often times, the best practice for establishing success included denying one’s blackness. White Rock-n-Roll artists had the privilege of being white without denying one’s self. In fact, White Rock-n-Roll artists could succeed in any venue and crossover without trepidation. For

example, some White Rock-n-Roll artists would make a conscious effort to sound black to appeal to Black audiences, while declaring the black sound as a new trend for White audiences.

Catering to both audiences allowed record labels and artists to make double money. However, Black and Latino Rock-n-Roll artists would have to sound white, alter their appearance (sometimes), and was hardly ever allowed on their own album covers. Black and Latino Rock-n-Roll artists also struggled with the decision of whether or not to allow white artists to re-sing their songs and change their names on the album cover in order to have minimal success in the Rock-n-Roll music industry. With the country approaching various decisions surrounding disparities between races, racism, segregation, Jim Crow laws, education, boycotts, voting rights, lynchings, staged sit-ins, organized marches, and other social, political, and economic issues, the music industry served simultaneous purposes marked by progress and resistance. The term whitewashing is a term that was indicative of the realities of American life, during the 1950s.

The Hip Hop cultures' connection to Rock-n-Roll is the unique relationship between young people and the music, sex, and drugs. In other words, there appears to be a continuing connection that young people have with these two genres of music. However, another compelling aspect is the notion and evolution of whitewashing; specifically music associated with African Americans, dating back since the days of slavery. Whitewashing creates insurmountable concerns regarding the authenticity of artistic expression, while also raising an enormity of questions about future practices and the credibility of artists. Whitewashing allowed

for record labels to capitalize off of a sound synonymous with the impoverished and disenfranchised without ever having to pay homage to the past and give credit to the original artists. In spite of the controversy surrounding whitewashing, that unique sound of Rock-n-Roll was still able to reach massive audiences, even if people consciously and unconsciously denied where the sound came from. Whitewashing also raised questions about whether or not African Americans are simply over-reaching and desiring credit for everything that was never acknowledged in prior decades and centuries.

Rock-n-Roll music, nonetheless was an essential part of American history, because music was able to cross-over in ways that people of different races struggled to do, in the 1950s. The combination of artists and Rock-n-Roll music produced, during this era, allowed people to listen privately to a Black or Latino sound, without having to think about the inequality that is occurring publically. Rock-n-Roll, like current Hip Hop culture has become inclusive and not exclusive. Just like Elvis is constantly and publically considered the “King of Rock-n-Roll,” Chuck Berry is simultaneously declared to be the “Father of Rock-n-Roll.” Are these titles equally synonymous or an attempt to rectify an injustice and lack of credibility experienced decades before?

If one considers the current trend of Hip Hop, one must admit that even though African Americans still serve as the majority of artists in the genre, the primary consumers of rap music are White people. Rap sales increases even more with the occasional emergence of a White rapper. White rappers like Vanilla Ice, Beastie Boys (although Jewish categorized as white rappers), Mc Serch, Snow, Kid Rock, Insane Clown Posse, Paul Wall, Bubba Sparxxx,

Eminem, Machine Gun Kelly, Kid Rock, Yelawolf, Mac Miller, Asher Roth, and Iggy Azalea have received great support, notable reviews, and accolades in Hip Hop locally and globally; in spite of how long these artists careers have been in the rap industry. Does this reality imply that Hip Hop culture (as a whole), not just the genre of rap, has become an emerging reflection of whitewashing?

SAMPLE

**The Hip Hop Lectures**  
**(Volume 2)**

**By:**

**Dr. T.L. Osborne**

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## Chapter 1

### Hip Hop Culture: The Evolution

If the history of Hip Hop culture could be defined into a few words, these words would be “coming from nothing into something.” Hip Hop culture has a rag to riches story of success. Early contributors, innovators, participants, and aficionados of Hip Hop culture never realized that the culture would be as influential and impactful locally and globally. Young, poor, talented, and urban kids innovatively created a multi-billion dollar industry. Who knew that two record players could be joined together with a few wire connections to create a best of both worlds sound? Who knew that Adidas track suits and sneakers could be fashionable? Who knew that breakdancing on a cardboard box could eventually lead you to dancing on stage and television shows in front of millions of people?

On the 1996 *Life After Death* album; the Notorious B.I.G. coined what would become the goal for his life and anyone else’s life who desires to become successful. The phrase for success, in Hip Hop culture, is “going from ashy to classy.” Most rap artists talk about what life was like before the fame, which reflects the same sentiments that Notorious B.I.G. expressed in 1996. Some examples are present in 50 Cent’s song, *Window Shopper*, Kanye West’s song *Good Life* (2007), Lupe Fiasco’s song, *Hood Now/Outro* (2012), and Nick Minaj’s song, *I’m the Best* (2012):

### 50 cents' Verse

You's a window shopper/ Mad at me, I think I know why.../ In the jewelry store lookin' at  
sh\*\* you can't buy/

In the dealership tryin' to get a test drive.../

Mad as f\*\*\* when you see me ride by

### Kanye's Verse

Have you ever popped champagne on a plane,/ while gettin some brain.../ Whether you  
broke or rich, you gotta hit this/ Havin' money's not everything; not havin' it is.../ I  
always had a passion for flashin' Befo' I had it/ I closed my eyes and imagine/ The good  
life

### Lupe Fiasco's Verse

That's right/ You in the hood now/ Ramen noodle soups,  
you make the best/ Water in the milk to make it stretch/ That's the hood now

### Nicki Minaj's Verse

I remember when I couldn't buy my mother a couch/ Now

I'm sitting at the closing, bought my mother a house.../

Cause even when my daddy was on crack I was crack/

Now, the whole album crack you ain't gotta skip a track/

These rap verses by 50 Cent, Kanye West, Lupe Fiasco, and Nicki Minaj are reflective of artists' experiences, struggles, and articulations about life before success and life after

success. These sample verses from each artist allows the listeners to understand that before the hard work garnered fame, there was an enormous amount of growing pains.

Hip Hop culture started from humble beginnings and innocent activities, such as dj'ing, graffiti, breakdancing, and mc'ing; and an occasional mention of beatboxing. Hip Hop culture served as the alternative for gang affiliations and illegal activities. Because the Hip Hop movement initially started with young impoverished teenagers, who sought to be creative and have fun, in spite of the circumstances, the culture was able to experience steady growth, rather than a culture that had instantaneous and momentary success. In other words, Hip Hop culture was overlooked before being mass produced into a multi-billion dollar worldwide industry.

### ***Element 1***

History- Hip Hop culture's history dates back to Africa and includes various historical eras of influences dating back from slavery to Hip Hop culture's birth in New York. Jewelry, fashion, dance, drumbeats, and other notable aspects of Hip Hop cultural have roots in African cultural traditions. Therefore, understanding history becomes just as important as understanding Hip Hop culture currently.

### ***Element 2***

Language/Slang- Hip Hop culture's vernacular has always been a uniquely identifying characteristic of the culture. However, roots of language and slang were birthed during the days of slavery, when slaves spoke in broken dialect (ebonics) and began to emerge consistently

during the Harlem Renaissance (1920s). Being able to develop acronyms, re-define words, and create new words is a constant part of the culture. Examples include, but are not limited to “fresh, grill, bling, wipe me down, dope, shizzle, skeet skeet, yo-lo, swag, kush, murk, brain, t.h.o.t., fleek, b.a.e., turn-up, doe/bands/cake/paper/cheese, kick rocks, turn-up,” and many more.

### ***Element 3***

Sampling/Stealing- Sampling is a unique term that can often allude to stealing. The terms could be used interchangeably; especially considering the history of music, musicians rights, as well as the impact that sampling and stealing has on determining who is the originator of certain style trends, songs, dances, styles, and entertainment trends. There is an old African proverb, “There is no original song, except the first song.” Some would believe that sampling/stealing has been going on since the beginning of time; especially, once Africans arrived in America, during the slave trade. Several distinct periods of history reveal the level of sampling and thievery; especially during the Minstrel Show era (Thomas D. Rice), Harlem Renaissance era (black authors publishing works under pseudonyms or white authors), during the Rock-N-Roll era (Elvis Presley), or even with the ascription of twerking to Molly Cyrus. Unfortunately, sampling/stealing did not become officially illegal until Elvis Presley, in 1961, sued James Tenney (*Collage No. 1, 1965*) for illegally sampling/ stealing the song, *Blue Suede Shoes*. Prior to this case, sampling/stealing was not a legal dispute that could be argued or proven in a court of law. Sampling/Stealing is a unique topic in Hip Hop, because the culture includes

elements from various genres and historical periods, which raises some questions about how authentic and creative Hip Hop culture can be if the culture constantly samples music legally and illegally sometimes. Producers, like Sean Combs, of the Bad Boy Record Label, was one of the premier producers who were able to capitalize on sampling/stealing without legal incidence in the 1990s, because many older artists were unaware of what Hip Hop culture was and that the songs were being sampled/stolen, because the older generations did not listen to rap. Today, one can find current incidents arising with rap artists illegally sampling/stealing music, because many artists (specifically older artists) do not want their music to be affiliated with rap music, because of the negative imagery and misogynistic lyrical content.

#### ***Element 4***

Graffiti- Hip Hop culture's use of graffiti has always been unique; however, so has the use of hieroglyphics, which are present in mummy tombs, ancient murals, and on the encased caskets of the dead throughout Africa (specifically in ancient Egypt). Therefore, there is no wonder that graffiti becomes an essential element of Hip Hop culture in terms of expression and reflection, story-telling, branding, displaying societal awareness, creating fashion trends. In other words, graffiti is one of the many elements of Hip Hop that requires natural skills and artistry. Graffiti is as multi-dimensional and multi-ethnic in essence. Most graffiti artists uniquely developed his or her craft by: creating flyers for local parties, creating clothing trends, telling stories on self-made murals about communal or global issues or tragedies, creating an awareness about social, economic, or political issues, warning people about violence, or

encouraging people to remain hopeful. Even though graffiti is a unique element of Hip Hop culture, initially this element of Hip Hop culture was not well received or perceived as a beneficial gift by larger society. Graffiti and graffiti artists were considered a public nuisance for the constant vandalism (defacing public property); especially in New York City, around 1970's.

### ***Element 5***

Dj'ing- Hip Hop culture's Dj's are considered the back-bone of the culture and beginning in the 1970's, specifically 1972 with the emergence of Dj Kool Herc and the evolution of the craft to include Grandwizard Theodore, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and other notable dj's like Kid Capri, Spinderella, Funkmaster Flex, Nick Cannon, and Dj Khalid. Clive Campbell (also known as Dj Kool Herc) was originally born in Kingston, Jamaica and raised in the Bronx (NY) is a founding Dj in Hip Hop culture. Kool Herc is responsible for introducing and popularizing key elements to dj'ing, which include bass sounds, break-beats, merry-go-rounds, and toasting.

- Bass sounds- described and synonymous with today's music (and associated specifically locations like Miami). This sound is often described as a speaker busting or heart pounding and throbbing type of sound, when heard through speakers.
- Break-beats- described as the part of the album when the lyrical content stops and only instruments are played. This is also described as being the best part of a song to dance on and is equivalent to the hook of a song.

- Merry-go-rounds- described as a technique that includes the connecting of multiple songs with other songs. The technique would begin with the Dj playing the best parts of a song and then connecting/ blending that best part of the song with another song's best part and so on. The purpose of this technique, the merry-go-round was so that audiences can dance all night long (24/7).
- Toasting- rooted in African tradition and equivalent to the call-and response technique. Toasting is referred as talking on the microphone and is similar to what a MC (master of ceremonies) would do at an event. This technique eventually would evolve beyond talking on a microphone and lead to people rapping on the microphone.

Dj Kool Herc was one of the pioneering and influential Dj's in Hip Hop culture and these four elements were key to the evolution of the art form. Unique aspects of Hip Hop culture includes the ability to innovate, but also to evolve. The impact that Dj Kool Herc had on Hip Hop culture with the inclusion of these four elements influenced other Dj's like Grandwizard Theodore, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash.

Grandwizard Theodore (birth name Theodore Livingston) was born in Bronx, New York. Grandwizard Theodore started dj'ing at a young age and by the time he was a teenager, he perfected a dj'ing technique called needle-dropping. The technique is simplistic in name, but difficult in action. The process involves a complex ability to drop the needle of a record player onto an album at the exact point (normally on the breakbeat) consistently without having to cue up the album. Cueing is a technique that involves the process of having an exact part of the



same album or another album waiting to play. Because needle dropping does not require cueing or additional equipment to find the same point on an album, the Dj can create faster movements as the album plays. Eventually, Grandmaster Flash would evolve Grandwizard Theodore's needle dropping technique by introducing and popularizing the dj'ing technique known into a new form of dj'ing, which would become known as scratching. The scratching technique (which is synonymous with Grandmaster Flash's brand) involves the possible use of a crossfader or mixer, while moving an album back and forth as the song plays.

Afrika Bambaataa (birth name Kevin Donovan) was born in Bronx, New York. Kevin Donovan was smart and talented at a young age. Because gangs were becoming prominent and dangerous for anyone who was not a member of a gang, Bambaataa joined a gang called The Black Spades in New York. Even though Kevin was a gang member, he still attended school, received good grades, and participated in school activities. During one of the school's semesters, teachers organized and sponsored an essay competition for the students. The students who won the essay content would win a trip to Africa. Kevin Donovan won the essay contest to Africa and learned much more than he had anticipated. Kevin learned about the power of Zulu warriors and how destructive black-on-black violence can be to a community and future generations. Because of his trip to Africa and his newfound knowledge, Kevin Donovan returned home to New York and renamed himself Afrika Bambaataa. Bambaataa's inspiration while visiting Africa, led him to convince some of the Black Spade gang members to change their lives and become an empowering gang instead of a violent gang that aided in the destruction of their communities and future generations. Afrika Bambaataa would re-invent The

Black Spades Gang into a Hip Hop crew, called Zulu Nation. What made the Zulu Nation special was more than just the transformation of the gang into a Hip Hop crew, but that fact that Zulu Nation was one of the premier crews in Hip Hop. Zulu Nation was one of the only crews, in New York, that included four of the founding Hip Hop elements: graffiti artists, dj's, breakdancers, and mc's. While at parties, Bambaataa could easily assemble his crew and enter into every competition/battle. As a result, Bambaataa even evolved his dj'ing technique and introduced an electro/techno sound of music. The 1982, song, *Planet Rock*, would become a foundational record for Afrika Bambaataa's career.

Grandmaster Flash (birth name Joseph Saddler) was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, but raised in the Bronx (NY). Grandmaster Flash introduced the swagger and style to dj'ing. Flash re-invigorates the dj'ing techniques such as scratching, inventing cutting and mixing, as well fusing his dj'ing style alongside a rap group known as the Furious Five. The combination of Grandmaster Flash's techniques and these rappers created a monumental blend of the Dj and rapper(s). The group created what many Hip Hop enthusiast consider the foundational song of Hip Hop culture. The song is called *The Message* (1982).

Each of the leading Dj's mentioned (Herc, Theodore, Bambaataa, and Flash) has made foundational contributions to Hip Hop culture history and evolved traditional dj'ing techniques making them legendary. What is even more interesting is that the majority of these Dj's have roots and connections to islands, like Jamaica and the continent of Africa, which creates a transatlantic sound to the music.

### ***Element 6***

Breakdancing- Breakdancing was popularized around 1976; the dance trend is practiced by many different ethnic groups; however, Puerto Ricans and Blacks lead the way with this particular dance trend. The Breakdancers favorite part of the album played by the Dj would be the break-beat, which would ignite dancers to begin to do various styles of breakdancing techniques. Breakdancing techniques included up-rock, top rock, down-rock, power moves, freezes, blow-up, flavor, spinning, popping, locking, strutting. Examples of original breakdancing legends would include the Rock Steady Crew (specifically Richard “Crazy Legs” Colon and Santiago “Jo Jo” Torres), Zulu Nation, as well as new-age groups like the Jabba Walkies. Breakdancing has gone from a street oriented culture to becoming a world-wide phenomenon and currently includes competitive exhibitions displayed on television shows like America’s Best Dance Crews (ABDC), So You Think You Can Dance, Battle of the Year (BOTY), The Notorious IBE, Chelles Battle Pro, Red Bull BC One, Floor Wars, R16 Korea, and World B-Boy Classics.

### ***Element 7***

Mc’ing- Hip Hop culture’s Mc’s are an essential element because the mc’s foundationally provided a lyrical description of reality for society (locally and globally). The mc can best be described as the un-biased and truthful news reporter for a community of people that have been stereotyped and forgotten. In addition, the mc, historically, becomes relevant, to Hip Hop culture, in two distinct years 1976 and 1977. Kurtis Blow (critically acclaimed hit

1980 song, *The Breaks*) becomes the first commercially successful solo rapper in 1976. In 1977, The Sugar Hill Gang (*Rappers Delight*, 1979 song, sampled song from Chic's *Good Times*) becomes the first commercially successful rap group.

What are equally notable facts about these two distinct artists are the names; "Blow," "Sugar," "Hill," as well as, "Gang." The drug, crack cocaine, plays a pivotal role in Hip Hop culture; especially in regards to the rapper, who serves as the communal storyteller. Therefore, there should not be a surprise to learn that rappers names have become intertwined with the drug culture. Rappers have chosen rap monikers that reference nicknames for drugs, drug paraphernalia, gangs, or drug dealer's and Kingpin names. What is also interesting is how many fake mc's would begin to emerge in Hip Hop culture (at this particular period in time) claiming to be authentic, but appearing to only capitalist of the culture? The Sugar Hill Gang is credited with being the first commercially successful rap group. However, the group's history is marred by thievery from one of the original influences in Hip Hop culture; Grandmaster/Dj Caz (who was a neighbor of Dj Kool Herc and was one of the first to serve simultaneously as a dj and mc, in Hip Hop culture). Sylvia Robinson created the group The Sugar Hill Gang and included three members: Wonder Mike, Big Bank Hank, Master Gee. Coincidentally, Big Bank Hank was a close friend and bouncer at a club, where Grandmaster/Dj Caz often performed. Because the group was created with the sole purpose of capitalizing financially on the newly popularized element known as rap, questions about an artist's actual talent and lyrical authenticity was over-looked, ignored, and considered irrelevant. Therefore, when the time came to prepare and record a verse for the groups' new single, *Rappers Delight*, Big Bank

Hank relied on the recent and popularized verse he heard Grandmaster/Dj Caz rhyme weeks prior at the club. After recording the verse, Big Bank Hank, allegedly, visited Grandmaster/Dj Caz explaining how he used Caz's rap verse on a new song, while simultaneously asking Caz for permission to use additional rap verses written in Caz's book of rhymes. Should Caz allow Hank to use his rap verses, Hank promised to pay Caz for use of his lyrics, as well as arrange an opportunity for Caz to get a record deal. Grandmaster/Dj Caz agreed and unfortunately Caz never retrieved any money, received any acknowledgement or accolades for his rap verses, or received an opportunity to get a record deal. The Sugar Hill Gang serves as an example of how an artists can rise to success commercially, but fail to succeed in the eyes of those from which Hip Hop culture was birthed; the underground

### ***Element 8***

Beatboxing- Beatboxing's connection to Hip Hop culture's history is another relevant element because of the creativity associated with the craft. Beatboxing coincidentally becomes another creative form of Hip Hop culture, because most aspiring rap artists and beat-makers could not initially afford the equipment to make the sounds that he or she wanted and people. Also, rappers and beat-makers would eventually get tired of sacrificing their fists and wrists to bang on a table just so that rappers could have a beat to rhyme/freestyle over. Therefore, beatboxing became a free and in-expensive way to make beats. Beatboxing begins around the 1980s and includes many notable artists who pioneered or evolved the beatboxing craft includes: Rahzel (*If Your Mother Only Knew*, 2000), Doug E Fresh featuring Dj Kool Herc

(*Clear My Throat*, 1996), Biz Markie (*Just a Friend*, 2002), Will Smith (*The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*), The Fat Boys (*Human Beatbox*, 1984), and even movie actors like Michael Winslow (*Police Academy* Movie Collection) revealed various skill levels to the craft. Even more interesting, is that most rappers have the ability to rap and beat-box as well, which most likely helped maintain a constant beat for rappers that was not contingent on one person. In other words, if a person did a beat for you to rhyme over reciprocate the favor by duplicating a beat for the next rapper.

### **Element 9**

Beefs & Battle Rap Competitions- Competition is an important aspect of any aspect of life that seeks to separate the talented from the talent-less, those that can from those who cannot, those who are real from those who are fake, those who should be revered and those who should be abhorred. Beefs and battle rap competitions have become an important part of Hip Hop culture, because beefs and battle rap competitions provide entertainment for audiences, while simultaneously revealing an artist's level of acuity, creativeness, and cleverness. Beefs and battle rap competitions have also inspired artists, specifically rap artists, to rhyme some of the most creative and paramount lyrics one has ever heard. Beefs and battle raps competition also prove to be beneficial financially and promotionally for an artists' career. Beefs and battle rap competitions provide artists with an opportunity to become relevant instantaneously, while simultaneously gaining a stronger fan-base, and increasing popularity; all of which can pay off financially through record sales. In spite of the benefits that beefs and

battle rap competitions can provide for an artists' career, engaging in a beef or battle rap competition (momentarily or continuously) can also create high levels of stress, paranoia, ignite violence, and either make or break an artist's career. The impact of beefs and battle rap competitions can be even more detrimental to the rap artists participating in a beef or battle rap competition because in one instance a rappers career can be destroyed or never be allowed to ascend. For example, an up-and-coming artist may want to bypass their amateur status, by calling out/challenging another popular rapper/top rapper. If the up-and-coming artist is successful, he or she can possibly de-throne and end the career of a notable elite rapper. However, if that up-and-coming artist fails to win the beef, then that particular artist's career may become obsolete before even starting a rap career. Hip Hop beefs began to emerge at two distinct periods: in, 1981, at a club between Kool Moe Dee and Busy Bee (which occurred spontaneously), while the more notable beef that introduced "beefing on wax" occurred in, 1984, between U.T.F.O. (Un.Touchable.Force.Organization.) and Roxanne Shante', based on a song called, *Roxanne' Roxanne'*. An embarrassing rap beef or battle competition can become a permanent scar over the victim and victor's rap legacies. Other notable beefs and battle rap competitions, for further research purposes, include the following:

- MC Shan (Queens Bridge) versus Krs-One (South Bronx)- 1985
- Mc Lyte vs. Antoinette- 1987
- Rakim vs. Big Daddy Kane- 1988
- Ice Cube vs. N.W.A.- 1989

- Biggie vs. 2Pac- 1994
- Common vs. Westside Connection- 1994
- Lil' Kim vs. Foxy Brown- 1997
- Cannibus vs. LL Cool J- 1997
- 50 Cent vs. Ja Rule- 2000
- Jay-Z vs. Nas- 2001
- Krs\_One vs. Nelly- 2002
- Eminem vs. Benzino - 2002
- Nicki Minaj vs. Lil Kim- 2007
- Drake vs. Common- 2011
- Loaded Lux vs Calicoe – 2012 (Battle Rap)

Even though there could be some positive aspects, for audiences, to listen to artists beef, there are sometimes unfortunate aspects associated with beefs; specifically violence or death. Beef and battle rap competitions can easily go from being a friendly competition over lyrical greatness to an all-out personal assault on someone's character, family, life, or lifestyle. There is *no* time out or hold back punches solution, during a beef or battle rap competition, especially since the 1990s, when beefs and battle rap competitions became popularized. In other words, beefs and battle rap competitions have gone from being an element of Hip Hop that is used to evoke artistic competition for entertainment purposes, to an all-out war that becomes personal. The Biggie and 2Pac beef displayed the highest level of negativity that beefs can cause within



the Hip Hop culture. Biggie and Tupac's beef made entire coasts (east and west coasts) feud over which coast is more loyal to an artist; while the media instigated every aspect of dissension between the two rappers, who were once close friends. Unfortunately, Biggie and Tupac would both die and people would later realize that no one artist represented one area, because Hip Hop culture; specifically rap transcends boundaries; especially coastal.

### ***Element 10***

Collaborations- Collaborations are another fun aspect of Hip Hop culture, because collaborations allow artistic growth to be displayed. Collaborations allow two artists from different genres of music to collaborate and create new music or by remixing an already popularized song. Collaborations, also, provides an opportunity for artists who are up-and-coming to create music with an established artist or artists to gain artistic credibility and validity. Lastly, collaborations can expose artists to new or different fan bases, which can be financially lucrative. Collaborations, according to Hip Hop culture's history has two distinct dates of reference; 1981 and 1986. The 1981 collaboration includes Blondie featuring Fab Five Freddy in a song called, *Rapture*. The 1986 collaboration included Aerosmith and featured Run DMC in a song called, *Walk This Way*. Even though, Blondie's collaboration precedes the Aerosmith & Run DMC's collaboration, Hip Hop enthusiasts support the *Walk This Way* (1986), as the officially first rap collaboration, because the song featured rap artists rhyming, unlike Blondie's collaboration, which features her rapping, while Fab Five Freddie just appears in the video. Aerosmith & Run DMC's rock and rap collaboration helped create a sub-genre of Hip Hop

called Rock Rap, which continues to bridge the gap between Rock-n-Roll and Hip Hop cultural roots.

### ***Element 11***

Fashion- Fashion is another important part of Hip Hop culture; especially concerning how trends are made and set within and outside of the culture. For example, one should not be surprised to learn that a majority of dj's, rap artists, breakdancers, and graffiti artists have developed and expanded profitable brands; specifically designed clothing, television shows, and electronics. Fashion trends were inspired by drug culture, initially. Designers like Dapper Dan made Gucci car seats, custom-made outfits, jumpsuits, velour sweatsuits and any other designer brands that people wanted. Fashion trends, such as jewelry, can date as far back as African culture. Africa, was initially rich in resources; specifically diamonds, which ironically becomes a status symbol of success in Hip Hop culture; especially rappers. The array of bright colors and patterns associated with Hip Hop culture's fashion rose in the 1980s and continued to evolve into official brand name designer labels (once artists began to make more money commercially). Popularized designer labels included Tommy Hilfiger, Polo, Timberlands, First Downs, Goose down, Gazelles, Tom Fords, Bamboo Earrings, Throwback Jerseys, Hairstyles (Gumbies, Mushrooms, and Fades with designs). Eventually, Hip Hop entrepreneurs would begin to invest in their own clothing lines, such as F.U.B.U. (For.Us.By.Us by Daymond John), Phat Farm & Baby Phat (Russell Simmons) Sean Jean (Sean Combs), Roca-wear (Damon Dash, Jay-Z, and Kareem "Biggs" Burke), Wu-Gear (Wu-Tang Clan), Trukfit (Lil' Wayne's

brand), OVO (Drakes Brand), as well as collaboration deals with Nike (Air Yeezy's/Kanye), Reebok (Rick Ross), Jordan Brand (OVO/Drake Jordans).

### ***Element 12***

Technology- Technological advances begin to influence Hip Hop culture in the early parts of the new millennium; specifically around the 2000s. With the consistent access to multiple social media platforms, up-and-coming artists; as well as established artists are allowed an innumerable amount of exposure. Artists; especially up-and-coming or new artists are no longer limited to being just a local celebrity, but can gain access to people across the world without ever having met. Technology has great benefits to Hip Hop culture, but can be detrimental to an artist's craft. Some of the benefits include online collaborations with artists in other states and countries and the ability to promote ones music or talent beyond just the local radio station. Some unfortunate aspects would be cultural misperceptions (people believe the videos or lyrical content), piracy issues, and stealing of intellectual property (lyrics, beats, or concepts stolen).

### ***Element 13***

Hustling (Legal & Illegal)- Hip Hop culture never has and never will be exempt from hustling, because of the culture's origins. Several record labels, rappers, dj's, graffiti artists, and breakdancers have succeeded because of legal and illegal funding. Therefore, the best date attributed to this particular element of Hip Hop would be forever. Hustling (legally and

illegally) has allowed Hip Hop culture to gain notoriety and allowed those who are actively part of the culture instantaneously rich; in many cases over-night.

SAMPLE

## Chapter 8

### Hip Hop Culture Is Alive and Still Has a Voice for the Voiceless

July 1, 1982 marked an important day in Hip Hop culture; especially the rap culture, because the song *The Message*, by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five was released. *The Message (1982)* was a monumental song, because this was the first song that actually provided a realistic depiction, through the form of rap, about how real people were experiencing everyday life. When considering the timespan between 1982 and now, one must wonder how far has Hip Hop culture come and how far can the culture still go? The original intention of the culture was to provide a “message” to the world and be a “voice for the voiceless.” The simple desire to speak for those who have no voice was a notable desire that has emerged far beyond what anyone could have imagined the culture to become.

Since the conception of *The Message (1982)*, critics and Hip Hop enthusiasts can agree on one singular fact, if nothing else; Hip Hop culture; specifically rap has changed. Determining whether the change is positive or negative depends on one’s current view of Hip Hop culture, as well an awareness of how Hip Hop culture was before becoming a multi-billion dollar industry. Many critics may believe that Hip Hop is nothing more than a musical genre that degrades women, promotes promiscuity, supports relational infidelity, encourages violence, and egotistically brags of materialism. Critics and enthusiasts struggle with evaluating the current messages in Hip Hop, because at times the content of certain lyrics can appear contradictory and at best indecisive and inconclusive. For example, one can hear a song

called, *How to Love* (2011), by Lil' Wayne that reveals a deep desire to learn what love is and how to love a woman. However, the genuine intentions of Lil' Wayne's words are questioned, when one listens to other Lil' Wayne song lyrics, which are sexually provocative and includes constant references about genitals, sex acts, and drug references. In spite of the contradictions, artists should have the ability and freedom to express themselves (freely), just as the essence of African drum and dance encouraged people historically. Music and content should never be limited to a singular emotion, because as human beings we are not limited to a singular emotion or feeling.

Determining whether Hip Hop culture still has a relevant message, requires one to be knowledgeable about Hip Hop's history, connections to the past, and the other sub-genres of rap. Most people's perceptions about Hip Hop's culture are dictated by what is seen and heard. When it comes to understanding Hip Hop culture's history in its entirety, what is unseen and unheard is just as important as what is seen and heard. Music has always had an ability to unite people in ways that politics, religion, economics, generational gaps, and life cannot.

Common's 1994, song *I Used to Love H.E.R.* (Hearing. Every. Rhyme.) is an important representation of one's love towards a woman, metaphorically Hip Hop culture. Common's song, although criticized by other rappers (specifically rappers from the West Coast), identified the changes that relationships can go through, while subliminally describing the changes he has noticed is occurring in Hip Hop. Common's portrait of Hip Hop culture as female and not male, created a comparison between how men in Hip Hop treat women and the culture. Hip Hop culture was originally something that was once considered sacred, precious, attentive to

the needs of the people, and relevant. Now, the culture appears to have changed and become secularized beyond originality, lyrically worthless, negligent, disrespectful, and ultimately irrelevant to the aspects of life that are most important.

Common may have expressed why he used to love her (aka Hip Hop) and why there appears to be a deterioration of that love, but Nas' declaration of *Hip Hop is Dead* (2006), almost 12 years later, reveals the multi-dynamic issues that have destroyed Hip Hop. Nas' acclamations in the hook states, "Roll to every station, wreck the Dj," which explains how Dj's (the backbone of Hip Hop culture) have contributed to the death of Hip Hop culture. Dj's helped create, define, legitimize, and validate the sound of a culture; just as African drummers do in the ring circle. Unfortunately, the sound of Hip Hop culture is non-inspiring. For Nas, if Hip Hop is dead, then those who endorse fanciful imagery and linguistic coonery are partially to blame. Along with the Dj's are those who have diluted the culture by focusing on album sales and financial gain, rather than encouraging a healthy balance between lyrical artistry and endorsing additional aspects of Hip Hop culture, like graffiti, breakdancing, and beatboxing. For Nas, the declaration of Hip Hop was not a permanent condemnation of Hip Hop, but a deafening call out to those who participate and love Hip Hop culture.

Today, additional concerns have increased about whether Hip Hop culture's successful integration into pop culture has diluted Hip Hop's message and ability to be a "voice for the voiceless." Despite the controversial lyrics and the barrage of questions surrounding Hip Hop culture's current message and voice, one cannot deny how impactful the culture can be **when it matters most** and when addressing issues like: politics, social injustice, economic

disparities, educational inequalities, violence, and police brutality. Hip Hop culture; especially rappers, have never shied away from controversy or idly sat by when blatant injustice was occurring. In 1989, Krs-One, along with other artists, started a Stop the Violence Movement, inspired by a song called, *Self-Destruction*, to address the on-going issue of Black-on-Black violence that was plaguing various communities. The song and movement provided a much-needed “message” and a “voice for the voiceless.”

After the recent and controversial deaths involving police officers and Black people (specifically young Black men) like Trayvon Martin (killed 2012) and Michael Brown (killed 2014), Hip Hop culture responded with a “message” and provided a “voice for the voiceless,” just like Krs-One and others did in 1989. The 2014 song called, *Don't Shoot*, by The Game featuring various artists, reflected the thoughts and sentiments of many people, not just in America, but also worldwide. Deducing the historical or current impact of Hip Hop culture; specifically the art form of rap, would be diminishing the credibility of some of the most influential aspects and people in Hip Hop culture. As long as someone (from anywhere in the world) comes from nothing into something, while claiming, referencing, explaining, bragging, representing, and declaring their connection with Hip Hop culture, the founding pioneers and prominent contributors of Hip Hop culture **will always** have a redemptive message.