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Ideological and narrative structures of Hip-Hop music: A study of selected Hip-Hop artists

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ABSTRACT

HUMANITIES

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THE IDEOLOGICAL AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURES OF HIP-HOP
MUSIC: A STUDY OF SELECTED HIP-HOP ARTISTS

Advisor: Dr. Viktor Osinubi

Dissertation  Dated May 2009

This study examined the discourse of selected Hip-Hop artists and the biographical aspects of the works. The study was based on the structuralist theory of Roland Barthes which claims that many times a performer’s life experiences with class struggle are directly reflected in his artistic works. Since rap music is a counter-culture invention which was started by minorities in the South Bronx borough of New York over dissatisfaction with their community, it is a cultural phenomenon that fits into the category of economic and political class struggle.

The study recorded and interpreted the lyrics of New York artists Shawn Carter (Jay Z), Nasir Jones (Nas), and southern artists Clifford Harris II (T.I.) and Wesley Weston (Lil’ Flip). The artists were selected on the basis of geographical spread and diversity. Although Hip-Hop was again founded in New York City, it has now spread to other parts of the United States and worldwide.

The study investigated the biography of the artists to illuminate their struggles with poverty, family dysfunction, aggression, and intimidation.
The artists were found to engage in lyrical battles; therefore, their competitive discourses were analyzed in specific Hip-Hop selections to investigate their claims of authorship, imitation, and authenticity, including their use of sexual discourse and artistic rivalry, to gain competitive advantage.

The conclusions drawn from the findings suggest that although Hip-Hop lyricism was originally established as an alternative to physical violence, social and psychological factors such as competition, masculinity, class struggle and ideology often lead to conflict and hostility. In addition, the artists’ economic successes were not necessarily tied to their educational background, but were based on their assumed role as representatives of the oppressed. This representation enables its conveyer to serve as a voice for the voiceless through his/her artistic expression.

Discourse in Hip-Hop (whether musical or cultural) is an area of African-American culture in which further study would be valuable in order to fully appreciate the valuable artistic contributions of inner-city youths. Unfortunately, these new artists are often misunderstood. Unlike famous mainstream artists such as Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Langston Hughes, Hip-Hop artists are agents of cultural productivity who are less appreciated simply because they operate in the arena of popular culture.
THE IDEOLOGICAL AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURES OF HIP-HOP MUSIC:

A STUDY OF SELECTED HIP-HOP ARTISTS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

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THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF ARTS IN HUMANITIES

BY

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Peace to my fraternity brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated and the Universal Zulu Nation worldwide.
The goal of this research is to analyze the narrative structures of Hip-Hop lyrics and to describe the significance of those structures. For this study, four major artists in the Hip-Hop genre are selected: Nasir Jones (known as “Nas”), Shawn Carter (known as “Jay-Z”), Clifford Harris Jr. (known as “T.I.”), and Wesley Weston (known as “Lil’ Flip”). The artists are among the most prominent of the Hip-Hop practitioners, and they represent the various geographical and stylistic variations of the genre.

The Hip-Hop genre is selected for this study because of its significant role as an art form and a carrier of ideology for many African Americans and various peoples across the globe. For its practitioners, Hip-Hop is a vehicle for communicating an ideology that promotes a particular lifestyle. Ideology may be defined as the body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual group, class, or culture. Just like literary works, whether oral or written, Hip-Hop music expresses the ideological perceptions and values of its creators. According to Alexander Rosenberg (1995) in his book, *Philosophy of Science*, the means by which Capitalism alienates a particular group in society is the superstructure. In response to the oppressiveness of the superstructure, the group creates values, ideals, laws, social norms, and institutions that promote their
own interests.\textsuperscript{1} The responses of the alienated group constitute its ideology, or a “form of consciousness” that legitimizes and supports certain social institutions. Hip-Hop culture may be one of the responses by which young minorities relate to various conditions forced upon them by the capitalist superstructure. In turn, each Hip-Hop artist expresses a distinct ideology in response to these socioeconomic conditions. The early focus of the Hip-Hop music from the South Bronx (New York City) was cheerful and party oriented. The focus was a form of escapism from the appalling living conditions in which they live; but these conditions soon provided the impetus for the black and Latino ghetto youths to rebel against the superstructure and its oppressiveness. Whenever such oppressive conditions are allowed to fester, people tend to challenge the system in order to free themselves from their perceived bondage. Just like the black and Latino ghetto youths who challenged the system in New York, the Arab and African youths in Paris, France recently did the same. An article by Eric Pope on a Zarien-born Paris youth, Miala, and his involvement in the Parisian unrest reflects this point vividly. The Zarien-born youth told Pope: “We knew long ago that it [their problem with the system] would blow, with all hatred on both sides, the everyday hatred, the police staring people down.”\textsuperscript{2}

In his observation of Miala’s activities, Pope notes that “Miala can understand the anger, resentment, and fear; it is why he sometimes toils 60-hour weeks as a contractor to pay for studio time for local rappers who articulate it [their problem with the system].


long ago he might've stood alongside the kids in the streets." Before the Paris rebellion, Miala was working double-shifts to pay for youths to rap about their socio-economic problems in Hip-Hop lyrics. Of course, the disregard for the youths' concerns allowed the problem to fester and to create the rebellion.

Hip-Hop is also a function of cultural signification within the culture and heritage of a people. This function is another reason for a deliberative study of this important genre which young people appropriate for the purpose of creating change. In Carter G. Woodson's text, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, one of the main reasons for a "miseducation" was that Blacks in America were spending more time learning about a racist system that had denied them rather than learning about their own history which would in turn bring about a more positive change. Not only would this bring about a turning point in the learning processes of Blacks in the United States, but it would, in turn, give all scholars a more realistic understanding of the truth about the history of oppression. Woodson further explains some of his views in relation to the proper teaching of the humanities:

The Negro whether in Africa or America, must be directed toward a serious examination of the fundamentals of education, religion, literature, and philosophy as they have been expounded to him. He must be sufficiently enlightened to determine for himself whether these forces have come to his life to bless him or to bless his oppressor. After learning the facts in the case the Negro

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3 Ibid, 141.
must develop the power of execution to deal with these matters as do people of vision.  

Countering oppression through literature or art, as Woodson suggested, African descendants, as well as other races, have been able to come to an understanding of their identity and to vent their frustrations. This was one of the reasons that Woodson established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 with several friends in Chicago. Shortly after this, he published the *Journal of Negro History*, one of the oldest learned journals in the United States. These breakthroughs led to the establishment of Negro History Week, in 1926, which is now Black History Month in February. When one studies Hip-Hop music, the ideologies of cultures and art should be analyzed. A study of Hip-Hop music would definitely be a means to further the research of Dr. Woodson and many other educators like him.

Self-motivation is definitely a requirement for people to achieve self-actualization and transcend their hardships. This is probably why Frederick Douglass’ text, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, is known as one of the most important narratives of the twentieth century. Douglass documents his life as a slave on various plantations all the way to becoming an American diplomat to the Republic of Haiti. Not only did he come from a disadvantaged condition, but he also rose to become part of the highest socio-economic class of his time. Similarly, a serious investigation of Hip-Hop music may shed some light on the biographical experiences of many youths who come from various socio-economic regions and backgrounds. The investigation may also help people realize

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5 Ibid, 194.
how young people try to find the path to self-affirmation and how they struggle with their existential challenges. In essence, Hip-Hop music provides to its admirers a sense of purpose and a model of self-actualization, so that the listeners become, like readers of literature, the inheritors of new found insight gained from the artists and their stories.

In a previous study titled, *The Language and Ideology of Hip-Hop Music*, this writer noted that Hip-Hop music can be categorized as an art form because it possesses many qualities of poetry.\(^6\) Both rap and poetry share characteristics, such as, figuration, symbolism, figures of sound, and ambiguity, but some of these similarities may not be obvious to the average listener unless he or she pays attention to the words. Hip-Hop music or rap contains lyrics, which cannot be described as anything else but poetic. Tricia Rose, the author of *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994), argues that Hip-Hop music itself has fused the elements of poetry with the technological aspects of the late 1970s to the present. Just as technology is ever-changing, so is rap music. As a matter of fact, it is now getting to the point that any distinctions between spoken poetry and rap music are disappearing.

Present-day rappers have been creating new trends in the genre in terms of the technological arrangements of their songs, but they are now beginning to pay more respect to the pioneers of the word—that is, the black poets who only used words to communicate. Moreover, rappers engage in lyrical battles to test their mastery of the word. The outcome of such battles depends on how their ideology is fully expounded

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through their linguistic maneuverability, as the writer already found in The Language and Ideology of Hip-Hop Music (Jordan 1997, 80). The victory is a result of the artist’s accomplishing a complex task—that of projecting an ideology for approval by his audience, while simultaneously pointing out the shortcomings of his competitors.

When critics or historians discuss Hip-Hop music, many issues about its origins are generally befuddled by controversy. A careful exploration of the origin of the popular art form, however, brings to mind a group in New Jersey called the Sugarhill Gang, who were responsible for the first commercially successful rap song known as “Rappers Delight.” Although this party song was the first tune to have been often repeated on the lips of many Americans of all races and colors, Hip-Hop music had its establishment in the roots of unsung artists who initially created the activity merely as recreation. One of the individuals who can be given credit for establishing Hip-Hop music was Clifford Price (also known as Afrika Bambaattaa). Price is probably best known among the African-American community for his hit songs, “Planet Rock” or “Looking for the Perfect Beat.” However, his most impressive accomplishment seems to be the establishment of an organization called the Zulu Nation. Not only was the Zulu Nation the first organization to promote the spread of Hip-Hop culture, it also helped to decrease much of the violence and rivalry of city gangs in New York in the early 1970s.

In the beginning, Price was part of a New York City street gang, called The Black Spades. After he had acquired a love for an up-tempo music called Hip-Hop, his priorities as well as his beliefs changed. Price explained this new outlook on life in an article about the history of the Hip-Hop culture:
I’ll give credit to my mother. When I was growing up in the 60’s, I used
to hear a lot of Motown sounds, James Brown sounds, the Stax sounds,
Isaac Hayes and all of them. As well as Edith Piaf, Barbara Streisand, the
Beatles, the Who, Led Zeppelin. From there I started knowing about a lot
of different music and that’s when I first heard African music from
Miriam Makeeba. I was listening to this sister talk about things about
South Africa which I didn’t really understand at the time. One movie that
grabbed my attention was a movie called “Zulu.” At the time when you
were seeing black people on TV, you would see us in degrading roles. So
to see this movie with Black people fighting for their land was a big
inspiration for me. Then here comes this guy that I used to not like at first.
I thought he was weird and crazy, which was Sly Stone. But once I heard
“Sing a Simple Song,” “People,” and “Stand”, I switched totally to this
sound of funk… I said to myself, ‘When I get older, I’ma have me a Zulu

Price’s inspiration from his mother as well as his passion for music led him down a more
positive, constructive path. After watching a Michael Caine film, which featured a Zulu
tribe outnumbering a group of British soldiers, he adopted their name. The Zulu Nation
then metamorphosed into a worldwide organization that promotes peace through
unification of the differences in various cultures.

Thanks to this new movement of peace which sought to increase the presence of
creativity among the South Bronx ghetto community and most of its youth, Price was
successful in transforming these inner-city trouble makers into citizens who had begun to
have genuine concern for their community. In the past where once they would battle over
territorial rites with knives and fists, they were now doing so with dances full of acrobatic
complexity (often called ‘uprocks’ and ‘backspins’). These new dance moves were the
common practices of ex-gang members who were now known as ‘breakboys’ (or b-boys).
The term “breakboys” was used to identify anyone who was about to take the initiative at
a party and start a dance battle. Price's role in these battles was to engineer a change of perspective for young black males. These youths, who once were violently fighting among one another over who had the most panache, were now dancing and having fun with their creativity.

Although Price and his Zulu Nation set a foundation for the main ideologies in Hip-Hop, another pioneer of the cultural art form was Clive Campbell (also known as Kool Herc), who conducted sound system explorations even prior to Price's efforts. Campbell's discoveries set the musical backdrop for most of the activities and creative expressions of the "b-boys." Most experts on Hip-Hop music believe that the art form started in the South Bronx, but, according to Campbell, one of the first sound system deejays from the South Bronx, Hip-Hop music started in Jamaica, his birthplace. He could still remember the scenery in his birthplace of Kingston, Jamaica, where he witnessed the origin of the "Heartbeat" of Hip-Hop. Frank Owens, a writer for *Vibe Magazine* explains Campbell's description of one of these Jamaican sound sets:

Campbell remembers the backyard dances, illuminated by a string of lights, dark and scary to a youth not yet in his teens. The pungent odor of grass hung in the air, bottles of Red Stripe were strewn everywhere, a goat's head lying in a boiling pot. The local rudies lined up at the edge of the dance, stylish figures in slim-fit, James Bond style suits. An occasional flash of metal sliced through the murk as a ratchet knife searched out its target. But most heavy of all was the bass heavy attack of the sound system when it kicked in, a roar so loud it shook rib cages and windows alike.\(^8\)

Vivid descriptions such as these, not only convey what had been taking place in the trench towns of his birthplace, but also refer to the practice of sound-blast rivalry, also

known as a block party in the park, in which a disc jockey unveils his system in the hope of receiving a challenge from some unlucky soul to try to outwit his pumping sounds.

This should come as no surprise because for many years prior to the turntable era of Hip-Hop music, the first Masters of Ceremony (or M.C.s) in the Western World were originally disc jockeys in the various Caribbean island nations off the coast of Florida. With inspiration from musical recordings from the United States, as well as strong antennae and receivers, the deejays would mostly play rhythm and blues songs just like their U.S. disc jockey counterparts.

By the 1960s, disc jockeys began to string in voiceovers over their music to report about activities in their neighborhood. As this became a common practice, many of these disc jockeys would come up with catch phrases which became their signature tunes. As the disc jockeys became more competitive, they began uttering this scripted material by memory. One such oral technique by a duo of disc jockeys had led to a very important innovation. While recording a group of songs for an artist named Duke Reid, both Ewart Beckford (U-Roy) and Osbourne Ruddock (King Tubby) experimented with the technique of vocalizing over their recordings. This technique is the focus of Fernando's analysis in the following paragraph:

It was becoming standard practice in this era of primitive two track recording—with the vocals on one track and the rest of the band on the other—to reserve the B-side of a record to test sound levels during recording. The instrumental B-side became known as the version, and in experimenting with it Tubby stumbled onto something new. By manipulating the tracks in the studio, he discovered the possibility of making new versions of a song in which the vocals phased in and out and over an instrumental track that could be dropped out altogether or brought forward. The new technique was called dubbing, a recording term for copying or making doubles of a tape, and appropriately the
Beckford and Ruddock began to chant songs such as the one called “You Don’t Care” by a group called The Techniques, in which both disc jockeys began to add voice-over effects and replicate the sounds in order to produce a different musical effect each time. This accidental discovery of theirs was important to Hip-Hop in two ways. First, these efforts, as well as the efforts of other artists, laid down the foundation of early rapping over pre-recorded beats. The improvisational speeches which the disc jockeys had produced over their recordings became not only advanced poetic forms, but they were also the catalyst which influenced Clive Campbell to bring his sound system to the Bronx. Second, the replicated versions of vocal effects (known as dubs) became a very popular aspect of American Hip-Hop. These replicated versions in which the vocals were fading in and out became a vehicle in which American disc jockeys or rappers (as they were later called) would establish a conduit for self-expression and artistic inventiveness.

It would be correct to say that Clive Campbell was officially the first disc jockey to blast his sound system in New York City; but even though he deserves this credit, there are numerous disc jockeys in the history of Hip-Hop culture who have unfortunately remained anonymous. One such disc jockey was an artist popularly known as D.J. Hollywood who would spin occasionally at a South Bronx spot called

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Club 371. Many claim that he was such a good disc jockey that not only would he move the crowd with his on-time blending of different songs, but he would also lead them in some of the most innovative call-and-response chants which began a trend that remains part of the Hip-Hop culture today. One of these chants contained the very expression “Hip-Hop,” which became a new concept in the musical lexicon of the genre lovers; and according to writer Nelson George, this is how the culture received its name. Other early disc jockeys from around metropolitan New York City included many who were only known by their nicknames, such as Coke-La Rock, D. J. Flowers, Frankie D., Master D., and a mixer known as D.J. Peter Jones. What was so amazing about their popularity was that they were getting “props” (the Hip-Hop jargon for exposure) from not only word of mouth, but also from recordings of their live shows, which were also called “mix tapes.”

Around the early 1970s, the distribution of mix tapes was the general way in which a disc jockey would receive his exposure. The deejays themselves would record their personal show and other individuals were recording them as well. Although this recording of one another may appear to be a form of counterfeit, it was considered an act of respect, at the time, when someone recorded budding artists and sold their tapes around town. The disc jockey’s name grew in popularity among ghetto youth through this word-of-mouth publicity, but this early form of publicity, which also led to the artists growing in stature, and profiting from their craft.

In 1979, a hit song by The Sugarhill Gang was recorded on the Sugarhill Records

11 Ibid.
label owned by a woman named Sylvia Robinson. Since this was the first rap song to be recorded on vinyl, many Americans thought the song was the first rap song ever. This assumption is actually erroneous. Prior to this, disc jockeys such as D.J. Hollywood and Kevin Smith (Lovebug Starski) were already chanting at their live shows in New York parks and clubs. One of the earliest rappers to actually recite rap lyrics was a member of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, a famous rap group that is still known today.

Born as Joseph Sadler in the South Bronx, Grandmaster Flash was like many other disc jockeys who had gained their notoriety by performing as disc jockeys at numerous block parties. At one of these events, Sadler came to the conclusion that his performances, which consisted mostly of blending and scratching records constantly, were beginning to get monotonous.

Although Sadler was already recognized by his fellow disc jockeys as the “Grandmaster” of the trade, he still felt the need to be more creative in order to keep his fans happy. Coincidentally, Keith Wiggins, a friend of Sadler’s and a member of his group (Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five), began to make commentaries and announcements over the microphone while Sadler was blending and mixing records. Somehow, this practice was well-received by the audience; so Sadler and Wiggins further developed the practice into an art and made it part of their performance repertoire. These cryptic expressions became short poems. One perfect example is the following chant:

Throw Your Hands in the air!
and wave them like you just don’t care!

And if you’re ready for Grandmaster Flash,
somebody say, Oh Yeah!!!\textsuperscript{12}

Of course after this rhythmic and catchy phrasing, the response from the crowd would usually be an agreeable and vibrant, “Oh Yeah!” If this was not the case, then the Master of Ceremonies would generally resort to more dramatic verbal methods, such as asking people who “have on clean underwear” to scream as long as their mother was “not on welfare.” This was one of the catch phrases that got people excited. As Wiggin’s creativity progressed, his lyrical expressions became more complex.

Although Keith Wiggins (also known as Cowboy) cannot be regarded as the first Master of Ceremony to record a Hip-Hop record, he certainly can take the credit for being one of the earliest in the genre. (The credit for having the first record that included a Master of Ceremony belongs to The Soul Group Fatback Band.)\textsuperscript{13} Sadler, Wiggins, and four of their friends who were also Masters of Ceremony, and who had honed their skills as neighborhood pioneers, were later signed to the Enjoy record label as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Prior to the success of the Sugarhill Gang record, Sadler had been approached about recording his craft, but because he had no idea of how people would react to a commercial recording he turned down the offer. Incidentally, the Sugarhill Gang record, “Rapper’s Delight,” went triple platinum after a few months on the charts. But several Hip-Hop purists had little respect for the Sugarhill Gang because they felt the group had stolen their lyrics from a pioneering neighborhood group, the Cold

\textsuperscript{12} Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and the Sugarhill Gang, Showdown, excerpts read by the author, Sugarhill Records, 1981, cassette.

\textsuperscript{13} Nelson George, Buppies, B-boys, Baps, and Bohos; Notes on Post-Soul Black Culture (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 43.
Crush Brothers, which like Sadler’s group, also became famous later than the Sugarhill Gang.

In a Hip-Hop reunion organized, in 1993, by Nelson George, a Hip-Hop historian, both Clifford Price and Clive Campbell explained in Source Magazine why they had very little respect for the Sugarhill Gang. In addition, they explained that the Sugarhill Gang had stolen lyrics and a style already established in the streets by Curtis Fisher (Grandmaster Caz of the Cold Crush Brothers). The interview between Nelson George and the two founding fathers of Hip-Hop culture reads as follows:

[Herc:] And when I heard (Big Bank) Hank (of the Sugarhill Gang), I was like, what? I knew Hank, I really didn’t appreciate that Hank knew me personally, had been to my house, was from my neighborhood, and never once said, ‘Herc, I’m doing something’ Never, until this day.
[Bam:] Cause he never gave credit to Grandmaster Cassanova Fly, who is called Grandmaster Caz these days from the Cold Crush Brothers, for the rhymes.
[Source Magazine:] Now did he literally write them, and Hank took them?”
[Herc replying:] Caz used to come to the Sparkle where Hank was a doorman. He used to get on the mic and Hank heard him. That’s when Hank saw the scene growing. I went to New Jersey—my girlfriend knew him—and he was working in a pizza shop down there. I just said, ‘When Sylvia (of Sugarhill Records) hear the real deal, she gonna know.’ And I was so happy to be in the Fever when she seen the truth. And it was hell with them after that. To see Melle Mel and them on stage.\(^{14}\)

As stated in the interview, the Sugarhill Gang were thought to have been the originators of Hip-Hop music, but eventually Sadler and his group received recognition as one of the founding groups of Hip-Hop music. Because people also eventually found out the truth about Sugarhill’s misappropriation of authorship, the group’s recording career became

short-lived. Even today, not only can Sadler or one of the members of his group be seen on television, as representing the South Bronx’s cutting, scratching, and lyrical style, but their titles (whether together or as separate solo groups) have become household words in the Hip-Hop culture.

Another particular aspect of the Hip-Hop culture which has an origin similar to that of deejaying around the same time is graffiti. Graffiti started out as a very dangerous activity which entailed an individual sneaking into train yards and decorating subway cars with various insignias which held some form of relevance to the author as well as his neighborhood. Although generic graffiti had been sprayed upon various structures for years in many cities, the new process of expression in the New York metropolitan area was more complex and often referred to as “tagging.” The youngsters responsible for these masterpieces were known to one another as “writers,” and just like the other elements of Hip-Hop music, graffiti writing was not only done as a means of creative expression, but as a redefinition of one’s self and one’s environment. Some of these designs were common tags with basic word structure; however, there were many tags which had complex designs as well as three-dimensional visual expressions.

The dangers that graffiti artists encountered while writing “tags” were seemingly infinite. Anything could possibly happen to a graffiti artist, from getting chased by watchdogs, to getting hit by a train. Also he could, in extreme cases, get electrocuted as a result of tripping and falling on the subway rail tracks. Graffiti was illegal, and anyone caught in the act of applying it to city property was treated as a felon. These various dangers involving graffiti writers not only made them more inventive, but also made
them appeal to the machismo of young inner-city kids. Eventually many businesses saw
the potential that this popular art form had for gaining positive reactions from the general
public and would sometimes allow young graffiti writers to display their art upon their
store walls.

Since graffiti was illegal in most areas of New York City, the names of the most
gifted of the graffiti artists were known mostly by both fellow graffiti writers and Hip-
Hop enthusiasts. One graffiti artist in particular who took the art form and other aspects
of the Hip-Hop culture to a higher level was Frederick Braithwaite (also known as Fab
Five Freddy). Braithwaite started out as a writer under the tutelage of another popular
culture artist, Jean Michael Basquiat. Braithwaite began his interest in graffiti by
spraying his artworks on city trains throughout Brooklyn and other boroughs. After
meeting Basquiat, Braithwaite soon improved on his style and was introduced to the art
gallery scene of lower Manhattan. Although Braithwaite was widely known for his
artwork on the passing subways, Basquiat, a young Haitian-American, also introduced
him to a group of his white friends who were doing gallery shows in Manhattan.
Braithwaite started focusing more on writing graffiti downtown because around his
neighborhood, many Blacks were not involved in graffiti. Basquiat also introduced him
to other kids from various ethnic backgrounds who were also graffiti writers: Keith
Haring, Futura 2000, and Dry Craft Zephyr. Braithwaite was not only a graffiti artist, but
he was also very much inspired by deejaying, mc’ing, and Hip-Hop music. As one of the
only young African-Americans from Brooklyn who was interested in graffiti, Braithwaite
took the responsibility of connecting graffiti to Hip-Hop music and showing their
relationship to Hip-Hop culture in general:

Although my paintings were influenced by the way the music felt, I wanted to introduce the works as a part of a complete culture because, I felt, they would have a bigger influence on people that way. I didn’t want to be viewed as a folk artist or somebody who was a primitive artist, you know what I’m sayin’? It’s a very rarefied, ultrawhite scene but what I basically wanted to do was set up like a cultural battering ram to show these people, well there’s not just this painting, there’s a music and a dance which makes it a complete culture, a style of dressing too.  

Braithwaite was one of the few African-Americans who helped to bridge the cultural gap between Black inner-city artists and artists of other nationalities through his relationship with Glen O’Brien, who in 1980 was the editor of Interview magazine. O’Brien was impressed by Braithwaite’s artistic talent, and his knowledge of the disc jockey and other aspects of Hip-Hop, which he had acquired while watching shows in Brooklyn parks. Braithwaite also started doing studio camera on a cable access talk show, which elevated him into other genres of expression such as film making.

Through his association with his new friends, as well as his interest in communications, Braithwaite was performing shows (that is, deejaying, writing graffiti, and rapping on the microphone) and coming into contact with punk rock groups. These groups were no ordinary run-of-the-mill 80’s new wave groups; they were big-name artists such as The Talking Heads, the B-52s, and the Sex Pistols. He also met a group called Blondie, who requested him to demonstrate some of his graffiti techniques in their video, “Rapture.” Through his bonding with these artists of other races, Braithwaite

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learned that the passion one has for one's art has no cultural boundaries. Due to its illegal nature, graffiti was purely limited to commercial galleries. However, there were those youths who still wanted to reclaim the right to mark their territory through the technique of graffiti writing with spray paints, chalks, and other tools used in their murals. Since Braithwaite knew that graffiti needed a better public image, in 1980, he organized one of the first major Hip-Hop art shows downtown at the Mudd Theatre. In addition to displays of art from a majority of his peers, he invited Clifford Price to deejay the event, making the occasion his premiere performance in downtown Manhattan.

Although Braithwaite had done a few Hip-Hop records, he did not consider himself an MC (a rap lyricist in Hip-Hop jargon). He used his knowledge of the South Bronx Hip-Hop tradition as a catapult for exploring other new avenues of the Hip-Hop culture. Because of his background in mass media, and with the help of Chris Stein and Charlie Ahearn, including more of his white friends from downtown, he successfully directed the first movie about Hip-Hop called “Wild Style.” The motion picture was named after a graffiti style developed by a local writer known as Legend, and it followed a young graffiti artist through one of his “everyday experiences.” Even though many other films about Hip-Hop have already been produced, purists view this particular motion picture as the most accurate interpretation, for it depicted true-to-life characters. This aspect of its production made it more authentic, like a “spontaneous documentary.” Due to the success of “Wild Style,” Braithwaite was asked to direct music videos by groups such as Boogie Down Productions, Gangstarr, and Queen Latifah (real name Dana Owens, whom Braithwaite later introduced to Tommy Boy Record Company).
The main reason that people confuse the term Hip-Hop with its more familiar element of rap music is probably because many of its other aspects are not as widely practiced as they were in the 1970s. Although deejaying is still alive and thriving in current American tradition, the park jams such as those organized by the pioneers have been limited because of the violence brought forth by jealousy by bystanders. Charles English, a New York transplant now based in Atlanta, describes in the following words the demise of the park jam in his boyhood neighborhood of Reese Park, New York City:

They had a park jam and instead of people hanging out, all these gang dudes came out there. They started messing with the ladies and started throwing their weight around with the groups and it started fights. At this time there wasn’t really a thing, you know like guns and all that stuff you know it wasn’t really that type of thing going on. But then the gangs started bringing it in and they started shooting. And so they closed it down; that was the last of those jams. I think it was in like the Summer of ’75.16

It seems obvious that in the early skirmishes of Hip-Hop rivalry, guns were actually used; this suggests a likeness to the notorious brawls of today. However, most of the gunshots were fired into the air, and known casualties involved only a few cuts and bruises. The way in which gunplay has now changed the traditional meaning of “brawls” in Hip-Hop culture will be further explored later in study; but for now, it is important to indicate that the intensity of the competition surrounding Hip-Hop increased so much that many artists began to take the competition too seriously that it now often leads to death and tragedy.

Break dancing (or b-boysing), another element of Hip-Hop, is still maintained by a few choreographic aficionados, but it has for the most part gone underground due to its

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16 Charles English, interview by author, 5 May, 1998, Atlanta, tape recording, English’s home, Atlanta.
heavy commercialization. The original break dancers felt that too much commercialization was destroying the culture through dishonest representation of its image in motion pictures like "Breakin" and "Rappin."

Mc'ing or rapping could very well be the one aspect of Hip-Hop culture which has overshadowed the other three (deejaying, break dancing, and graffiti writing). From its early foundations in Africa and the Caribbean, in the form of "toasting" and "playing the dozens" to its new metamorphosis in the rap music of African-American culture, rapping has since taken on other various forms. While the Northern U.S. rappers developed a style similar to their Big Apple pioneers in the Bronx, other regions were doing their own different versions of rapping. For example, the migration of Zulu Nation members to the Western, Central, and Southern United States produced West Coast G-Funk and Bass Music respectively. Although each particular genre can usually be played in heavy rotation in each area, this does not necessarily confine one type of sound to a particular place. For example, G-Funk, or what the media calls "Gangster Rap," can be as easily found in Kansas City, Missouri as in Los Angeles, California. In addition, there are even hardcore Hip-Hop groups which create rap in its original form in Los Angeles. The reason for this is that Hip-Hop music or rap is a musical expression through which young people voice their complaints about the ills of their society. It is for this reason that this researcher refers to this art form as the product of a counterculture, because each of its elements was formed by young Blacks and Latinos in rebellion against the poverty and oppression in which they were living. Their families never had enough money to provide musical instrument lessons for them, so in response to this disadvantage, the
youth made two turntables, a microphone, and human percussion methods their instruments. They felt as though they were "nobodys" who possessed nothing, not even the very housing project in which they resided. In response to such stimuli, they painted their ghettos with complex visual markings similar to the condensed narratives characteristic of pictorial writing systems of older civilizations around the world, as in Egyptian hieroglyphics for example. And finally to tell the story of their hardships as well as to dissipate their frustrations, young Blacks and Latinos performed Hip-Hop presentations (or "rocked the microphones") at parties and concerts. Eventually, they began to perform their art on digital recordings.

In Hip-Hop music, the battle has always been an important part of the competition. The first lyrical competition of this sort was between Melvin Glover (Grandmaster Melly Mel) of the Furious Five and an uptown rapper named David Parker (also known as Busy Bee); however, as it turned out, the battle ended up being between David Parker (winner of the first battle) and another rapper by the name of Mohandas Deweese (Kool Moe Dee). Ironically, Deweese was the referee for the first lyrical contest. After the crowd at the Disco Fever that night cheered him into a contest with Parker, he accepted the challenge and obliterated Parker with a barrage of lyrical creativity that overwhelmed his opponent. Not only did this famous battle spread rapidly by word-of-mouth, but the bystanders who happened to tape the contest also made a great deal of money selling these mix tapes all over New York City for $3.00 to $10.00. (This was a lot of money in those days, especially for inner city youths.) As a result of this battle, the Hip-Hop mix tape industry grew in strength and popularity.
Just as in many contests, the factor which fuels each opponent to seek victory is machismo. The American Heritage Dictionary defines this competitive asset as an exaggerated sense of masculinity. Even though two men participated in one of the earliest lyrical confrontations in Hip-Hop music history, it was ironically a young girl who, through some of her lyrics, brought Hip-Hop narrativity to prominence. It all started out, in 1984, when a Brooklyn rap group known as UTFO wrote a rap song called “Roxanne.” The four-member crew chronicled what occurred when they tried to court a young woman named Roxanne. Shawn Fequire (The Kangol Kid), Fred Reeves (Doctor Ice), and Jeffrey Campbell (The Educated Rapper MD) all discussed how each of them were turned down when they tried to win the heart of Roxanne. After the song had received so much acclaim, numerous groups began to answer the famous narrative using numerous personas. The most popular responses to the original narrative were “Roxanne’s Revenge” (written by Lolita Gooden or Roxanne Shante) and “The Real Roxanne” (composed by Adelaida Martinez). New York City deejay Marlon Williams (Marley Marl) along with his then partner Tony Pearson (Mr. Magic) were working at one of the first radio stations to play “Roxanne, Roxanne”; however, tensions ensued that led to the formation of one of the most popular battle records (or “dis” records) in Hip-Hop history. Tyrone Williams (Fly Ty), Marlon Williams’ manager at the time, explains how the whole Roxanne saga was sparked by one of his protégé, the artist Lolita Gooden:

Shante’ started the whole Roxanne craze. It all began when Mr. Magic played the UTFO song on his radio show, and it became a hit. At the time, we were starving. We had no money. So UTFO promised to pay us back by doing a benefit Christmas show. But they changed their minds and cancelled on us. We were really hurt and disappointed. Magic, Marley and I were talking about it, and Shante’ overheard us.
She said, 'Let me make a tape dissin’ them.' I said, 'Get out of here.' But she talked us into it. So Marley took her upstairs and made the tape “Roxanne’s Revenge” in his mother’s living room. We played it on our show that night and later that week a guy from a small label, Pop Art Records, bought it from us for $750.17

After “Roxanne’s Revenge” was released, not only did it anger the original authors of the Roxanne song (UTFO), it also caused all records which were tied to the name “Roxanne” to sell a large number of units, especially for a Hip-Hop record. In retaliation to Gooden’s record, Shawn Fequiere and the rest of UTFO members decided that the best way to win the battle on record was to simply ignore Gooden. They did this by finding a girl in their neighborhood and pretended at their shows that this woman was actually the Roxanne that they were insulting in their song. They called this woman, named Acelaida Martinez, The Real Roxanne. Although Martinez’s sales of “The Real Roxanne” were lackluster in comparison to Gooden’s “Roxanne’s Revenge,” numerous other answer records were released that exploited the name Roxanne but had nothing to do with UTFO or Marlon Williams, the original creators of Roxanne. In essence, the whole Roxanne saga was proof that narratives on vinyl, especially battle records, were extremely marketable in Hip-Hop music. Now that UTFO members and Marlon Williams’ group (The Juice Crew) have settled their differences over the Roxanne incident, they continue to reenact their battles as a form of nostalgia, which also continues to generate financial rewards. Both sides

had come to realize that there was money to be made from the whole rivalry. Currently, Shawn Fequire, UTFO’s leader and spokesperson, writes rap jingles and commercials for radio, while also writing songs with a band (called Full Force) and other artists. Similarly, Lolita Gooden benefited so well from her album sales that she was able to put herself through college, and her record label paid for all the tuition.\(^{18}\) Not only was Lolita Gooden (now with a doctoral degree), considered to be one of the most renowned female Hip-Hop lyricists for her contribution to narrativity, but she is also the only female member of a prominent Hip-Hop group (the Juice Crew) and the first rap artist in history to elevate herself intellectually through the rewards of her sweat and craft.

A few years after the Roxanne controversy, the Juice Crew continued to rule the radio airwaves thanks to Fred Pearson’s Hip-Hop show, which was called “Mr. Magic’s Rap Attack.” Due to the show’s popularity, it was common for aspiring rappers to enter contests seeking airplay on the “Mr. Magic’s Rap Attack” show. One of these aspiring rappers was a young homeless youth, named Lawrence Krishna Parker, who grew up in the South Bronx and left home at a very young age because he told his mother of his aspiration of becoming a rapper and she opposed it. “Kris,” as his friends referred to him, soon met a social worker named Scott Sterling who had similar dreams. In addition to providing Parker with counseling at the men’s shelter in which he resided, Sterling and Parker formed a rap group in which Parker was the master of

ceremony, and Sterling was the disc jockey. The two men dubbed themselves the Boogie Down Productions Crew. After working on a few demonstration tapes, the duo approached Fred Pearson about getting their tapes played on his radio show. When Pearson told them “no,” Parker interpreted this action as Pearson criticizing his lyrical style as incompetent. In retaliation to this rejection, Parker and Sterling released a song called “The Bridge is Over” that disparaged the rap group that Pearson favored (that is, the Juice Crew). The song was, in fact, intended as an attack on Shawn Moltke (professionally known as M.C. Shan) who had earlier written another song “The Bridge,” in which he rapped about his early years of discovering Hip-Hop in Queensbridge. Parker (by now known as K-r-s One) mistook Moltke’s song, “The Bridge,” as misrepresenting the birthplace of Hip-Hop by claiming Queens as its origin, instead of Bronx, which happened to be Parker’s and his friend’s hometown. When Parker’s and his friend’s song, “The Bridge is Over,” was played in Hip-Hop clubs all over New York, the borough battles between the South Bronx and Queens began officially. One particular song by Parker and Sterling, “South Bronx,” captured the spirit of the borough battles:

What made you think that Hip-Hop started out down in Queensbridge? You try popping that junk out here and you might not live, ’cause we’re in South Bronx, The South South Bronx. . .19

In response to Parker’s attacks on his borough, Moltke released a retaliation song titled “Kill That Noise”. Basically, he defended himself by claiming that he was

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only presenting his perspective on Hip-Hop without ever denying its true birthplace (the South Bronx). Nevertheless, he threatened Parker: And if I see you out in public you better bring boys ‘cause if you knew what I knew you’d kill that noise!\(^{20}\) As was frequent in Hip-Hop battles, Parker returned fire for the fire he got from Moltke’s “Kill That Noise.” Shortly after his first song in the battle (“South Bronx”), he released another song titled, “The Bridge is Over.” The song was supposed to pick up from where “South Bronx” left off, only this time it gets more explicit on Parker’s disgust with rap artists from Queens borough, especially the Juice Crew:

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Manhattan keeps on making it, Brooklyn keeps on taking it
Bronx keeps creating it and
Queens Keeps on faking it Yeeaaahhhhhhh.....
What’s the matter with your deejay M.C. Shan, on the wheels of steel
Marlon sucks.....
Roxanne Shante’ is only good for steady F-------...\(^{21}\)
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Lolita Gooden, another Juice Crew member, also delivered a retaliation song against Parker, but most of the group’s members blamed Moltke for not beating Parker in the lyrical battles. Although Moltke has since gone on to further his career in other ways, the lyrical defeat has haunted his career. The film director Keith Ward (alias Future) described what it was like to work with Parker and Moltke on a now classic Sprite commercial, which reenacts the famous borough battles between the two Hip-Hop pioneers:

I felt kind of bad for Shan [Moltke] because my client (Sprite) pretty much allowed the outcome of the battle to be K-r-s One [Parker] winning even after all of these years simply because he was the popular favorite among the core audience. This was evident in the fact that they allowed K-r-s [Parker] to hear Shan’s [Moltke’s] prerecorded response to his and make up another premeditated verse...because of situations like this and pressure from his crew, Shan [Moltke] sort of acts like the world owes him a second chance and in a way he’s right. The (onscreen) battle was rigged.22

In spite of the popular belief that Moltke lost the battle, the two rappers still come together for public shows and make money from reenactments of their old battles. Having made money from these reenactments, Parker tries to support the community by establishing a venture he calls Edutainment, which he also memorialized for his friend Scott Sterling (known as D.J. “Scott La Rock”) who was shot and killed while trying to be a peace maker in a serious altercation. “Edutainment” is his way of reaching out to teach the community through his form of entertainment, Hip-Hop. Not only has Parker become successful in his musical ventures, but he also has lectured at schools all over the world and helped found the “Stop-the-Violence” movement in Hip-Hop with several other artists. He remains one of the most admired lyricists in the underground (a term for Hip-Hop enthusiasts who are not commercially motivated); unfortunately his poor album sales do not reflect this influence.

Although the South is not the “birthplace of Hip-Hop,” it is definitely thriving when it comes to record sales. This success began as a spark ignited by Miami rapper Luther Campbell and his Los Angeles transplant companions of

the 2-Live Crew. The pairing of Campbell and the 2-Live Crew began around the early 1980s when Luther Campbell met the group while touring the country with his self-established "Ghetto Style DJ’s" of Miami, Florida. Campbell had given his disc jockey group quite a following by promoting the records of whichever artists were the most popular in his Miami community. Usually the songs that were the most successful were those that incorporated Hip-Hop lyrics with heavy bass amplification. The 2-Live Crew, which consisted of Chris Wong Won (Fresh Kid Ice), Mark Ross (Brother Marquis), and David Hobbs (D.J. Mr. Mixx), was one such group. Their regional bass song titled "2 Live" received so much acclaim from Miami crowds at Campbell’s clubs like "Strawberries" that he soon joined their group. Although Campbell was not the most adept lyrically, he brought both promotions and crowd participation tactics to the group. To emblematize Campbell’s precocious abilities as a promoter for the group, Chris Wong Won gave him the name Luke Skyywalker, the name of the young hero in the science fiction movie Star Wars. The following excerpt is an example of a song bearing his new name:

Like Luke Skywalker  
I got the force  
Whenever I rhyme I am the boss  
‘Cause I’m one MC who can do it all...²³

The name Luke Skywalker had stuck with Campbell and became his recording company’s brand name. Owning various clubs in Miami did wonders for Campbell and his new group of Los Angeles transplants, but what really set

²³. The 2 Live Crew, 2 Live, excerpts read by author, Fresh Beat Records, 1985, vinyl recording.
Campbell’s business acumen apart from other artists were his live shows, in which he decided to incorporate call-and-responses techniques filled with profanity, and much later featured professional strippers as dancers. Campbell knew what his audience wanted and gave it to them. He tantalized them with sexual symbolism. This play on sexual imagery started out with a dance that the group made famous in Miami called *Trow That D*—. As a Jamaican transplant, Campbell knew that a song tied in with a dance craze (that is, a sexually suggestive kind of dance move) would definitely generate intensity and excitement from the crowd.

Just as in Campbell’s native Jamaica and other parts of the African Diaspora, getting crowd participation was definitely the group’s best promotion tactic. For example one popular chant of theirs went as follows: “If you believe in having sex, say ‘Hell Yeah!’” Of course the audience would definitely reply to this tease by screaming and yelling. Although the 2 Live Crew’s first two albums containing explicit lyrics were sold in music stores in the late 1980s, there were no problems with the songs, until 1990, when several community organizations began to complain. Later, the group also released another album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*, which got the attention of some white communities and moral activists who demanded censorship of the album. In response to these agitations, the police began to arrest numerous salespeople in Dade and Broward Counties in Florida for selling the group’s albums. Not only were salespeople at numerous stores being arrested, but Campbell and his colleagues
were also arrested at concerts wherever they performed the explicit versions of their album. Censorship labels were now required on Campbell’s albums in order to keep minors from purchasing the albums, and the press and law enforcement agencies in Florida frequently stopped Campbell and his group from performing.

This pressure continued until they were cleared of all charges in a Florida court of law (Skywalker Records Inc. v. Navarro, DC Sfla, No. 90-6220-CIV-JAG, 6/6/90). In the case, Sheriff Navarro of Broward County, Florida, had to prove that the lyrics from the entire album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*, had contained obscene lyrics according to what is called the Miller Test. This standard of proof, which was brought forth from the Miller v. California trial of 1973, had three details that were needed to be proven in order for a piece of work to be considered obscene: (1) The average person applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; (2) measured by contemporary community standards the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, a sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and (3) the work taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.24 Presenting expert testimony for the defense (the 2 Live Crew) was the Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates. In his testimony, Gates argued that the album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*, could very well be classified as an art form, and the testimony was

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24 Luther Campbell and John Miller, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be; The Uncensored Story of Luther Campbell and The 2 Live Crew* (Kingston: Kingston Publisher’s Limited, 1992), 159.
able to sway the jury’s verdict to a decision of “not guilty.” He convinced the jury by giving one of the songs, “Pretty Woman,” a literary analysis, calling it a satire of another song that had originally been done in the 1960’s by another artist. Since the 2 Live Crew had put their own comedic twist to the song using satire, a poetic tenet, Gates had successfully proved that the work certainly had literary value. Not only did their landmark case in 1991 solidify their name in music history, but it also laid the groundwork for various other artists to follow suit from different parts of the South.

In Houston, Texas, a mighty underground group known as the Geto Boys ruled the charts for years. Further east in Memphis, Tennessee, Premro Smith (also known as Eightball) and Marlon Jermaine Goodwin (alias MJG) also had laid a blueprint for various artists in the South to vent their frustrations on topics that many seemed to care little about. The artists’ habit of venting their frustrations, as well as the influence of New York’s Hip-Hop culture, led to the successful careers of southern rappers like Outkast, Mike Jones, Paul Slayton (alias Paul Wall), 3-6 Mafia, Clifford Harris (TI), and Wesley Weston (Lil’ Flip). The accomplishments of these artists are truly amazing, considering the fact that the South, unlike New York, lacks the resources necessary to launch a major Hip-Hop career. As resources became more available to many aspiring artists in the South, the artists began to project a prominent southern Hip-Hop culture that now rivals that of other parts of the United States.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

Many critics begin interpreting Hip-Hop culture with various comments that relate to issues of misogyny or violence. This is ironic because Hip-Hop culture, more specifically break dancing (b-boy), originated in the 1970s as an artistic expression with the objective of doing away with gang warfare, which was common in the South Bronx (the birth place of Hip-Hop). Though dancing was one of the first elements of Hip-Hop, lyrical activities such as mc'ing or rapping eventually became more popular. Probably one of the main reasons for the lyrical aspect of Hip-Hop culture becoming more popular was that the media began to over-expose and over-commercialize the dancing aspect. Lyrical battles, which had previously taken place in a public venue, were now being recorded, played, and answered by opposing camps through published recordings.

Critics who know little or nothing about Hip-Hop and its relevance to popular culture fail to see anything positive about Hip-Hop. They view Hip-Hop music as totally offensive, thus failing to see its vibrancy and expressiveness. In addition, they fail to appreciate that all art forms have both positive and negative qualities. For example, Fred Robinson, an enraged pastor from Lithonia, Georgia, find nothing positive about Hip-Hop:
“Stepin Fetchit couldn’t have done a better job... It’s normalized a subculture that is destructive to the well-being of the black community.”¹ This is an example of how some people simply misjudge Hip-Hop on the basis of ignorance. Although Robinson expressed what he felt would be the effect of Hip-Hop on the Black community, however, other people have expressed similar reservations about other music genres. Usually when people describe the music of a generation that came after them, then it is usually characterized as negative. For example, in the same article, John Blake remarks that both jazz and ragtime have received the same types of criticisms as Hip-Hop.²

A more recent negative critique of Hip-Hop culture was expounded by the renowned comedian William Cosby on May 17, 2004, in Constitution Hall. Ironically, the event was sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the NAACP Legal Fund, and Howard University in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of The Brown v. The Board of Education decision. The speech Cosby gave could be described as “ironic” because he chastised, not only the Hip-Hop Movement, but also Blacks who belonged to the lowest class on the economic scale at an event in which he was rewarded for his philanthropic endeavors. There were so many controversial statements made about the Hip-Hop generation (Black youth born in the mid 60’s through the mid 70’s) that Michael Eric Dyson, a prominent expert on popular culture, wrote an entire book about it:

² Ibid, E1.
Is Bill Cosby Right? (Or Has The Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?)

Dyson’s book analyzes Cosby’s criticism of the Hip-Hop generation, and suggests that the practices that Cosby condemned in Hop-Hop were the same tools that he used himself throughout his career to become a famous entertainer. One example of Cosby’s criticism of African-American popular culture in general is seen in the following quotation from the text:

Those of us sitting out here who have gone on to college or whatever we’ve done still fear our parents (clapping and laughter). And these people are not parenting. They’re buying things for a kid. $500 sneakers. For what? And won’t buy or spend $250 on Hooked on Phonics. (clapping). . . All this child knows is “gimme gimme, gimme.” And these people wanna buy the friendship of a child...and the child couldn’t care less...Just forget telling your child to go to the Peace Corps. It’s right around the corner. It can’t speak English. It doesn’t want to speak English. I can’t even talk the way these people talk. “Why you ain’t, where you go is ra.” I don’t know who these people are. And I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk (laughter). And then I heard the father talk. This is all in the house. 3

From the excerpt, Cosby makes a valid point that there is no effective disciplining going on in many households anymore, especially African-Americans’. In previous generations there was more fear put into children thus bringing forth successful results in behavior. However, as Dyson points out in his critique, the manner in which Cosby makes his point is somewhat disrespectful. For example, in the excerpt he refers to the child as “it” which objectifies him. The message he was getting across was crystal clear with the $500 sneaker reference. This is the same type of argument that people make about the Hip-

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3 Micheal Eric Dyson, Is Bill Cosby Right? (Or Has The Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?) (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005), xiii.
Hop generation. They are usually described as linguistically challenged simply because they speak the African-American dialect. For some people, the constant use of the dialect in Hip-Hop music creates a bad linguistic role model for American children and teaches them wrong values.

The controversy about Hip-Hop is also fueled by the generation gap which exists between the Hip-Hop generation and their parents. The generation gap influences the acceptance or lack thereof of Hip-Hop in mainstream America, and the use of dialect in Hip-Hop music is one of the factors dividing the younger and older generations. In the passage that follows, Dyson defends the use of dialect by explaining its relevance to African Diasporic experiences, most of which came from The Middle Passage:

Thus, complex linguistic rules emerged from the existential and political exigencies that shaped black destiny: speaking about white folk in their face without doing so in a way that resulted in punishment or perhaps death, leading to verbal hiccups, grammatical hesitations and linguistic lapses; articulating the moral certainties of black worldviews without compromising the ability to transmit them in the linguistic forms that best suited their expression, while adapting them to religious passions of the white world; capturing in sound the seismic shifts in being and meaning of New World blacks that came in staccato phrases or elongated syllables; unleashing through the palette a percussive sense of time peculiar to the negotiation of an ever-evolving identity with grace and humor (when I was in grade school, my German professor said about a certain phrase, "the tense can be translated in the Black English terms, "It bes like that"); and situating the absurdity of modern blackness through the constantly modulating form as of diction that lent to a protective veneer a spontaneous rationality to rapidly evolving patterns of speech. And by their creative linguistic transformations, black slaves inflected, and infected, the speech of their masters.  

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4 Ibid, 73.
Dyson attempts to demonstrate that the African-American dialect was a valid form of communication. He explores the definition and the origin of the dialect to show its historical integrity; and through exemplification, he shows the acceptance of the dialect by his high school German teacher, which goes to show that not everyone is necessarily a linguistic traditionalist or a pedantic ideologue. He further criticized Cosby’s suggestion that African-American parents should purchase “Hooked on Phonics” as a linguistic tool for their children to improve their speech. Dyson thinks Cosby’s suggestion is unhelpful because the “Hooked on Phonics” program has not been proven to be successful. At best, even according to educational experts, the program can only be used as a supplemental instrument in reading pedagogy. Moreover, Dyson states the obvious flaw in Cosby’s attack on Hip-Hop orality in the area of African-American dialect. The very aspect of the culture that Cosby criticizes was undoubtedly present and glorified in his hit television show, *Fat Albert and The Cosby Kids*. The very same “Black English” that Cosby criticized in his recent speech was embodied by each and every one of the “Cosby Kids” in his cartoon series, which also was a part of his doctoral dissertation. Dyson explains the use of Ebonics by “Mushmouth,” a character in Cosby’s television series:

...they (The Cosby Kids) brought verbal resonances to Saturday Morning television that were rooted in the black community. A cartoon series set in the projects, with the intonations of black children ruling their roost through stories with moral meaning, it was *visual vernacular*; the aesthetic communicated a dialect of style. When Mushmouth created a distinct pattern of speech, he asserted the rule of his own-by inserting the “B” sound into his speech, he asserted the role of syllabic construction. “Hey man” became “hey-ba man-ba.”

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5 Ibid, 79.
6 Ibid, 75.
The use of dialect by Cosby’s television characters is a form of textual realism since the dialect truthfully portrays the lives of real children living in the housing projects. To be artistically successful, Cosby creates a real-live drama that portrays the existential struggles of regular children in the city. The question Dyson is probably concerned with is: “Why should Cosby be able to use dialect to represent the lives of everyday people and Hip-Hop artists should not have the same technique or opportunity available to them?” Dyson’s critique of Cosby’s famous speech is definitely a validation of the artistic endeavors of Hip-Hop culture. Obviously, individuals like Bill Cosby ignore the fact that Hip-Hop culture has both positive and negative aspects.

Even prior to performing an analysis on Hip-Hop music, the culture itself must be further chronicled and interpreted. Although there various sources which successfully account for this, the most relevant ones for this study are those which were written by scholars. Probably one of the most famous of these is Tricia Rose’s *Black Noise*. Not only does she provide groundbreaking evidence of Hip-Hop music being a postmodern art form, but she also validates the idea that it was created as a rebellion to harsh living conditions in the inner city (the South Bronx). Rose explains these factors which led to young Blacks and Latinos developing the Hip-Hop culture:

Shrinking federal funds and affordable housing shifts in the occupational structure away from blue collar manufacturing and toward corporate and information services, along with frayed local communication patterns, meant that new immigrant populations and the city’s poorest residents paid the highest price for deindustrialization and economic restructuring. These communities are more susceptible to slumlords, redevelopers, toxic waste dumps, drug rehabilitation centers, violent criminals, red-lining, and inadequate city services and transportation. It also meant that the city’s
ethnic and working-class-based forms of community aid and support were growing increasingly less effective against these new conditions.7

Rose’s description of the living conditions and available infrastructures in the South Bronx around the early 1970s definitely provides a better understanding of the origins of Hip-Hop. The very environment in which the South Bronx youths lived gave them the impetus for creating Hip-Hop as the new form of artistic outlet. The impoverished environment is not only characterized vividly by Rose’s description above, but also in various early Hip-Hop songs. One of these songs, which really depicted the deprived situations of the South Bronx was “The Message,” written and performed by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (Joseph Sadler and his rap group). In the following first stanza of “The Message,” Melvin Glover, a member of the Furious Five, gave a brilliant interpretation of life in the Bronx:

Broken Glass Everywhere
People pissing on the stairs
You know they just don’t care
I can’t stand the shouting, I can’t stand the noise
I’ve got no money to move out so I ain’t got no choice
Rats in the Living Room, Roaches in the back
People in the alley with the baseball bat
I tried to get away but I couldn’t get far
‘Cause the man from Prudential repossessed my car
Don’t push me ‘cause I’m close to the edge
I’m trying not to lose my head a huh huh huh huh
It’s like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under.8

The main reason for “The Message” being so popular was that it captured a scenario of poverty so vividly and so perfectly that many people could identify with the suffering of

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ghetto living, especially numerous minority youth living in the South Bronx in the early 1970’s. The widely successful song, no doubt, raised people’s awareness of poverty and hopelessness; and consequently, also raised the social consciousness of other Hip-Hop artists nationwide.

Another popular text which successfully documents the early origins and influences of the Hip-Hop tradition is: David Toop’s *The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip-Hop*. Similar to Rose’s *Black Noise*, Toop’s text relates the verbal dexterity in Hip-Hop music to the tradition of orality in African and African-American cultures. According to Rose, Toop fails to characterize the genre’s postmodern existence. Rose explains her critique in the following excerpt:

Toop, although he does have a solid grasp of the more prominent African-American oral influences in rap, draws a false dichotomy between rap’s African-American roots and the high-tech equipment to which it is equally wedded. Rap then, is not simply a linear extension other orally based African-American traditions with beat boxes and cool European electronics added on. Rap is a complex fusion of orality and post modern technology. This mixture of orality and technology is essential to understanding the logic of rap music; a logic that, although not purely oral, maintains many characteristic of orally based expression and at the same time incorporates and destabilizes many characteristics of the literate and highly technological society in which its practitioners live.  

Just as Rose explains, rap or Hip-Hop music is very much modern and technical; however, the addition of its oral tradition which derived from Africa combined with this contemporary electrical advancement whose development was inspired by the experimental efforts of inner city youths. These are two factors which make Hip-Hop music fall directly under the art form category of postmodern. For example, there is no

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denying that the call and response used in Hip-Hop music had derived from Africa. In most performances within the continent’s communities for centuries, the audience was just as important to the presentation as well as the narrator or storyteller themselves (commonly known as griots). In Hip-Hop, Sadler learned how to use a drum technique machine whose original use was to correctly practice drum rudiments. Sadler took this very machine and instead used it to actually become the drum track in a song which was performed by his group. Due to Sadler’s visionary equipment experimentation, the drum machine or beatbox was later invented. This type of re-invention technique is just one example of what inner city youths had done to inspire technological trends; and the trends definitely put Hip-Hop in the category of postmodernist art form in which art intertwines with technology.

John R. Miller Jr.’s As Nasty As They Wanna Be: The Uncensored Story of the 2 Live Crew explains the struggles of one musical group whose experience with censorship and subsequent vindication in the courts has affected every music form in existence. The group’s impact is truly significant because without Campbell and his group winning the obscenity charge, which was brought against them by Broward County Florida, musical or recording artists would have been currently limited in terms of what they could write and publish. One of the factors of the trial that certainly worked in Campbell’s and his group’s favor was that rap music was validated as an art form, especially through the expert testimony of the Henry Louis Gates Jr., the renowned African-American history scholar, who described the group’s reinterpretation of “Pretty Woman” as a parody of another artistic creation (see chapter one for a full discussion of this controversy).
Similarly, in his book, *Rap: Black Studies and the Academy*, Houston Baker Jr, a distinguished professor of humanities, also sights the landmark Skywalker/Broward County obscenity case as an important factor in the understanding of Hip-Hop music, in general, even though the group's music may not be categorized by some people as Hip-Hop, but as Miami Bass or early crunk music. Baker explains his view on why the group has the right to self-expression even though he may not like what they say in their music:

> I am certainly not suggesting that the criminal prosecution of popular artists should become a United States norm. Nor am I advocating the institution of a kind of State PC (in this instance, "popular culture") police force to roam the land instituting "standard" words and works in lieu of popular idioms. What I wish to emphasize, as I have earlier implied, is that popular cultural forms are historically weighted contemporarily useful, and always extraordinarily various. To refuse to recommend, listen to, or endorse the 2 Live Crew is, in no way, to make a general or simplistic judgement about rap music. For, in ways that I hope I have made clear, 2 Live Crew is less a casual site of agency than a single point of imbrication in an intricate social (and preeminently materialist) narrative.10

Frequently, the group’s music is criticized by many people as misogynistic. However, Gates notes that the criticism of misogyny is one more excuse for people to attack the group. On the contrary, he thinks that the criticism is not relevant to the artistic merit of the group’s music—an artistic work is artistic, regardless of its misogyny. Of course both Gates and Baker made it clear that they were in no way trying to motivate their colleagues or peers to follow suit in support of Campbell and his group, but they did want to bring up a relevant factor, which is racial discrimination on the part of county officials. In other words, the victims in this ideological "witch hunt" were the record distributors

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who sold copies of *Nasty As They Wanna Be* to anyone once the state of Florida banned the album prior to its receiving platinum sale status. In addition to referencing the landmark case in his research, Baker also stresses the importance of rationality and objectivity for any critics who wish to make judgments about Hip-Hop to first explore the various types of “Rap Music” genre before making pronouncements on the legitimacy of the music and the culture:

In the creative and ever-expanding world of rap, there are works firmly dedicated to women’s rights. There are efforts devoted to the eradication of violence from the black community. . . . There are raps that make the strongest case (and perhaps the *only case* available to young urban blacks) against child abuse and acquaintance rape. There are raps designed to teach black children their own specific history. There are raps that encode (and perhaps they are the only sources among certain young black people that do so) the relationships of policing and surveillance to the rights of individuals in a “free” society. There are raps that send instruction to young black men on how to “be a father to your child.”

. . . .If one concentrates on what I call positive sites of rap and sets these sites in the context of video imaging that one samples on BET (Black Entertainment Television) and MTV, then one realizes how sinally creative, important, and varied rap is as a generational form—perhaps as the last relay and ultimate outpost of teenage redemption in an aging United States.¹¹

Baker is suggesting that Hip-Hop music has become so dominant in the realm of popular culture and in everyday society in, general, even in its rawest form; nonetheless, the industry still has both negative and positive genres within the Hip-Hop. However again, those who have already made their mind up about using the music as a scapegoat have often done so due to prejudice and ignorance; and the same sentiments were the reasons the Hip-Hop’s pioneers (young blacks and Latinos) invented Hip-Hop in the first place, to vent their anger and frustration against the system.

¹¹ Ibid, 75.
Another issue that Baker discusses in *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy* that directly related to Hip-Hop culture is the ignorant interpretation of the genre, particularly in the case of the Central Park Jogger of 1989. In this controversy, a young Caucasian woman was attacked and raped by as many as twelve minority youths (according to Houston Baker) in New York’s Central Park where she originally had decided to jog.\(^\text{12}\) It just so happened that the attack occurred around the part of the park that was the closest to Harlem and the Upper Westside of Manhattan. Since the area is predominantly minority, the New York media automatically began to associate the crime with the subculture of Hip-Hop. When suspects of the crime were asked the reason for their treachery, they (according to reports) stated, “We were wildin’.” “Wildin’” is a term in African-American dialect which means to go on a rampage with little regard for hurting any innocent bystanders. Due to a lack of understanding of Hip-Hop, which was slowly becoming mainstream around 1989, it appeared that the media cutlets had searched for any excuse to blame the murder directly on Hip-Hop. Around the time of the murder, a Los Angeles rapper named Anthony Terrell Smith (Tone-Loc) had a song which topped the charts called “Wild Thing.” The song was mainly about having casual sex. Originally Smith had borrowed the term from a line made by ac\text{o}r/graffiti artist Freddy Brathwaite (Fab Five Freddy) in Spike Lee’s movie “She’s Gotta Have It” to describe his character’s nonchalant manner in which he would pick up women. Baker explained that the New York City media were taking part in a Hip-Hop “witch-hunt” based on the negative actions of a few misguided minority youth. Baker explains in the quotation

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 36.
below how the news story may have differed if the victim were an African-American woman who was raped in a similar manner:

It would be salutary, for example, if the 'grim neighborhoods' of public housing were to reap the benefits of the type of hearing provided by the Central Park moment. Then perhaps we would not only see the horror of that black woman who was forced to a Brooklyn rooftop, raped, and murdered in the same time frame as the Central park jogger assault, a rape and murder that were very much unreported; we might also find in our new public concern both exacting and effective ways to channel the transitional capital of everyday rap into a spirited refiguration of black urban territories—a refiguration that would foreclose even the possibility of such horrendous black women victimization as that in Brooklyn, and a refiguration that certainly would prevent the veritable silencing of such obscenity.  

Baker explains how a young woman of a different race could have been attacked near her home in the projects, and though it is an atrocity, it would never have made news or appeared in the papers. The Central Park Jogger controversy was made into a racial issue as well as a matter of concern by the news outlets. Central Park is one of the largest parks in the United States whose boundaries encompass numerous burroughs of New York City. However, Baker explains that the media tried to make it into a racial issue because the victim was a white woman who was attacked in a public place that just so happened to be close to Spanish Harlem. In other words, the New York media was trying to say that a white woman should not have to be careful about her surroundings, even in an unsafe public place. Ironically, Hip-Hop received its origination in the park with the sound clashes of deejays; however, parks appeared at the time to be free to everyone, with the exception of African-American youth (as Baker points out in his interpretation of the Central Park Jogger incident.) In any event, women (whether Caucasian or

\[13\] Ibid, 58.
minority) are raped in a similar manner many times, but many of those incidents never make the news, unless they affect certain groups of people.

A third argument in support of an intellectual study of Hip-Hop culture is offered by Houston Baker. Hip-Hop seems to provide the incentive to create narratives of personal experiences of violence that minority citizens experienced in their environment, including their experiences of police brutality and victimization. As a professor at various universities on the west coast, Baker found that he needed to be familiar with Hip-Hop, since white people would always ask him the reason why his “black folks” were always so violent. Although this encounter may be interpreted as racist, because they assumed that he ought to know why some black youths were violent, it is important to be able to analyze and interpret Hip-Hop as a minority scholar. The knowledge of Hip-Hop helps the analyst to explain the sociological and economic struggles of the Hip-Hop generation.

Baker explains in his analysis that the problem with violence in Los Angeles is not because of NWA (Niggaz With Attitude) rapping on their 1989 song (“F--- Tha Police”) but about the victimization perpetrated by crooked police officials. These attacks by lawmen had been happening for decades. Baker explains that not only did NWA release their song prior to the beating of Rodney King, but that there obviously was a violent atmosphere with an early race-related riot occurring in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1965. Based on this reality, he remarks that it was an inconsistency to blame “Gangster Rap” (the title given to all Los Angeles Hip-Hop music) for the city’s problems of violence. Baker’s research focuses on the need for the Hip-Hop narrator to
interpret (as a proletariat artist) the hardships placed upon him and his community by the bourgeoisie class.

Richard Oliver and Tim Leffel’s body of work, *Hip-Hop, Inc.*, is another study, which not only validates Hip-Hop’s legitimacy in current society, but also brings to light a number of questions as to why Hip-Hop is not currently used in business schools to illustrate the concept of product marketability. For example, after being victimized for decades by the irresponsible decisions of Commissioner Robert Moses in the construction of the Bronx Crosstown Expressway, young Blacks and Latinos in the South Bronx were coming up with numerous ways to make money for survival. Since there were no employment opportunities in the South Bronx, as in Manhattan (like working fast food), these youths turned to money-making projects such as legal graffiti, breakdancing, and selling mixtapes. In addition, in order to counter the lack of artistic programs in local Bronx area schools and recreation centers, the youths were practicing a variety of Hip-Hop activities as ways of staying out of trouble. Where children had no local YMCA to play basketball, they were instead participating in basketball playing and contemporary artistic activities like dance and visual art organized by the Zulu Nation. Richard Oliver, a college business professor, and Tim Leffel, a former music executive, explain some of the reasons why they believed Hip-Hop is an example of cultural production and a grass root form of entrepreneurship:

In a country of firsts and in the business arena, where innovations are the name of the game, hip-hop represents a genuine watershed in American and even global business. It is the first (legal) industry to rise like a phoenix out of the urban poor of America, and has become not just a cultural phenomena, but an industry that generates predictable revenues
and earnings, employs thousands, and daily touches the lives of people around the globe.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition to being one of the most dependable sources of Hip-Hop research, \textit{Hip Hop Inc.} is also probably the most recently published text in the area of Hip-Hop culture. The book has been very helpful for this research in terms of evaluating the most recent occurrences in Hip-Hop culture, especially when discussing many of the events that have occurred in the South. Just as the unfortunate living circumstances in the South Bronx made life tough for the residents, the recent Hurricane Katrina made life tough for its victims; but what unites the victims of these economic tragedies is that they used Hip-Hop as a means of providing opportunities in areas which lacked them. After the New Orleans levies broke, many of the city’s local Hip-Hop artists provided hope to the victims by using the resources from their profitable careers to donate sundry items. These rescue efforts were intense because many of the resident artists also had lost numerous material possessions in the storm themselves. \textit{Hip-Hop Inc.} describes the lengths to which some of Hip-Hop moguls went in order to nurse the bayou region to post-storm recovery:

\begin{quote}
Reuters/ Billboard reported that many in the music industry were rallying a support for survivors. Among those leading the effort were Tim McGraw, Harry Connick Jr., and Wynton Marsalis. One of the most prominent though was Master P, who created the organization Team Rescue (team rescueone.com) to get supplies to those left in New Orleans. ‘We’ll do whatever we have to do for our people.’ Master P, who lost a home in the flood reportedly put aside competition with other New Orleans-based hip-hop artists and planned a fund raising tour with Cash Money—a rival label—and the artist Juvenile.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 138.
As stated above, not only did Percy Miller (Master P) save his fellow New Orleans residents, thinking more of them than himself, he also put aside differences with his business rival, Cash Money Records also of New Orleans, in order to revitalize the southwestern region after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Oliver and Leffel’s text is one of the only texts, at this stage of research, to admit Luther Campbell’s prominence in Hip-Hop music and how Campbell’s resourcefulness is a blueprint for current Hip-Hop artists especially in the South. The authors also discuss his impact on the way that business moguls in the South market Hip-Hop commercially. Campbell’s business sense is acknowledged by Oliver and Leffel in the following passage:

The southern rap scene started out with more notoriety than respect. Miami-based Luther Campbell was in some ways the first southern rap mogul. His 2 Live Crew albums were independently produced outside the major label system and sold millions. Most of those sales were based on the novelty value, however, despite the Miami “deep bass” sound. The lyrics were shockingly crude, and the live shows featured props such as barely clothed strippers. Album covers featured women in thongs and the videos rarely departed from the same script.16

Although Richard Oliver and Tim Leffel’s Hip-Hip Inc is one of the more current sources for use in this analysis, various articles will be used as evidence of artists’ opinions on different issues. The main publications in which this type of information is chronicled are Quincy Jones’ Vibe Magazine, Earl Graves’ Source Magazine, and last but not least the now leading Hip-Hop covering source, Elliot Wilson’s XXL.

In addressing the issue of male masculinity among Hip-Hop artists, a text whose epistemological approach to the subject is relevant to this study is Marimba Ani’s (1994)

16 Ibid, 159.
Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior. One major reason why the text is relevant is that one of its areas of focus, like the one used for this study, concerns African-American males. The text Yurugu is an interpretation of both African and European perspectives in relation to ideology and human experiences. Two of the issues which are most prevalent in the selected works of the four artists are ideology and violence. One of the causes of violence among inner-city youths is the belief that one’s possession cannot be taken away because it was God-given. If one were to examine many of the wars that have occurred in history (especially the history of the Western world) it would be obvious that one of the main factors for conflict was religion. In addition to a sensitivity with religion on the part of human beings, a majority of beliefs which are held by inner-city youths were fostered upon them by the capitalistic European system. Most inner city youths, especially African Americans, base their ideological beliefs and concepts of masculinity on what was imposed upon them through capitalism. Although numerous African cultures speak of a harmonious interaction with the divine feminine and masculine consciousness in their conception of a supreme being or beings, the role of women in the western culture is quite different, especially in matters of religion and spirituality. A valid example of sexual bigotry in the western world is referenced in Yurugu by Ani in her explanation of sexism in Christianity and Judaism in the following excerpt:

It is not permitted for a woman to speak in church, nor is it permitted for her to teach, nor baptize, nor to offer [the eucharist], nor to claim for herself a share in any masculine function—not to mention any priestly office...From Judasim and Jewish values the church inherited much of its patriarchal character, and though Paul recognized women as deacons and fellow workers, he “argues from his own—traditionally Jewish—
conception of a monistic, masculine God for a divinely ordained hierarchy of social subordination: as God has authority over Christ, he declares citing Genesis 2:3, so men have authority over women. In 1 Corinthians 11:7-9, a man ...is the image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from the woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman but woman for man.\textsuperscript{17}

In this excerpt, it is clear that in most Judeo-Christian traditions, women are allowed to work within the church as long as they knew their positions, and that means being under the superiority of the male church patriarchy. God is assumed to be in the image of the man, so that makes the man superior to the female congregation. In contrast, African cultures represent gods and deities with both masculine and feminine qualities due to the balance in their conception of creation. For those cultures, the supreme being is not just a male figure, but also one that possesses a matriarchal quality.

Violence is another aspect of masculinity which Ani clarifies in her text. This form of violence as an aspect of masculinity also occurs in Hip-Hop. Although Hip-Hop was originally founded as a counter to violence and oppression, unfortunately, it has been incorporated into the culture through events and activities designed to test the limits of competition. In the Hip-Hop music, many times the most intense battle is the one that an artist has with himself. Just as in Greek mythology, violence in Hip-Hop is unfortunately treated as a normality. However, it should be pointed out that violence as a form of competition is not peculiar to Hip-Hop. According to Sigmund Freud, masculinity derives from a concept that he calls the “Oedipus Complex”.\textsuperscript{18} In the Oedipus myth, a young warrior had to leave home in order to avoid seducing his mother and the


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 377.
murdering of his father by his hands. Although Oedipus leaves home in the saga, the youth unconsciously fulfills the prophecy without even realizing it until the end of the epic. The murder of his father occurred when he randomly killed a man who had refused to let him pass during his journey. The second prophecy was fulfilled when Oedipus entered a relationship with a woman when he became a king before finding out that his original parents were his foster parents, but the woman he married was indeed his biological mother. In essence, the Greek epic projects an irony that Freud borrowed to examine masculinity. For most Hip-Hop artists, this irony of masculinity is central to their emotional and psychological development. Many Hip-Hop artists, raised by their mothers, struggle against the image of their father as a failure and had determined to succeed in order to negate the failure of their father. Ani explains the Oedipus Complex, within the framework of Freud’s and Sagan’s interpretation, as it affects the male species:

According to Freud, the “feminine” attitude develops in a boy when he reacts passively to the Oedipus Complex, wanting to take the place of the mother and become the love object of the father...Sagan argues that the greater a boy’s capacity to imagine the fulfillment of his Oedipal desires, the more “masculine” will be his stance; “the less will be his passive stance” towards his father and toward all men in authority.” He reasons, therefore, that there is a connection between Greek male homosexuality and the fear of Oedipal aggression.19

It is obvious that Ani correctly identifies the strong influence of masculinity in Greek culture and the rest of modern society. In many cultures, a failure to rebel against authority is viewed as weak and spineless. For a young man to act with aggression and forcefulness is associated with true “manhood.” This may very well explain the reason

19 Ibid., 377.
for a high level of masculinity in the realm of Hip-Hop discourse and other areas of popular culture.

The theoretical framework which will be used for this analysis of Hip-Hop will be the Marxist theory of literary criticism. Marxist ideals present a plan for changing the world from a place of class struggles which have foundations in racism, hatred, and prejudice to a place where there is no class boundary; and wealth, opportunity, healthcare, and education are accessible to all people without regards to their race or class.20 These ideologies derive from the 19th century writings of German critic and philosopher Karl Heinrich Marx. Although Marx developed this as economic ideology, its literary approach to various forms of literature, which focuses on the study of the relationship between a text and the society that reads it, was not developed until the 20th century. According to Marx, society's perception of itself definitely is rooted in everyday language and has a root which controls all human institutions and ideologies known as the "base."

This "base" both engenders and controls all institutions and ideologies, or what Marx calls the superstructure which includes: all social and legal institutions, political and educational systems, religions, and art. Also within Marxist's proposed society also known as Communism, there is a constant clash between two major classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The capitalist bourgesie have successfully enslaved the working class or proletariat through the economic policies and production of goods. Because of this dilemma, the goal of the working class (proletariat) is to take away the

power of the bourgesie and fairly distribute this wealth into the hands of everyone. This situation also holds true for Hip-Hop and is the reason why the Marxist criticism is relevant to this analysis. For example, Hip-Hop culture was developed in the South Bronx as a rebellion to the impoverishment that the New York City Urban Planning Commission (led by Robert Moses) had exerted upon the African-American and Latino community as a result of the commission’s development strategies. The only reason these communities were the main groups affected was that the planning strategies (referred to as “dumb growth” by sociologists like Robert Bullard) disrupted civilized living and consequently left them with nowhere to go.

In essence, in order to change the abuse of power placed upon them, the communities developed their own forms of expression such as deejaying, graffiti, break dancing, and rapping, some of which later became valuable commodities worldwide. True enough, Hip-Hop began as a means of survival; however, it has now grown into a subculture from which wealth has been brought to the impoverished proletariats (many of whom also happen to be minorities). Although the bourgeois record companies and distributors still hold the economic control over Hip-Hop music, the genre constantly redefines guerilla marketing tactics which place power back into the hands of the proletariat from time to time (the proletariat being the people living in the inner city). They have come up with new tactics In order for the Hip-Hop practitioners to remain in control of their capital cultural production, new tactics are constantly being developed, some of which include mixtapes, mP3 distribution, cross promotions, etc.
The application of Marxist theory to literary criticism to the interpolation of any cultural production has been popularized by writers like George Lukačs, Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Antonio Gramsci, and more currently Fredric Jameson and Terry Eagleton. These various scholars were reflecting and venting on the ills of capitalism and how the ills impact communities. The following excerpt explains the intentions of Marxist literature:

Such a revolution can begin if working-class people create their own literature (dramas, poems, and novels), music, and paintings, thereby establishing a hegemony to challenge the bourgeoisie's hegemony. Not through guns or battles or the shedding of blood, but through artistic expression of their own cultural activities can the working classes successfully revolt and usurp the hegemony of the dominant class.21

Although it may be subconscious to Hip-Hop lyricists, their discourse is a form of rebellion to the system; whether it is intentionally political or just a narrative of their economic situation, Hip-Hop discourse serves the very same purpose as Marxist and Socialistic literature. This is the very reason that Charles Bressler's important book, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (1999), drives the theoretical focus of this research. The following are questions that Marxist scholars ask themselves in their practice of textual criticism, and they are the same kinds of questions which will be applied in the present study of Hip-Hop lyrics:

- Is there an outright rejection of Socialism in the work?
- Does the text raise fundamental criticism about the emptiness of life in bourgeois society?
- In portraying society, what approximation of totality does the author achieve? What is emphasized? What is ignored?
- How well is the fate of the individual linked organically to the nature of societal forces? What are the work's conflicting forces?

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21 Ibid., 217.
• At what points are actions or solutions to problems forced or unreal?
• Are characters from all social levels equally sketched?
• What are the values of each class in a work?
• What is valued most? Sacrifice? Assent? Resistance?
• How clearly do narratives of disillusionment and defeat indicate that bourgeoisie values (competition, acquisitiveness, chauvinism) are incompatible with human happiness?
• Does the protagonist defend or defect from the dominant values of society? Are those values in ascendancy or decay?22

With so many similarities between the Hip-Hop movement and the rebellion of the proletariat forces in class-based societies, a Marxist literary approach will be helpful to any analysis of narrativity (story-telling) in Hip-Hop lyrics, for such an analysis would unravel the struggles of the artists and the historical and economic conditions that generate these experiences.

Another Marxist scholar whose ideas help to direct this study is Roland Barthes. Barthes was a French philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician whose ideas have been influential within Marxism and post-structuralism. Although he died in 1980, his works continue to be relevant to textual analysis. For example, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975) and *Image Music-Text* (1977), both written by Barthes, provide useful insights into the study of narrative structures and the analysis of bliss (or exhilaration) in literature.

Although Hip-Hop lyrics are not always written out, the most decipherable are those that successfully relay a message to the listener. One aspect of this taking place is through the narrator (in this case, the rapper) relating a situation to the listener with which the listener can empathize. Barthes describes this very type of literature and the audience that relates to it in the following excerpt:

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22 Ibid., 222.
All socio-ideological analyses agree on the deceptive nature of literature (which deprives them of certain pertinence): the work is finally always written by a socially disappointed or powerless group, beyond the battle because of its historical, economic, political situation; literature is the expression of this disappointment.²³

The “socially disappointed” group which Barthes refers to can be found in Hip-Hop as the inner city African-American and Latino youths, or perhaps any racial or ethnic groups living within deprived economic conditions. If an individual of an underclass group happens to relate a situation through lyrics to an audience, the narratives will in essence give bliss to both those who have experienced the situation as well as those who are curious about the condition (usually the bourgeoisie).

Amazingly, Barthes wrote these important books in the 1970s when Hip-Hop began evolving, and yet throughout the two texts he describes various aspects of the genre. Another theory of Barthes is that the “bliss” or extreme pleasure that a reader or audience member receives as a result of interpreting literature does not always lie in what exactly is written, but also in the aural compositionality of the message. In other words, even though most Hip-Hop lyrics are not always understood the first time they are listened to, the sound and the rhythm of various words engage the listener even if they cannot understand the author’s philosophy. Ironically, Barthes subconsciously defines various aspects of Hip-Hop narratives in his analysis on “bliss” in the average text. The ideas in the excerpt below amazingly appear to be a description of Hip-Hop lyricism before the genre even became popular:

Imagine an aesthetic (if the word has not become too depreciated) based entirely (completely radically, in every sense of the word) on the pleasure of the consumer,

whoever he may be, to whatever class, whatever group he may belong, without respect to cultures or languages: the consequences would be huge even harrowing.\textsuperscript{24}

Even though Barthes died during the time Hip-Hop was originating in the South Bronx, his descriptions almost serve as a foreshadowing of Hip-Hop’s aesthetic and communicative qualities.

Another text which will be used to analyze the class struggles in this study is \textit{The Wretched of the Earth} by Frantz Fanon. Fanon explains the manner in which class struggle is used to turn the indigenous Africans of Algeria against one another by the ruling class—the French colonizers. Even though the population of indigenous Africans was greater than that of the French, this class isolation enabled the French to conquer Algeria through the tactic of “Divide and Conquer”. Oftentimes, the ruling colonizer would put into place various class divisions which provide for the “low men on the totem pole” to constantly fight one another to death while the colonizer barely has to do anything except wait for one of the oppressed classes to weaken itself. Fanon explains one of his ideologies of this struggle concerning the Algerian War that could very easily relate to any war:

\begin{quote}
\ldots after liberation, they are called upon to fight against poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment. The struggle, they say, goes on. The people realize that life is an unending contest.
\end{quote}

We have said that the native’s violence unifies the people. By its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces and separates them.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 59. \\
\textsuperscript{25} Fanon, Frantz. \textit{The Wretched of the Earth.} (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 207.
\end{flushright}
As Fanon explains, the key to winning any war is to cause a separation to its forces that were meant to originally work together in unison. However, this tactic must definitely be done in a way that political and economic control will remain in the possession of the ruling class. Not only is Fanon’s text an excellent source on Socialistic class struggles around the world, it is a text which analyzes the inner struggle of Blacks amongst themselves in a land which no longer belongs to them.

In this research, four Hip-Hop artists who exemplify Frantz Fanon’s class struggle are selected for analysis and study. They are: Shawn Carter (Jay-Z), Nasir Jones (Nas), Clifford Harris II (T.I.), and Wesley Weston (Lil’ Flip). The selection of these artists is based on geography and economic success. Carter and Jones are from New York City, while Harris and Weston come from Atlanta and Houston respectively. For each of these four artists, their major albums will be the focus of analysis and interpretation. This process will be done by reviewing the lyrics of some of their more prominent selections and researching how these songs coincide with their biographical information. A research aid in this area of the analysis which has come in very handy has been the website: www.ohhla.com. Different contributors to the website have transcribed the words to the songs of almost any artists that one can imagine. Although a majority of the lyrics typed are usually accurate, those that are found to be inaccurate are corrected through fact checks. For this dissertation, thirty songs are chosen for analysis (at least 5 from each of the four artists). Those rare songs that have not been transcribed in any place have been transcribed by the researcher.
In a previous study on Hip-Hop, *The Language and Ideology of Hip-Hop Music*\(^{26}\) this, researcher used a model of analysis that sees Hip-Hop as an art form; thus accordingly, the model will also be incorporated in the current research. However, the current analysis will focus more on narrativity and ideology—that is, the nature of biographical stories that Hip-Hop artists tell and the manner of telling the stories.

CHAPTER 3

HIP-HOP AND THE REFLECTION OF BIOGRAPHY

Just as the foundation of Hip-Hop culture itself came from poverty, all of the artists chosen for this study grew up in poverty as well. Although these artists came from different urban centers (New York, Houston, and Atlanta), each of their cities had struggled through economic and social problems similar to those experienced by South Bronx, the birthplace of Hip-Hop. Although these artists come from different cities, the stories told by each individual have a great deal in common, yet the particularities of each city were strong enough to give uniqueness and originality to the artists’ songs.

As discussed in the first few chapters, narratives expressed through the lyrics of songs are very important especially because they provide biographical and autobiographical accounts relating to the survival of the human spirit. For example, a young African-American who may lack self-esteem or motivation may conquer this psychological deficiency by learning about another individual who may have had to overcome similar odds or even more seemingly insurmountable adversity.

For example, the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*¹ is a perfect example of a success narrative, which also provides a brilliant blueprint for African-American youths who wish to raise themselves from their predicament.

For example, below is an excerpt from Douglass’ story, which reflects his lack of knowledge of self from early years of his life in slavery:

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have met a slave who could tell his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it.

Douglass reveals that he barely knew what part of the country he was born in. Even more discerning was the fact that he never knew his exact age. These are a few of the things that free men of all races and creeds seem to take for granted. The degree to which the author was deprived of his humanity was further increased in the way he observed that the white children around his age knew how old they were and where they were born. This lack of knowledge of self further reflects his identity as a piece of property, just like owning a horse or cattle. By the time Douglass completes the drama of his life, the reader notices a complete transformation of his life. Following is an excerpt, which appears towards the conclusion of his narrative in which he has now educated himself:

I had not been a reader of the “Liberator,” before I got a pretty correct idea of the principles, measures, and spirit of the anti-slavery reform. I took right hold of the cause. I could do but little; but what I could, I did with a joyful heart and never felt happier than when in an anti-slavery meeting. I seldom had much to say at the meetings because what I wanted to say was said so much by others. But, while attending an anti-slavery convention at Nantucket, on the 11th

2 Ibid, 1.
of August, 1841, I felt strongly moved to speak, and was at the same time much urged to do so by Mr. William C. Coffin, a gentleman who had heard me speak in the colored people's meeting at New Bedford. It was a severe cross, and I took it up reluctantly. The truth was, I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable ease. From that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren—with what success, and with devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide. 

In the above passage, Douglass eloquently reflects the very feeling that he was overwhelmed with when he first realized that he had finally won his freedom. Obviously he had been conditioned by slavery so well that at first, when he had to speak before white people, he had a phobia that he was going to be reprimanded by them. However, he gradually became more self-confident and was able to conquer his fears. Later in his life, he became an influential public figure.

Just as Dr. Carter G. Woodson had stated in his text "The Mis-education of the Negro," it takes more than just education for an individual to truly be free. A second requirement is to have knowledge of the accomplishments of both one's family and other members of one's culture that preceded one's history. Without this "study of the Negro," it is simple for one to dwell in negativity and become complacent. Similarly, just as one can acquire valuable knowledge from the narratives of individuals like Frederick Douglass and Dr. Carter G. Woodson, one can also learn more about the Negro in America through the study of literature and popular culture (among other sources). The narrators chosen for this study are artists in the popular culture genre--the Hip-Hop culture. The artists which include: Shawn Carter (Jay-Z), Nasir Jones (Nas),

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3 Ibid., 69.
Clifford Harris II (TI), and Wesley Weston (Lil' Flip), have also been successful in their own rights.

Narratives in Hip-Hop music share aspects of story-telling with popular narratives in Greek mythology and other ancient cultures. For example, in Greek sagas and epics, the character is usually introduced “in medias res” (which in English means “in the middle of things”). For the rapper Shawn Carter (Jay-Z), his introduction to the Hip-Hop audience was an album titled *Reasonable Doubt*, distributed by Priority Records (under his Roc-A-Fella imprint). Lines, such as the following (from his solo album) explain exactly what his outlook on life was at the time:

Ahh, who wanna bet us that we don’t touch leathers  
Stack cheddars forever, live treacherous all the et ceteras  
To the death of us, me and my confidants shine  
You feel the ambiance, y’all niggaz just rhyme  
By the ounce dough accumulates like snow  
We don’t just shine, we illuminate the whole show; feel me?  
Factions from the other side would love to kill me  
Spill three quarts of my blood into the street, let alone heat  
Fuck ‘em, we hate a nigga lovin’ this life  
In all possible ways, know the Feds is buggin my life  
Hospital days, reflectin’ when my man laid up  
On the Uptown high block he got his side sprayed up  
I saw his life slippin, this is a minor set back  
Yo, still in all we livin, just a dream about the get back  
That made him smile through his eyes said, “Pray for me”  
I’ll do you one better and slay these niggaz faithfully  
Murder is a tough thing to digest, it’s a slow process  
And I ain’t got nothin’ but time  
I had near death brushes, not to mention three shots  
Close range, never touched me, divine intervention  
Can’t stop I, drinking Mai-Tai’s with Ta Ta  
Down in Nevada, ha ha, Poppa, word life  
I dabbled in crazy weight without rap, I was crazy straight  
Potnah, I’m still spending money from eighty-eight...what?

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In the opening line of this stanza, Carter states that “he doesn’t touch leathers.” This statement is probably not to be taken literally. It is perhaps a message to the listener that although he is a rapper, and has made a great deal of money from his art, his life is still not an easy one, like some others in his line of work. In addition to his rapping career, Carter has another pastime: selling illegal drugs. In the same verse, Carter claims he “stacks cheddars forever.” This expression is probably an admission of a cruel fact—that he is well-off because of his chosen life of crime. Comparing his seedy but private life of making fast money to “accumulating like snow” is a wonderful use of simile to demonstrate how easy it was to make all the money. The expression is also a play on words, suggesting the street name for the product that he sells: cocaine. The next lines refer to enemies coming “from the other side” to get him and his friends; and since it is already clear that Carter’s chosen field is drug trafficking, one can understand why enemies would be coming at him. The “other side” could very well be his drug-dealing competitors and/or the legal authorities. These authorities are the FBI agents who are, according to him, “buggin’” his life with a phone tap. Carter’s quest for money by any means necessary has gotten him so focused on it that one can read in the lyrics how murder has now become second nature for him: “...Murder is a tough thing to digest, it’s a slow process and I ain’t got nothing but time.”6 Similar to the machismo of the average Bronx rapper, bragging is always present; however, Carter portrays himself as having so much money that even the money he made eight years prior to 1996 has not been totally exhausted. The simple truth about this erstwhile ghetto kid from Brooklyn is that he has

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6 Ibid.
become rich beyond his wildest imaginations. In essence, he has become one of the bourgeoise that he used to despise.

From around 1991 through the year 1996, numerous New York rappers began rapping about drugs and street violence because of the popularity of rappers like Compton’s Most Wanted and NWA (Niggaz With Attitude). These groups may have influenced Carter to also rap about the events in his neighborhood. Apparently he had decided that if rapping about raw street dramas could work for Calvin Broadus (Snoop Doggy Dogg), it could work for him too. The now-classic epic of a Brooklyn drug dealer may have been Carter’s first major solo release, but he made a few other appearances with several friends who were also in the music business. One in particular was a neighbor in the Marcy Projects, Jonathan Burke (The Jaz). Although he appeared with Burke in songs such as “Hawaiian Sophie” and “The Originators,” Carter did not entirely leave the street life behind. Carter explains this experience in the following excerpt from a Vibe magazine interview:

When Jaz got a deal with EMI for $400,000 or some outrageous number for a rapper back then), he kept his word and took me with him to London, where the label set him up to record his album. When I left the block, everyone was saying I was crazy. I was doing well for myself on the streets, and cats around me were like, ‘These rappers are hos. They just record, tour, get separated from their families, while some white person takes away all their money.’ I was determined to do it differently. Rap is my way out, the only talent I had, and my shot at making something of myself. And it was legal!...

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Carter found out that everything that was promised him and Burke did not materialize. He was very disappointed because the recording company failed to adequately compensate both of them for their work. He also found to his dismay that the recording company wanted to control what rappers could say in their lyrics. This experience further convinced Carter that the bourgeois class still had control over his life and his art, even though he had thought that music could give him some measure of freedom.

When the bourgeois control of Hip-Hop production dampened Carter’s idealism he turned to other methods to make his dreams come true. Carter was still engaged in drug trafficking, but also would return to “rock the microphones” at parties and shows, and sometimes even make guest appearances on albums rapping along with his friends.

One of the challenges of life is growing up poor and having a voice. Usually, when people grow up in poverty, they lack the ability to make people hear their voice. This is also true for Carter. One of the songs that reflects Carter’s belief in the power of having a voice is called “Can I Get Open?” Carter’s verse in the song is as follows:

Well, cause Can I? Is never a question of how but
When I rip it, will I quit it, forget it
Still I’m always on point whenever I hit it
Biting’s forbidden, don’t do what ya gonna..., it’s too late y’all did it
I’m shredding the track, I’m burning you back-back, like Backdraft
Brotha’s who running the crack down I stutter, that-that niggas fast
I pick up pieces, I straighten it out like Pete Rock
Or C is, or creases, it’s your choice Jesus—Christ
I’m nice like that, you freakin’ gay right
I flow like water, so put your finger in a dyke
I slam, I got original flavor, pick up the jam
I killed Chico, and now it’s just me- The Man
Go get your gun I go all out with a can
Brothers is having a hard time with who I am
K kicken it, A rippin it, way past Y
I’m so crazy AAAAAHHHH

Carter is explaining to his listeners how happy he was to have a voice in which he defines himself. As someone who grew up in the ghetto, and a member of the voiceless proletariat, having a voice that thousands of people listen to is a form of empowerment. That in itself becomes Carter’s ideology of success. In other words, having a voice that is larger than life makes Carter an exemplification of a ghetto boy becoming successful and rising to economic power. He states that after he has established his voice in the Hip-Hop genre (figuratively ripping “the microphone,” according to the artist) quitting was certainly out of the question. Carter’s wish to remain part of Hip-Hop demonstrates the importance of self-actualization—when people become successful, they generally wish to continue to do well.

Although Shawn Carter had gained much of his popularity around 1996, he rarely discussed his family life until his album from 1997 was released, In My Lifetime Vol. 1. In the personal selection entitled “You Must Love Me?” Carter opened up in one verse about his mother and older brother. The following excerpt discusses the reference to Carter’s mother:

Since my date of birth
Bought you nothing but hurt
Play those video games
Stole change from ya purse
Sat on the cold bench
‘til I was arraigned in ya skirt
Saw the pain in ya face
Through you maintained a smirk
All you did was motivate me
Don’t let ‘em hold you back

What I do I turned around
And I sold you crack
I was a bastard for that
Still I'm drowning in the shame
Just remember one thing now
You're not to blame

The verse makes reference to the artist's mother, Gloria Carter. Carter suggests in the lyric that he had sold cocaine to his mother. However, in several interviews later, Carter reveals that the reference to his mother in the song was a figurative analogy to all the females he had sold drugs to in the past. In addition, he expresses his apology to his mother for getting involved in drug trafficking even though she raised him in the right way. However, the next excerpt in the same song that revealed a startling incident that occurred in an argument that he and his brother had over a piece of jewelry:

We used to fight every night
But I would never suffer
Just smile my big brother's tryna make me tougher
As we grew fussing and fighting continued
As I plundered through ya stuff
And snuck ya clothes to school
Got intense real intense
As we got older.

The verse illustrates some of the social dynamics in Carter's family background. He and his older brother Eric had intense sibling rivalry growing up in the Marcy Projects of Brooklyn. The older brother fought with his little brother to make him tougher, because the little brother needed to be tough to survive the dangers of ghetto life. The sibling rivalry got more confrontational when the older brother Eric started to take his little brother's clothing without his permission. On a particular occasion when the older

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10 Ibid.
brother took a 4-fingered gold name ring belonging to his little brother without his permission, hell broke loose. The relationship was transformed into a “civil war” in which the little brother shot his older brother:

Never believed it would lead
To be popped in one of your shoulders
With my rings knew you had it
‘cause you took too long
as Mickey, Andy, and the girl that bought it looked on
Huffin’ and puffin’ gun in my hand
Told you step outside
Hoping you said no but you hurt my pride
Made our way to the steps
Maybe you thought it was just a threat…

Like a stranger damn I just shot my nigga
And ran off into the night as if it was not my nigga
Left the scene how could I go that way
Still you asked to see me in the hospital ya next day
You must love me.11

With a gun in his hand, Carter asks his older brother to step outside. When the older brother did what Carter asked of him, the older brother was shot in the shoulder. By this time, Carter was high on drugs and the gun made him feel invincible. After shooting his older brother, Carter regrets his actions and wonders whether his brother would forgive his bad behavior.

Although Carter had not previously revealed much information about his family in any of his works, he did so in “You Must Love Me.” For young Shawn Carter, since his father was not around at the time, his older brother Eric functioned somewhat as a role model for him. When Eric broke the rule of borrowing his belongings without his permission, Carter then refused to deal with the matter passively. Had he done so, just as

11 Ibid.
in Greek Mythology (the root of masculinity) he would have been viewed as weak by his peers. With this on his mind, he let his pride get the best of him and he acted out violently. Carter probably did not realize at the time he shot his brother that his family loved him unconditionally. This is a lesson he later learned in his adult life, and that is why he is sharing the experience with his listeners, so that another young person would not commit the same senseless crime.

This particular narrative ("You Must Love Me") was one of the first selections in which he actually shared events that related to his family life. The story was told effectively, and the technique of its delivery was exceptional, especially in comparison to other well-known rap artists. The story was also presented in the form of a ghetto confessional that the average listener could understand. Indeed, by this time, Carter gained notoriety for being an impressive lyricist/griot.

Although Shawn Carter was extremely reluctant to provide personal information in his first few albums, toward the latter part of his career, he began to open up his life story to the public a lot more in his music. Another narrative to do this is an autobiographical song entitled "Blueprint (Momma Loves Me)". From the first few verses of the song, the nature of his family's genealogy becomes apparent to the listener, as well as what the family members meant to him:

Momma loved me, pop left me
Mickey fed me, Annie dressed me
Eric fought me, made me tougher
Love you for that my nigga no matter what brah
Marcy raised me; whether right or wrong
Streets gave me all I write in this song...
Mickey cleaned my ears, Annie shampooed my hair
Eric was fly- s---, I used to steal all of his gear
I was the baby boy, I could do no wrong.
Yeah it’s goin’ fast—let’s move it along."12

From this song, it is clear that Carter had three siblings (Mickey, Annie, and Eric) while living with his mother in the Marcy Projects. Carter thanks Eric, the older brother, for “fighting” him to make him tougher. It is also evident that Shawn Carter’s father was not present in his life while he was growing up. Although this was true, in 2002, Carter forgave his father for walking out on him and his family. Again, Carter speaking out in discourse about his father is a trait of masculinity that was derived from the Oedipus legend mentioned in the previous chapter. In essence, his voicing these frustrations was the psychological equivalent of Oedipus both murdering his father and later seducing his mother.13 In an interview from XXL magazine, Carter explained the tribulations that the loss of a father had brought to his life:

(Interviewer): I heard you recently got with your pops again right?

(Carter): Yeah, it was great man. It was weird because we’re like the same pigheaded people. We was supposed to meet the first time and he ain’t come. I’m trying to reach out to this guy, I didn’t do nothing to him. And my mom, I always call her naïve and s---. Like she sees the good in people. When we finally got together we kicked it and I just told him how I felt. I was like “I ain’t got nothing to do with you and my mom. I want you to understand what you did.” To any kid they pops is like Superman, like God. My first crib was on Lexington Avenue. I moved to Marcy. I used to walk to Marcy and he used to let me lead the way. He was teaching me a sense of direction, teaching me to be my own, go left, go right. I said, “You can’t teach a kid that and then not be in his life.” It’s like “Damn, you everything to me and then you left.” He was like “I checked on you” and I was like “Naw it ain’t the same though.” So it

wasn’t even about holding no grudges, it was about moving on. I told him everything I felt and shook his hand. So everything’s cool.14

Carter’s animosity with his father dealt with the latter’s absence in his life, so that he had to learn how to be a man by other means, such as his older brother being rough with him. Carter released his album titled The Black Album (which was originally meant to be his final album), and in selections like “December 4th” and “Moment of Clarity,” he gave a vivid description of his growing up in the Marcy Projects. His mother, Gloria Carter, was given the chance to express the feelings she had when she gave birth to her youngest son Shawn Carter who weighed “six pounds but gave her no pain.” For Carter to forgive his father’s absence in his life and to allow his mother to sing in his album demonstrate the fact that Carter had character, in spite of his destructive childhood.

In the song “You Must Love Me,” a non-misogynistic reference to women was presented. This subject was hardly expressed in much of Carter’s earlier works. It was the song that showed another side to Carter: his willingness to admit to having wronged the female species. This expression of regret relates to his sense of guilt for a lady friend who made the grave sacrifice of trafficking drugs for him across the United States:

You put the pressure on me dearly
Rarely would you let it go
Was a thousand and one times
I had to tell you no
When it was one of those days
When nobody was around
And I needed an emergency trip out of town...
Strapped her body with them thangs
As you boarded the plane
Couldn’t explain these strange feelings
That I caught and the pain
I’m thinkin’ why would I send you
When I knew it ain’t right

I’m thinkin’ what would
Make you sacrifice ya life
You must love me. 15

Even though Carter realized that it was wrong for him to impose such measures on a lady friend, he nevertheless still continued with his criminal activities in order to sell drugs.

The song is one of the most openly emotional and spiritual early pieces of Carter’s.

Although life in the Marcy Projects was tough for Carter, his Hip-Hop career had not only given him a financial escape from poverty but also an extended family of other artists to work with. More importantly, his music gave him the means to vent his life’s frustrations.

Another Hip-Hop artist who gained notoriety for his story-telling ability is the Queens rapper Nasir Jones (Nas). His introduction into the Hip-Hop world of lyricism was due to the mentoring of an already established group, the Main Source. Because of his apprenticeship with the Main Source, Jones was able to rap one verse on the group’s record. The song “Live at the Barbeque” was his debut to the Hip-Hop music world:

Street’s Disciple, my raps are trifle
I shoot slugs through my head just like a rifle
Stampede the stage, I leave the microphone split
Play Mr. Tuffy while I’m on some Pretty Tone S---
Verbal assassin, my architect pleases
When I was twelve, I went to Hell for snuffin’ Jesus
Nasty Nas is a rebel to America.....
Kidnap the President’s wife without a plan
And hangin’ niggaz like the Ku Klux Klan
I melt mics ‘til the sound waves over
Before steppin’ to me you need to step to Jehovah... 16

15 Ibid.
In “Live at the Barbeque,” the self-proclaimed “Street’s Disciple” is the artist’s way of lyrically dismembering images of authority using violent similes, metaphors, and clever wordplay that borrow heavily from pop culture. The slugs that he claims to be “shooting from his head like a rifle” are simply aggressive rhymes, which he then compares to a weapon of choice that “street disciples” such as himself had used in the ghettos to terrorize and intimidate their victims. The expression “Mr. Tuffy” (used in line 4 of “Live at the Barbeque”) refers to the tough exterior of a ghetto thug who is also a pimp as depicted in a character named “Pretty Tony” from the 70’s blaxploitation movie “The Mack”. The expression “pretty tone” plays on the sound similarity with the name of a movie character (Pretty Tony) and also portrays the way in which Jones would actually describe his tone quality in “Live at the Barbeque.” In other words, he sees himself as having a pretty tone that captivates his audience.

Although this image that Jones is creating for himself may seem self-indulging, yet this strategy is a common one in the world of Hip-Hop where every rapper creates a sense of hyper-reality and self-promotion. Because of the poverty he had endured for most of his life, Jones feels that the answer to his hardship and penury would be to “kidnap the president without a plan.” This plan is clearly ridiculous. However, Jones appears to be showing his disregard for authority, especially an authority that is guilty of ignoring his poverty and the plight of people like himself—the proletariat. His reference to hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and his racist and anti-Christian comments, may not be taken literally; but the way Jones throws them around, it would appear that he wants his listeners to know right away that he is a hard nut to crack. Therefore, he
advises, “Before steppin’ to me you need to step to Jehovah.” In a rather blasphemous phraseology, he claims to be tougher than his maker. Once again, this can not be literally true; he is simply humoring the harshness of his existential struggles.

At the tender age of eighteen, Nasir Jones, a lyricist from the notorious Queensbridge Housing Projects, added his name to the list of successful rappers from the largest public housing facility in the United States. In addition to being a breeding ground for immense poverty, the housing project was a breeding ground for rap artist wannabes. It was from these training grounds that the Juice Crew (produced by Marlon Williams) emerged (see a full discussion of this group in Chapter One). Jones knew that being a former resident of the Queensbridge Housing Projects, he had enormous shoes to fill. Rappers from Queensbridge always had a lot to prove ever since Lawrence Parker (a South Bronx Master of Ceremony known as KRS-One) had disrespected the entire Borough of Queens in the late eighties with his songs “South Bronx” and “The Bridge is Over.” Although Jones belongs to another generation of Queens rappers, he still wanted to break the stigma of the Borough’s rappers being labeled as “wack” (which translates as ‘inadequate’ in Hip-Hop Ebonics).

Similar to other rappers, Jones narrates his stories using three different pen names: Nasty Nas, Nas Escobar, and just plain Nas. These names are supposed to represent the rapper’s various identities: the street disciple, the street hustler, and his regular persona. Jones was born Nasir Jones on September 14, 1973 to his mother Fannie Ann Little and Father Olu Dara Jones. Olu Dara Jones was a Blues trumpeter originally from Natchez, Mississippi, who played behind many Blues greats, but had divorced
Nasir’s mother at some point after his birth. Although he never mentions his father in the album “Illmatic,” the father, however, plays a trumpet solo on Jones’s song “Life’s a Bitch.” For the most part, “Illmatic” picks up from where “Live at the Barbeque” had left off. In “Illmatic,” Jones explains how it was difficult for a young high school dropout to survive in the ghetto with just his mother and his younger brother. On the song’s introduction, the “Live at the Barbeque” a song plays in the background, while two characters from the Hip-Hop movie “Wild Style” engage in a dialogue. One character tells the other to go on and “be a man” instead of getting stuck in the hustle and bustle of artistic frustration. Following the dialogue, which happens to serve as the album’s introduction, Jones describes the wretched surroundings of the his Queensbridge Housing Project in the song, “New York State of Mind.”

I keep some E&J, sittin’ bent up in the stairway
Or either on the corner bettin’ Grants with celo champs
Laughin’ at baseheads, tryin’ to sell some broken amps...

So hold your stash until the coke price drop
I know this crack head, who said she gotta cook nice rock
And if it’s good she’ll bring ya customers in measuring pots, but yo
You gotta slide on a vacation
Inside information keeps large nigga erasin’ they wives basin
It drops deep as it does my breath

I never sleep, cause sleep is the cousin of death
Beyond the walls of intelligence, life is defined
I think of crime when I’m in the New York State of Mind17

The above stanza suggests that Jones drinks E&J liquor to quench his thirst while he is betting on a dice game in the hallway and laughing at crack fiends who are trying to sell

stolen and damaged electronic goods to get money for their addiction. In fact, these kinds of people are not strangers to Jones; he sees them in his community. For the purpose of self-preservation, Jones claims that after the sale of drugs, every now and then, he must take a vacation to avoid the police or getting murdered like some of his competitors. Jones personifies “sleep” and “death” by describing them as cousins. In other words if a soldier is not totally alert, as in Vietnam in the early 1970’s, or even now in Iraq, the soldier may die very quickly.

In the song “One Love,” Jones invites the listener to eavesdrop on an open letter to a friend of his in jail (Rapper Cory “Cormega” McKay) about what was occurring on the outside while he was away:

What up kid? I know s--- is rough doing your bid  
When the cops came you shoulda slid to my crib  
F--- it black, no time for looking back it’s done  
Plus congratulations you know you got a son  
I heard he looks like you, why don’t your lady write you?  
Told her she should visit that’s when she got hyper....  
I was like yeah, shorty don’t care, she a snake too  
F----- with the nigga from that fake crew that hate you.\textsuperscript{18}

This song reflects the sincerity that Jones has about friendship. Because Jones cares about his friend Corey McKay, he actually took his time to write the friend an epistolary song (that is, a song written in the form of a letter). He tells McKay that when the police came to the house to arrest him, McKay could have found a safe haven at his house (Jones’s house), if he had asked for it. Furthermore, Jones tells McKay the good news about the birth of his newborn; but as an objective narrator, he also tells his friend the bad news about his son’s mother. According to Jones, McKay’s girlfriend was sleeping with the

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
enemy; she was dating a member of her boyfriend’s rival gang and might have been revealing some of the boyfriend’s secrets to the gang.

In addition, the song teaches high moral standards, even in the middle of harsh economic and psychological chaos. This message is probably the most relevant of the series of songs in the Illmatic album to the lives of troubled ghetto children. In the stanza below, Jones discusses the struggles of a young troubled youth that Jones had met outside his project building:

Shorty’s laugh was cold blooded as he spoke so foul  
Only twelve trying to tell me that he liked my style  
Then froze only to blow the herb smoke through my nose  
And told my little man that I’m a go cyprose  
There’s some jewels in the skull that he could sell if he chose  
Words of wisdom from Nas to try and rise above  
Keep an eye over shorty what  
One love

Jones sees a youth with a gun, standing by his project apartment, and acting tough. Jones saw himself in the youth and was motivated to change the youth’s life of crime and violence. Therefore, he advises the youth to not let negativity destroy his life but the youth ignored Jones’s plea and admonition; so Jones gives his expensive jewelry to the youth to sell and use the money to rehabilitate himself.

It seems apparent that Jones puts his neighborhood characters, including himself, at the center of his narrative. He uses his persona of “Nasty Nas” (which translates into a tough bully with a hard ghetto disposition) to describe both the positive and negative aspects of his environment. Although many rappers use this description of the ghetto in their lyrics, Jones’ description seems to gain more attention because his characters fit into

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
the realism of ghetto living, just like many of the characters of other contemporary African-American fiction authors such as Toni Morrison, or even Terry McMillan. In addition, an interesting aspect of Jones’ narrative ability is that his skills belie his level of education. Jones, who was a tenth grade dropout, is astonishing in his ability to compose powerful and interesting narratives about the Black experience in the ghetto and their experiences about economics, religion, and politics.

By the time his second album, *It Was Written*, was released, Jones had adopted the nickname, “Nas Escobar.” He seems to have used the nickname to suggest his entrenchment in the drug culture, and to obliquely reference the struggles of a notorious Latin American public figure, Pablo Escobar. Just as Pablo Escobar ruled the Central American drug world, Jones brags about the lifestyle through his “big willie” lyrics. In other words, Pablo sells drugs and makes money, but Jones brags about selling drugs and makes music. Unfortunately, however, Jones may be considered to be narcissistic in the manner in which he glamorizes drug peddling and street violence.

The second album’s introduction explains the significance of his name Nasir, which in Islamic theology refers to the first man created by Allah (God). Jones’ Islamic background may very well explain his disdain for Christian entities in some of his past songs (*Live at the Barbeque*); however, his chosen belief in Islam does not explain his penchant for the glorification of street violence.

In the song “Black Girl Lost,” Jones advises young black women who are caught up on materialism to have a more positive self-identity and vision of life:

> Where are you focused, on legit niggaz and where the coke is Nice and thug life niggaz, yo you seem hopeless
Your value – too much to be measured, I wonder how you
Could ever be played your p----y worth gold amountin’ to
More than the world, but not knowin’ nothin’ about you
You leavin’ the crib, takin’ all your kids out to
Drop them off, lettin’ some nigga knock you off
So hot and soft, that’s the same thing that got you lost (you should be ashamed) 20

The song which gives an example of how a young African American woman in his
community puts more emphasis on hanging out and doing drugs rather than putting a
focus on her family and realizing her true self-worth may very well have been based on
his daughter’s mother Carmen Bryan. Since their relationship had now grown sour, the
young couple never got married and the money she inherited from Jones went for her to
indulge on whatever she chose. Outside of this song and “If I Ruled the World,” most of
Written’s cuts referenced drug culture vividly. The perfect example can be seen in

“Affirmative action:”

We got the fleet of panama
But wait it’s half & half
Keys is one and 2/5 is how we flip
32 grams raw chopped in half get 16… 21

This depiction of actual drug dealing both received praise and complaints from many of
Jones’ listeners. Many grew weary of Jones’ boasting about street scenarios, which they
refused to believe that a son of a blues player had ever faced. Some even called out Jones
and his lyrical cohorts in magazines for getting their math wrong in the description of
making the drugs. Whatever the criticisms were, “Nas Escobar” as he was now known,
formed an offshoot group known as The Firm based on the John Grisham novel of the
same name. Many fans wondered, “What had happened to the Nasir Jones who was so

21 Ibid.
introspective into his lyrics about the everyday life about ghetto youth.”\textsuperscript{22} \textit{It Was Written} had an ironic meaning to it because it usually alludes to something biblical, however, in addition to being a Christian iconoclast like “Nasty Nas,” “Esco\bar” had found himself a new God: The Mafioso Lifestyle which he represented through his lyricism.

After his album, \textit{It Was Written}, Jones’ persona seemed to have changed, and became more grounded in social narratives. For example, in many of the songs in the 2002 album, \textit{The Lost Tapes}, he explores his difficult relationship with his father. In the song “Poppa Was a Player,” which comes from \textit{The Lost Tapes}, he discusses his past complicated relationship with his father, Olu Dara Jones:

\begin{quote}
What’s that white s--- on that plate you’re facing?
Papa why you butt a—from the waist
And who’s this lady I’m facing
Dark skin you’re not my mommy. . .\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

The above stanza references a childhood memory of walking into a room where his father was sniffing cocaine with a woman he was having an affair with. Although the song is entitled, “Poppa Was a Player,” most of the song credits his mother and father for not letting him realize that anything was going wrong in their relationship until he was older and his father moved away.

The same subject of father-son relationship is explored in another song titled “Fetus”. In this song, Jones describes his life from the time he was in the womb until he was born. In doing so, he further clarifies in graphic details the instability in his family life, especially the abusive relationship between his mother and father:

\begin{quote}
But I was saved he (God) changed his mind in the last minute
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23} Nas. \textit{The Lost Tapes}. Transcribed by author. Columbia, 2002.
Watchin' 'em yell, heard my moms voice well
Feared fist fights, so terrified when we fell
While they broke up furniture and smash plates on the wall

Jones' creativity shows in his ability to tell his story from the perspective of a fetus. The fetus remembers teetering on the verge of death, because of the smashing and the throwing going on in the house. It was perhaps a miracle that the fetus did not die in all of the chaos. His mental options may have been to blame his father for the family's poverty and the emotional insecurity which may have angered him (thus leading to physical and/or emotional revenge on the part of young Jones.) However, instead of blaming his father and mother for their destructive behavior, Jones used his experience of pain and sorrow to drive his creativity through the rest of his career, growing up to be a successful artist.

In spite of his growing up in a dysfunctional home, and later in a single-parent household, just like other rappers and black men in his age group, Jones must have been raised with some positive values. Both his father and mother had probably instilled within him, through their own dysfunctional behavior, a toughness that has helped him to survive the miseries of life. The parents' constant fights and bickering strangely provided him the information about the vileness of his origin, an origin to which he cannot return. His experience of Christianity was instilled in him through the influence of his mother, while the Islamic and pro-black Nationalistic spirit that comes out of his music may have come from his father. In addition, by raising his daughter Destiny out of wedlock, Jones

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24 Ibid.
seems to have experienced the challenges of parenthood, just like his parents did, but has become wiser to the ways of the world.

After Jones’ mother, Fannie Mae Jones, died around 2002, the event not only made him re-evaluate his career, but it also brought him and his father much closer. This reuniting between father and son is reflected in his Street Disciple track called “Bridging The Gap”. Just as Jones had rapped earlier in his career about how his father was a “rolling stone,” in this new song he describes how Olu (his father), “Was a rolling stone, but then he came home!” By taking his mother’s advice and continuing to work, he was able to complete the cycle of giving up his immature ways and becoming a man. He did this through his change in perspective from when he was known as “Nasty Nas,” “Nas Escobar,” and completed his quest for maturity, preferring to be a newly enlightened “Nas” (which he creates from Nastradamus), and calls himself God’s Son to suggest his newfound enlightenment.

Nasir Jones is arguably one of the most talented lyricists in Hip-Hop. Although he began his career as a strong iconoclast in the image of Jesus Christ, he now has the title “God’s Son” tattooed on his abdomen in memory of a slain friend, Tupac Shakur. Although Jones was never able to receive his high school diploma, he has truly been able to move the public with words that described what was going on outside of his project window whether it was simply in the community or even further out into the world. It may very well be argued that some of his lyrics are violent, misogynistic, and glorifying drug deals; however, through the balancing of his life story and the subject matter of his contemporary living, Jones has succeeded as a Hop-Hop star in the eyes of his admirers
and followers. Although his last double album, *Street's Disciple*, may not have measured up to his past successes, he continues to evolve as a popular culture icon, and remains a voice for the voiceless in the Hip-Hop community, especially a voice for those whose life stories represent a triumph of the human spirit over poverty, negativity, and hopelessness.

Although the socially unfriendly land development occurring in the 1970's in New York City may have served as a catalyst for lyrical inspirations for rap artists in New York City, a very similar sequence of events was occurring down South. Even in places like Atlanta, Georgia and Houston, Texas, some of these very same socially unfriendly plans were being executed. One perfect example can be seen in plans to rebuild the Perry Homes Housing Project of Northwest Atlanta. Sociologists Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres explain this particular incident in their sociological analysis, *Highway Robbery*:

In 1999, the Atlanta Housing Authority won a federal grant to move the 2,500 low-income black residents out of Perry Homes, demolish the existing housing, and build a new 1,000-unit complex. A $340 million, upscale mixed-income development, West Highlands, was built on the 343-acre site where Perry Homes once stood. Approximately 228 homes will be set aside for public housing Perry Homes residents were relocated in 2000 and West Highlands will be ready for occupancy in 2003. There is no guarantee that any former Perry Home residents can move back to the Westlands development. Past experience in Atlanta reveals that only one in ten former tenants are successful in securing units redeveloped in public housing. However, this transformation has come at the price of displacement of low-income tenants in favor of those tenants who can pay full market rent. Before all of the redevelopment, Atlanta had 14,500 units of public housing. Today, there are 9,500 public housing units in the city.²⁵

As referenced above, approximately 5000 former residents of the Perry Homes project in Atlanta were left homeless in 2003. It was in the environment similar to this that rap artists like Shawn Carter and Nasir Jones were bred in New York City. The same holds true for the Atlanta native Clifford Harris II (T.I.). The now 25-year-old Harris was born in a humble house very close to the notorious Bankhead Housing project which also was close to the Perry Homes project. At the time of his entrance into the Hip-Hop culture, he made an album titled *I’m Serious* on a label called Ghetto-Vision/Arista. Harris is easily one of the individuals to have rapped about selling drugs in the South in his songs. Although other Atlanta rap groups like Outkast, Goodie MOB, and Parental Advisory talked about the topic in their songs, it was Harris whom solidified the notoriety of expressions like “Trap House” and “Dope Boys” into current mainstream Hip-Hop vocabulary. Harris was known on the streets as T-I-P; however, he was forced to drop the letter “P” in his name because his label mate (Kamaal Fareed) also had a similar nickname (Q-Tip); hence Harris gave himself a new identity with the new name “TI”.

Although Harris rapped about the drug culture in a majority of his songs, his narrative style stands out in a class by itself. The uniqueness of his style may have evolved from the honesty with which he describes his experiences. A perfect example of this honesty can be seen in the first song from the album *I’m Serious*. The song, titled “I Still Ain’t Forgive Myself”, runs as follows:

Man I been in and outta trouble since adolescence
Spoiled rotten, dead fresh, wit no daddy present
I got two uncles, Quint and Man they keep me straight
7 and 8, I’m countin’ while they movin’ weight
My daddy send me clothes and always tell me to come see him
I say aight but still I feelin’ like my momma need him
They sendin' letters home from school, nobody readin' mine  
And plus my uncles, doin' 10 years Fed time  
Then I started rebellin', crack sellin'  
The littlest thing on the corner wit a Mac 11  
After school I hear momma holler homework  
I say aiight ma, but look I got my own work  
Started interactin' wit fiends at the age of 13  
Now my momma findin' rocks in my socks, glocks in my toy box  
Like damn, why do trouble come to me like this  
But on the real, it ain't even have to be like this (f---)  
(Chorus)  
Mistakes made on this road to wealth  
I still ain't forgave myself  
Ay, what I am today  
I made myself but I still ain't forgave myself  
For runnin' to the grave getting' closer to death

I still ain't forgave myself  
For anyone who ever wondered how I felt  
I still ain't forgave myself

Although the idea of selling drugs at a very young age is familiar in the songs of New York rap artists who preceded Harris, instead of waiting for his career to go further before explaining himself, the young rap artists from Atlanta begins his story directly from the beginning, leaving very few questions unanswered. Although Harris had a father, his father was living in New York City, while he lives in Atlanta. There is no evidence to suggest that Harris's father was a hustler like his son, but the young Harris was schooled in the "drug game" by his two Uncles Quint and Man, while his father was living in the New York City. Eventually his uncles were apprehended for selling drugs and had to spend 10 years in a Federal prison. In their absence, Harris began selling crack cocaine to addicts or "fiends" as he referred to them at the age of 13. Not only was he the "smallest thing on the corner with a machine gun (Mac 11)," but his mother began

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26 T.I., I'm Serious, excerpts read by author, Ghettovision/ Arista 2001.
to find pieces of 9 MM pistols in his clothing and around his toys. In the second verse he
goes on to discuss the things he learned while growing up on this particular side of the
law. Harris learned such lessons as “never buy a car from a stranger” as well as how
money seemed like his “ticket out of the ghetto.” However, it appears that he learned his
best lesson on why earning money legitimately is much better than earning it illegally,
during an incident in which he was pulled over by a policeman:

At 16, here’s my introduction to manhood
Blue lights behind me, damn what I’m gonna do
‘cause I got 2 pounds of weed and a 3.80 too
I guess everything’ll be aight if I just keep it cool
How ‘ya doin officer, what ya mean why I ain’t in school

Can you search the car?? Yea but, I rather that you didn’t
Besides it’s just a waste of ‘yo time ‘cause ain’t nuthin’ in it
(Laugh) I guess that’s when I seen, that I don’t know s---
When stuck in a place wit freedom I ain’t gonna get..(D---)27

The “manhood” that Harris is speaking of in the first line of the stanza above is the reality
of getting caught by the police and by being treated as an adult, even though he may have
thought he was a juvenile. For a young man who was running the streets and trying to sell
two pounds of marijuana with a 38 caliber pistol in his possession, staying out of trouble
would definitely not be easy. The distress of getting caught by a police officer scared
him. In addition, the police officer knew that Harris should have been in school, so
catching him with cannabis with the intent to distribute really shattered his sense of
security and independence. Although his song about this experience never actually
reveals whether or not Harris was arrested on that particular night, the story of his
encounter with the police may provide a disincentive to other young people who may

27 Ibid.
want to traffic in drugs. This interpretation is even supported by the disclaimer that Harris offers at the end of the song:

Yea, for anybody who ever wondered how I felt
Anybody who wondered what’s wrong with me, here it is...
3 16’s of what’s in the heart of T.I.P
This song is dedicated to everybody who ain’t here wit me
Cap, d--- you f----- up shawty, but when you get out
If live to see it, its gone be on again ya know what I’m sayin
And we ain’t gotta worry bout no jail shawty we legit now
Ya know what I’m sayin.. Cern, Quint, Endae, yall gone get out man
And when you do I’ll be there shawty.. always
Bankhead, J-rue, I’m sorry man, some s--- I can’t change
When I get there, we gone ball again, open the gates shawty let me in...
We gone ball. J-Rue man I know money ain’t worth no friend shawty..
I f----- up man...I still ain’t forgave myself
My momma, I’m sorry I ain’t graduate but

H--- we rich now it don’t matter. My uncles s---,
It don’t matter neither..y’all back
Well h----..My ‘lil boy (music stops)
You betta not do the same s--- I did
Or Im’ma whoop you muthaf------ a—

The above monologue may be described as an acknowledgement of all the individuals to whom Harris is apologizing. Moreover, the monologue reveals a small part of the biography of the individuals whom he talked about throughout his narrative. Harris promises his uncles, Cern, Quint, and Endae, some support and rehabilitation as soon as they get released from prison. Even some of his friends like Bankhead and J-Rue who have been killed selling drugs are acknowledged in the song. This celebratory remembrance of his friends is touching. He demonstrates his loyalty to them by requesting that they let him into the gates when he gets “there” (Heaven). In a similar mood of sober recollection, Harris apologizes to his mother for dropping out of school

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28 Ibid.
and pursuing a life of crime. However, with a deprecating sense of humor, Harris states that, "we rich now, it don't matter" and goes on to reveal that his uncles are out of prison, which completes the healing process for him and his family. At the end of the song, he tells his son not to do what he has done or take the same negative path; his retribution for his son’s disobedience would be severe corporal punishment.

Although the album, *I’m Serious*, appears to be a glorification of the culture of drug dealing, it also touches on a variety of other subjects. The album includes selections which validate him as both a strong rapper and a narrator. The album not only demonstrates Harris’s lyrical versatility, but also reveals his vision as an artist. In the song, *I’m Serious*, Harris explains the much nobler side of rapping—getting known for being a serious artist, as opposed to just getting rich off rapping:

Some niggas wonder what my goal is  
They think it’s havin’ h--- sweatin’ me  
F--- that, I’m in it for longevity  
Picture me as one of the greatest that’ll ever be  
Compare me to, Tupac, B.I.G., and Jay-Z  
Work with legends like Organ,I-Z-E, and J.D.  
Neptunes, they even flow on one of Dre’s beats  
Fly to Miami, chill with Luke and we can trade freaks.\(^{29}\)

Harris compares himself to other rap celebrities, and he is pleased to be among their ranks. The roll call of the rap greats begins with the legends, such as Tupac Shakur, Christopher Wallace ("The Notorious B.I.G.") , and Shawn Carter ("Jay-Z") who many say had earned the crown of the lyrical king by default (because of the untimely death of Tupac and B.I.G.). Next he reaches out to the production teams that have made the rappers to be successful. For example, he celebrates "The Neptunes," the group that

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
programmed the track for "I'm Serious," and also worked extensively with other platinum-selling artists. He also gives honorable mention to Luther Campbell of the 2-Live Crew. In essence, Harris can be described as humble in the way he respects other people's contribution to the art form, despite his own major success.

On the subject of misogyny, Harris may be vulnerable to criticism. However, the criticism may be one-sided because many of his songs present a different perspective on male-female relationships that are normally addressed in Hip-Hop songs. In the next song, "I Can't Be Your Man," Harris explains why he rejects a lady for fear of commitment. The chorus explains it all while the verses go deeper into this reason for rejection:

I can't be your man
It ain't you it's me, sorry shorty
I can't be your man
Where I been I don't see no rings on these fingers
I can't be your man
Look to the future, find someone better than me

Although Harris pleads with young women in the chorus, some of them he refers to as "lazy" and "trifling." Usually in Hip-Hop songs, the narrator will refer to women in more derogatory ways like calling them a b---- or w----. It appears that the voiceless individuals who Harris is vouching for are men everywhere who are not ready to commit. In a similar song entitled "Chooz You," Harris again pleads for rejection, but this song has a slower tempo and does so in a manner in which its narrator shows self-doubt:

I like to pursue, but I still I respect it to let it go
Give it time, room to breathe and let it grow
I'll just tell her when I'm ready to change, I'll let her know
Hate to say it, but 'til then be friends and nuthin mo

30 Ibid.
Evendoe anotha time, anotha place
I swear I know we coulda been great

This type of ballad is a far cry from the norm of most Hip-Hop artists who denigrate women. On the contrary, Harris explains why he is not good enough for a particular woman. This approach is unusual, and perhaps innovative, for a rap artist known for selling drugs.

Harris now was starting his own groups as well as renovating homes in his Bankhead neighborhood. Harris founded a company, “New Finish Construction,” to rebuild his community. Clearly, Harris’ days of selling crack were far behind him, but his next album was given a drug-related title, Trap Muzik. This may seem surprising to those who know of his encounter with the law as a result of drug trafficking, but Harris explains in a magazine interview the reason for drug-related title:

People see the trap as being all bad because that’s what they see on TV and that’s all they hear on records. I’m trying to show people it ain’t all like that. Everybody [who’s selling drugs] out here ain’t robbing, stealing and killing. It’s some people out here who just selling dope because this is the only way they know how to get money as fast as they need to get it. The crack epidemic has done a lot of positive and negative. On one instance, it’s genocide, it brings down the community, it kills. But at the same time, it provided people with a way to do things for their community and for their family that the government never would’ve done.

One perfect example of community service that Harris is speaking of is his “New Finish Construction.”Ironically, the very same practice that Harris engaged in that destroyed his community is now rebuilding his Bankhead community as well as supporting him and his family.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 145.
The next rap artist to be considered is Wesley Weston, Jr. (also known as 'Lil Flip). Weston was born in Houston, Texas on March 3, 1981. Unlike the other rap artists in this study, Weston is a high school graduate from Worthing High School. Prior to rapping, his pastimes were sports in school especially basketball. One musical influence of Weston's may have been his grandmother playing piano at his family's Christian Love Baptist Church. Weston also was an honor student never bringing anything less home on his report cards than an “A” or “B.” He even admitted on an episode of B.E.T.’s Rap City that it was his strong love for rap that aided him in receiving high grades in subjects like English. Although Weston was equally adept at basketball, he chose rap as his career after high school because he could easily make money from it.

Although Weston had numerous underground albums, the one that sold 150,000 copies, and for which he is most known as his starting point, was *The Leprechaun.*

Below is an excerpt from a song titled “Da Freestyle King:”

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We blow Indo, I might be on Jay Leno
They be like Flip, can you listen to my demo
I say naw nigga I got shows to do
After the concert, I got h--- to screw
If I’m on stage, I don’t want to be close to you
I got money n----, I ain’t gonna boast to you
What am I supposed to do is keep rappin’
Some n---- got gold in they mouth, I got platinum
I ain’t cappin’, what happened
I done blew too quick. 33
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Songs such as “Da Freestyle King” are a Houston representation of the ever-present aspects of party antics represented in Hip-Hop music. Sure, all Weston is talking about

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are groupie women and materialism, but in the beginning, as mentioned in chapter one, this was the main topic usually covered by early Hip-Hop artists. Originally a rapper’s lyrics were meant to counteract the monotony of the disc jockey’s spinning. Although the verse may not seem to be the most complex, the independently distributed album had sold well, and Weston proclaimed that Robert Davis (a well-known Houston deejay also known as D.J. Screw), recognized him as the best rapper in Texas. Consequently, Davis presented Weston with a plaque during The Leprechaun’s March 3, 2000 release calling him “The Freestyle King.” Although some feel this presentation was true, Duane Hobbs (Weston’s former manager also known as Humpty Hump) has argued on various occasions that Weston had designed the plaque and proclaimed himself “The Freestyle King.”34 Whatever the situation was, Weston was now a force to be reckoned with out of Cloverland, his south Houston neighborhood.

In 2002, Weston’s first major release was with Sony records on an album entitled Undaground Legend. Although Weston’s reputation as a champion freestyle rapper did not really get him acclaim in major circles of the music industry, they did however enable him a wide level of acceptance at the grassroots or “underground level” (which is where the album had received its name). Although the following verse was from a song off this major debut, the lyrics just so happen to be a remix from the album featuring Vallejo California lyrical heavyweight Earl Stevens (E-40):

Lil Flip, I’m back on this track
But this time around, E-40 got my back
You know we popping collars, hittin’ sixteen switches
And after the show, I’m takin’ fifteen pictures
With fourteen chicks, and they all from Mexico

When they saw the Sprewells, they said let’s go
Now we smoking sweets yep, thirteen grams
Now I’m doing donuts, in an orange Lam
Borghini on Dubs, cruising through the club
Trying to find a chick, who like f----- with a thug
I’ve never been a scrub, I always had do’
But now I’m with Sony, so I got a little ‘mo
Now we acting bad, when we pulling off the lot
I treat my car like a stripper, watch me drop the top
I’m doing 85, going down to Sea World
Me, E-40, Hump, Redd and my homie C-Note.

Of course Weston introduces himself on this remix track by emphasizing that it is his return. Not just with a brand new album, but a brand new major label, Sony. “Popping collars” is basically a custom practiced on the west coast in which an individual pulls onto his collars and flexes them out as a symbol of a high status. Hitting switches is another west coast custom in which hydraulic cars bounce up and down after a switch in the car has been pressed. Of course the fifteen girls from Mexico that Weston claims to have taken pictures with is self-explanatory. “Sprewells” in line 6 of the stanza is a custom-made racing car rim that was designed by NBA basketball icon Latrell Srpewell (Of course they cost thousands of dollars). As they drive away in Weston’s orange Lambourghini sports car with thirteen grams of Marijuana, they begin turning the car 360 degrees in what is known as a “donut.” A “scrub” is a label for someone who is inadequate, and Weston of course denies being one. However, he does mention that he’s searching for a few women in a club who are willing to have intercourse with this “self-proclaimed thug”. As Weston goes 85 miles per hour to Sea World, he compares his Lambourghini to a stripper through the way he lets down its convertible top. Now lyrics such as these sound nice to a beat, especially when they are freestyle or improvised;

35 Lil’ Flip, _Underground Freestyles_, excerpts read by author, Sony records, 2002.
however, most Hip-Hop enthusiasts, except of course those from Houston, may describe this lyrical flow as inadequate.

By the time Wesley Weston had released his third album entitled *U Gotta Feel Me*, he may not have been everyone’s favorite rapper, however, he had rhymed with a large variety of popular artists from many regions. Although this versatility was a factor in Weston’s lucrative career, perhaps what had taken his career to the next level was a selection entitled “Game Over.” The following song reveals part of the reason why this possibly occurred:

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The game over, ‘cause s--- about to change over
It’s about time ‘cause Hip-Hop need a make over (But you don’t hear me)
If most producers want to charge too much
But around my way that’s how you get f---- up (But you don’t hear me)
You might think we all beats and rhymes
But way before this rap s---, n----, the streets was mine (But you don’t hear me)
I got that hot s---, that “Thug Life” ‘Pac s---
That get hot s---, that B.I.G “Ready To Die” s---
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Weston voices his reasons for why he feels the “Game is Over.” One of these reasons is that producers “charge too much.” It is not really clear as to whether or not this taunt is aiming at anyone in particular, but nevertheless he had vented this one factor with his displeasure at the time. Also in his boasting of how in his neighborhood (“around his way”) people who charge too much for musical beats and production are beaten up is also stated. His final comparison is a metaphor in which he likens his style to Tupac Shakur’s “Thug Life” concept as well as that of Christopher Wallace (The Notorious B.I.G.). Although these lyrical trends are average at best, probably the main reason for Weston’s successful sales of this song was its musical production. The catchy beat contains sound

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interpolations of one of the most popular video games of all time, Ms. Pac-Man. Just as when the make-believe yellow heroine eats dots and makes a noise, the same sound effect is used in the beat of the song.

The final song that probably made *U Gotta Feel Me* a successful album for Weston was a rap ballad entitled “Sunshine.” Although the lyrics may have been looked at as “corny” to some, its memorable vocals by a background singer may have had something to do with its success:

[chorus :Lea]

I can call you my baby boy
You can call me your baby girl
Maybe we can spend some time (spend some time)
I can be your sunshine!

[Verse 1 ‘Lil flip’]
Look, I know you wanna chill wit a player
But all you gotta do is keep it real with a player
Just answer your phone whenever I call
‘Cause I’m riding on chrome whenever I ball
I like them short and tall but not too thick
I just walk in the spot and take my pick
And they wanna roll cause they like my style
And when I pop my collar, I make them smile
I need a lady in the streets but a freak in the sheets
That know how to cook ‘cause a n--- like to eat
Spaghetti, shrimp and steak and I’ll adore you
I’ll treat you like milk, I’ll do nothing but spoil you 37

The line “I’ll treat you like milk, I’ll do nothing but spoil you,” has been described as dry and boring by numerous Hip-Hop critics. 38 Although the song may be dry and boring, it happens to be very popular with the younger generation who has chosen it as the ring tone of choice for their cell phones. The ring tones for “Sunshine” as well as “Game

37 Ibid.
Over" have increased Weston’s popularity due to purchase of both song’s ring tone versions by three million cell phone customers.39

Hip-Hop music genres, like other art forms, reveal a great deal about authors and their circumstances. Regardless of what Hip-Hop artists may feel about what they might or might not do at the start of their careers, many of these preconceived notions go out of the window once their careers actually take off. Since the record companies have usually been the greatest shareholders in an artist’s earnings, Hip-Hop lyricists have now come up with various new ways to recoup all of the money which they feel they righteously deserve. This drive for ownership is no widespread, regardless of the region the artist is from, their biographical backgrounds, or their level of education. A thirst for wealth and fame continues to remain the spark that unites the struggles of all rap artists. However, these artists with their varied and complex narrative styles have all made their contributions to the Hip-Hop music industry.

39 Ibid.
Chapter 4

Hip-Hop as an Instrument of Discourse

As was previously mentioned in the last chapter, Hip-Hop is a reflection of an artist’s biography. The artist relies on his art to tell the story of a personal struggle that may not necessarily be important to the mainstream media. In addition Hip-Hop can also be an instrument of discourse between two or more artists. Using Hip-Hop as a deliberate discourse began in the late 1970’s in the competition of neighborhood deejays, which was based on how loud their sound systems were. Since rapping was born out of deejaying, one of the first recorded forms of Hip-Hop discourse may have been the confrontation between two pioneering rappers, Mahandas Dewese (Kool Moe Dee) and David Parker (Busy Bee), around the 1980’s.

In the famous lyrical competition between Dewese and Parker, the skirmish was sparking through a fan in the crowd urging Parker, winner of the Harlem World battle, to match his wits with Dewese, one of the judges in the battle. Parker accepted the challenge and battled with Dewese. Had Dewese not accepted the challenge to battle with Parker, he may have been viewed as inadequate and lacking in masculinity (Ch.2).\(^1\) However, Dewese defeated, and from that point on, Dewese became the official King of New York Rap. The encounter was recorded on a cassette tape and reproduced, and circulated throughout the metropolitan New York area.

After the encounter between Dewese and Parker, more lyrical battles were being recorded, and these forms of confrontational discourse became competitive and aggressive. The discourse in the “Roxanne Wars” was one of the first of these recorded lyrical battles. The discourse had the effect of generating more discourses, which led to the borough battles between the South Bronx and the Queens.

The competition between Brooklyn and Queens may have been responsible for the ferocious discourse exchange between Shawn Carter and Nasir Jones. The battle between Carter and Jones was also the result of the competition for who would hold the rap title “King of New York”. The title would endow the bearer with certain rights and privileges; and for this reason, many rap artists were determined to acquire the title no matter the rigors of the lyrical competition. Originally, the title of “King of New York” was borrowed from a popular movie, in which a drug dealer named Frank White (Christopher Walken) was intensely idolized by Hip-Hop artists. Walken’s character had the license to do whatever he wanted, including killing his adversaries. Similarly, some Hip-Hop artists believed they were also entitled to this privilege.

The discourse between Carter and Jones probably continued to intensify. One interesting version occurred in Carter’s first album *Reasonable Doubt*. In a song entitled “Dead Presidents” Carter actually used a recording of Jones’ voice for the chorus of the song. This phrasing, which read “I’m out for Dead Presidents to represent me,” was repeated throughout Carter’s narrative and clearly stated his intent in rapping about hardcore tales from his illegal Brooklyn pastime. At first, when Jones did not immediately respond to Carter’s using his voice, Carter may have interpreted the silence
to be an endorsement of his discourse strategy. Consequently, Carter made another imitation of Jones’ discourse style in a song from Carter’s second album, *In My Lifetime Vol. 1*: “Where I’m From.” In the song, Carter proudly includes himself in the company of big names of rap: Christopher Wallace and Nasir Jones. By implication, Carter refers to himself as one of the “big three rappers” in New York:

> Your world was everything, so everything you said you’d do
> You did it, Couldn’t talk about it if you ain’t lived it
> I from where n----- pull your car over and argue all day about
> Who’s the best MC’s, Biggie, Jay-Z, and Nas

The four lines in the stanza suggest that in the realm of gangster rap and narratives, if one had not lived the hardcore lifestyle, the unwritten rule was that an artist could not rap about it. According to Carter, fans of this “New York street reality rap” were so intense about the unwritten rule that they would actually pull their cars over in the streets and argue all day about who were the best gangster rappers. Not only is this a compliment, but it also means that the best gangster rapper would be the leader of the pack while the rest are imitators.

Shortly after the death of Christopher Wallace on March 9th of 1997, Carter proclaimed himself the lyrical “King of New York”. In doing so he sought to esatblish his dominance with a song titled “The Takeover”, from the album *The Blueprint*.

Although Carter mentioned the names of many different rappers in the song, the most frequently mentioned was Nasir Jones. Here is excerpt from the song:

> Trust me on this one—I’ll detach you
> Mind from spirit, body from soul
> They’ll have to hold a mass, put your body in a hole
> No, you’re not on my level get your brakes tweaked

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I sold what ya whole album sold in my first week
You guys don’t want it with Hov’
Ask Nas, he don’t want it with Hov’, no!2

In the song, Carter dismisses other rappers as unworthy of the title, King of New York. He does this by giving himself a new alias, “Jayovah the God M.C.” The alias, which is an allusion to Jehovah, the Christian creator, suggests that Carter imagines himself to be the creator of New York Hip-Hop, just as Jehovah is the creator of humankind. In the song’s last line, Carter states, “Ask Nas he don’t want it with ‘Hov, no.” This line is directed towards Jones to remind him of his place and to advise him not agitate for Carter’s Hip-Hop throne. In other words Carter sees himself as the preeminent Hip-Hop artist in New York, while his competitors like Nasir Jones are irrelevant. In the next stanza, Carter further validates his “superiority” by exaggerating the influence of his entourage and by being contemptuous of Jones:

R.O.C., we runnin’ this rap s---
M-Easy, we runnin’ this rap s---
The Broad Street Bully, we runnin’ this rap s---
Get zipped up in plastic when it happens that’s it
Freeway, we run this rap s---
O& Spark, we runnin’ this rap s---
Chris and Neef, we runnin’ this rap s---
(Watch out!! We Run New York)

I know you missin’ all the – Faaaammme!
But along with celebrity comes bout seventy shots to your frame
N----, you a Laaaammme!!!!... 
Went from, Nasty Nas to Esco’s trash
Had a spark when you started but now you’re just garbage
Fell from the top ten to not mentioned at all
To your bodyguard’s “Oochie Wally” verse better than yours
Matter of fact you had the worst flow on the whole f-----’ song
But I know – the sun don’t shine, then son don’t shine

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That’s why your – laaaammme! - career come to an end
There’s only so long fake thugs can pretend
N----; you ain’t live it you witnessed it from your folks pad
You scribbled in your notepad and created your life

Authorship is established through repetitive rhyme. Carter claims that he and his group dominate New York Hip-Hop. He gives emphasis to this idea of domination through repetition. This is a form of psychological brainwashing in the sense that when people (especially his supporters) hear his claims of superiority repeated over and over, they might subconsciously accept the validity of the claims. Using an allusion to a David Bowie rock song called “Fame,” Carter alleges that Jones is lacking in “fame.” He also contends that celebrity comes with a price: “seven shots to his frame.” This expression is a Hip-Hop terminology for assassination. Carter then alludes to the idea that Jones’ bodyguard is even a better rapper than Jones. In further challenging Jones’ authenticity, Carter’s next tactic was to question the validity of Jones’ drug trafficking tales:

I showed you your first tec on tour with Large Professor
(Me, that’s who) Then I heard your album bout your tec on your dresser
So yeah, I sampled your voice, you was using it wrong
You made it a hot line, I made it a hot song
And you ain’t got a coin n---- you was getti’n f----- and
I know who I paid God, Serchlit Publishing
Use your Braaaiiinnnn! You said you been in this ten
I’ve been in it five -- smarten up Nas
Four albums in ten years n----? I can divide
That’s one every let’s say two, two of them s---- was due
One was – Nahh, the other “Illmatic”
That’s one hot album every ten year average
And that’s so Iliiaaammmeeee!! N---- switch up your flow
Your s---- is garbage, but you try and kick knowledge?
(Get the f--- outta here) You n----z gon’ learn to respect the king
Don’t be the next contestant on that Summer Jam screen
Because you know who (who) did you know what (what)
With you know who (yeah) but just keep that between me and you for now

---Ibid.

---Ibid.
According to Carter, Jones was a "fake thug" who penned fantasy tales about what he saw out of his parents' window in the projects. Carter also alleged that Jones was inspired to write rhymes with a "gangster theme" after he (Carter) showed him an automatic machine gun (tek) while they were on a musical tour. This statement is intended to not only question Jones’ authenticity and discredit his street credibility, but also to present him as a devotee of imitation. Carter furthers the invalidation of Jones’ street credibility by using Jones’ voice in the song “Dead Presidents” and claiming to have used the voice even better than Jones would have done. In his use of the voice, Carter discredits Jones by insinuating that Jones does not own proprietary rights to his voice. In addition, Carter mocks Jones’ musical productivity by pointing out that he produces “One hot album every ten years.” In the finale of this attack on Jones, Carter reminds Jones that he is the “King” (of New York). He also warned Jones to not be a contestant on the “Summer Jam,” an annual Hip-Hop concert organized by New York radio station Hot 97, because he would be trashed by the king (Carter).

In response to Carter’s song “The Takeover,” Jones released a song on his album Stillmatic which was entitled “Ether.” The album was probably named “Stillmatic” to symbolize that lyrically, Jones was still as good as his greatest selling debut album, the classic known as Illmatic. Jones discredits Carter as “The King of New York,” through questioning both his authenticity as well as his imitation of his own narration and lyrical style. Examples of this discourse can be seen from Jones’ “Ether:”

(Nas Talking) F--- Jay-Z
What’s up N-----, ay yo, I know you ain’t talking about me dog
You what?
(F--- Jay-Z)

Ibid.
You been on my d--- n----, you love my style, n----
(F--- Jay-Z)

[chorus]
(I) F--- with your soul like ether
(Will) Teach you the king you know you
(Not) “God’s son” across the belly
(Lose) I prove you lost already\(^5\)

Even with just the chorus on its own, it is clear that Jones’ intention is to mock Carter’s claim as the “King of New York.” He does this by using a phrase that Carter throws around in another one of his songs, “I will not lose!” Instead of just accepting this self-affirmation by the Brooklyn rapper, Jones turns the expression on its head and claims that Carter has “lost already.” Although “The Takeover” may have been a successful discourse that attempted to weaken Jones’ credibility in the streets, however, Jones’ response with “Ether” was far more devastating. The song was better lyrically and more powerful in its message. Jones begins his demolition of Carter’s image of authenticity from the very first verse of the song:

Brace yourself for the main event
Y’all impatiently waitin’
It’s like an AIDS test, what’s the results?
Not positive, who’s the best? Pac, Nas, and Big
Ain’t no best, East, West, North, South, flossed out, greedy
I embrace y’all with napalm
Blows up, no guts, left chest, face gone
How could Nas be garbage?
Semi-autos at your cartilage
Burner at the side of your dome, come outta my throne
I got this, locked since “9-1”
I am the truest, name a rapper I ain’t influenced
Gave y’all chapters but now I keep my eyes on the Judas
With Hawaiian Sophie fame, kept my name in his music
Check it\(^6\)

\(^6\) Ibid.
"Brace yourself for the main event," is Jones' way of saying that Carter has indeed picked himself a fight by disparaging him in his narrative "The Takeover." In addition, the huge amounts of cursing between the choruses, also is evidence to the reader or listener that Carter's attack on him was a complete surprise. Of course, Jones was definitely sure that he and Carter competed for the same core audience, however, "Ether" was a confirmation that now Jones was ready to retaliate. Had Jones avoided retaliation, he would have probably been viewed as a "loser" who is afraid to defend his masculinity. Jones described the fans waiting for the results to an AIDS patient waiting for a test. In response to "The Takeover," Jones denies all of the labels that Carter placed on him: from being "garbage" to him not being adept at expressing himself on the microphone. He furthers this claim by comparing Carter to Judas. Because Carter had ridiculed Jones in "The Takeover," Jones is furious that someone who behaved like a true friend and then ridiculed him must be another Judas. The next stanza is the body of the discourse, and it further explains the reasons for Jones' criticism of Carter. In the lyrics, Jones likens his song (Ether) to poison, which becomes his preferred method of killing Carter, albeit figuratively:

I've been f---- over, left for dead, dissed and forgotten
Luck ran out, they hoped that I'd be gone, stiff and rotten
Y'all just piss on me, s--- on me, spit on my grave (uh)
Talk about me, laugh behind my back but in my face
Y'all some well-wishin' b------, friendly actin' envy hidin' snakes
With your hands out for money, man, how much can I take?
When these street keep callin', heard it when I was sleep
That this Gay-Z and Cockafella Records wanted beef
Started cockin' up my weapon slowly loadin' up this ammo
To explode it on a camel, and his soldiers, I can handle

This for dolo and his manuscript sound stupid
When KRS already made an album called “Blueprint”
First, Biggie’s ya man, then you have the nerve to say you’re better than Big
D--- suckin’ lips, whyn’t you let the late, great veteran live…

In the second stanza, Jones explains how he heard that Shawn Carter had a problem with
him. He heard his name mentioned in various songs and around town. In essence, Jones
is accusing Carter of talking behind his back. In the world of hardcore rap, talking
behind somebody’s back is unpardonable cowardice. The reference to “Gay-Z” and
“Cockafella” in the song above is Jones’ denigration of Carter’s name and record label
(Jay-z and Roc-A-Fella). Jones claims that by “dragging his name through the mud” in a
song and spreading rumors about him around town, as Carter has done, reveals the
latter’s spinelessness and timidity, characteristics not associated with manhood. The
“camel” mentioned in the stanza was Jones’ nickname for Carter because of his big lips.

Jones furthers the narrative with an accusation that Carter stole the ideas and technique of
other established artists. For example, in the song cited above, Jones claims that Carter
stole the title of his album from Kris Parker’s album of the same name from which Carter
derived the title of his album “The Takeover” (“K-R-S already made an album called
Blueprint!”). Not only did Jones discuss how Carter, the self-proclaimed “New King of
New York,” was stealing (biting in the Hip-Hop dialect) album titles but also how Carter
was reinterpreting both the lyrics and the style of his deceased friend, The Notorious B-I-
G (Christopher Wallace). Jones furthers his ridicule of Shawn Carter’s lack of
authenticity (style stealing) in the conclusion to the song:

Is he Dame Diddy, Dame Daddy, or Dame Dummy?
Oh, I get it, you Biggie and he’s Puffy

8 Ibid.
Rockefeller dies of AIDS, that was the end of his chapter
And that’s the guy y’all chose to name your company after?
...You a--, went from Jaz, to hangin’ with Kane, to Irv, to Big
And Eminem murdered you on your own s--
You a d----ridin’ f-----, you love attention
Queens n------, run you n------, ask Russell Simmons
Ha, R-O-C get gunned up and clapped quick
J.J. Evans get gunned up and clapped quick
Your whole d---- record get gunned up and clapped quick
Shawn Carter to Jay-Z, d---- you on Jaz d---
So little shorty’s getting’ gunned and clapped quick
How much of Biggie’s rhymes is gonna come out of your fat lips?
Wanted to be on every one of his classics
You pop s----, apologize, n----, just ask Kiss

Jones concludes his accusation of Carter’s lack of authenticity by describing how he and his colleagues have similar titles to other currently established rap artists. Carter’s lack of creativity shows in his phony affiliation with artists of greater reputation and talent. First he starts to mock Damon Dash, Carter’s then business partner, by purposely misquoting his name as “Dame Diddy,” “Dame Daddy,” or “Dame Dummy.” This deliberate malapropism not only expressed how Jones felt about Carter’s preoccupation with inauthentic persona, but it further validated his original claim of Carter’s childish desire to duplicate the image of Christopher Wallace and his producer, Sean Combs (P-Diddy).

To conclude his evidence of Carter’s lack of authenticity in “The Takeover”, Jones mentions the names of Hip-Hop artists to whom Carter has a habit of comparing himself. These include: Christopher “B-I-G” Wallace, Big Daddy “Antonio Hardy” Kane, Irving “Gotti” Lorenzo, and Christopher “Jaz-O” Burkes. Jones even claims that Carter’s title “Jay-Z” was stolen from Burke’s title (Jaz-O). This charge of lack of

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9 Ibid.
authenticity on the part of Carter's, is also shared by other Hip-Hop competitors and critics, not just Jones alone.

In addition to the Carter-Jones discourse rivalry that centers on controversies about authorship, imitation, and authenticity, another prominent factor which almost caused the rivalry to become fatal was sexual discourse. Although Jones had a few casual encounters with Carter, he (Jones) really had no true knowledge that his Hip-Hop competitor had a real problem with him until his girlfriend had admitted to having an affair with Carter. Information about this affair was not leaked to the public until Jones' former girlfriend wrote a book about it in 2006. The book, *It's No Secret: From Nas To Jay-Z, Seduction To Scandal—A Hip-Hop Helen of Troy Tells All*, discussed Carmen Byan's affairs with not only Shawn Carter but also NBA star Allen Iverson. In the excerpt below, Bryan explains what it was like when she finally admitted to Nas about her affair with Carter:

Jones: I keep hearing about this Memphis Bleek song with Jay-Z. It's supposed to be about you.

Bryan: The song was news to me, but at the mention of Shawn's name my heart sank down to my stomach, which tightened into knots... Nas wasn't exactly buying my little speech, but he let things drop for the moment. We hung up and I lunged for the bathroom, where I was sick.¹⁰

The excerpt explains Jones' reaction to rumors about her having an affair with Carter.

Shawn Carter’s young protégé” “Malik Cox” sang a song titled, “Is That Your Chick (B----)” that was rumored to be about Bryan's sexual escapades. Although Cox’s song was rumored to be about Bryan, it is not easy to make the connection. However, the first clue

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of Carter’s and Bryan’s affair is hinted in the former’s song “The Takeover.” This affair is what Carter was alluding to when he says, “Because you know who, did you know what, with you know who, but just keep that between me and you.”\(^{11}\) The narrative in which Carter got extremely explicit about his affair with Bryan is on a 12-inch song titled “Super Ugly.” In the song’s introduction, Carter reveals a somewhat pornographic encounter between himself and Bryan, which supports the rumors of an affair:

> All I really know is your hoe wants to be with me, and she ain’t playin’
> And what I’m sayin’ (She creeps with me)
> And sleeps between the sheets
> Me and the boy Al got more in common
> Than just ballin’ and rhymin’ get it, more in Carmen
> I came in your Bentley backseat, skeeted in your jeep
> Left condoms on your babyseat
> Yeah n---- the gloves is off, the love is done
> It’s whatever, whenever, however n---- one
> And since you infatuated with sayin’ that gay s---
> Yes you was kissin’ my d--- when you was kissin’ that b----
> Nasty s---, thought I was bonin’ Vanette
> You callin’ Carm a hundred times I was bonin’ her neck
> You got a baby by the broad you can’t disown her yet
> When does your lies end? When does the truth begin?
> When does reality set in or does it matter?
> Gotta hurt I’m your baby mama’s favorite rapper
> And ask your current girl, she knows what’s up
> Holla at a real n---- cause n---- (I don’t give a f---)\(^{12}\)

Not only did Carter present a graphic testimony about his affair with Bryan, he even alluded to another affair that she was having with Allen Iverson, the NBA basketball star. Carter implies from the first line of the stanza that Carmen chose to be with him, practically throwing herself at him, which suggests that Carmen is rather promiscuous. This description of Bryan’s promiscuity negatively reflects on Jones’ reputation and that

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is the point Carter is trying to make—in fact, he wants to suggest that Jones is a pushover to allow his woman to engage in such undignifying behavior. To have another individual blatantly disrespect someone’s love interest is the equivalent in Hip-Hop culture of being a wimp. If one let’s this occur, then the person is viewed as weak and non-masculine. Moreover, Carter implies that he and Iverson (Bryan’s other partner) have more in common than just rapping and making money through hustling (“ballin’ and rhymin’). Carter then jokingly says “…get it more in Carmen,” to allude to their sexual liason with the same woman who happened to be Jones’ beloved fiancee.

Further sexual connotations are widespread in the song. Carter even describes the process of sexual intercourse with Bryan. He admits to having an orgasm with Bryan in the backseat of her car and uses words such as “bonin’” to refer to sexual intercourse. To show an element of conceit after his conquest of Bryan and his disdain for Jones and his child, Carter leaves his used condoms in their (Jones’ and Bryan’s) baby’s car seat afterwards. As a final humiliation of Jones, Carter boasts about how he is Bryan’s favorite Hip-Hop star (“I’m your baby mama’s favorite rapper.”). The song “Super Ugly” was so sexually explicit and morally shocking that Carter’s mother called into New York Radio Station Hot 97 while the song was playing on the air and forced her son (who was also there while the song was playing on the air) to apologize formally to Jones and his family over the air.

Although the battle had grown long and drawn out, most hardcore Hip-Hop fans have come to admire the Carter-Jones rivalry as one of the most legendary Hip-Hop

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battles. The reason for this was that every bit of animosity that Jones and Carter had felt for one another was injected into the battle and not vented into anything physically violent (like the B-I-G-Tupac Shakur rivalry). By the time Jones’ album God’s Son was released, more detailed information about many of his past rivalries was revealed in a song titled “The Last Real Nigga Alive.” Among other things, the song chronicles the reason for Jones’ battle with Carter:

Rap became a version of Malcolm and Martin
Rest in Peace Will, Queensbridge live on
There’s some ghetto secrets I can’t rhyme in this song
There’s some secrets I had to leave out...
However, I learn, with some niggaz it’s all business
But I’m a street dude with morals
To diss niggaz with Jigga, too much, he used to say Jay wanted my spot
I laughed, stayed home, never hung a lot
A quiet man who used to be alone planning
Baby moms thought I couldn’t stand it
She hit the streets, later hittin’ the sheets
With a rapper who wanted me on his songs, thinking he strong
I taught her how to watch for cars that might follow
Taught her s--- that I know
Her weakness was shine yo
But that’s her, I ain’t mad baby, it made me stronger.14

This stanza begins by explaining the Carter-Jones rivalry and comparing the two rappers to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm-X, both having similar ideologies but expressing them in different manners. The same held true for Jones and Carter.

While Jones had a clever underground and witty lyrical style that most would cause most fans to label him as a “true M.C.,” Carter rapped more about materialism and sought acceptance from the commercial audience, which would earn him the label of a rapper.

Although Carter raps more about materialism than Jones, Carter’s ego was bruised when

14 Nas, God’s Son, excerpts read by author, Sony/ Columbia, 2002, cd.
Jones, another rapper whom he admired, had refused to record songs with him. This rumored rejection may have been the reason for the origin of the Jones-Carter rivalry, as evidenced in the following lyric: “Baby moms thought I couldn’t stand it/ She hit the streets, later hittin’ the sheets/With a rapper who wanted me on his songs, thinking he strong” (see “The Last Real N---- Alive” quoted above).

Jones goes on to say that Steve Stoute had been a manager for both he and Carter and had mentioned that Carter wanted Jones’ spot or title. He also relays how his trust had remained with Stoute even after Sean Combs (P-Diddy) had a falling out with him. Finally he revealed why he isolated himself from everyone, including Carmen Bryan and how this somehow had driven her into the arms of Shawn Carter. If one were to ask who won the battle, it would be a mixed reaction.

Despite the intense rivalry between Jones and Carter, a more serious family problem confronted Jones. His mother was battling cancer. At the same time, Carter had released a virtuous song, “Super Ugly,” which attacked Jones’ masculinity and cast aspersions on his relationship with his unfaithful girlfriend, Carmen Bryan. During this time, which was obviously traumatic for Jones, his mother advised him to keep his mind off the chaos and continue to work. In April of 2002, Jones lost his mother to cancer. Afterwards, he expressed to Hip-Hop magazine XXL his psychological disposition because of his mother’s death:

I felt like when my mom left, my whole world had ended. But one of the last things she was telling me was, ‘keep going. Keep going to work. I know you’re busy go ahead.’ If I would have been sitting down with nothing to do but think, I wouldn’t be here talking today—I’d be gone...I was getting ready to start a rampage on all rappers in the game. Not all of them, just the ones I felt had indirectly [dissed me] or
somehow was phony or some s---. I felt like taking it to another level, and me going out in a blaze, because I had nothing to live for.\textsuperscript{15}

Although Jones had wanted to go down literally fighting, he saw that in addition to his sickly mother urging him to keep on working, he also had decided he wanted to be around for his daughter, Destiny.

After more than three years of intense rivalry, Shawn Carter and Nasir Jones surprised the Hip-Hop community when they called a truce at a concert called “I Declare War.” The event, which was sponsored by a local station (Hot 97 FM) and held in Rutherford, New Jersey, on October 27, 2006, was actually organized to establish a truce between all of the competing Hip-Hop artists who had been engaging in contentious discourse. Various Hip-Hop artists who had rivalries with one another, performed at this event. For example, Curtis Jackson (“50 Cent”) performed a few of his singles alongside his nemesis Jayceon Taylor (“The Game”) who had originally been a member of his group G-Unit. Despite the fact the two rappers were now enemies, they still managed to come together and perform at the “I Declare War” concert peacefully. Both Nasir Jones and Shawn Carter also performed at this event and what made their performance historic was that a month or so later, they became partners on the same label. Jones’ contract with Sony/Epic was nearing its end and he knew that he had wanted to improve his record sales since his last album \textit{Street's Disciple} did not generate enough popularity as he would have wished. Around the same time, music executive Antonio Reid (LA Reid) turned over the Def Jam Hip-Hop record label to Shawn Carter, who had just finished

riding the success of his most successful album, *The Black Album*, which was rumored to be his last. After releasing this album, Carter felt burned out and wanted to pursue other ventures outside of music, such as the manager of the New Jersey Nets basketball team (NBA), promoting his own Reebok S. Carter sneaker, managing his own 40/40 club in at least three major cities, and promoting a variety of other products which has continued to grow. However, in spite of all of this responsibility, Carter chose to accept the position of CEO at Def Jam. After the Def Jam opportunity, Carter and Jones both answered to the press that Jones would sign to Def Jam under Carter. Although Carter’s latest album *Kingdom Come* was doing very well on the charts since its November 2006 release; Jones’ *Hip Hop is Dead* was also doing well.

Many fans of both Jones and Carter were suspecting that one of the two emcees would eventually turn on the other; both men admit, however, that their partnership which they finalized after the “I Declare War” concert was no fluke. Jones conveys the authenticity of their partnership in an interview in the XXL Magazine in which he expounds on his failed relationship with Carmen Bryan and his newfound partnership with Carter:

(Jones) It ain’t about trying to build a friendship because, umm...I don’t think rappers got into it to be friends. We got music to make, history to make and things to do. Honestly, I’d rather just be with K(Kelis). Her and me, we ride out. Other that that, I got my homies, and I got my comrades. There’s camaraderie in rap, and there’s competition, and there’s history to be made, and [Jay and I] understand that, and that’s what it is. There’s a respect thing between each other.....

(Interviewer) Yeah. I gotta tell you I read a copy of your baby mama’s tell-all book...She implies she sparked the original beef between you and Jay.
(Jones) She didn’t spark anything. She was an NYC girl running through the streets. We were both young, and whatever she did is her business. I was a young dude in the rap game, and I was running around and didn’t have time for a family. She’s gonna say what she’s going to say about it. I don’t really remember it. I think it’s mean when you do s--- just to play somebody, but I don’t know. [Shrugs] I’m cool whatever she wants to do. She’s lying or maybe she’s not lying – I have no idea. God bless her.16

When the interviewer asked about his failed relationship with Carmen Bryan, Jones explained that his relationship with Bryan happened when they were both young and immature. Jones also explains that his only true friend is his new wife Kelis; but, Carter is more like a co-worker than an actual friend. Jones does not admit to being friends with Carter, but claims that the partnership is what history needed in order to move forward. In essence, Jones is sacrificing his feelings of animosity towards Carter or anyone else for the sake of his love for Hip-Hop music.

Jones’ latest release Hip-Hop is Dead reflects what Jones sees as a pervasive trend in Hip-Hop: a lack of creativity in the music. Instead of rapping about social issues of relevance, many artists, according to Jones, are now more concerned with jingoistic materialism, a trait which he admits to have possessed earlier in his career (as displayed in his album, “It Was Written”). He explains that most successful artists in the industry currently are more interested in making money instead of promoting creativity.

As CEO of Def Jam Records, Carter has working assiduously to make his business successful. Being the CEO of Def Jam Records has been the most challenging aspect of his career. By putting aside their differences, both Carter and Jones have been able to make history, expressing their unity through Hip-Hop music. Economically, they

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have also started a trend of their own which makes being a Hip-Hop artist something that other artists can emulate as a career goal instead of doing it as a last resort.

Similar to the confrontational discourse between Nasir Jones and Shawn Carter, the battle for Hip-Hop supremacy in the south was over authorship. Cliffford Harris II (also known as T.I.) was rumored to have been attacked first by another Hip-Hop artist. Harris was attacked because he claimed to be the most successful Hip-Hop artist in the South, even though he was a newcomer to the genre. From his very first album *I'm Serious*, Harris had always referred to himself as “The King of the South.” Evidence of this claim occurs in the chorus of a song from his 2003 album *Trap Muzik* which has the same title:

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Ay what these n---- talkin’
I don’t believe that s---
I’m the king ‘cause I said it
And I mean that s---
I set the city in fire
Have you seen that s---
Ay, what these other n---- talkin’
I don’t believe that s---.17
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To many fans in the South, it seemed arrogant for Harris to make such a claim of authorship, but no one really questioned his “claiming the throne” in the beginning. As a matter of fact, many of his producers like Pharrell Williams from The Neptunes even compared him to Shawn Carter, who many view as one of the best rappers in the business:

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I don’t like to say it in this way because Jay [Shawn Carter] doesn’t like to be compared to anybody, but right now T.I. is like the Jay-Z of the South.
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But we still haven’t done the “World is Yours” type record that we need to
do, but Tip has it in him. . .

Pharrell Williams not only compared Harris to Shawn Carter but also Nasir Jones who
had a song entitled “The World is Yours” which was one of Jones’ most successful. The
theme of that particular song came from another gangster movie, Scarface, written by
Bian Depalma. Just like The King of New York, it too is a movie revered by fans of Hip-
Hop and popular culture. As a producer for both Hip-Hop artists (Shawn Carter and
Nasir Jones), Williams should definitely know Clifford Harris’ potential as a lyricist, so
he was one of the Hip-Hop moguls who had no problems with Harris’ claims.

Although Harris had moved on from a life of crime when he started his career in
Hip-Hop music, he never gave up hanging around his drug-dealing friends, and this
mistake cost him dearly. Because of his early history of drug dealing, the authorities
watched him very closely even after he denied any involvement in drug trafficking. In an
interview, Harris explains how he went to jail on a probation violation for finding an
associate’s gun on his property:

It was a gun charge. The gun was in my house. But see, the thing is, I
was involved in some s--- that the Federal Bureau of Investigations was
poking they nose in. Somehow my name had came up in the association
of these people, and there was some murders and dope [involved]. They
had nothing on these guys, so they wanted me to turn on them. But I
basically told them, “Y’all barking up the wrong tree, shawty. If y’all
figured I had something to do with all the s---, you’re mistaken.” But
before there was a problem with me they raided my house….My security
at the time, a good buddy of mine, was staying at the house when I was on
the road. And he had left his pistol under my bed. They went into the
house and lifted up my bed and saw the pistol. He comes to the house and
claims the pistol and they say,”How is this your pistol and it ain’t your

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house?" Basically, when they saw they didn't have s--- on me for real, and I wasn't cooperating, they just found a way to f--- with me. Following me, all kinds of s---. They got me on suspended license, marijuana, all kinds of s---. They just kept getting me on little s--- to where I had to go and do some time.\(^9\)

The FBI decided to see if the illegal activity Harris talked about in his songs were actually true. After investigating him for years, they could not find anything felonious or incriminating. When they could not find anything current which could be used against Harris as a probation violation, they used the smallest misdemeanor they could find to charge him with probation violation.

Shortly before Harris was locked up to serve his probation violation, he participated in a photo shoot for Source Magazine in New York City with other up and coming rappers who were primarily from the south. This was where his meeting with Wesley Weston (popularly known as Lil' Flip) occurred. Weston claimed in a DVD interview that Harris and his entourage came rudely into his trailer drinking and smoking while he was getting his hair braided for a shoot.\(^20\) At some point during the photo shoot, a prominent Southern deejay, Nick Fury, invited Harris to record a verse for the remix of his production "Game Over," which he had previously produced for Weston. Fury managed to get clearance from the proper channels (i.e. Sony and Weston's camp) to produce a remix featuring Harris, but Weston turned him down. Weston claimed it was too late because he had already completed the remix. However, this claim was not true. The truth of the matter was that Weston did not wish to work with Harris.

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\(^20\) Peter Spirer. *Beef III.* Produced and directed by Quincy Jones III and Peter Spirer. 2 hours. Image Entertainment, 2006, DVD.
Shortly after the disagreement over the remix, Harris was now imprisoned for his probation violation. In spite of his incarceration, the daily operations of his company Grand Hustle were still being taken care of by his manager. The point at which Harris proclaimed himself the “King of the South” became a problem after he was in jail and away from the music business. In the Summer of 2004, Weston had slowly started to express his displeasure with Harris for referring to himself as “The King” of their region. He expressed this displeasure in an interview:

You did a verse but hey, I already did it so I told him it’s too late to be on the remix. After that, he went to jail and we shot the cover over. He got out of jail and I was on the cover, it’s jealousy man.21

As far as Weston was concerned, the true “King of the South” title rightfully belonged to Bradley Jordan (Scarface), former leader of the Houston crew “The Geto Boys.” In addition, various well-known artists from Houston (Weston’s hometown) who once idolized him were now both fans and supporters of Harris. For example, Paul Slayton (also called Paul Wall) made Harris an expensive grill from platinum and diamonds for his teeth and served as a deejay for Harris’ group, The PSC. According to Weston, in the early days of his musical entourage (the Screwed Up Click) he was an idol for Paul Slayton whom he now accused of stealing some of his song ideas.22 Weston’s sense of aggrievement may be a factor for his disrespect of Harris at an Atlanta Midtown Music Festival while Harris was incarcerated. Sometime later in the evening, Weston approached a group of young ladies who were socializing at the concert. Unbeknown to him, these women were friends of Harris’ girlfriend, Tamika Cottle. When Weston

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21 Ibid.
introduced himself to them as the “King of the South,” they told him that Atlanta was Harris’ “stomping ground.s” Disagreeing with their opinion, Weston was reported to having performed his song “Game Over” and dedicated it to Harris. When he was accused of taunting Harris in his performance at the Atlanta festival, Weston denies the charge rather, he claims that he actually praised Harris in his performance. In an interview on the same DVD, Weston defends himself by restating the praises:

You know my favorite rapper’s Tupac and B-I
But I ride 24’s just like T-I
I’m jumping out of chinchillas you wearing Levis...
I never said F--- this n---a.23

Weston explains in the stanza that he also rode in custom cars with 24 inch rims, just like Harris. According to Weston, if he did not like Harris, he would not be copying his style. Weston also notes that a rumor was spreading around that his disrespect of Harris at the Atlanta Midtown Music Festival had been recorded on tape. As a challenge to those who spread the rumor, Weston demanded that they “show the tape somewhere if it does exist. That’s because it don’t exist. I know if I had it, I’d show that s---!”24 However, Weston’s alleged disrespect of Harris caused Weston no discomfort until several months later when Harris was released from jail.

Since Harris had been incarcerated in the Atlanta Fulton County jail for nine months, Weston’s popularity was already spreading all over the country, even in Atlanta. When Harris was out on bail from prison, he made a surprise public appearance at a radio

24 Ibid.
anniversary celebration in Atlanta’s Hi-Fi Buys Amphitheatre. Coincidentally, Weston was scheduled to appear as a headliner at the same event. Not only did Harris have the intentions on reclaiming his fans who had not heard any new material from him while he was incarcerated, he also wanted to address the taunts he had heard that Weston made about him. Obviously, for Harris to not answer to Weston’s alleged rude remarks would have been considered cowardice, so in the tradition of masculinity, Harris retaliated when given the opportunity. Harris stormed into the arena with his group and several pictures from the cover of Weston’s album The Leprechaun. Below is an account of Harris’ vengeful song which questioned Weston’s authenticity:

‘Lil Flip I heard you in the house; bring your punk a—to the stage! Has anybody seen Lil’ Flip? ...I’m a tell you what Flip! P---- n---- I’m the leader of the troops; You just following suit.
I got questions for anybody following you. What type of n---- take a picture in a Lucky Charm suit with a lollipop chain and some leprechaun boots?
Even worse your reputation gonna forever follow and haunt you.
You’re a sucker in 12 and 22 you’re one too.
Regardless of your possessions or who you run to
No matter how many blessings God place upon you.
Your heart pumps syrup so n---- ya punk you.
Keep lying to your fans as long as you want to.
Trying to rhyme about s--- you won’t do
Money you never had, the pistols you don’t shoot
Just amping about the s--- you won’t do.
Your rap game garbage it was over when you started, trying to overthrow the throne are you retarded?

In retaliation for Weston’s comments about him, Harris appeared on the birthday bash stage and sang the song above to the crowd as he passed out pictures of Weston’s as a

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26 Ibid.
prop to contextualize his accusations. The pictures showed Weston in a leprechaun suit from his album of the same title. Harris then voiced his frustrations and claimed that Weston’s marketing tactic was ridiculous and unhelpful to his street credibility. He also compared his identity as an artist to Weston’s and explained why his self-proclamation as king was definitely the truth. Furthermore, the dialogue contains the following lines:

F--- n---- have you lost your mind?
Flip I ain’t an artist (gunshot effect sounds off.)
I’m an ex-con trying hard and it ain’t being hard its all about where your heart is and if you’re smart you’ll be thanking God I ain’t rob you.
If I was starving, you’d be such an easy target.
N----- in your own city don’t even like you.
Next time he say he the “King of the South,” tell homeboy say, say it in my face and something tell him I say, “Look what I got!” Lucky charms ain’t runnin’ s----; Come see me!  

Harris admits to being an ex-convict in his early life. He did this to convey his honesty as opposed to Weston’s dishonesty and glorification of crime and drug trafficking.

Above all, in a freestyle soliloquy, Harris revealed that individuals in Weston’s own city (Houston) did not like him. These alleged “Weston-haters” were other respected Houston artists like Brad Jordan (Scarface), Paul Slayton (“Paul Wall”), and manager Duane Hobbs (“Humpty Hump”) who also had claimed that Weston was pretentious.

Following his confrontational discourse towards Weston, Harris also performed a selection entitled “Welcome Back” which was a remake of Mason Betha’s (Mase’s) song of the same title to celebrate his newly-found freedom from incarceration. Although Weston was scheduled to perform after Harris, the security officials cut off the sound in order to avoid any violent confrontation between the two artists.

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27 D.J. Drama, D.J. Drama presents Down With the King: T.I. versus Lil’ Flip, Gangsta Grillz mixtape, 2004, ed.
At the time of the confrontation between Harris and Weston at the Atlanta radio performance, no one knew that Weston’s father had made a phone call to Harris, pleading with him not to start trouble with his son. Respectfully Harris accepted his wishes; however, this request did not stop Harris from attacking Weston, because he felt aggrieved by Weston’s earlier insults. Although Weston had denied any serious problem with Harris, he was now greatly offended when he knew about Harris’ interpretation of his (Weston’s) father’s intervention in their confrontation. Weston explains in a magazine interview:

When I heard him in the interview he was like, ‘Well I want to go send my daddy to go in and handle my business. I didn’t send him... I didn’t tell him call this n----. He did that s--- on his own ‘cause he my daddy and he from the streets and he my daddy you dig what I’m saying? Ain’t no mother f----- gonna give a f--- about you more than the mother f----- that had you...So when he put his name out there like I sent him to go handle that s---, that’s when I was like ‘Okay you gonna disrespect my daddy like that so now it’s serious!28

As one may recall, Weston already had a dislike for Harris because of their dispute over the “Game Over” remix controversy. Once Harris taunted Weston on his father’s intervention in their altercation, Weston was now mad as hell. Weston did not really view Harris as an adversary until he had brought his father into the conflict. In other words, Harris’ reference to Weston’s father alluded to the fact that Weston could not take responsibility for his own battles. In European (and African) epistemeology, this is the

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archetype of a coward. Weston retaliated by handing out fliers with Harris's face attached to the body of a malnourished Ethiopian child at his concert in London, England. He even went on the Tim Westwood radio show (also in London) to release an answer to Harris' song, "91 Problems Lil' Flip Ain't One." The lyrics to this radio improvisation are as follows:

Look, First of all I'm a Clover G Veteran
And y'all already know who I'm better than

Y'all know T.I. can't f--- with me
You're a featherweight, you don't even weigh a buck fifty.
N---- you lucky my plane got delayed
'cause I would've knocked your p---- a--- off the stage
You a seven-time felon
What you care about a case yeah,
You got of jail early 'cause you working for the state snitch

You a b----, been a b----, still a b----
And yeah that leprechaun suit got me filthy rich
I should've known you was a snake
When you was at the Source photo shoot just smilin' in my face
Tryin' to get on the "Game Over" remix but I told you "No"
I only do tracks with n----- that I think dope
You n----- know, the streets I'm the hardest
So why in the f--- would I dis a gold artist?
I'm from the dirty-dirty and I represent
I get head like the mother f---- president
Southside and we ride on twenty inches
I got a million dollars; I'm not just a penny pincher

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30 Peter Spirer. *Beef III.* Produced and directed by Quincy Jones III and Peter Spirer. 2 hours. Image Entertainment. 2006, DVD.
Weston begins his response to Harris’ counter-charge by claiming his position as a “Clover G” veteran. Weston reaffirms his street credibility which Harris had questioned, and he did this wearing the Leprechaun costume as a representation of his Cloverland neighborhood in Houston. This is important because Cloverland is a hardcore neighborhood in Houston where both he and Brad Jordan (Scarface) come from. Weston believes that Jordan is actually the rightful “King of the South,” and that Harris has no business making this claim. Because Weston is taller than Harris, Weston then taunts Harris about his size. Explaining why he could not perform at the radio anniversary celebration along with Harris, Weston’s claim of the “…plane being delayed” was offered as his excuse, not that he was afraid of Harris. Weston also claims that Harris was working in the state penitentiary as a state snitch, which suggests that Harris is untrustworthy and undependable. Weston then defends the use of the leprechaun suit as a money-making venture even though it may have looked ridiculous. He then alludes to Harris “smiling in his face” at the Source Magazine photo shoot and the denial of letting Harris participate on the remix of “Game Over.” He further claims to be a better artist because he is from the streets. He then wonders why he would want to do a song with a gold artist (500,000 units sold as opposed to a platinum one which is a million units sold).

Southside is Weston’s neighborhood in Houston where youngsters have a practice of riding on classic cars with 20 inch chrome wheels. These automobiles and accessories definitely cost a lot of money so he brags about his status as a millionaire to contradict Harris’ accusations that Weston was really bankrupt. The rest of the song continues thus:
Holler back, I'm straight from the streets
Jump out the jeep with the K and the heat
With you layin' in your lap, your brain in your lap
I'm reppin' H-town put Clover on the map

Holler back, I got my nine and my strap
Everybody, you better get the Hell back
When Flip pops up, I'll leave you're a--dropping dead Southside, we don't trip over blue or red
I'll leave you cripple with my pistol in your back end
Make your chest do a f------ back bend
Holler back I'm from the streets dog
And I'll knock you off your feet dog
What's Beef? Beef is when a n---- like you can't eat
Wake up with an appetite and you can't eat
Look both ways when you walk across the street 'cause you don't want to bump heads with a n---- like me
Rubber man with you A-K s---
But your first album flopped with that wack s---
Reggae s--- holler back n-----!!31

In the song, the letter "K" is significant to its interpretation. The "K" is a machine gun (An AK 47) with which Weston claims he and his neighborhood cohorts protect themselves. This type of submachine gun is common with military operations, but it is the weapon of choice for Weston and his cohorts to represent their machismo in their tough neighborhood. Weston also implies that his neighborhood is on the Southside of Houston where they do not gangbang according to colors like the bloods (red) and crips (blue) of Los Angeles, California. The next lines (9-12) make violent threats to bend Harris' body in several proportions if he refuses to leave him alone. Weston then explains "beef" which is an African American dialect term for "opposition" or a problem with a nemesis. He concludes his freestyle by claiming that Harris would not dare to run

into him on the streets, and he taunts Harris on the lack of success on his first album

*I'm Serious.*

After hearing about Weston’s retaliation to his song, “Welcome Back,” Harris decided to release an entire mixtape devoted to addressing Weston’s discourse. Harris also ridiculed the manner in which Weston waited until he was all the way in the United Kingdom before he released his retaliation performance. Harris also mentioned how unoriginal and timid it was of Weston to superimpose a picture of a malnourished Ethiopian child’s torso onto his head in a picture, while touring England. Although Harris had done a similar thing with the leprechaun picture, he felt that his was funnier because it was factual, not fabricated. Harris and his Grand Hustle group recorded the famous birthday bash confrontation and released it on a mixtape entitled, *Down With the King: D.J. Drama presents T.I. versus Lil’ Flip.* Not only did the compilation contain the actual dialogue at the beginning of Harris’ performance, but it also had Harris interviewing various Houston musicians and moguls on what they thought of Weston. For Harris, not only was revenge sweet, but it was also profitable. In addition to the interviews which taunted Weston, Harris remained true to Hip-Hop discourse narrativity (that is, telling stories and dialogues through the Hip-Hop genre) by releasing a reinterpretation of a classic song “99 Problems” by Tracy Marrow (“Ice-T”), in which the artist discussed issues and situations that bothered him. That artist Tracy Marrow claims that a lack of communication with the opposite sex was not one of the problems that bothered him, thus spanned the chorus: “I’ve got 99 problems but a b---- ain’t one!” Harris’ version of the same song was also entitled “99 Problems.” While Marrow
identified women as not being a problem for him in his version, in contrast, Harris identified his competitor (Weston) as not being a problem for his livelihood. In other words Harris believes that Weston is not a threat to him in any shape or form. Both of the songs by Harris and Marrow constitute a sub-genre of Hip-Hop which one may describe as a "brag narrative". On one hand, Marrow used the sub-genre to brag about his male invincibility in relationship to women. Harris, on the other hand, used the brag narrative to imply his supremacy over his competitors.

In his version of "99 Problems," Harris replied Weston on a number of attacks that Weston had previously directed at him. The excerpts below show why this song may have been the highlight of the confrontational discourse between Harris and Weston:

King of the place, called home of the bass
He emerged at the trap, from the zone of the flake
Caught a case, and he still keep a chrome on his waist.
For the haters in the face, getting thrown in the waist

Like a p---- n---- named Lil' Wesley, tryna test me
On your best behavior what your faggot ass best be
Choose words carefully when you address me
You ain't gotta like me, but you're gonna respect me
(or else) Or else you get wet like a jetski

Take ten of these and live, that'll impress me
Say I wanna rap on your songs but you ain't let me
See you on the front of The Source, like that upset me
F--- you in the a-- , I ain't mad about that s---
Try Tip, shot quick, that's all you're a---gon' flip
Bet your mom and your dad 'gon trip
But them some consequences tryna mash on Tip
N---- lyrically I'll merc you
Physically I'll hurt you
You ain't never ran he streets, you had a curfew

In the introduction to this first verse of the narrative, Harris refers to himself as “King of the Place called Home of the Bass.” This place is the South from whence a form of Hip-Hop called Bass had originated. In other words, he is still claiming authorship as the “King of the South” and standing his ground. The expression “Caught a case and still keep a chrome in his waist,” is possibly discussing information that Duane Hobbs had shared with Harris about Weston’s past. According to Hobbs, Weston may have come from the Cloverland section of Houston, but he (Weston) was not a gangster at all. The individuals known in their neighborhood as “The Clover G’s” even suggested that Weston had to be, “…begged to even shoot” anyone who had picked on him growing up in Cloverland.” Wesley of course is Weston’s first name which is definite proof that the narrative is directed towards the artist known as “Lil’ Flip.” The imperative statement “Choose words carefully when you address me,” was a statement by Harris made in reference to alleged remarks that Weston was accused of making about him at the Atlanta Music Festival while he was imprisoned. Although it is fact that Weston questions Harris’ claim as “King of the South” (which he felt rightfully belonged to Houston rap artist Brad “Scarface” Jordan), he always appeared to judge Harris while he was never around. Harris threatened that if Weston ever disrespected him again such as he did while Harris was locked up, he threatened to “wet him like a jetski.” This is a dialect phrase that means to shoot someone and leave the person bleeding.

In the second stanza, the “ten things” that Harris tells Weston to take and live in order to get an impression from him are definitely bullets (The sound effects which follow the phrase in the recording definitely further validate this point; though they
cannot be seen in text). Toward the end of the verse, Harris implies that he is lyrically more skilled: “I’ll merc you.” “Merc” is a term that means to kill which derives from the word “mercenary” or one who murders for profit. Harris also comments on how Weston’s parents regret even giving birth to him: “Daddy shoulda got some head, wish he woulda worn a rubber…” In other words, Harris claims that Weston is such a disappointment to his father, that he implies that Mr. Weston wished he had worn a condom before engaging in sexual activity with Weston’s mother. Although these are harsh words, the sentiment expressed by Harris indicates that he had more respect for Weston’s parents than he did for him. This may have been because prior to the Atlanta concert, Mr. Weston, Wesley’s father, had a talk with Harris to ask him to settle his differences non-violently with his son.33

Although Harris had great respect for Weston’s father, the respect did not deter Harris from ridiculing Weston. The stanza below further illustrates Harris’ perception of Weston. In addition, the disrespect for Weston promoted Harris’ idea of Weston being a “school boy” and a rapper with no street credibility. This is so because, according to Harris, Weston should have been able to stand up for himself, not relying on his father to bail him out:

P---- n---- playin’ with me, you’ll be in the dirt soon
Look you in the eye see you sweet like perfume (muah)
So go on, keep runnin’, you d--- sucker
Imma swing, show the world that you justa big sucker
Daddy shoulda’ got some head, wish he woulda worn a rubber
But he didn’t, so now I guess the world gotta suffer
You kind of wanksta, gangsta’s done had enough of
So I’m a take pride when I ride through and bust you

Tip will be the reason for the saddest day your momma seen
When I let this K slay ya like the mixtape King
Try n---- I ain’t the one
I got 99 Problems Lil’ Flip ain’t one

As previously mentioned in this chapter, the “K” that Harris speaks of in the last line of the stanza above is a short reference to an AK-47 sub-machine gun, a common weapon used in gang warfare. Harris also plays on words such as “K-Slay” which is the deejay name of a Hot 97 New York deejay, Keith Grayson, also known as “The Drama King” because of his promotion of non-violent Hip-Hop discourse. Harris’ song uses the technique of imitation and the performance of sexual discourse to defend his claim as the “King of the South” and to discredit Weston’s authenticity.

In the second and final verse, Harris totally discredits Weston. Harris does this by revealing how prominent Hip-Hop icons from Weston’s hometown (Houston) whom he believes should have admired him, do the exact opposite by rallying behind Harris (an Atlanta native) instead of supporting their own. The contentious relationship between Harris and Weston is further illustrated in the following stanza:

(‘Lil Flip recorded voice) Scarface the King of the South
P---- n---- , shut the f--- up
I’m cool with ‘Face and even he know that you’re a sucker
Paul Wall runnin’ Texas along with Slim Thug
Mike Jones he a genius he rode with some real hustlers
Never been important boy, you just a buster
Never been seen outside the Southside
Sucka, now you puttin’ on like you run s---
At the third go to jail with this Leprechaun s---

34 D.J. Drama, D.J. Drama Presents: Down With the King: T.I. Versus Lil’ Flip, Gangsta Grizz Mixtape, 2004, cd.
Half time you don’t like what I’m saying then buck

N----, swing when you see me n----, I don’t give a f---!
Cause I know you just lame and your partners ain’t tough
Know your aim ain’t s---, know your fight game suck
So I couldn’t image you what G’s wanna listen to
Just some kids, women, and a lot of homosexuals
I’m a stand up high, man, I set the principle

All you do is lie, and everything is fictional
I demand my respect, and I’ll die about that
But I’m a hit you with the take, and let you lie about that
So keep me out your raps or this s--- ain’t done.

A recording of Brad Jordan (Scarface) being interviewed by Harris on what he thinks of Weston, is used as an introduction to the song referenced above. Although Jordan, a legendary Hip-Hop artist from the South, comes from the same city as Weston (which is Houston), he states on the recording that he has no problem with Harris proclaiming himself the King of the South. In the introduction, Jordan even goes as far as taunting Weston right along with Harris. In the stanza above, Harris furthers his claim to the throne by name-dropping Houston rappers who are authentic grass roots artists, while suggesting that Weston is a fraud in comparison. In Houston there is an intense rivalry between deejays on the Northside and the Southside. Weston’s neighborhood (Cloverland) happens to be on the Southside which explains why Harris claims that Weston has “never been outside on the southside.” This suggests that Weston is not an authentic “Cloverland hustler” as he portrays in his songs.

Furthermore, both stanzas above make reference to the Houston lyricists Paul Slayton (Paul Wall), Stayve Thomas (Slim Thug), and Mike Jones who are all from the

35 Ibid.
Northside of Houston. Their area of the city is a rival to Weston’s Southside; however, even though Weston is also an artist from their city, Harris taunts Weston on how these lyricists do not support him, a Houston local. Harris refers to “Third” (a nickname for a Houston artist) who originated the leprechaun image, and from whom Weston copied the idea and then suggests that Weston should have let the “goofy” concept stay in prison with its creator.

In the stanza’s conclusion, Harris describes Weston’s audience as “kids, women, and homosexuals.” This was probably due to the romantic nature of songs like “Sunshine” (discussed in chapter 3) and female vocals who performed in the background. However, this is a strange way to describe one’s competitor. It should not be important whether a Hip-Hop audience is composed of children or women, as long as the artist is successful. Harris also recorded songs with women performers in the background. Moreover, his audience must also have included children and women because there is no way for him to control who likes his music. Therefore, what Harris was accusing Weston of is rather pointless since one can identify the same thing with Harris’ career.

Toward the end of his song, Harris threw another challenge at Weston. The challenge is based on who is more authentic and consistent. Harris shares with his audience various secrets he has discovered about Weston:

I heard you talkin’ about me n----
You wanna see me n----? Come see me n----
ATL, Westside’s only one, understand that, n----? (Bankhead)
Matter of fact, I’ll come see you n----
In the suburban area of Houston, n----, I know you can’t come to the city, n----...
...You rented that mother f------- house
In Galveston, Ohio, n---- for six thousand n----
You think I didn’t know about that, don’y ya n----?36

In the stanza above, Harris presents a speech instead of the usual Hip-Hop rhyming schemes. The free verse allows Harris the freedom to report about Weston’s persona and lifestyle. Harris explains that Weston has been living a lie because he did not own many of the material status symbols he constantly displayed in the media. For example, the house he purported to have owned in Galveston, Ohio, was actually a rented property. Therefore Harris is using examples like this to question Weston’s authenticity as a Hip-Hop gangster.

Although it may appear that Harris has made unfair comments about Weston, the sources of his conclusion appear to be justified. When Harris accused Weston of spreading rumors in 2004 at the music festival in Atlanta, he declared in a magazine article that his girlfriend was not the only person who brought Weston’s dislike for him to his attention. The following quotation supports some of Harris’ claims against Weston:

...My girl [tells me] and I say, ‘Nah, you’re lying.’ She like, ‘that’s exactly what happened.’ Then a DJ came from a radio show...this is another time at a radio show in the daytime. Outside, two non-related situations. He heard the same story. ‘Tell T.I., Game Over.’37

In essence, Harris was reluctant in believing his girlfriend until someone told him the same story. Harris’ dislike for Weston appeared to be rooted in the rivalry for the title of “The King of the South”. Weston himself seemed to have fueled the rivalry through his actions at both the festival and the Source Magazine photoshoot in which he denied Harris the opportunity to collaborate.

36 Ibid.
In March of 2005, while Harris was in Houston to promote his *Urban Legend* album, he took a trip to the Cloverland section of Houston with hopes of exposing Weston as a fraud. After following one of Weston’s promotional vehicles through the Southside neighborhood, he jumped out only to be allegedly punched by one man from Weston’s entourage. Shortly after this confrontation, a fight ensued and somebody let off a gunshot. Although this altercation began as a violent one, James Prince who founded the Houston rap group (the Geto Boys) sat down with both Harris and Weston, including their entourages, and got them to both call a truce. Both rappers have managed to go on without any more retaliations, having given their word to Prince, whom they look up to as a mentor. Nonetheless, Weston expresses his feelings about their confrontation in the following documentary DVD entitled *Beef*:

You’re looking at a n---- who took a bullet and wised-up and learned how to treat mother f------ [Weston describing himself] and you’re looking at a n---- who never took a bullet, been to jail, didn’t learn how to treat mother f------ and keeps going to jail and still is going to be ignorant [Weston describing Harris].  

According to Weston, there is no need for him to make narratives about the hustling life he has outlived because he has learned from the experience, for he almost died from that lifestyle. Similarly, however, Weston tried to also expose Harris as fraudulent in his narrative claims of selling drugs and accumulating felonies. Due to Harris’ respect for James Prince and Brad Jordan as pioneers of the Southern Hip-Hop genre, he too accepts the truce which has been honored to this day. Harris explains his outlook on the

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termination of their confrontational discourse in his remarks: "Whether I like it or not, we’re still trying to accomplish a common goal and that’s to put the South on the top."39

Although Harris and Weston are not working together currently on any projects, they have both held their commitment to James Prince’s proposed truce. While Harris has gone on to produce two other albums such as *King* (2006) and *T.I. vs. T.I.P.* (2007), Weston is just now releasing *I Need Mine* on his new label Warner Brothers since he parted ways with Sony. This split for Weston was due to what he claims as a “leaking of his album” to the public by Sony. Weston’s music career has just begun to get back on track, and he has appeared on a television series called *Las Vegas* on NBC. In contrast, Harris walked away with one of the best selling triple platinum albums of 2006, *King.* He also received a guest spot on Shawn Carter’s Best of Both Worlds Tour for a few dates after R&B singer Robert Kelly (“R-Kelly”) dropped from the tour due to legalities. In addition, Harris received product endorsement deals from Sean John Clothing, Chevrolet, and a leading role in the Chris Robinson Production of the motion picture *ATL.* Harris has also appeared on albums from famous musicians from various genres in spite of his reputation as an underground hardcore rapper from Atlanta’s notorious Bankhead neighborhood.

In the discourse between Carter and Jones, the outcome has been the former rivals settling their differences. Before arriving at this relationship, both artists have engaged each other in a variety of discourses expressing conflict, animosity, and hatred. The discourse of authorship was about who was The King of New York or The King of the South and the best storyteller of street hustling tales. In both cases, the discourse with

39 Ibid.
relation to the artists' characteristics of authentication were sought in relation to each artist's biography as proven by their songs. Also, sexual discourse was a catalyst and/or a factor in both discourses. In the Carter versus Jones discourse, sexual discourse appeared in Carter's affair with Jones' love interest. In Harris-Weston rivalry, sexual discourse was predicated Harris' question Weston's credibility as "King of the South." Rivalry is always at the center of everything Hip-Hop artists do to promote themselves. This may have to do with Hip-Hop being founded as an alternative to violence (as discussed in Chapter 1). However, the psychological need to prove their masculinity causes Hip-Hop artists to take their rivalry too seriously.
Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

Hip-Hop is a form of counter-culture that many critics have questioned as a legitimate area of academic study. Some critics disregard the artistic qualities of Hip-Hop while others disregard it because of their lack of understanding of the genre. The critics base their judgment on a number of assumptions, which are neither valid nor practical. On the contrary, Hip-Hop culture is an area of popular culture that researchers (including this writer) have explored as a form of narrative that expresses the social conditions of its practitioners. Other researchers have also explored the genre for its ideological and artistic qualities.

To understand the existential struggles of minority ghetto youths in their various forms, it is essential that academic researchers approach Hip-Hop with an open mind and with the same degree of seriousness that one might exercise if one were to study the high literary culture of urban writers. After all, literary creativity is not the exclusive privilege of educated writers or performers, and should not be denied in the works of minority youths simply because they are underprivileged or because their messages are a rendition of a counter-culture ideological construct that produces an unconventional reality that many of us find offensive or ghastly. An art form must present life's struggles the way they are, neither understating nor undervaluing them. The fascination of Hip-Hop culture centers on its realism—that is, its ability to portray the lives and struggles of the underprivileged in American society.

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To reject a study of this group of people (who happens to be outside the mainstream of American society) is elitist and discriminatory. The urban youths who founded the Hip-Hop movement did so in order to survive economic oppression and to compensate for privileges that were not readily available in their isolated world of Bronx, New York. For example, in the absence of recreational programs for their children, citizens of the South Bronx would hold block parties in their communities. The parties were organized by Clifford Price’s Zulu Nation as opposed to a city councilman. Where gangs like the Black Spades were once rioting and fighting, they were now doing things to uplift their communities. This type of postmodernist redevelopment was being expressed politically and artistically in their Hip-Hop music and culture.

By the time the mainstream media came in contact with Hip-Hop culture, not only did they choose to ignore it, but when the denial was almost impossible, they also sought to discredit it. The initial disdain for Hip-Hop by the mainstream society made its artists dig deeper into the realm of originality and began to create unconventional interpretations of society through paintings, “soundscapes,” dance steps, and literary or poetic songs.

As Hip-Hop music became the most popular vehicle for ideological interpretations of society, minority youths—especially Blacks and Latinos—began to use their musical talents to embody their feelings of frustration caused by what they perceived as oppressive experiences in society. In order to represent some of the ideological trends in the musical narratives of the Hip-Hop generation, this study selected four artists who seemed to be the most popular within those realms—that is, the
discourses between Shawn Carter and Nasir Jones (to represent New York, Hip-Hop’s origin), and the discourses between Clifford Harris II and Wesley Weston Jr. (to represent the South, Hip-Hop’s currently most popular genre).

In Shawn Carter’s evolution, it could be seen that he grew up in the Marcy housing projects of Brooklyn, New York, with a mother and several siblings. From the first time he recorded his Hip-Hop music, Carter’s musical narrative strategies were a reflection of his rebellion against the ruling class. This rebellion for Carter originally began as a young lyricist expressing his voice through selections like “Can I Get Open” with his friends from the group Original Flavor. He did a similar type of vocalization with his childhood friend Jonathan Burke, but decided to pursue drug trafficking full-time after he and Burke could not secure what they considered fair monetary compensation for their work. Their failed recording career drove Carter to a life of drugs. However, following the examples of other Hip-Hop artists like Calvin Broadus (Snoop Doggy Dogg) and his friend Christopher Wallace (The Notorious B-I-G), Carter began to construct musical narratives about his life as a drug dealer.

Although Carter had begun his solo career speaking out against economic and political oppression, he also began to share his biographical history in musical selections such as “December 4th,” “You Must Love Me,” and “The Blueprint (Momma Loves Me)” (see Chapter 3 for a description of these songs). It was in songs such as these that the one could infer that although Carter was a successful drug dealer, he did not enjoy his life of crime and debauchery. As referenced in “You Must Love Me,” it was clearly a matter of criminal indulgence which led Carter to shoot his own brother Eric over jewelry and to
steal money from his mother Gloria. Although Carter figuratively described selling drugs to his mother, this metaphor was meant to symbolize the manner in which his reckless drug-dealing activities were destroying black families at large. Although Shawn Carter lived for most of his childhood without a father, his father had a brief relationship with him prior to dying from complications of drug use. His mother Gloria, who remained in his life, in spite of his criminal behavior, made this brief but important reunion between father and son a reality.

Nasir Jones, who grew up in the projects of New York City in Queensbridge, the largest housing project in the United States, lived with his mother and father through the first half of his life. When Jones was six or seven years old, his parents eventually divorced. Just like Shawn Carter, Jones gained acclaim by appearing on songs with other famous Hip-Hop artists. Once Jones had the chance to do a solo album (*Illmatic*), he described life in the Queensbridge housing projects. "New York State of Mind" was probably one of the best musical narratives that he wrote to characterize his life as a member of the underclass. Unlike Carter, however, Jones did not focus extensively on drugs and drug dealing in his early works. For example, "One Love" was an open letter to an incarcerated friend. The selection "Life’s A B----" expressed the average day for a youth growing up in Queensbridge projects. "Black Girl Lost" was a selection analyzed that addressed the ways in which Black women were mistreated by their own community. Jones’ second album *It Was Written* featured a majority of selections which glamorized drug-trafficking. This new style in his music was probably due to the emerging trend in Hip-Hop music itself in which many artists began to glamorize the life of drugs as a
symbol of hardcore, gangster-masculinity. This album represented a second phase of notoriety in his life which he called the "Escobar" stage.

Although Jones was extremely introspective in most of his narratives, his album *The Lost Tapes* had provided more information about his biography. Two important songs, "Fetus" and "Poppa Was a Player," were excellent examples of narratives that furthered his dissatisfaction with growing up in poverty as well as growing up without a father figure for most of his early life.

The southern Hip-Hop artist Clifford Harris II was a young rapper who sought to capitalize on the "Dirty South" Hip-Hop movement which had been made famous by Hip-Hop groups such as Outkast, Eightball and MJG, and 3-6 Mafia. Although these groups did a great job of representing the lower income neighborhoods of the South, Harris was one of the first southern artists to create narratives about his drug-dealing experiences. Because of his focus on the subject of drugs, he was oftentimes compared to Shawn Carter. Also the child in a single-parent family, Harris was raised by uncles and cousins in the absence of his father Clifford Senior. As expressed in his musical narratives such as "Dope Boyz," and "I Still Ain’t Forgave Myself," the intervention by his uncles and cousins in his early life was not exactly a positive influence. Harris’ cousins, uncles and possibly including his father were all involved in illegal drug activities. Harris sang about this family dynamic in a few of his songs. Dropping out of Frederick Douglass High School around the 9th grade, Harris went in pursuit of hardcore gangster-masculinity through friends and some family members.
Although Harris was engaged in dealing drugs, he was raised as a fan of Hip-Hop music. Harris gained notable accoclades with this newfound hobby, but it was not enough to keep his label Ghetto-Vision from firing him for lack of sales. After his first recording contract failed, Harris took his money that he had acquired illegally to establish his own recording company, Grand Hustle. Today, Harris has not only established himself as a force to be reckoned with in Hip-Hop music, but has also become a major icon of the entertainment industry.

Wesley Weston Jr., another southern artist, was raised in the poverty-stricken Cloverdale neighborhood of Southside Houston, Texas. Although he lived in poverty, two things he did not share with the other artists in this study were his educational achievements and his family structure. Weston graduated from high school at the top of his class and was raised in a stable family structure, with both his grandmother and grand father present in the household. Although this was his foundation, Weston pursued Hip-Hop on the side as a vocation.

Weston claimed to have gained recognition as the “Freestyle King” of Houston around the year 2000. This is to suggest to his competitors that he has mastered the skill of extemporaneous rhyming (usually from memory). Some of his songs analyzed in this study include “Game Over,” “Da Freestyle King,” and “Like a Pimp,” which became famous for their sexual discourses and references to masculinity.

The chapter on “Hip-Hop as an Instrument of Discourse” analyzed the four artists (Shawn Carter, Nasir Jones, Clifford Harris II, and Wesley Weston) with regard to authorship, imitation and authenticity, sexual discourse, and rivalry. Collecting data from
these artists was helpful in illuminating the nature of competition in Hip-Hop music and culture and the complexity of their narrativity (that is, the ability to construct powerful narratives that tell the stories of existential and ideological struggles).

The discourse about authorship was ignited by personal and professional rivalry. In the beginning, Carter proclaimed himself the King of New York after Christopher Wallace had been murdered. Carter’s song “The Takeover” included this proclamation, and mocked other artists by name including Jones. Jones retaliated with a song of his own titled “Ether,” which also included sexual innuendos and a question of Carter’s authenticity and imitation. Although Carter responded with a sexual discourse narrative “Super Ugly,” a majority of fans of Hip-Hop music suggested that Jones was the winner of the rivalry due to the complexity of his previous musical narrative (“Ether”). While a deejay in New York played both discourses followed by a call-in listener poll, Carter apologized for the explicit comments he had made in his sexual discourse about Jones’ ex-girlfriend Carmen Bryan.

Despite the fact that the Carter-Jones rivalry had become very personal, surprisingly, their competition ended in a positive manner. Both Jones and Carter soon realized that they gave Hip-Hop culture more by working together rather than by working against each other. They had come to understand that their disagreements were best solved by focusing on larger issues in society, such as the economic conditions of their neighborhoods and the general depravity suffered by the oppressed.

In the discourse between Clifford Harris II and Wesley Weston Jr., some of the same factors operating between the two previous artists had also led to their own
competition. Although Weston had been making what he felt was “Southern Hip-Hop history” for years as the “Freestyle King,” he viewed Harris’ claim of being “The King of the South” to be an insult. In addition, Hip-Hop supporters in Weston’s own hometown of Houston seemed to provide more support for the Atlanta-born Harris. This further validated Harris’ claim of popularity.

Comparable to the Carter-Jones competitive discourse about authorship, imitation, authenticity, and sex, Harris and Weston engaged in a similar rivalry. This rivalry was reflected in various live performances in Atlanta by both artists. In addition, both artists recorded songs on mixtapes which promoted their rivalry and were circulated by deejays in the United States and Europe. With the hope of exposing Weston as a fraud, Harris confronted Weston and his entourage in a potentially explosive encounter.

Confrontations such as this one became sources of musical narratives for the artists. Eventually, both rappers made amends with one another through the peacemaking efforts of a respected Hip-Hop figure (James Prince, a pioneer in the southern rap industry).

Each of these artists, as was previously mentioned in the analysis of their development, established a type of discourse that mirrors or embodies their biography. Interestingly enough, the educational background of each artist has nothing to do with their fame. In other words, these Hip-Hop artists achieved their fame not because of any formal education, but because of the experiences they acquired while growing up and their ability to construct remarkable narratives that explain those experiences. As Carter
G. Woodson, the renowned historian, has stated, there is more to being an intellectual than mere education through schooling.¹

Using the idea of narrativity, as has been done in the previous chapters, to evaluate the songs of Hip-Hop artists studied in this research, some artists appear to have superior ability than their rivals. For example, Weston is weaker than his rival, Harris. Even though Weston was reared in a home with two guardians (his grandparents) and was a straight A and B student in high school, many Hip-Hop purists view his lyrical narratives as gimmicks (meaning incompetent in Hip-Hop terminology). Similarly, the other three narrators (Carter, Jones, and Harris) who left formal education early in their lives are considered by many Hip-Hop critics as some of the strongest writers and lyricists in the genre. It is interesting to note that these three artists are high school drop-outs. They have not only received immense success without their high school diplomas, but have also demonstrated (through their songs) that they are knowledgeable about economic institutions such as the World Bank, or about world religions, especially the global influence of Islam.

Furthermore, although Weston may not have been as successful in business as the other three artists, his vocational training in the record business has definitely opened doors of economic success for him as well. Weston’s skills in narrativity have also helped tremendously. This is a skill that is always ignored by those who reject Hip-Hop as an important area of academic study. But many philosophers have recognized the

¹ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (The Associated Publisher’s Inc., Washington D.C., 1933; New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc., 1993), 194 (page citations are to the reprint edition.)
ability to construct complicated texts as a measure of creativity. For example, the philosopher and linguistic professor Roland Barthes writes:

A paranoiac would consume or produce complicated texts, stories developed like arguments, constructions posited like games, like secret constraints. As for the hysteric (so contrary to the obsessive), he would be the one who takes the text for ready money, who joins in the bottomless, truthless comedy of the language, who is no longer the subject of any critical scrutiny and throws himself across the text (which is quite different from projecting himself into).²

Barthes’s description of two categories of storytellers is relevant to Hip-Hop. His classification of storytellers into “paranoiac” and “hysteric” is similar to what many Hip-Hop purists identify as “rapper” and a “Hip-Hop lyricist” in the Hip-Hop genre. Since Wesley Weston would rap mostly about his material possessions, party anthems, and spontaneous compositions (freestyles), he is often viewed as belonging to one category of narrator, one who does his trade simply for the money and not to challenge himself expressively. Narrators in this category are usually referred to as “rappers”.

On the other hand, the other Hip-Hop artists in this study, Harris, Carter, and Jones, would be classified as lyricists. Although this is probably an appropriate categorization, many Hip-Hop purists would put Carter and Harris into the rapper category due to their successful record sales; however, they too can be considered skillful narrative constructionists. Jones would probably reside in only the category of lyricist because he has never really had the critical acclaim that he probably deserves until only recently when he signed under Carter’s label Def Jam. It seems an amazing coincidence

that Barthes described these types of storytellers while his study was published in 1973, the very year that Hip-Hop appeared in the Borough of South Bronx.

For young men, origin is an extremely important aspect, especially for storytellers. This is also true for young African-Americans. Barthes explains this importance of knowledge of one’s origin in his text *The Pleasure of the Text*:

Isn’t storytelling always a way of searching for one’s origin, speaking one’s conflicts the Law, entering into the dialectic of tenderness and hatred? Today we dismiss Oedipus and narrative at one and the same time: we no longer love, we no longer fear, we no longer narrate. As fiction, Oedipus was at least good for something: to make good novels, to tell good stories. . .

Naturally with no “blueprint” for life in existence for a youth, he or she may very likely travel down the wrong path. It may be recalled that the Hip-Hop artists investigated in this study all have points in their lives when their father figures were absent. Both Carter and Jones were fortunate enough for the loss to be remedied recently in their lives. While Jones now is very close to his father, Carter made amends with his father only prior to the father passing. Harris constantly vents his frustration of his father’s absence as well as his disdain for his father’s focus on materialism rather than being around for his development. Ironically, Weston never mentions his father in his works, although the father showed up later to save his son from acting foolishly (at least according to Harris). In the process of misdirection, young people create interesting stories about life based on their interpretation. Barthes recognizes the importance of this phenomenon in narrativity. Barthes’ quote above also uses the story of *Oedipus Rex* to validate his point (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of the story and its relevance to masculinity). Barthes’ explanation

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3 Ibid., 47.
acknowledges the significance of origin and masculinity in self-actualization. Therefore, given the fact that Hip-Hop was founded by Black and Latino youths in the South Bronx in 1973 as a counter-culture to oppression, it is not surprising that the genre is marked by a psychological injection of masculinity as a means of self-actualization.

The powerful effects of narrativity in literary works have also been identified by Barthes in another text, *Image-Music-Text*. Barthes' observation entails how storytelling comes in many forms and is not characteristic of only one culture, lifestyle, or type of literature. Barthes explains:

> . . .narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio’s *Saint Ursula*), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is often shared by men with different, and even opposing backgrounds.4

Barthes, a structuralist and socialist, again describes characteristics that relate to Hip-Hop discourse and music. Although Hip-Hop was founded by underprivileged minorities who have been ignored by a capitalist system, however, while these unfortunate youths have been left behind economically, their humanism and inventiveness helped them transcend their state of hopelessness and economic deprivation. It also brought forth an aesthetically satisfying method of expression that eventually provided the mechanism for their survival. The satisfaction of their aesthetic inventiveness was crucial to their

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survival, and the economic benefits that such creativity engendered was equally
gratifying to them. Once the ruling class entrepreneurs saw the economic benefits that
accrued to these disadvantaged inner-city youths, they too began to participate in the
management and marketing of the Hip-Hop art form.

Moreover, the nature of narrativity in Hip-Hop music, as illustrated in the study,
reflects the artist's displeasure with the ruling economic class, similar to the
discontentment of the proletariat class with a capitalistic structure. Using the ideologies
of Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels the study noted in previous chapters that Hip-Hop is
emblematic of a class struggle between poor inner-city youths who are struggling to
achieve the American dream and a system that denies their relevance and legitimacy.
Class struggle in not a function of race or ethnicity; it is everywhere. In his analysis of
class struggle in Africa, the African nationalist and renowned politician Kwame Nkrumah
noted:

> Ideologies reflect class interests and class consciousness. Liberalism,
> individualism, elitism, and bourgeois “democracy”—which is an
> illusion—are examples of bourgeois ideology...In fact in any capitalist
> society, the working class forms the majority and this class is far from
> silent, and is vocal in its demand for a radical transformation of society.5

Although Nkrumah did not exactly specify the mechanisms to be used to remain vocal in
the agitation for power by the powerless, it appears that musical or poetic expression is a
relevant mechanism for political or economic agitation. In essence, victims of poverty,
including minority youths, barely own the basic fundamentals of freedom. One of the
options open to these urban “proletariats” is to remain vocal, and that exactly is what
Hip-Hop has become for many urban youths—a medium that helps them vocalize the

defining characteristics of their struggles and economic condition. Ironically, however, when some of these urban “proletariats” manage to acquire some measure of economic success, they begin to flaunt their possessions, perhaps forgetting the liberation of other urban “proletariats” that need their help.

Clearly, Hip-Hop music remains a powerful vehicle of self-expression for those that would normally be overlooked—that is, the underprivileged and the voiceless. These seemingly disadvantaged urban youths may appear to have limited choices and opportunities in terms of succeeding in a capitalistic society, however Hip-Hop has become the escape route for many of them. Nonetheless, both their performance and style of narrativity must be superior in order to achieve stardom as Hip-Hop artists. The artists studied for this research belong to the group of Hip-Hop artists who have achieved stardom as a result of their narrative creativity and ingenuity in the Hip-Hop genre.
Appendices (Rap Lyrics)

Lyrics of all songs used as examples in this Dissertation in their entirety

**Artist:** Original Flavor ft Jay-Z
**Album:** Beyond Flavor
**Song:** Can I Get Open

Ready on the right, the right, the right,
ready on the left, the left, the left
Ready on the right, the right, the right,
ready on the left, the left, the left

Ski:
Ayo T, Can I get open? (You know it)
Hey Jay, Can I get open? (You know it)
Hey ya'll, Can I get open? (You know it!!)
(You want a fly style Ski's about to show it)

Verse 1: Ski
As I, um you know, play you like Uno
Sigga-sigga slam a jam, jugga just like a sumo
I gets big, check out my thingamajigum
Styles I kick em, suger smack ya dig em
Divva-divva damn, I'm divva on a sigga-sigga slam
You knows who I am, you knows who I am
Back up that's an order
Da-da, Da-da, get out the water
Nah not yet, ready, set, go!
When I grab the mic they get pet-tro-fied
Why?, Hey! I'm just so fly
Lions, Tigers, Bears, oh my God!!
Goodness gracious, witness style
Drive a child wild
I'm rippin this microphone
Ain't no place like home, Ain't no place like home

Tone Hooker:
Yo Ski, Can I get open? (You know it)
Hey Jay, Can I get open? (You know it)
Hey ya'll, Can I get open? (You know it!!)
(You want a fly style T's about to show it)

Verse 2: Tone Hooker
You know they got me like, Holy cow, what can you do now?
When I flip the style girls be like "Ohh child"
I'm living dangerous
But as strange as living the lifestyle of a bad rich and famous kid
When I get raw baby paw better parlay
Beat me?, aww please, that's what they all say
You can't get with the kid, no not the kid
"Uh-uh no he didn't", oh yes I did
Well I wax enough backsides in a jiffy
"I know he ain't just front on him", but you damn skippy
Good god, damn I'm slam hard
With my squad, uh good god
Damn I'ma scream, AH he's a dream
Boat when I float, rough on every note
Mean like a horror flick, till tomorrow
I'm gone, ghost, peace, syanara

Jay-Z:
Yo T, Can i get open? (You know it)
Hey Ski, Can I get open? (You know it)
Hey ya'll, Can I get open? (You know it!!)
(You want a fly style Jay's about to show it)

Verse 3: Jay-Z
Well, cause Can I? is never a question of how but
When I rip it, will I quit it, forget it
Still I'm always on point whenever I hit it
Biting's forbidden, don't do what ya gonna..., too late ya'll did it
I'm shredding the track, I'm burning you back-back, like Backdraft
Brotha's who running the crack down I stutter, that-that n----- fast
I pick up the pieces, I straighten it out like Pete Rock
Or C is, or creases, it's your choice, Jesus--Christ
I'm nice like that, you freakin gay right
I flow like water, so put your finger in a dyke
I slam, I got original flavor, pick up the jam
I killed Chico, and now it's just me- The Man
Go get your gun I go all out with a can
Brothers is having a hard time with who I am
J kicken it, A rippin it, way past Y
I'm so crraaazzyy, AAAAAHHHH
Jay-Z: Did I get open? (you know it)
Tone Hooker: Hey ya'll did I get open? (you know it)
Ski: Hey ya'll did I get open? (you know it)
All: You know it, you know it, you know it

(Repeat 10X till fade):
Ready on the right, the right, the right,
ready on the left, the left, the left

**Artist:** Jay-Z  
**Album:** Reasonable Doubt  
**Song:** Dead Presidents II

**Chorus:**

"Presidents to represent me" --> Nas      "Get money!"
"I'm out for presidents to represent me"      "Get money!"
"I'm out for presidents to represent me"      "Get money!"
"I'm out for dead *fuckin* presidents to represent me (Whose...)"

Rock... on, Roc-A-Fella y'all  
The saga continues

Ahh, who wanna bet us that we don't touch leathers  
Stack cheddars forever, live treacherous all the et ceteras  
To the death of us, me and my confidants, we shine  
You feel the ambiance, y'all n----- just rhyme  
By the ounce dough accumulates like snow  
We don't just shine, we illuminate the whole show; you feel me?  
Factions from the other side would love to kill me  
Spill three quarts of my blood into the street, let alone the heat  
Fuck em, we hate a n---- lovin this life  
In all possible ways, know the Feds is buggin my life  
Hospital days, reflectin when my man laid up  
On the Uptown high block he got his side sprayed up  
I saw his life slippin, this is a minor set back  
Yo, still in all we livin, just dream about the get back  
That made him smile though his eyes said, "Pray for me"  
I'll do you one better and slay these n----- faithfully  
Murder is a tough thing to digest, it's a slow process  
and I ain't got nothin but time  
I had near brushes, not to mention three shots
close range, never touched me, divine intervention
Can't stop I, from drinkin Mai-Tai's, with Ta Ta
Down in Nevada, ha ha, Poppa, word life
I dabbled in crazy weight without rap, I was crazy straight
Potnah, I'm still spendin money from eighty-eight... what?

Chorus

Geyeah, know what? I'll make..
you and your wack mans fold like bad hands
Roll like Monopoly, ad- vance you copy me
like white crystals, I gross the most
at the end of the fiscal year than these n----- can wish to
The dead presidential, canidate
with the sprinkles and the presidential, ice that'll offend you
In due time when crime fleas my mind
All sneak thieves and playa haters can shine
But until then I keep the trillion cut diamonds shinin brilliant
I'll tell you half the story, the rest you fill it in
Long as the villian win
I spend Japan yen, attend major events
 Catch me in the joints, convinced my iguanas is bitin
J-A-Y hyphen, controllin, manipulatin
I got a good life man, pounds and pence
Nuff dollars make sense, while you ride the bench
Catch me swinging for the fence
Dead Presidents, ya know

Chorus

Uh-huh, yeah, uh-huh, so be it
The Soviet, The Unified Steady Flow
You already know, you light I'm heavy roll, heavy dough
Mic macheted your flow, your paper falls slow
like confetti, mines a steady grow, bet he glow
Pay five dead it from blow, better believe I have
eleven sixty to show, my doe flip like Tae-Kwon
Jay-Z The Icon, baby, you like Dom, maybe this Cristal's
to change your life huh, roll with the winners
Heavy spenders like hit records: Roc-A-Fella
Don't get it corrected this s--- is perfected
from chips to chicks just drivin a Lexus
Make it without your gun, we takin everything you brung
We cake and you n----- is fake and we gettin it done
Crime Family, well connected Jay-Z
And you fake thugs is Unplugged like MTV
I empty three, take your treasure, my pleasure
Dead presidentsials, politics as usual
Bla-ouw!

"Dead *f-----* presidents to represent me (Whose...)
"Dead *f-----* presidents to represent me (Whose...)
"Dead *f-----* presidents to represent me (Whose...)
"Dead *f-----* presidents to represent me (Whose...)

Chorus 2X

**Artist:** Jay-Z and Notorious B.I.G.  
**Album:** Reasonable Doubt  
**Song:** Brooklyn's Finest

[Pain In Da A--]
{*gunshots*} OKAY, I'M RELOADED!!!
You motherf------, think you big time?
F----- with Jay-Z, you gon' die, big time!
Here come the "Pain"! {*gunshots*}

[Jay-Z]  
Jigga... (Jigga), Bigga... (Bigga)  
Nigga, how you figure... (how you figure)
Yeah, yeah, yeah, aiyyo

Peep the style and the way the cops sweat us (uh-huh)  
The number one question is can the Feds get us (uh-huh)  
I got vendettas in dice games against a-- betters (uh-huh)  
and n----- who pump wheels and drive Jetta's  
Take that witcha..

[Notorious B.I.G.]  
. hit ya, back split ya  
Fuck fist fights and lame scuffles  
Pillow case to your face, make the shell muffle  
Shoot your daughter in the calf muscle  
Fuck a tussle, nickel-plated  
Sprinkle coke on the floor, make it drug related  
Most hate it..
[Jay-Z]
.. can't fade it
While y'all pump Willie, I run up in stunts silly
Scared, so you sent your little mans to come kill me
But on the contrilli, I packs the mack-milli
Squeezed off on him, left them paramedics breathin soft on him
What's ya name?

[Notorious B.I.G.]
.. Who shot ya? Mob ties like Sinatra
Peruvians tried to do me in, I ain't paid them yet
Tryin to push 700's, they ain't made them yet
Rolex and bracelets is frostbit; rings too
N----- 'round the way call me Igloo Stix (Who?)
Motherf-----!

[Chorus]
Jay-Z and Biggie Smalls, n---- s--- ya drawers
(Where you from?) Brooklyn, goin out for all
Marcy - that's right - you don't stop
Bed-Stuy.. you won't stop, n----!

[Jay-Z]
What, what, what?
Jay-Z, Big' Smalls, n---- s--- ya drawers
Brooklyn represet y'all, hit you fold
You crazy, think your little bit of rhymes can play me?
I'm from Marcy, I'm varsity, chump, you're JV
(Jigga) Jay-Z

[Notorious B.I.G.]
.. and Bigga baby!
My Bed-Stuy flow's malicious, delicious
Fuck three wishes, made my road to riches
from 62's, gem stars, my moms dishes
Gram choppin, police van dockin
D's at my doors knockin

[Jay-Z]
What? Keep rockin
No more, Mister, Nice Guy, I twist your s---
the f--- back with them pistols, blazin
Hot like cajun
Hotter than even holdin work at the Days Inn
with New York plates outside  
Get up outta there, f--- your ride  

[Notorious B.I.G.]  
Keep your hands high, s--- gets steeper  
Here comes the Grim Reaper, Frank Wright  
Leave the keys to your In-tegra (That's right)  
Chill homie, the b---- in the Shoney's told me  
You're holdin more drugs than a pharmacy, you ain't harmin me  
So pardon me, pass the safe, before I blaze the place  
and here's six shots just in case  
(Brooklyn... Brooklyn... Brooklyn...)  

[Chorus]  
Jay-Z and Biggie Smalls, n---- s--- ya drawers  
(Where you from?) Brooklyn goin out to all  
(Crown Heights...) You don't stop  
(Brownsville...) You won't stop, n----!  
(Brooklyn... Brooklyn... Brooklyn...)  
Hah hah! Jay-Z and Biggie Smalls, n---- s--- ya drawers  
(Where we from?) Brooklyn goin out to all  
(Bushwick...) You don't stop  
(Fort Greene...) You won't stop, n-----!  

[Jay-Z]  
Yeah, yeah, yeah  
For nine six, the only MC with a flu  
Yeah I rhyme sick, I be what you're tryin to do  
Made a fortune off Peru, extradite, china white heron  
N---- please, like short sleeves I bear arms  
Stay out my way from here on (CLEAR?) Gone!  

[Notoriuos B.I.G.]  
Me and Gutter had two spots  
The two for five dollar hits, the blue tops  
Gotta go, Coolio mean it's gettin "Too Hot"  
If Fay' had twins, she'd probably have two-Pac's  
Get it? .. Tu-pac's  

[Jay-Z]  
Time to separate the pros from the cons  
The platinum from the bronze  
That butter soft s--- from that leather on the Fonz  
A S1 diamond from a eye class don
A Cham' Dom' sipper from a Rosay n----, huh?!
Brook-Nam, sippin on

[Notorious B.I.G.]
Cristal forever, play the crib when it's mink weather
The M.A.F.I.A. keep canons in they Marc Buchanans
Usually cuatro cinco, the shell sink slow, tossin ya
Mad slugs through your Nautica, I'm warnin ya
(Hah, what the f---?)

[Chorus]
Jay-Z and Biggie Smalls, n---- s---- ya drawers
(Where you from?) Brooklyn goin out to all
(Flatbush...) You don't stop
(Redhook...) You won't stop, n----!
(Brooklyn... Brooklyn... Brooklyn...)
Jay-Z and Biggie Smalls, n---- s---- ya drawers
(Where you from?) Brooklyn goin out to all
(East New York...) You don't stop
(Clinton Hill...) You won't stop, n----!
{**"Is Brooklyn in the house?"**}

[Outro]
Uhh, Roc-A-Fella, y'all, Junior M.A.F.I.A.
Superbad click, Brook-lyn's Finest, you re-wind this
Represetin BK to the fullest

**Artist: Jay-Z ft/ Foxy Brown**
**Album: Reasonable Doubt/Nutty Professor soundtrack**
**Song: Ain't No N----**

[Jay-Z]
I keep it fresher than the next b----
no need..for you to ever sweat the next b----
..with speed, I make the best b---- see the exit..indeed,
you gotta know your thoroughly respected by me,
you get the keys to the Lexus, with no driver
you gotcha own '96 suh-in..the ride
and keep you're a-- tighter than Versace thats why
you gotta watch your friends you got to watch me
they conniving s----
the first chance to crack the bank
they try me, all they get is 50 cent franks
and papayas, from the village to the tele
time to kill it on your belly no question
I got more black chicks between my sheets than Essence
they say sex is a weapon, so when I shoot
mmet your death in less than 8 seconds
still poundin in my after life..
laugin my s--- is tight
you who askin right...

Chorus:

Aint no n---- like the one I got
no one can f--- you betta
sleeps around but he gives me a lot
keeps you in diamonds and leathers
friends 'ill tell me I should leave you alone
hah hah, hah hah, hah hah, hah ha
tell the freaks to find a man of their own
(man a they own, man a they own)

[Jay-Z]
Fresh to def in Moschino, coach bag
lookin half black and filipino fakin no jacks
got you a beeper to feel important
surrounding your feet in Joanie Dega's and Charles Jordan
I keep ya dove but love
you know these ho's be makin me weak
yall knows how it goes 'b and so I creep
I've been sinnin since you been playin wit Barbie and Ken in
you can't change a players game in the 9th inning
the chrome rim spinning keeps em grinnin
so I run way the f--- up in em
and wrinkle the face like linnin
I play hard-eh till they say God..
he's keepin it real jigga stay hard
lawd don't even trip
I never slip, n---- what you dont see is whatcha get
weapons concealed what the f--- yall feel
when you n---- play sick we can all get ill
-whats the deal-

Chorus

[Jay-Z]
Yo, aint no stoppin this, no lie
promise to stay monogamous, I try
but love you know these ho's be makin me weak
Y'all knows how it goes B so I stay deep

[Foxy Brown]
What up boo just keep me laced in the illa snakes
bank rolls and s----, back rubs in the french tubs
Mackin this b----, wifey n----
so when you flip that coke
remember them days you was dead broke
but now your style and I raised you
basically made you into a don
flippin weight..heroin and s----
you know my p---- is all that
thats why I get bagets 5 carats and all that
From Dolce Gabana to H Vendell I'm rinin bells
so who the playa, I still keep you in the illest gators
Tailor made so we can lay up in the shade reminiscin
on how I f--- the best and s----
specially when Im flippin Baileys
don't give a f--- about how you move with them other mamis
I push da Z, eating shrimp scampi with rocks larger than life
F--- them Reebok broads, you made it known who your wife was
I got you frontin in Armani sweaters
before this rap s----
when you was in letters and bulls--- berattas
and e classes with mo in the glasses
shows in Cali wit all the flavor suede Bally's
now all your mens' up in your benz's
high post, I swear you be killin me
playin inside my pubic hairs
I never worry bout them other chicks
cuz you proved who was your wiz
when you was spinnin that b----
I took a little when you was up north
your comisary stay pilin
how you livin large on the island
all them collects have me vex
but when you come home
knew I was comin off wit half of dem checks
now we on the rise
your diamond mami wit the slanted eyes
holdin this grip cocked the green and the s----
F---- no, I see half the dough
Made you into a star, pushin hundred thousand dollar cars

Chorus

**Artist:** Jay-Z
**Album:** In My Lifetime, Vol. 1
**Song:** Where I'm From

[Jay-Z]

uh-huh, je-je je-je-jeah
ye-ye-yeah, ye-ye-yeah
How real is this, how real is this
Uh-huh huh, Inspect this here, check

**Verse One:**
I'm from where the hammer's rung, New's cameras never come
You and your man houndin' every verse in your rhyme
where the grams is slung, n----- vanish every summer
Where the blue vans would come, we throw the work in the can and run
Where the plans was to get funds and skate off the set
To achieve this goal quicker, sold all my weight wet
Faced with immeasurable odds still I get straight bets
So I felt some more something and you nothing check
I from the other side with other guys don't walk to much
And girls in the projects wouldn't f--- us if we talked too much
So they ran up town and sought them dudes to trust
I don't know what the f--- they thought, those n----- is foul just like us
I'm from where the beef is inevitable, Summertime's unforgettable
Boosters in abundance, buy a half-price sweater new
Your world was everything, So everything you said you'd do
You did it, Couldn't talk about it if you ain't lived it
I from where n----- pull your car, and argue all day about
Who's the best MC's, Biggie, Jay-Z, and Nas
Where the drugs czars evolve, and thugs always are
At each other's throats for the love of foreign cars
Where cats catch cases, hoping the judge R and R's
But most times find themselves locked up behind bars
I'm from where they ball and breed rhyme stars
I'm from Marcy son, just thought I'd remind y'all

Chorus: {5x}
Cough up a lung, where I'm from, Marcy son, Ain't nothing nice
Mentally been many places but I'm Brooklyn's own

Verse Two:
I'm from the place where the church is the flakiest
And n----- is praying to god so long that they Atheist
Where you can't put your vest away and say you'll wear it tomorrow
Cause the day after we'll be saying, d--- I was just with him yesterday
I'm a block away from hell, not enough shots away from straight shells
An ounce away from a triple beam still using a hand-held weight scale
Your laughing, you know the place well
Where the Liquor Store's and the base well
And Government, f--- Government, n----- politic themselves
Where we call the cops the A-Team
cause they hop out of vans and spray things
And life expectancy so low we making out wills at eighteen
Where how you get rid of guys who step out of line, your rep solidifies
So tell me when I rap you think I give a fuck who criticize?
If the s---- is lies, god strike me
And I got a question, are you forgiving guys who live just like me?
We'll never know
One day I pray to you and said if I ever blow, Let 'em know
Mistakes ain't exactly what takes place in the ghetto
Promise fulfilled, but still I feel my job ain't done
Cough up a lung, where I'm from, Marcy son, ain't nothing nice

Chorus {4x}

Verse Three:
I'm from where they cross-over and clap boards
Lost Jehovah in place of rap lords, listen
I'm up the block, round the corner, and down the street
From where the Pimps, Prostitutes, and the Drug Lords meet
We make a million off of beats, cause our stories is deep
And f--- tomorrow, as long as the night before was sweet
N----- get lost for weeks in the streets, twisted off weed
And no matter the weather, n----- know how to draw heat
Whether your four-feet or Minute size, it always starts out with
Three dice and shoot the five
N----- thought they douce was live, now hit 'em with trips
And I reached down for their money, pa forget about this
This time around it's platinum, like the s--- on my wrist
And this glock on my waist, y'all can't do s--- about this
N----- will show you love, That's how they fool thugs
Before you know it your lying in a pool of blood

Chorus {4x}

**Artist: Jay-Z**
**Album: In My Lifetime, Vol. 1**
**Song: You Must Love Me**

Kelly Price (Jay-Z)
Talking: Throughout my life (uh huh uh huh uh)
no matter what I've done.(Right)
You've been merciful and your love endureth (yeah)
through all things (ye yeah) For that
I am eternally grateful.

Verse 1
Since my date of birth
bought you nothing but hurt
play those video games
stole change from ya purse
Sat on the cold court bench
'til I was arraigned in ya skirt
Saw the pain in ya face
through you maintained a smirk
All you did was motivate me
don't let 'em hold you back
What I do I turned around
and I sold you crack
I was a bastard for that
still I'm drowning in shame
Just remember one thing now
you're not to blame
You was newly seperated
tryin' to escape ya world
and through my thirst
I didn't help you
I just made things worse
I hated me and everybody
that created crack
Had me thinkin'
the newest kicks and the latest gat
Still haven't apologized
so please play this back
while I try to come to terms
with such a heinous act
you know in more than one way
cocaine numbs the brain
All I did was think about
how the funds once came
then I ran across this memory
and it stung the brain
How can you ever destroy the beauty
from which one came
That's a savage you're the reason
why me and these beats make a marriage
why I rhyme above average and
I ain't s---
Glad you got yourself together
no thanks to me
Strong and beautiful the way thangs should be
You must love me

Chorus (K. Price) (You must love me repeats in background)
Say that you love me
All I know say that you must love me.
Ohh yeah

Verse 2
We used to fight every night
but I never would suffer
just smile my big brother's
tryna make me tougher
As we grew fussing and fighting continued
as I plundered through ya stuff
and snuck ya clothes to school
Got intense real intense
as we got older
Never believed it would lead
to be popped in one of ya shoulda
With my rings knew you had it
'cause you took too long
as Mickey, Andy, and the girl that bought it looked on
Huffin' and puffin' gun in my hand
told you step outside
Hoping you said no but you hurt my pride
made our way down the steps
maybe you thought it was just a threat
or maybe ya life was just that crazy
and you was beggin' for death
try to justify this in my young mind
but ya drillin' it
and my ego hurt combined
drove me berzerk
Saw the devil in your eyes
high off more than weed
confused I just closed
my young eyes and squeezed <gunshot>
What a sound
opened my eyes just in time
to see ya stumbling to the ground
Damn what the f--- I done now
runnin' around in a circle
thinking I'm a---- out
hot gun burnin' my waist
ran straight to Jazz' house
Like a stranger damn I just shot my n----
and ran off into the night as if it was not my n----
Left the scene how could I go out that way
Still you asked to see me in the hospital ya next day
You must love me.

Chorus (You must love me repeats in background)
What after all the wrong I've done
I know you must

Verse 3 (Starts over last line of chorus)
Everything in my power and within my frame
to protect you from this life and
keep you away from the game
But you was one of the few people
that I can trust
and the fact of the matter I slang
these pies for us
You put the pressure on me dearly
rarely would you let it go
Was a thousand and one times
I had to tell you no
When it was one of those days
when nobody was around
and I needed emergency trip
out of town
Searched my mental rolodex
for all the numbers I know
As you stared in my face
asking me could you go
I'm agreed said sender
everything'll go smooth
just tell her what to do
and everything'll go through
Strapped her body with them thangs
as you boarded the plane
Couldn't explain these strange feelings
that I caught and the pain
I'm thinkin' why would I send you
when I knew it ain't right
I'm thinkin' what would
make you sacrifice ya life
You must love me

Chorus (You must love me repeats in background)
After everything that I've done wrong
I know inside you must love me
I know that you love me
You showed me I know it
I know
Say that you love me
say that you love me
I know you must love me
Oh yes you do
Inside I know it
you've always shown it
you love me yea yea
Oh yeah
I know that you love me

**Artist: Jay-Z**
**Album: The Blueprint**
**Song: Blueprint (Momma Loves Me)**

Yeah, yeah..
Uhh, right, right, right
Right, right, right, right

Uhh uhh uhh, feel me now, listen
Momma loved me, pop left me
Mickey fed me, Annie dressed me
Eric fought me, made me tougher
Love you for that my n----- no matter what brah
Marcy raised me; and whether right or wrong
Streets gave me all I write in the song
Hootie babysitted, changed my diapers
Gil introduced me to the game that changed my life up
East Trenton grew me, had me skippin school
Valencia's boyfriend Vovo had me makin moves
Mommy raised me, pop I miss you
God help me forgive him I got some issues
Mickey cleaned my ears, Annie shampooed my hair
Eric was fly - s---, I used to steal his gear
I was the baby boy, I could do no wrong
Yeah it's goin past fast - let's move along
Kitchen table - that's where I honed my skills
Jaz made me believe the s--- was real
Labels turned me down, couldn't foresee
Clark sought me out, Dame believed
Primo laced me, Ski did too
"Reasonable Doubt" - classic, shoulda went triple
Momma loved me, pop left me
Grandma dressed me, plus she fed me
banana puddin, what's in the hood then
Puffin on L's, drinkin pink champelle
Ty rolled with a n-----, V.A. spot
Tone, Mike 'Zo and them n-----, V.A.'s locked
Biggs f----- with a n-----, whassup Hoff?
B-High hated the fact I put rap to the back
Money pourin in, clientele growin now
Birth of my first nephew, time to slow it down
October 21st, Lavelle came to the world
Followed by three more boys and then a baby girl
Momma loved me, T.T. Uncle Jay
loves you to death won't let no trouble come your way
Oh, can't forget my man down in Maryland
He's gone 'til November, how can I not remember?
Tell your moms I'm there for her and Tiembra
And your son too - there's nothin I won't do
Unless you was me, how could you judge me?
I was brought up in pain, y'all can't touch me
Police pursued me, chased cuffed and subdued me
Talked to me rudely; cause I'm young rich and I'm black
and live in a movie, not livin by rules
New rap patrollin the city, follow my crews
Bleek you're still with me - n---- what did I say?
The time is comin; you one hit away
Beans I ain't tryin to change you - just give you some game
to make the transition, from the street to the fame
My momma loves me..

**Artist:** Jay-Z  
**Album:** The Black Album  
**Song:** December 4th

[Intro: Gloria Carter]
Shawn Carter was born December 4th
Weighing in at ten pounds, eight ounces
He was the last of my four children
The only one who didn't give me any pain, when I gave birth to him
And that's how I knew, that he was a special child

"Hi baby, what's wrong? You look like, you've lost your best friend
Tell me, is it something that I've done again?
You look like, you've lost your best friend
Tell me."

[Verse One: Jay-Z]
They say they never really miss you 'til you dead or you gone
So on that note I'm leavin after this song
See you ain't gotta feel no way about Jay so long
At least let me tell you why I'm this way, hold on
I was conceived by Gloria Carter and Adnus Reeves
Who made love under the sycamore tree
Which makes me, a more sicker MC and my momma would claim
At ten pounds when I was born I didn't give her no pain
Although through the years I gave her her fair share
I gave her her first real scare, I made up for birth when I got here
She knows my purpose wasn't hurt cause I ain't perfect, I care
But I feel worthless cause my shirts wasn't matchin my gear
Now I'm just scratchin the surface cause what's buried under there
Was a kid torn apart once his pop disappeared
I went to school, got good grades, could behave when I wanted
But I had demons deep inside that would raise when confronted
Hold on

[Interlude: Gloria Carter]
Shawn was a very shy child growing up
He was into sports, and a funny story is
At four, he taught himself how to ride a bike
A two-wheel at that, isn't that special?
But, I noticed a change in him... when me and my husband, broke up

[Verse Two: Jay-Z]
Now all the teachers couldn't reach me and my momma couldn't beat me
Hard enough to match the pain of my pop not seein me SO!
With that disdain in my membrane
Got on my pimp game, f--- the world, my defense came
Then the Haven introduced me to the game
Spanish Jose introduced me to 'caine; I'm a hustler now
My gear is in, and I'm in the in-crowd
And all the wavy light-skinned girls is lovin me now
My self-esteem went through the roof, man I got my swag'
Got a vocal from this girl when her man got bagged
Plus I hit my momma with cash from a show that I had
supposedly - knowin nobody paid Jaz like a--
I'm gettin ahead of myself, by the way, I could rap
That came second to me movin this crack
Give me a second I swear, I would say about my rap career
'til ninety-six came, n---- I'm here - goodbye!

[Interlude: Gloria Carter] - *talking
Shawn used to be in the kitchen, beatin on the table and rapping
And umm, into the wee hours of the morning
And then I brought him a boombox
And his sisters and brothers said that he would drive them nuts
But, that was my way to keep him close to me, and out of trouble

[Verse Three: Jay-Z]
Goodbye to the game all the spoils, the adrenaline rush
Your blood boils, you in a spot, knowin cops could rush
at you in the drop, you so easy to touch
No two days are alike, except the 1st and 15th pretty much
And trust, is a word you seldom hear from us
Hustlers, we don't sleep, we rest one eye up
And a drought could define a man when the well dries up
You learn the worth of water
Without work you thirst 'til you die - YUP!
And n----- get tied up for product
And little brothers ring fingers get cut up
to show mothers they really got 'em
And this is the stress I lived with
'til I decided to try this rap s--- for a livin
I pray I'm forgiven - for every bad decision I made
Every sister I played - cause I'm still paranoid to this day
And it's nobody fault, I made the decisions I've made
This is the life I chose, or rather the life that chose me
If you can't respect that, your whole perspective is whack
Maybe you'll love me when I fade to black
If you can't respect that, your whole perspective is whack
Maybe you'll love me when I fade to black
Now if you can't respect that, your whole perspective is whack
Maybe you'll love me when I fade to black
If you can't respect that, your whole perspective is whack
Maybe you'll love me when I fade to black.. {*fading out*}

Artist: Memphis Bleek f/ Jay-Z, Missy Elliott, Twista
Album: The Understanding
Song: Is That Your Chick (The Lost Verses)

[Jay-Z]
R-O-C
Memph Bleek
Jigga man
Missy, Twista sho' nuff
Yeah, yo

Don't get mad at me
I don't love 'em I f--- 'em
I don't chase 'em I duck 'em
I replace 'em with another one
You had to see she keep calling me BIG
(And another one!)
And my name is Jay-Z
She was all on my d---
Gradually I'm taking over your b----
Coming over your s---
Got my feet up on you sofas, man
I mean a hostess for my open hand
You coming home to dishes and empty soda cans
I got your b---- up in my Rover man
I never kiss her, I never hold her hand
In fact I diss her I'm a bolder man
I'mma pimp her, it's over man
When I twist her in the Gold sedan
Like I'm Goldie man, you're bitch chose man
Jigga man, iceberg with the frozen hands
wedding bands don't make it rosy man

[Missy]
Oh is that your chick
Why she all in his six?
With her hand on his d---
Keep licking her lips
Is that your chick?
Why she all in his ride?
With her hand on his thigh
Keep looking in his eyes
Oh is that your chick?
You better tell her chill
While you all in his grill
Don't you know that man kill?
Is that your chick?
Why she beeping him?
Keep praising him?
Cause that's Bleek and them, trick

[Memphis Bleek]
Yo check it now, yo, yo
Your hoe chose I
I ain't gonna lie
What I look like turnin' down chocha
Drove by, smokin' lye
Recognize a pimp, open your eyes
Hop in the passenger side of the ride
Damn Bleek, can't speak
Uh-huh, okay, what's up, SHUT UP
And close the door
Act like you been in the drop top
On the open road before
Fix your weave, then fix me
Ever gave head doing 160?
Ever seen a pair of kicks this crispy
How you love how the white wife beater fit me
M-dot, him hot, them not
(That's gangsta)

[Missy]
**[Twista]**

Oh is that your chick
Why she all in his six?
With her hand on his d---
Keep licking her lips
Is that your chick?
Why she all in his ride?
With her hand on his thigh
Keep looking in his eyes
Oh is that your chick?
You better tell her chill
While you all in his grill
Don't you know that man kill?
Is that your chick?
Why she beeping him?
Keep praising him?
Cause that's Bleek and them, trick

Tha Jigga and Twista got 'em screaming
Like a demon fiending for the semen
Chrome gleaming like the dome off Keenan
Gone while I'm leanin' smoking
I'm whip it in the stomach
Your bitch on the passenger side of me flashing your money
Why you acting so funny?
You know she been flirting while your working
Behind the curtain knuckles jerking for certain
Poppin' that p-----
Sweatin' till no fluid is left
When I come in the party with J we gonna do it to death
You gon' ruin your rep
Trippin' while we pimpin' these hefers
Playa lectures got me shining like a new Gator stepper
Must have been mad
When your ho put my stuff in the dash
Bust in her a--
To climax I come up with a nab
The game don't stop
Legit ballers bending up the block
N----- rushing, coming at us cause of status and props
Sucking and f-----, loving it when I put tha d---- up inside her
Can't help it if she yellin' with a ridah

**[Missy]**
Oh is that your chick
Why she all in his six?
With her hand on his d---
Keep licking her lips
Is that your chick?
Why she all in his ride?
With her hand on his thigh
Keep looking in his eyes
Oh is that your chick?
You better tell her chill
While you all in his grill
Don't you know that man kill?
Is that your chick?
Why she beeping him?
Keep praising him?
Cause that's Bleek and them, trick

[Jay-Z]
Yo, yo
Why you home alone, why she out with me?
Room 112, hotel balcony
How she say Jay you can call the house for me?
There's no respect at all
You betta check her dawg
She keep beggin' me to hit it raw
So she can have my kids and say it was yours
How foul is she? And you wifed her
Shit, I put the rubber on tighter
Sent her home, when she entered home
You hugged her up
What the f--- is up?
She got you whipped, got your kids
Got your home, but that's not your b----
You share that girl, don't let 'em hear daddy Earl
It'll make 'em sick that his favorite chick
Ain't saving it, unfaithful b----

[Missy]
Oh is that your chick
Why she all in his six?
With her hand on his d---
Keep licking her lips
Is that your chick?
Why she all in his ride?
With her hand on his thigh
Keep looking in his eyes
Oh is that your chick?
You better tell her chill
While you all in his grill
Don't you know that man kill?
Is that your chick?
Why she beeping him?
Keep praising him?
Cause that's Bleek and them, trick

[Memphis Bleek]
Yo how dumb the pimp?
I heard he trick
Bought a new five, maybe a six
Copped that for his new down b----
And I was digging that down since '96 s----
Memph man I'll take your b----
Let her do her thing, give brain in the whip
And you know how it go when it come to the hoes
She can do the same thing to the clique you know
Your hoe chose, don't get mad at me
Got your wife callin' me daddy
Put her out on the street let her get that cheese
My bad is that your freak
But you know how a thug do
When a nigga hit that, it's f--- you
Keep it snug, tre deuce in the boot
N----- wanna act, get a motherf-----' slug too

[Missy]
Oh is that your chick
Why she all in his six?
With her hand on his d---
Keep licking her lips
Is that your chick?
Why she all in his ride?
With her hand on his thigh
Keep looking in his eyes
Oh is that your chick?
You better tell her chill
While you all in his grill
Don't you know that man kill?
Is that your chick?
Why she beeping him?
Keep praising him?
Cause that's Bleek and them, trick

[Jay-Z]
Cool out homie
You betta keep her away from my balling clique
Keep her out of nightclubs all in the mix
From hanging out with chicks who be swallowing d----
From catz who order Cris play the floor with the Knicks
That can only lead to something unfortunate
Hot boy like Jigga man scorch your b----
Play the floor dot Jigga man go first
Then we all rock cause we all hot
You know the boys from the Roc got them w----- on lock
Got them b------ in the smash
Making yours drive fast
Cause we get more cash than the average n----
All dem hoes like damn I gotta have this n----
Cause I'mma hot black, how in the hell can you stop that
You would f--- mine
How the hell can you knock that?
I'm just playing the cards choosenly
Jigga man who ya supposed to be?

[Missy]
Oh is that your chick
Why she all in his six?
With her hand on his d---
Keep licking her lips
Is that your chick?
Why she all in his ride?
With her hand on his thigh
Keep looking in his eyes
Oh is that your chick?
You better tell her chill
While you all in his grill
Don't you know that man kill?
Is that your chick?
Why she beeping him?
Keep praising him?
Cause that's Bleek and them, trick
Artist: Jay-Z
Album: The Blueprint
Song: Takeover

[Jay-Z]
R.O.C., we runnin this rap s---
Memphis Bleek, we runnin this rap s---
B. Mac, we runnin this rap s---
Freeway, we run this rap s---
O & Sparks, we runnin this rap s---
Chris & Neef, we runnin this rap s---

The takeover, the break's over n----
God MC, me, Jay-Hova
Hey lil' soldier you ain't ready for war
R.O.C. too strong for y'all
It's like bringin a knife to a gunfight, pen to a test
Your chest in the line of fire witcha thin-a-- vest
You bringin them Boyz II Men, HOW them boys gon' win?
This is grown man B.I., get you rolled into triage
B---- - your reach ain't long enough, dunny
Your peeps ain't strong enough, f----
Roc-A-Fella is the army, better yet the navy
N------'l'll kidnap your babies, spit at your lady
We bring - knife to fistfight, kill your drama
Uh, we kill you motherf----- ants with a sledgehammer
Don't let me do it to you dunny cause I overdo it
So you won't confuse it with just rap music

R.O.C., we runnin this rap s---
M-Easy, we runnin this rap s---
The Broad Street Bully, we runnin this rap s---
Get zipped up in plastic when it happens that's it
Freeway, we runnin this rap s---
O & Sparks, we runnin this rap s---
Chris & Neef, we runnin this rap s---
{**"Watch out!! We run New York" -> KRS-One*}

I don't care if you Mobb Deep, I hold triggers to crews
You little F----, I've got money stacks bigger than you
When I was pushin weight, back in eighty-eight
you was a ballerina I got your pictures I seen ya
Then you dropped "Shook Ones," switch your demeanor
Well - we don't believe you, you need more people
Roc-A-Fella, students of the game, we passed the classes
Nobody can read you dudes like we do
Don't let 'em gas you like Jigga is a-- and won't clap you
Trust me on this one - I'll detach you
Mind from spirit, body from soul
They'll have to hold a mass, put your body in a hole
No, you're not on my level get your brakes tweaked
I sold what ya whole album sold in my first week
You guys don't want it with Hov'
Ask Nas, he don't want it with Hov', nooooo!

R.O.C., we runnin this rap s---
B. Sigel, we runnin this rap s---
M-Easy, we runnin this rap s---
Get zipped up in plastic when it happens that's it
O & Sparks, we runnin this rap s---
Freeway, we run this rap s---
Chris & Neef, we runnin this rap s---
{*"Watch out!! We run New York" -> KRS-One*}

I know you missin all the - FAAAAAAAME!
But along with celebrity comes bout seventy shots to your frame
N----; you a - LAAAAAAAME!
Youse the f-- model for Karl Kani/Esco ads
Went from, Nasty Nas to Esco's trash
Had a spark when you started but now you're just garbage
Fell from top ten to not mentioned at all
to your bodyguard's "Oochie Wally" verse better than yours
Matter fact you had the worst flow on the whole f----- song
but I know - the sun don't shine, then son don't shine
That's why your - LAAAAAAAME! - career come to a end
There's only so long fake thugs can pretend
N----; you ain't live it you witnessed it from your folks pad
You scribbled in your notepad and created your life
I showed you your first tec on tour with Large Professor
(Me, that's who!) Then I heard your album bout your tec on the dresser
So yeah I sampled your voice, you was usin it wrong
You made it a hot line, I made it a hot song
And you ain't get a coin n---- you was gettin f----- and
I know who I paid God, Serchlite Publishing
Use your - BRAAAAAAAAAIN! You said you been in this ten
I've been in it five - smarten up Nas
Four albums in ten years n----? I can divide
That's one every let's say two, two of them s---- was due
One was - NAHHH, the other was "Illmatic"  
That's a one hot album every ten year average  
And that's so - LAAAAAAAME! N---- switch up your flow  
Your s--- is garbage, but you try and kick knowledge?  
(Get the f--- outta here) You n---- gon' learn to respect the king  
Don't be the next contestant on that Summer Jam screen  
Because you know who (who) did you know what (what)  
with you know who (yeah) but just keep that between me and you for now  

R.O.C., we runnin this rap s---  
M-Easy, we runnin this rap s---  
The Broad Street Bully, we runnin this rap s---  
Get zipped up in plastic when it happens that's it  
Freeway, we run this rap s---  
O & Sparks, we runnin this rap s---  
Chris & Neef, we runnin this rap s---  
{*"Watch out!! We run New York" -> KRS-One*}  

A wise man told me don't argue with fools  
Cause people from a distance can't tell who is who  
So stop with that childish s----, n----I'm grown  
Please leave it alone - don't throw rocks at the throne  
Do not bark up that tree, that tree will fall on you  
I don't know why your advisors ain't forewarn you  
Please, not Jay, he's, not for play  
I don't slack a minute, all that thug rappin and gimmicks  
I will end it, all that yappin be finished  
You are not deep, you made your bed now sleep  
Don't make me expose you to them folks that don't know you  
N---- I know you well, all the stolen jew-els  
Twinkletoes you breakin my heart  
You can't f--- with me - go play somewhere, I'm busy  
And all you other cats throwin shots at Jigga  
You only get half a bar - f--- y'all n-----

Artist: Jay-Z  
Album: Super Ugly (White Label) 12"/DJ Kay Slay "Takeover Part 1"  
Song: Super Ugly  

[Intro: sample singing from Nas "Got Urself A Gun"]  
(Woke up this morning) Uh oh!!!!  
(You got yourself a gun) Yeah, I got myself a gun, uh oh!!!  
Yeah, I got myself a gun, Brooklyn stand up!!!
I got myself a gun

[Verse 1]
But really I don't need the heat
Your heart pump project Kool Aid you sweet nigga
I don't got a 2 way you gays
This is not beef this is rap homey, I don't have a scratch on me
You feel Jay soft rip Jay off
Damn I'm only worth over a hundred million
Look I got beef with like a hundred children
N----- with pink suits, tryin to get cute
You a little outta line homey, don't let the nine hold me
Put you out your mind homey, s---- just rhyme homey
Kick your little lies I kick my real facts
Like you sneakin out the back of the source sound lab
Huh, we wasn't chasin you, we had a tapin too
We came through to do our one two thing
It wasn't a Roc-A-Fella come through thing
Cause if it was on like that n----- would come through Queens
With Queens n----- you know how I do
Look, I got more shooters in Queensbridge than you
N----- will tie you up on the colliseum roof
And open beer bottles off the boy chipped tooth, look here

[Chorus]
I got myself a gun, uh oh!!!
Yeah, I got myself a gun

[Verse 2]
Listen, I'm the J, the A to the f--- this broad
N----- never sold aspirin how you Escobar?
Had to buy your chain back last time you got robbed
The nerve of this coward n----- oh my god
And I know rap rumors are in the windows
I bring em to ya live lift up your windows
Let the public peek in to your dirty laundry
Y'all don't wan't me to continue HOV!!!

[Chorus: sample from Dr. Dre f/ Knoc-turn'al "Bad Intensions"]
Super ugly!!!....(Cause I don't give a f---)
All I really know is your hoe wants to be with me, and she ain't playin
And what I'm sayin (She creeps with me)
And sleeps, between the sheets
[Verse 3]
Me and the boy AI got more in common
Than just ballin and ryhmin get it, more in Carmen
I came in your bentley backseat, skeeted in your jeep
Left condoms on your baby seat
Yeah n---- the gloves is off, the love is done
It's whatever, whenever, however n---- one
And since you infatuated with sayin that gay s---
Yes you was kissin my d--- when you was kissin that b----
Nasty s---, you though I was bonin Vanette
You callin Carm a hundred times I was bonin her neck
You got a baby by the broad you can't disown her yet
When does your lies end? When does the truth begins?
When does reality set in or does it not matter?
Gotta hurt I'm your baby mama's favorite rapper
And ask your current girl, she knows what's up
Holla at a real n---- cause n---- (I don't give a f---)

[Chorus: sample from Dr. Dre f/ Knoc-turn'al "Bad Intensions"]
All I really know is your hoe wants to be with me, and she ain't playin
And what I'm sayin (She creeps with me)
And sleeps, between the sheets

**Artist:** T.I.
**Album:** I'm Serious
**Song:** Still Ain't Forgave Myself

(Singing)

(T.I. Talking: Still ain't forgave myself.. damn
It's a lotta f----- up s--- that go down man..
You don't even know the half..)

[Verse 1]
Man I been in and outta trouble since an adolescents
Spoiled rotten, dead fresh, wit no daddy present
I got two uncles, Quint and Man and they keep me straight
7 and 8, I'm countin money while they movin weight
My daddy send me clothes and always tell me come and see him
I say aight but still I feelin like my momma need him
They sendin letters home from school, nobody read mines
And plus my uncles, doin 10 years F.E.D. time
Then I started rebellin, began crack sellin
Tha littlest thang on the corner wit a Mac 11
After school I hear my momma holla homework
I say aight ma, but look I got my own work
Started interactin wit fiends at the age of 13
Now my momma findin rocks in my socks, glocks in my toy box
Like damn, why do trouble come to me like this
But on the real, it ain't even have to be like this (f---)

[Hook]
Mistakes made on this road to wealth
I still ain't forgave myself
Ay, what I am today
I made myself but I still ain't forgave myself
For runnin to the grave getting closer to death
I still ain't forgave my self
For anyone who ever wondered how I felt
I still ain't forgave myself

[Verse 2]
At 14 man, thought I knew everything
I'm slangin slabs, trappin hard, movin heavy Cain
I bought an '85 cutlass on some dane-a-danes
Now I'm the s----, huh, the motor blew in 30 days
Hardheaded man I ain't listen to anything
I'm getting money so, I'm right and I got plenty game
Besides why I need school, Im'ma be rappin momma
If that don't work, then I guess Im'ma be trappin momma
But hey I promise Im'ma make it cause I'm damn good
Im'ma get us out this hood and off these can goods
School just a white man game, and it's ran good
At 16, here's my introduction to manhood
Blue lights behind me, damn what I'm gonna do
Cause I got 2 pounds of weed and a 3.80 too
I guess everything'll be alright if I just keep it cool
How ya doin officer, what ya mean why I ain't in school
Can you search the car?? Yea but, I rather that you didn't
Besides it's just a waste of yo time cause ain't nutthin in it
(Laugh) I guess that's when I seen, that I ain't know s---
When stuck in a place wit freedom I ain't gone get.. (Damn!)

[Hook]
Mistakes made on this road to wealth
I still ain't forgave myself
Ay, what I am today, I made myself
But I still ain't forgave myself
Guess these the chances ya take, when dealt the cards I was dealt
But I still ain't forgave myself
For anyone who ever wondered how I felt
I still ain't forgave myself

[Verse 3]
Outta all the n----- I was wit when I was doin wrong
3 in the fed, 1 doin life, and 2 dead and gone
Knew there was more to life than sellin blow and chopper bustin
But what's the good in knowin' better if I ain't tell 'em nutthin
I knew I coulda told Cap not to kill shawty
Put down the gun, get in the car let 'em live shawty
You'll probably get locked up, and I'll probably have a deal shawty
Naw, I ain't scared, I'm just telling ya like it is shawty
Coulda told Endae, Quint, and Kern, man ya covers blow
Leave that country town alone, y'all needa come back home
Bankhead and J-Rue, I just feel like if I was wit 'em
They woulda never got killed that night if I was 'em
Seem like I coulda done mo', said mo'
Why all my partners gotta be dead or in the fed fo'??
All the time, I just wish that y'all could ball wit me
Sometimes at night I close my eyes, and dream that y'all wit me (damn.)

[Hook]
And even though they say I cant blame myself
I still ain't forgave myself
For all the mistakes made on this road to wealth
I still ain't forgave myself
What I am today, I made myself
But I still ain't forgave myself
For anybody who ever wondered how I felt
I still ain't forgave myself

And yea they say I cant blame myself
But I still ain't forgave myself
Fo the mistakes made on this road to wealth
I still ain't forgave myself
Guess this the chance that you take, when dealt the cards I was dealt
But I still ain't forgave myself
For anybody who ever wondered how I felt
I still ain't forgave myself (Ain't Forgave myself)

[Talking]
Yea, for anybody who ever wondered how I felt
anybody who ever wondered what's wrong wit me, here it is.
3 16's of what's in the heart of T.I.P.
This song is dedicated to everybody who ain't here wit me
Cap, damn.. you f----- up shawty, but when you get out
if I live to see it, its gone be on again ya know what I'm sayin
And we ain't gotta worry bout goin to jail shawty we legit now
Ya know what I'm sayin.. Cern, Quint, Endae, yall gone get out man
and when you do I'll be there shawty.. always
Bankhead, J-rue, I'm sorry man, some s--- I cant change
When I get up there, we gone ball again, open the gates shawty let me in..
we gone ball. J-Rue man I know money ain't worth a friend shawty..
I f----- up bad man.. I still ain't forgave myself
My momma, sorry I ain't graduate but
hell we rich now it don't matter. My uncles s---,
it don't matter either.. yall back.
Well hell.. My Lil' boy (music stops)
you betta not do the same s--- I did
or Im'ma whoop yo muthaf----- a--..

Artist: T.I.
Album: I'm Serious
Song: Dope Boyz

[T.I. talking]
Ay, ay, ay, what you need shawty
Ay shawty man a I got 5 for 45 shawty, 5 for 45
Well shit what you need shawty
Ay these these bd's right here shawty
Ay this that this that noyd too shawty
You can't get no better than this right here
Ay nigga well get the f--- out my trapp then

[Verse 1]
A crack a ki’ a crumb do it fifty mo' times
The quarter go for 5 and the half go for 9
Still in the trapp wit them break down dimes
Hit me on the hipper anytime, I don't mind
Why y'all n----- b------- on and whining I'm a grind
Shack it in the winter and the summer I'm a shine (getting mine)
It's plenty of money to be made from Candler Road to Bankhead
It's plenty of room to get paid for those that ain't scared
I got the hard for the j's and dro' for the dank heads
The dope game still strong like pimping ain't dead
Heard what I said I ain't buying no yell
Weighing 36 o's or more on a triple beam scale
Yeah, look like you got that touchy bug shawty
Standing round in my trapp I think you f------ up shawty
Same n---- who taut a k getting paid in the trapp
Made a song for the n------ and the J's in da trapp
For the...

[Hook]
Da dope boyz in the trapp n-----
The thug n------, drug dealer where you at n-----
I say the, da dope boyz in the trapp n-----
The thug n------, drug dealer where you at, a where you at n-----

Ya dope boyz in the trapp n-----
The thug n------, drug dealer where you at, a where you at n-----
Ya dope boyz in the trapp n-----
This for da, ya dope boyz in the trapp n-----

[Verse 2]
Never everybody in the swats know I got the fiyah fiyah
N---- want that weight got it for the high high
You can't even supply the package I buy
I get it and I cook and it's gone for it dry
Get a quarter ki and cut it down to all dimes
Buy my own blow so the profits all mine
How we gone shine?, the same way we gone grind
N------ ain't gone be able to see us hey, they gone think they gone blind
C got choppers on his vert and I got daden's on mine
Tripple gold and vugges, poppin' moe' blowin' pine
Honey brown wood grain wheel in the 'lac
Oak on the dash and the 12's in the back
Came for years of trappin', staying down wit the crack
Now that I made it rapping I ain't never going back
I'ma let the paper stack till it can't no more
Still got love for my n------ slangin' blow
Getting do' fo' sure

[Hook]

[Verse 3]
I remember it all started wit a quarter ounce of hard
Me and C-Roy crunked the trapp up in Cobb
Nann n------ barred we the trillest n------ living
If this ain't yo trapp then what the f--- you doing in it?
What the muthaf------ business, do you think you puttin down?
If so then my corner you need to get the f--- from round
Unless you wanna sell some weed my n---- Beed got the pound
Anything else I don't need ya help, I got the hard locked down
37's ki's in da grill of the broam
Jumped from 33 to my folk in Bowen homes
All most gone ain't got but four mo'
Wey turned on Simpson Road ain't no more blow
Nothing left for you but to count my do'
Just something else to do while I blow my dro'
350k what I paid for the s---
Made 850 quick when I flipped all these bricks
Getting rich in this b----

HooK: 2x

{T.I. shouting out da dope boyz!}

Ay one time for da dope boyz in ATL
From the SWATS on Campbellton Road
on over to the Westside on Bankhead, ya understand
On over to Candler Road
Ay I know y'all n----- out there getting money in Decatur
Got damn ay we going on down to Miami shawty
Ay we know y'all n----- got them thangs down there for the low
I'm coming to get some
Ay one time for my n----- up in Tennessee shawty
Up in Orange Mound, y'all n----- trapp rolling good
On over to Memphis I know the pimpings real good down there

Artist: T.I. f/ Beenie Man
Album: I'm Serious
Song: I'm Serious

[T.I.]
Ay take a good look at me - Now picture me unhappy
No cash and outta fashion, not flashin
Picture me doin bad even if I wasn't rappin
Picture me even breathe on the mic not snappin
I'm fire hot not lukewarm, my arms frozen
Picture me in a room full of hoes unchosen
Picture me with no P.O. and no 'dro
Picture pimps walk with some broads and ain't gettin no 'tho
L.A. gone and I ain't gotta deal no mo' (Picture that)
A ghetto vision ain't real no mo' (Picture that)
Ah T.I.P. ain't work for MIA no mo'
He still so-so (picture that) he still po'
Nigga picture that, ah matta fact picture T.I.P.
Gettin anything other than rich
Now can you picture this, young, pompus, African son of a b----
Labelled as anything less than "the s---", I can't see it

[Chorus - Beenie Man]
Dis bad man you get shot, anyways
Bad man nuh tek back chat, no day
Jamaican bad bwoy seh dat zigga, zigga
We always gonna stay 'pon top always
Dis bad man you get shot, anyways
Bad man nuh tek back chat no day
Jamaican bad bwoy seh dat zigga, zigga
We always gonna stay 'pon top, always

[T.I.]
Pull up in a blue coupe that's damn near clear
And Polo gear that won't drop 'til next year
Be like this here, Cartier frames and Pierre Jouet wristwear
T.I.P. your majesty's right c'here
Notice when I came the dames disappeared, ya lames listen here
To play me, ba-by, hey he,
gone need a track from God featuring Jesus or Jay-Z
Go on floss; ball where it cost
Smile for the cameras, take your shirts off
Y'all n----- takin ya skirts off
Hoppin bomb-ass n----- and he ain't wanna work boss
I'm gettin sick and tired off these phony rendetions
Wonder why I don't consider them no competition
There's no vision - lil' ambition
How I feel about these n-----, and my word, are ya kiddin?

[Chorus]

[T.I.]
Some n----- wonder what my goal is
They think it's goin gold havin hoes sweatin me
F--- that, I'm in it for the longevity
Picture me as one of the greatest that'll ever be
Compare me to, Tupac, B.I.G., and Jay-Z
Work with legends like, Organo, I.Z., and J.D.
Neptunes, they even flow on one of Dre's beats
Fly to Miami, chill with Luke and we can trade freaks
I freak shows, just peep hoes under shade trees
Huh, but KP say just keep it top-notch
And make sure that the club is jumpin like it's hop-scotch
Floss rocks and in the summer keep the top dropped
Ten thousand dolla work for clo', when I go shop
In the Apollo on them 'boes so the hoes jock
Especially when I rock that linen suit with no socks
In Polo skippers, they undo zippers,
and they shows cock, to show shot s----
B----, I'm serious

[Chorus]

[Beenie Man]
Well it's a Neptunes sound (ha-ha-ha-ha-ha)
Zagga-zagga-za, na-na-na-na-na (T.I.P.)
Whoa na-na-na-na (Beenie Man)
(Zagga-za-za-za, Oh we dat shit)
An a ziggi-ziggi-zagga (Bad man sittin)
Straight from Jamaica (Alright lemme give this to ya)
Alright lemme tell them somethin (See it's goin down)

Artist: T.I. f/ Jazze Pha
Album: I'm Serious
Song: Chooz U

(Verse 1) [T.I.]
They say love blind, so why can't I picture this guhl mine?
Yea I dig her but I figure, I'm wastin this guhl time
I'm runnin from relationshippiz, scared to commit
Mad at monogamy, sexually, I'm a misfit
But this s----... way too much fo me
Usually I can take'em and make'em a cut buddy
Yo mama probably see me, and say that I'm no good
I was born in the burbs, I was raised in the hood
We from two seperate sides of life, two different backgrounds
Shawty been legit and I just started to rap now
I ain't tryina act now, I'm bein real witchu
Really, I just wanted to kick it and chill witchu
But the picture got bigger, 'fo I could even paint it
Thoughts got deeper befo' a n---- could think
A playa like me on this, strange ain't it?
One thang bout yo feelins is this, you can't change it
Yo preception on me, I don't think I can maintain
We flirtin with disaster, this game we playin iz dangerous
You the best thang that happened since I don became famous
But sometimes I think we shoulda remained strangers

(Chorus) [Jazze Pha]
I... I chose you baby
(Stay with me now, stay with me, sing it fo me shawty)
I, I, I, I... I chose you baby
(Ah, come on, uh, uh, uh c'mon)

(Verse 2) [T.I.]
I like you to persue, but still I respect it to let it go
Give it time, give it room to breathe and let it grow
I'll just tell her when I'm ready to change, I'll let her know
Hate to say it, but til then be friendz and nuthin mo
Evendoe anotha time, anotha life, anotha place
I swear I know we coulda been great
But rather than great, you lil heart take the smile of yo face
So I can treat you righ, I'm willin ta wait
And ain't s--- fake, I know it sound funny comin from a felon
But I think I got a piece of whuz up in heaven
So to keep from, blockin mah blessings, think I better back up
Last thang a n---- need now is bad luck
But if my life was perfect shawty, I'da had her
I guess, I guess I don't deserve it, ballaz tell me you ain't worth it
So I gots to hit the surface, I'll holla when I holla
Act like I don't wanna see ya, and I'on wanna call'er

Repeat Chorus 2X

**Artist:** T.I.
**Album:** I'm Serious
**Song:** I Can't Be Your Man

Yeah,
To the ladies,
One mo' message from T.I.P.,
I represent every man in America,
Naw, the world

You wanna know what he what he
thinkin' bout when he ain't
talkin to you bout why he can't
be your man you sure you wanna know

Here it is

[Verse 1]
My girl say I don't love her
She say we just f----
Nothin' against you
It's just that I hate tux
She wanna toast with the Mo' and the ice
Throwin' the rice
Wake up with me for the rest of your life
Ask me where I'm going, when I'm comin back when I bounce
Runnin' her mouth, call herself the queen of the south
Redecorate the crib throwin' satin on the couch
Catch me out adulteratin' takin' half of the house
Well it ain't she don't deserve it
Just I don't wanna give it
The life she wanna live
Shorty I don't wanna live it
Makin' money shorty's missin'
To all kind of digits
From KeKe's to Chaniques's
To Bianca's and Brigettes's
Poppin' up unannounced, shorty call 'fore you visit
Nothing about a number, mind your g--damn business
Look b----, some s---- bout Tip won't change
We can hang, but I got to let you know one thang

[Chorus]
I can't be your man
It ain't you it's me, sorry shorty
I can't be your man
Where I been, I don't see no rings on these fingers
I can't be your man
Look to the future, find someone better than me
I can't be your man
You deserve much more, I'm no good to you shorty

[Verse 2]
Don't it seem like s---- be cool for a month and a half
All of a sudden you frontin' and showin' you're a--
Complainin' bout what you got
Shorty look what you had
Before me, it was pull-out couches and Bilitant bags
Now she mad cause she ain't got a T.V. in her Jag
I tell you what if that ain't good enough get back on the bus
Give up the princess cuts and the Prada and stuff
I take you out to eat and you order a bottle of what?
Ungrateful wonderin' why I'm not faithful
Ballin's all good but this s--- is just wasteful
Want me to pay your bills
Help you get a bigger crib
Shorty I don't mind helpin'
But show some initiative
Ain't brought nothin' to the table but hard times and heartache
Do something, get on the grind for God's sake
A reminder, rewind this message from your highness
For those that chose to take my kindness for blindness

[Chorus]
I can't be your man
I don't cheat cause I ain't s---,
I'm cheatin' cause you aint s---
I can't be your man
Every time I walk in the house you sittin' on that g--damn couch
You ain't got nothing better to do
I can't be your man
Cook, clean, iron, pay the water bill, shorty do something
Work with me
I can't be your man
Ay, pack you shit shorty, I'm droppin yo a-- off at yo mami house
Right now

[Verse 3]
One more scenario
Bout another jazzy hoe
That I met on the road
After a show in Ontario
Shorty say she got a man
That don't really scare me though
But she say he got a temper
So, but what he jealous for
Cause you told him you were cheatin
Hell, well what you tell him for
Shit, what that got to do with Tip
You better let him know
Now she want to let him go
But what for
So you can get with me and keep being a slut hoe
I don't think so baby better stay where you at
I'm no good for you
Never mind the way that he act
You got a kid and a crib with him
What's better than that
I'm in town for the week you better settle for that

[End Chorus]
I can't be your man
I'm here for 4 days shorty, 4 days
I can't change the world
I can't be your man
He don't treat you right?
What that gotta do with me?
I can't be your man
He be cussin' you out and s---
You cheated on him shorty, can you blame him?
I can't be your man
You ain't fend to bring that bulls--- to me
I don't want naan parts of it
I can't be your man
Look here man
Get that shit out of my face
Kick rocks
I can't be your man
I aint fend to have nothing to do with it
Their will be none of that round here
I can't be your man
Besides shorty you talk to much
I can't deal with it
I can't be your man
You say you work where
Mickey D, get the hell out of here shorty
Man look ay, I can't deal with it
You got too much baggage with you man
You and little, uh,uh,uh little Opus Cunningham
Y'all kick rocks down the damn street
I can't deal with it shorty
N..., complain..., what..., you ain't got what?
Shorty when I met you shorty you was barefooted
Sittin' on the railroad track with some straw in yo mouth
What the hell you complainin' about what you got now
Wh-Wh-What n---- you got steak and eggs right here
I'm sayin, what the business is?
Get the hell out of here man
Ay man you need to show me some appreciation round here
You in the damn living room more than the muthaf----- furniture shorty
I can't deal with that s---- man
Get a damn job
Do something for me
Lazy b----, All the bad b------ in the world and I had to hook up
With the sorriest hoe in America
Why don't you take the weight off my back every now and then
why don't you pay a bill
30 damn dollars, the cable bill ain't but 30 damn dollars shorty
Why don't you change the..., flip the mattress
Man wash some clothes, change a light bulb
G--damn shorty, I gotta do every thing round this sumab----
A lazy b----, ain't nothing worse than a lazy b---- shorty wasted talent

Artist: T.I.
Album: Trap Muzik
Song: 24's

[Chorus: repeat 2X]
Money, hoes, cars and clothes
That's how all my n----- know
Blowin dro, twenty-fo'
That's how all my n----- roll

[T.I.]
In a drop top chevy with the roof wide open
My partners looking at me to see if my eyes open
Cause I've been drankin, and I've been smokin
Flying down 285 but I'm focused
Four fifty four's, I race Porsches
White leather seats, as fresh as Air Forces
Doing bout a hundred but the track still bumping
Number 8 on N.W.A., "Straight Outta Compton"
Pull up at your apartment sitting on 20 somethings
And the dope boys hollin "what's hapnin", kid runnin in
The clicks start dancin and the broads start choosin
And the cars been parked but the rims keep movin
Sign pictures by the hundred, to the youngins in the hood
Cause I ain't hollywood, I come from the hood
I'm used to it, if your rear view shaking and your seats vibrating
24 inch Daytons got the Chevrolet shaking

[Chorus]

[T.I.]
I'll make a mill' and I'm satisfied, I'll get the rest
Underaged civilian in the tigthest ride, I want the best
I refuse to get a 9 to 5, I'm a flip my ki's
Been payin my dues since eighty-nine, trying to get my cheese
Diamonds gleam when I'm on the scene, they know its me
Ain't no dream or no fantasy (b----) it's T-I-P
Brought busting, like a baby do a blanket
Five karat VVS's on my motherf----- pinkie
Half of Hennessy and Belvedere
What we drankin', pimp squad send for broads
What the hell you n----- thinkin'
Young n----- spendin weekends on the islands in the fall
24 inch rim shining when I'm riding cause I'm ballin
I'm calling out shots like a pool shark
My tools spark in the dark when I fool marks
Y'all fools hearts in the wrong place at the wrong time
I got a strong mind to grab my chrome nine
And shoot at you're a-- for a long time
But I'm a get that a-- hauled off, f--- around with the click
they'll be lookin for your d--- wit a stick
N---- y'all soft, so y'all lost, cause I'ma ball at all costs
Spit game at a dame, make her ride on this thang
'til she falls off and sucks balls off, I got the

[Chorus]

[T.I.]
I'm not bouching little shorty, I'm relaxing right now
I probably still be trappin if I wasn't rapping right now
Bragging about pistols at the house, I want 'em strapped right now
Keep on talkin folk, I'll lay you on your back right now
Want ta act right now, get smacked right now
I'm a buck a motherf-----, I don't know to back down
Clown down here fakin, frontin
Talkin bout what you makin - nothin
I'm 21 and 10 years deep, that shit to me ain't nothin
I'm raised by the n----- gettin head from the jays
Lose your leg when I spray, end up dead from the 'K
Stay ready for the raid, paid heavy from the yae
I told my class to kiss my a--, I smoke 11 everyday

(54th Platoon sample)

[Chorus] - (fades)

**Artist:** T.I.
**Album:** Trap Muzik
**Song:** Kingofdasouth

[Verse One]
I been a menace to society
Since when?
Since menace to society
Still refused to become a legitimate citizen quietly
Felt like my labor hidin' me
But here I am anyway
I might be back to slangin' grams any day
And if this record flop
Well I'll be--back
Wit' a bomb of heart
Wit' C-Rod and the squad
This whole industry's a façade
Man this ain't real life
Half these rappers don't know what sacrifice feel like
Man these n------ is all hype
Not even rappin' on real mics
They just get high and say whatever the f--- they feel like
They make me feel like bustin' these n------ one at a time
And I'm still outbustin' these n------
Hoe pick a rhyme

[Chorus]
Ay, what these other n------ talkin'
I don't believe that s---
I'm the king 'cause I said it
And I mean that s---
Ay, what's so special 'bout him
Ay, he ain't all that s---
I set the city in fire
Have you seen that s---?
Ay, what these other n------ talkin'
I don't believe that s---
I'm the king 'cause I said it
And I mean that s---
Ay, what's the big deal about him?
He ain't even that s---
I set the city on fire
Have you seen that s---?

[Verse Two]
It's only five rappers outta Atlanta who bustin'
And I'm one of 'em
The other four, you know who you are
But if you gotta think twice
Well shawty you ain't nice
Regardless of your publishing deal
You can't write
I'm the best thing left blowin' breath on the mic
The king of the south
Nothin' else will suffice
You wanna bet?
Well put yo' budget up
Match the price
Me and you like putting matches to ice
You won't make it
Before I had a deal
I was still butt naked
God signed this, like keeping' the Lord's promise
The truth n----
Like Beenie's first LP
You can do a song with N'Sync
And couldn't outsell me
I'm a legend in my own time
A prophet in my own rhymes
A king wit' a concubine

[Chorus]
N----- like you, a dime a dozen
They come and go
So why I'm runnin' now
And I ain't never run before
Grab choppers, cock 'em and blow
Stoppin' the show
Bet or owe 'em, droppin' the hoes
You just keep watchin' the door
Pop 'em, watch 'em drop to the floor
Fluff his pockets and go
Put a quarter block on his nose
And a glock in his clothes
He can keep his watches and gold
For his momma to hold
She'll be there buyin' the hoes
Before the drama unfolds
They know shawty outta control
Got me hot as a stove
Puttin' holes in yo' Girbaud
Wettin' up yo' polos
44's and Callico's
a black and a chrome
lettin' loose and splackin' your dome
hoppin' back in the Brougham
known for kickin' in yo' door
wavin' gats in yo' home
clearin' it out
I'm sorry I ain't hearin' you out
You hearin' about
The squad pumpin' Fe in your heart
Because you know sacrifice
Was near and dear to your heart

[Chorus]
(talking)
Ay, my n-----
Y'all already know what it is
T-I-P, Grand Hustle, Pimp Squad
For life n-----
Sanchez on the beat, dig this man
I'ma keep it always pimpin'
I'm stayin' down
Y'all n----- gone send yo' demos in
Get cha little motherf-----' deal
Go sell records
N----- I got houses, I got blow, I got dro
N----- I got hoes, n----- I got property n-----
What you wanna do n-----
F---y'all n-----
Come see about me if you don't like it
King of da G--damn south
Rubberband man in this b----
Uh, oh, oh

**Artist:** T.I.  
**Album:** Trap Muzik  
**Song:** I Still Luv You

[Chorus] 2X  
Don't hate me shawty  
But even if you hate me shawty  
I still love you  
And now I only wish that you could  
See that my intentions were good  
I still love you

[Verse 1]  
Forgave me once, forgave me twice, forgave me three times  
I stayed lyin', you stayed down in the meantime  
Had my son and turned around and had another one  
I broke yo heart when I told you bout the other one  
I stay in trouble ha? Ain't got too much to loose  
Knew I could loose it all but never thought of losin' you  
Eleven years ago I still regret me choosin' you  
Meetin' you, pursuin' you and doin' you in '92  
You fixed plates, showed yo face at every courtdate  
And all you wanted me to do was call when I was out late  
How could I let you go? I thought I knew it all  
When you deserved the best and more, you been through it all  
You think I sold yo dreams, but what I say I mean  
Just take it to consideration, I was 17  
I'm still the same man, just had a change of plan  
Never ask you back and f--- a wedding band  
But I still love you

Repeat Chorus 1 w/ ad libs

[Verse 2]  
Went from resentin' you, hatin' you, now I'm missin' you  
On the realest s--- I ever dropped, dissin' pops  
I never even thought, to ask my mom what happened  
Just knew that you was livin' in Manhattan and I was trappin'  
We never had a chance, we was in different states  
But all forgiven, you was human and we make mistakes
You tried to make it up, but s---, you couldn't pay enough
You sent me tons of toys and clothes thinkin' you gave enough
But it wasn't though, and you wasn't there
That's all I knew, so I grew up thinkin' you ain't care
I know it wasn't fair, but ay, it wasn't fun
But now what's done is done, no matter wha, I'm still yo son
I could care less if none of yo other children come
I'ma be right there prayin' you live to be a million one
Finally I understand, hustlin', livin' fast
Tryin' to get the cash and settle down and be a dad
You probably never knew, cuz hey, I never said it
But pops, I'm just like you, I'm stubborn and I'm hardheaded
But now you dead in the ground, no meanin' tellin' you now
But all I wanted was for you to be proud
I still love you

[Chorus]
Don't hate me shawty
If I ain't told you lately shawty
I still love you
Now I only wish that I could
See that yo intentions were good
I still love you
Don't hate me shawty
Please don't hate me shawty
Ay, I still love you
And now I only wish that I could
See that yo intentions were good
(Watch yo boy, shawty)

[Verse 3]
How could I criticize my daddy on that last verse
Lookin' at my own dirt, you got some nerve
But be that as it may, I got some s--- to say
It's been a secret, I can't keep it for another day
I got a lil' girl, not just two lil' boys
And that's been killin' me inside, eatin' me alive
And I can't find the words, nor the nouns or verbs
To express whachu deserve, girl you worth the world
But I'm a man and I ain't perfect, if you hear me now
I'll tell you wha had happened, when, why, where and how
Me and yo mama met, we kinda kicked it off
But we wasn't 'posed to have a baby, we just chillin' out
We had a lot in common, almost the same signs
Same goals, said thangs at the same time
But then we destroyed the situation like the a changed mind
How could I look her in her eyes and holla "Dat ain't mine"
Her stomach gettin' bigger, and time is gettin' close
Six, seven, eight, nine months and I ain't told mah folks
Not just messiah mama, hell, I had told yo granny
Three kids in two years, baby, daddy panicked
But I ain't ashamed of you, I'm more ashamed of me
It's not at all yo fault, you'd be better off blamin' me
But now I realize, where the problem lies
Forgive me babygirl, I apologize
And I still love you

[Chorus] 2X
Don't hate me shawty
Please don't hate me shawty
Cuz I still love you
Now I only wish that you could
See that my intentions were good

Artist: Lil' Flip
Album: U Gotta Feel Me
Song: Game Over

[Intro]
Fury
Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh

[Repeat 4x]
Game over, Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip

[Verse One]
Ah s----, y'all done f------ up and let me in this b------
I'm just your average hood n------ with dreams of gettin' rich (But you don't hear me)
My crib big like a football field (football field)
You might f--- around and think I signed a football deal (But you don't hear me)
I take 15 minutes to drop a track (yeah)
I take half a minute to load my gats (But you don't hear me)
I make 'em gloss all across the globe
I'm a pimp, I got your hoe takin' off her clothes (But you don't hear me)
A franchise like a Houston Rocket (Houston Rocket)
Every eight months is when I usually drop it (But you don't hear me)
I got the streets on lock, I like my beats with knock
You know my heat stay cocked, n------
[Chorus]
(Now who they want?) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip (game over) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip
(Now who they want?) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip (game over) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip
(Now who they want?) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip (game over) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip
(Now who they want?) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip (game over) Flip, Flip, Flip, Flip (game over)

[Verse Two]
Look, I'm a Cristal n---- and you a red-winer
You just an opening act, but I'm the headliner (But you don't hear me)
I'm 'bout to ship 3 mill' off top
You got your deal off your man, I got my deal off props (But you don't hear me)
I'm "Connected" like Dub and Mack 10 with Ice Cubes in my watch
And Dubs on the black Benz (But you don't hear me)
I'm getting' paid 'cause I do all the work
It's rainy days if we don't move all our work, we go bizirk (But you don't hear me)
I'm on the block fam, in the cream drop Lam
Mostly our cats with deals, y'all ain't hot man (But you don't hear me)
I'm 'bout to do it again, you 'bout to lose it again
It's show and tell motherf-----, I'm a prove it again

[Chorus]

The game over, 'cause s---- about to change over
It's 'bout time 'cause hip-hop need a make over (But you don't hear me)
If most producers want to charge too much
But around my way that's how you get f----- up (But you don't hear me)
You might think we all beats and rhymes
But way before this rap s----, n----, the streets was mine (But you don't hear me)
I got that hot s----, that "Thug Life" 'Pac s----
That get hot s----, that B.I.G. "Ready to Die" s--

[Chorus]

Artist: Lil' Flip f/ Lea
Album: U Gotta Feel Me
Song: Sunshine

[Intro: Lea, (Lil' Flip)]

[Lea] Uhhhhhhhh
[Lil' Flip] Yeeeah
[Lea] Ohh, ohh, ohh, oh baby
[Lil' Flip] Lil' Flipper (Lil' Flipper)
[Lea] Ooh baby
[Lil' Flip] My girl Lea (my girl Lea) hit it
[Chorus: Lea]
Sunshine
I can call you my baby boy
You can call me your baby girl
Maybe we can spend some time (some time)
I can be your sunshine!
I can call you my baby boy
You can call me your baby girl
Maybe we can spend some time (some time)
I can be your sunshine!

[Verse 1: Lil' Flip]
Look, I know you wanna chill wit a player
But all you got to do is keep it real wit a player
Just answer your phone whenever I call
Cause I'm riding on chrome whenever I ball
I like them short and tall but not too thick
I just walk in the spot and take my pick
And they wanna roll cause they like my style
And when I pop my collar I make them smile
I need a lady in the streets but a freak in the sheets
That know how to cook cause a n---- like to eat
Spaghetti, shrimp and steak and I'll adore you
I'll treat you like milk, I'll do nothing but spoil you

[Chorus: Lea]

[Verse 2: Lil' Flip]
I know your friends wanna holla cause I got them dollars
Push the Maybach Monday, tuesday Impala
I switch whips like kicks I'm a balla (I'm a balla)
And if I get your phone number I'm a call ya (I'm a call ya)
And we can meet up the next day and chill
But I'm always on the road baby girl, that's how I live
I got bills to pay, I got moves to make
But when my plane touch down, pick me up at 8:00, don't be late

[Chorus: Lea]

[Verse 3: Lea]
We don't have to be in love (love)
We can just be friends!
I will be right there, beginning to the end!
I can bring my girls (girls), you can bring your friends (friends)
We can both have fun, don't want this stuff to end!
[Verse 4: Lil' Flip]
They say love is pain and pain is love
I know ya Momma mad cause you talk to a thug
You think you know my type but you ain't got no clue
About - what a n---- like me do
I like to stack my bread and flip my chips
And I can change ya life if ya get wit Flip
I take private jets to Vegas, man
It's twenty bread each pick cause I'm major man
We can cruise the world in a Bently Azure
But don't worry, the chauffer open the door
You couldn't ask for more cause we got it all (we got it all)
Cause you my baby girl right?, right?

[Chorus: Lea]

[Outro: Lea]
We don't have to be in love (love)
We don't have to be in love (love)

Artist: Lil' Flip f/ E-40
Album: Underground Freestyles
Song: Way We Ball (Remix)

(*talking*)
Heeey hooo, this is the way we ball
(this the way we ball), this ain't the regular version man
This is the remix y'all (the remix), I got my boy E-40
In the house man (fa shiggidy), you know
We just gon spit a little game, (juts a little bit though)
I had to change the hook up a little bit (just a little bit)

[Hook - 2x]
This is the way we ball
And we like to floss, all my diamonds gloss
(tricka-wy-yow), I represent the Dirty South
And we riding Blaze, Jags and Escalades
I'm Third Coast born, but you know I'm Texas made

[Lil Flip]
Lil' Flip, I'm back on this track
But this time around, E-40 got my back
You know we popping collars, hitting sixteen switches
And after my show, I'm taking fifteen pictures
With fourteen chicks, and they all from Mexico
When they saw the Sprewells, they said let's go
Now we smoking sweets yep, thirteen grams
Now I'm doing donuts, in a orange Lam
Borghini on Dubs, cruising through the club
Trying to find a chick, who like f------ with a thug
I've never been a scrub, I always had do'
But now I'm with Sony, so I got a little mo'
Now we acting bad, when we pulling off the lot
I treat my car like a stripper, watch me drop the top
I'm doing 85, going down to Sea World
Me, E-40, Hump, Redd and my homie C-Note

[Hook - 2x]

[E-40]
Chick up on my wrist, mustard and mayonnaise kicks
Vogue tires, E-40 and the Click
Me and Lil Flip, drinking and we sip
Dome pliers, trying to get a grip
On this industry, P-I-M-P-ing
Talk slicker, than the average MC
Players from the track, females on my lap
Dog, this is the way we ball

[Hook - 2x]

[Lil' Flip]
I'm swanging about to rip the kizzerp, sipping on my sizzlyrup
And on the back of my throwback, it say Larry Bizzird
And on the back of my Jordans, it say Louis Vaton
And on the back of my shirt, it say We Are One
And on the back of my jacket, it say Burberry man
(say, what's that smell), that's blueberry man
So puff puff pass, cause that's all we know
I drink purple stuff, like my homie Big Moe
I'm leaning to the left, about to waste my cup
But I got another fo', so I don't give a f---
I've been having paper, cause I grind everyday
And since I'm in a big body, n---- get out my way

[Hook - 2x]
Artist: David Banner f/ Lil' Flip
Album: Mississippi: The Album
Song: Get Down (Like a Pimp)

Real girls get down on the flo' on the flo' (4x)
Like a Pimp
Real girls get down on the flo' on the flo' (2x)
Like a pimp
Real girls get down on the flo' on the flo'(2x)

[Lil' Flip]
By the time I hit the door
I saw hoes on the flo'
N----- dressed in suits
Tricking all dey hoes
Me imma pimp
I aint paying for no sex
Man I'd rather buy a car
Or a new rolex
Cause I got street paint
So hoes flock like birds
I got one hoe in the range
And another in the surbs'
When I hit the club
Imma be wit David Banner
A thug a----n-----
Wit bad table manners
We act bad (my n----- what is yall saying)
Like when we walk inside clubs
N----- hold they gal's hand
Cause they know we run trains (choo choo) all night
How could yo gal leave me
And be wit you all night
But its all right
Cause you know we don't kiss
Like Too $hort said
B------ aint s----
I tried to told ya
Dat most girls really freaks
And dis is how they gotta
make they money every week

[Chorus]{repeat 4 times}
Real girls get down on the flo' on the flo'(2x)
Like a pimp

[David Banner]
Step into club looking just like a pimp
We got cash
So we screaming out "shake something B----"
This is the song
Tell the DJ put it on
Micheal Tyler made you shake
Sisqo made you show your thong
B---- im dead wrong
The playa from the crib
So get out on the flo'
And girl get it how you live
And since you so hot (hot)
Then show yo p---- lips
??? but I know you still flip
B---- don't trip
Aint a damn thang changed
I still love my queen
But b------ keep me to the game
So if you gotta hoe
Shake em up and let em go uhh
And let them girls get down on the flo' on the flo'
Like a Pimp

[Chorus]

[Lil' Flip]
Now don't you hate them ole'
Lying a-- hoes
Smiling in your face
Wearing her best friends clothes
I suppose
They like the way me and Banner pimp
You can catch us at Poppa Do's
Eating steak and shrimp

[David Banner]
Or you can catch us at E&G pouring it up
Flip whipping Cali trucks
Guls licking my n----
We some south side pimps
And we aint giving a f---
F---- yo gul up in the throat
And make her swallow the n--

[Lil' Flip]
We make em
Swallow the n-- so
Follow the truck
Lil' Flip and David Banner
We got all of the butts and
All of they sluts and
All of the hoes
So drop it like its hot girl
Touch yo f------ toes
Oohh

[David Banner]
Gone touch yo toes and
Make me a roll and
Gone hit the mall
And buy me some clothes mayne
And if yo boy's trill
Imma bust a clip
Yall b------ can't f--- wit me
And

[Lil' Flip]
Lil' Flip N----
N---- N----
Yea n----
This for the real money makers out there you know
Get yo mother f------ money
Don't worry bout the next n----
Get yo mother f------ money
Get yo mother f------ money n----
Uh get your money money
Money money

Artist: Main Source f/ Nas (Nasir Jones), Fatal, Akinyele
Album: Breaking Atoms
Song: Live at the Barbeque

[Nas]
Street’s disciple, my raps trifle
I shoot slugs through my head just like a rifle
Stampede the stage, I leave the microphone split
Play Mr. Tuffy while I’m on some pretty tone s---
Verbal assassin, my architect pleases
When I was twelve, I went to Hell for snuffin’ Jesus
Nasty Nas is a rebel to America
Police murderer, I’m causin’ hysteria
My troops rool up with a strange force
I was trapped in a cage and let out by the Main Source
Swimmin in women like a lifeguard
Put on a bulletproof, n---- I strike hard
Kidnap the president’s wife without a plan
And hangin’ n----- like the Ku Klux Klan
I melt mikes till the sound waves over
Before steppin’ to me you better step to Jehovah
Slammin’ Mc’s on cement
Cause verbally, I’m iller than an AIDS patient
I move swift and uplift
Your mind shoot the gift when I riff in rhyme
Rapp[in sniper, speakin’ real words
My thoughts react like Steven Spielberg’s
Poetry attacks, paragraphs punch hard
My brain is insane, I’m out to lunch God
Science is dropped, my raps are toxic
My voicebox locks and excels like a rocket

Chorus (hook)
Ay Yo! It’s like that y’all (that y’all)
That y’all That y’all (repeat 6 times)
That’s All!
[Fatal]
Fatal is merciful and they curse me
When I grip the mic I show no mercy
I got heart, I rip the party apart
From the seams and hem’m up like bell-bottom jeans
But you get done, you get blues like 501
Brothers are livebut I betchal’m liver son
So let me get upon the scene and redeem
The dream of a team, and knock ‘em out like Mitch Green
Smoke some thai weed, flow at high speed
Rap on of breaks stompin’ like Nothlakes
Cause I’m livin larger than the founders of Fendi
An Asiatic brother that many rappers envy
So round up your crewentourage
And let the God merciful take charge
Chorus

[Akinyele]
Some of them said (said what?) that the Ak should quit
But I don't sweat it, cause I'm too big for that small s---
Like pigs when it comes to a showdown
Huff and puff but the Ak won't get blown down
Cause I come strong, rather than come at all and not be READY
That's what separates me from the PETTY
MC's gas themselves by drinking too much GETTY
And get torn the f--- up like CONFETTI
I'm rich and thick, your lyrics like Aunt JEMIMAH
It doesn't take Keenan Ivory Wayans to know that I'MA
Get You Sucka, if you bite like a PIRANHA
So save them preschool rhymes for the kids at Wonderama
Point blank, period, with no comma
Rhymes so dangerous, call for the homi-cide
Cause I knock'em dead even when I'm at my worst
The only future that lies ahead of them is the lights from the hearse
Got game like a crackhead
But don't be mislead, I keep rappers on lock like a dread
Knots in the head from the words that I said
So get a shovel and dig your grave cause the s--- you talk is dead

Aiyyo it's like that y'all (that y'all)
That y'all (that y'all) --> repeat 5X
And that's all!

[Large Professor]
I grab up girls like jacks
Add' em on like tax, and I'm over like Hot Trax
As far as brothers are concerned a pressure cooker from start
To finish I diminish like a cuisinart
Secondly, I'm sick of critics, who's neckin' me
(Oooh he got an afro) yo, but I get dough
Why's my name the Large Professor?
Cause I milked your cow in other words I hit your heffer
Don't talk about how you can break Rambo
That's just a bunch of namba-ja-hambo
Propaganda, save it for Savanda
Joe and Amanda, Zach and Alexandra
Don't let the folks around your way puff your head
Cause you'll be the owner of a hospital bed
I'll kick fire out you're a-- so fast
You'll be as crispy as my man Bill Blass

Aiyyo, like that y'all (that y'all)
That y'all (that y'all) --> repeat 5X
And that's all!

It's like that y'all (that y'all)
That y'all (that y'all) --> repeat 5X
And that's all!

It's like that y'all (that y'all)
That y'all (that y'all) --> repeat 5X
And that's all!

It's like that y'all (that y'all)
That y'all (that y'all) --> repeat 5X
And that's all!

Artist: Nas
Album: Illmatic
Song: One Love

[Verse One]

What up kid? I know s--- is rough doing your bid
When the cops came you shoulda slid to my crib
F--- it black, no time for looking back it's done
Plus congratulations you know you got a son
I heard he looks like you, why don't your lady write you?
Told her she should visit, that's when she got hyper
Flippin', talk about he acts too rough
He didn't listen he be riffin' while I'm telling him stuff
I was like yeah, shorty don't care, she a snake too
F------ with the n------ from that fake crew that hate you
But yo, guess who got shot in the dome-piece?
Jerome's niece, on her way home from Jones Beach - it's bugged
Plus little Rob is selling drugs on the dime
Hangin out with young thugs that all carry 9's
At night time there's more trife than ever
What up with Cormega, did you see 'em, are y'all together?
If so then hold the fort down, represent to the fullest
Say whassup to Herb, Ice and Bullet
I left a half a hundred in your commissary
You was my n---- when push came to shove
One what? one love

[Verse Two]
Dear Born, you'll be out soon, stay strong
Out in New York the same s-- is goin on
the crack-heads stalking, loud-mouths is talking
hold, check out the story yesterday when I was walking
the n---- you shot last year tried to appear like he hurtin somethin
word to mother, I heard him frontin
and he be pumping on your block
your man gave him your glock
and now they run together, what up son, whatever
since I'm on the streets I'ma put it to a cease
but I heard you blew a n---- with a ox for the phone piece
Whylin on the Island, but now with Elmira
better chill cause them n----- will put that ass on fire
Last time you wrote you said they tried you in the showers
but maintain when you come home the corner's ours
On the reels, all these crab n----- know the deal
When we start the revolution all they probably do is squeal
But chill, see you on the next V-I
I gave your mom dukes loot for kicks, plus sent you flicks
Your brother's buck whylin' in four maine he wrote me
he might beat his case, 'til he come home I play it low key
so stay civilized, time flies
though incarcerated your mind [dies]
I hate it when your mum cries
it kinda wants to make me murder, for real-a
I've even got a mask and gloves to bust slugs for one love

[Verse Three]
Sometimes I sit back with a buddha sack
mind's in another world thinking how can we exist through the facts
written in school text books, bibles, et cetera
F--- a school lecture, the lies get me vexed-er
So I be ghost from my projects
I take my pen and pad for the week and hittin L's while I'm sleepin
A two day stay, you may say I need the time alone
to relax my dome, no phone, left the 9 at home
You see the streets have me stressed somethin terrible
F---- with the corners have a nigga up in Bellevue
or h.d.m., hit with numbers from 8 to 10
a future in a maximum state pen is grim
So I comes back home, nobody's out but shorty doo-wop
Rollin two phillies together in the Bridge we called 'em oowops
He said, "Nas, n----- could be bustin' off the roof
so I wear a bullet proof and pack a black tres-deuce"
He inhaled so deep, shut his eyes like he was sleep
Started coughing one eye peeked to watch me speak
I sat back like the mack, my army suit was black
We was chillin' on these bitches where he pumped his loose cracks
I took an l when he passed it, this little bastard
keeps me blasted he starts talkin mad s---
I had to school him, told him don't let n----- fool him
cause when the pistol blow the ones that's murdered be the cool one
Tough luck when n----- are struck, families f----- up
Could've caught your man, but didn't look when you bucked up
Mistakes happen, so take heed never bust up
at the crowd catch him solo, make the right man bleed
Shorty's laugh was cold blooded as he spoke so foul
Only twelve trying to tell me that he liked my style
Then I rose, wiping the blunts ash from my clothes
then froze only to blow the herb smoke through my nose
and told my little man that i'm a go cyprose
there's some jewels in the skull that he can sell if he chose
words of wisdom from nas try to rise up above
keep an eye out for jake shorty what
one love

**Artist:** Nas w/ AZ  
**Album:** Illmatic  
**Song:** The Genesis

*sound of a subway train going overhead*
*in the background, Nas' verse from Main Source "Live at the BBQ" is heard*
*excerpt of verse is as follows*

(Street's disciple, my raps are trifle
I shoot slugs from my brain just like a rifle
Stampede the stage, I leave the microphone split
Play Mr. Tuffy while I'm on some Pretty Tone s---
Verbal assassin, my architect pleases
When I was twelve, I went to ... )

*conversation heard over this before Wild Style music kicks in is as follows*
*(dialogue from the film between ZORO and his infantryman brother, Hector)*
Hector: And you're sitting at home doing this s---? I should be earning a medal for this. Stop f---- around and be a man, there ain't nothing out here for you...

ZORO: Oh yes there is...this!

[somebody from the Firm]
Yo Nas
Yo what the f--- is this b---- on the radio Son?
[Nas]
Chill chill, that's the s---- God, chill
[AZ the Visualiza]
Aiyoyo yo, pull down the shade, man. Let's count this money, n----
Aiyoyo Nas, put the Jacksons and the Grants over there
You know what I'm sayin? Cause we spendin the Jacksons
[Nas]
Right, yeah.
[AZ]
You know how we get down baby
[Nas]
True, true"
[the Firm]
Nas, yo Nas, man s--- is mad real right now in the Projects
for a n--- yo, word to mother. All them crab a-- rappers
be comin up to me man word to mother man I think we need
to let them n----- know it's real man
[Nas]
True indeed, knahmsayin, but when it's real you doin this
even without a record contract, knahmsayin?
[AZ]
No question
[Nas]
Been doin this since back then
[the Firm]
No doubt
[AZ]
I'm saying regardless how it go down we gon keep it real
We trying to see many mansions and...and Coupes kid!
[Nas]
No doubt, we gon keep it real
True, true...
[the Firm]
Aiyoyo where's Grand Wizard and Mayo at man?
Takin n---- a long time, man..."
[Nas]
Who got the Phillies? Take this Hennessey

[AZ]
Aiyyo Dunn! C'mon, c'mon, man stop waving that man
Stop pointing that at me Dunn, take the clip out

[Nas]
Nigga alright but take this Hennessey man

[AZ]
I'm saying take the clip man
C'mon, take it out...

[Nas]
Light them Phillies up man
N----- stop f------ burning Phillies man
Light some Phillies up then!

[the Firm]
Pass that Amber Boch, pass that Amber Boch, n----! Act like you know.

[AZ]
Yo, we drinking this straight up with no chaser
I ain't f------ with you n----

[Nas]
I'm saying though man...

[AZ]
What is it, what is it baby?

[the Firm]
What is it Son, what is it?

[AZ]
You know what time it is

[Nas]
I'm saying man, ya know what I'm saying?

N----- don't listen man, representing
It's Illmatic.

**Artist:** Nas
**Album:** Illmatic
**Song:** N.Y. State of Mind

[Intro: Nas]
Yeah yeah, aiyyo black it's time (word?)
(Word, it's time n----?)
Yeah, it's time man (aight n----, begin)
Yeah, straight out the f----- dungeons of rap
Where fake n----- don't make it back
I don't know how to start this s---, yo, now

[Verse One: Nas]
Rappers I monkey flip 'em with the funky rhythm I be kickin
Musician, inflictin composition
of pain I'm like Scarface sniffin cocaine
Holdin a M-16, see with the pen I'm extreme, now
Bulletholes left in my peepholes
I'm suited up in street clothes
Hand me a nine and I'll defeat foes
Y'all know my steelo with or without the airplay
I keep some E&J, sittin bent up in the stairway
Or either on the corner bettin Grants with the celo champs
Laughin at baseheads, tryin to sell some broken amps
G-Packs get off quick, forever n----- talk s---
Remeniscing about the last time the Task Force flipped
N----- be runnin through the block shootin
Time to start the revolution, catch a body head for Houston
Once they caught us off guard, the Mac-10 was in the grass and
I ran like a cheetah with thoughts of an assassin
Pick the Mac up, told brothers, "Back up," the Mac spit
Lead was hittin n----- one ran, I made him backflip
Heard a few chicks scream my arm shook, couldn't look
Gave another squeeze heard it click yo, my s--- is stuck
Try to cock it, it wouldn't shoot now I'm in danger
Finally pulled it back and saw three bullets caught up in the chamber
So now I'm jetting to the building lobby
and it was filled with children probably couldn't see as high as I be
(So whatchu sayin?) It's like the game ain't the same
Got younger n----- pullin the triggers bringing fame to they name
and claim some corners, crews without guns are goners
In broad daylight, stickup kids, they run up on us
Fo'-fives and gauges, Macs in fact
Same n-----'ll catch a back to back, snatchin yo' cracks in black
There was a snitch on the block gettin n----- knocked
So hold your stash until the coke price drop
I know this crackhead, who said she gotta smoke nice rock
And if it's good she'll bring ya customers in measuring pots, but yo
You gotta slide on a vacation
Inside information keeps large n----- erasin and they wives basin
It drops deep as it does in my breath
I never sleep, cause sleep is the cousin of death
Beyond the walls of intelligence, life is defined
I think of crime when I'm in a New York state of mind

("New York state of mine" --> Rakim *repeat 4X*)

[Verse Two: Nas]
Be havin dreams that I'ma gangster -- drinkin Moets, holdin Tecs
Makin sure the cash came correct then I stepped
Investments in stocks, sewin up the blocks
to sell rocks, winnin gunfights with mega cops
But just a n----, walking with his finger on the trigger
Make enough figures until my pockets get bigger
I ain't the type of brother made for you to start testin
Give me a Smith and Wessun I'll have n----- undressin
Thinkin of cash flow, buddah and shelter
Whenever frustrated I'ma hijack Delta
In the P.J.'s, my blend tape plays, bullets are strays
Young b------ is grazed each block is like a maze
full of black rats trapped, plus the Island is packed
From what I hear in all the stories when my peoples come back, black
I'm livin where the nights is jet black
The fiends fight to get crack I just max, I dream I can sit back
and lamp like Capone, with drug scripts sewn
Or the legal luxury life, rings flooded with stones, homes
I got so many rhymes I don't think I'm too sane
Life is parallel to Hell but I must maintain
and be prosperous, though we live dangerous
cops could just arrest me, blamin us, we're held like hostages
It's only right that I was born to use mics
and the stuff that I write, is even tougher than d----
I'm takin rappers to a new plateau, through rap slow
My rhymin is a vitamin, held without a capsule
The smooth criminal on beat breaks
Never put me in your box if your s---- eats tapes
The city never sleeps, full of villians and creeps
That's where I learned to do my hustle had to scuffle with freaks
I'ma addict for sneakers, twenties of buddah and bitches with beepers
In the streets I can greet ya, about blunts I teach ya
Inhale deep like the words of my breath
I never sleep, cause sleep is the cousin of death
I lay puzzle as I backtrack to earlier times
Nothing's equivalent, to the new york state of mind

("New York state of mind" --> Rakim *repeat 4X*)
("Nasty Nas" --> cut and scratched 8X)
Artist: Nas  
Album: It Was Written  
Song: Album Intro

*Yee-hah's and whips cracking in background*
-Hey Nas, hey hey boy, you see what they done did to Jimmy and Lee.
Nas: Mmmhmm. Damn, man.
-I can't take it man.
Nas: Sho' can't.
-You think this is gonna eva' change?
Nas: Man, damn this place, man! Damn these chains! These damn chitlins every damn night.
-This cotton.
Nas: S---!
-I can't take it man.
Nas: Harriett done left the night befo'. It's time we go.  
Aint no place for black folk here. Man, promise land callin' me man.
-It's callin' me too.
Nas: It's time we go.
-Yeah, I'm wichou!
Nas: Hey man, hey damn these chains, man. Damn you master, you ain't my master, man!
*Sounds of punching and bumping*
Nas: You aint nothin', you aint nothin.
- Hey Bandit, Bandit, get the dogs! Get the hounds, we gonna have ourselves a hangin' tonight!

Nas: Nineteen-ninety-six!
Back up in this n----.
The right way, though, you know?
-Double-tres son, you know aint nothin'
coincedental or accidental, son.
Nas: No doubt!
-You know how it's goin' down, man.
Nas: It was all written.
-No question, I'm sayin' man, I mean, how we playin' man, you know what I'm sayin', they dealt us in, son.
They playin' with a fifty-four deck, you see with the
Jokers in and everything, you know what I'm saying?
Nas: Son, I'm playin' with the fifty-two.
-You wanna stress on how I used to play, that's how I play.
Nas: But, yo, they takin' us into this next millenium, right now. I'm sayin' law, you know what I'm sayin' we gotta lay the law, cause without law aint no order, you know what I'm sayin', that's why these cats are slippin' through, you know what I'm sayin? They got the rules missin', though.
Nas: True.
-Yo, word up, though, you know what I mean?
Nas: Son, these n----- look faker than the new hundred dollars, son.
-Yeah, you see that they look Monopoly money, right?
Nas: Word, with the big a-- face on it.
-Yo, what I'm sayin', we see through all that, though you know what I'm sayin?
Nas: No question.
-All eyes seein', son, you know we real.
Nas: Yo, no doubt. In the Qu'ran it says Nas, the men. Nesa's the woman, know? It was written.

Artist: Nas f/ AZ, Foxy Brown, and Cormega (The Firm)
Album: It Was Written
Song: Affirmative Action

Intro: AZ

This is what... this what they want huh?
This is what it's all about..
What? Time to take Affirmative Action son
They just don't understand, you know I mean?
N----- comin' sideways thinkin' stuff is sweet man
Ynahmean?
N----- don't understand the four devils:
Lust. Envy. Hate. Jealousy
Wicked n----- man

[AZ the Visualiza]
Yo, sit back relax catchin contacts, sip your cognac
And let's all wash this money through this laundry mat
Sneak attack, a new cat sit back, worth top dollar
In fact, touch mines, and I'll react like a Rottweiler
Who pull the late, we play for high stakes at gunpoint
Catch em and break, undress em tie em with tape, no escape
The Corleone, fettucini Capone
Roam in your own zone or get kidnapped and clapped in your dome
We got it sewn, The Firm art of war is unknown
Lower your tone, face it, homicide cases get blown
Aristocrats, politickin daily with diplomats
See me I'm an official mack, Lex Coupe triple black

[Cormega]
Criminal thoughts in the blue Porsche, my destiny's to be the new boss
That nigga Paulie gotta die - he too soft
That n-----'s dead on, a key of her-o'in, they found his head on
the couch with his d--- in his mouth, I put the hit out
Yo, the smoothest killer since Bugsy, b------ love me
And Queens where my drugs be, I wear Guess jeans and rugbies
Yo my people from Medina they will see you
when you re-up on your heater all your cream go between us
Real s---, my Desert Eagle got a ill grip
I chill with, n----- that hit Dominican spots and steal bricks
My red beam, made a dread scream, and sprayed a Fed team
Corleone be turnin n----- to fiends
Yukons and ninja black Lexus, 'Mega the pretty boy
with mafia connections it's The Firm n----- set it

[Nas]
Yo, my mind is seein through your design like blind fury
I shine jewelry sippin on crushed grapes, we lust papes
and push cakes inside the casket at Just wake
It's sickenin, he just finished biddin upstate
And now the projects, is talkin that somebody gotta die s---
It's logic, as long as it's nobody that's in my clique
My man Smoke, know how to expand coke, and Mr. Coffee
Feds cost me two mill' to get the system off me
"Life's a B----," but God-forbid the b------ divorce me
I'll be flooded with ice so hellfire can't scorch me
Cuban cigars meetin Foxy at Demars
Movin cars, your top papi Senor Escobar

[Foxy Brown]
In the black Camaro
Firm deep all my n----- hail the blackest sparrow
Wallabee's be the apparel
Through the darkest tunnel, I got visions of multimillions
in the biggest bundle, in the Lex pushed by my n----- Jungle
He money bags got Moet, Sean Don
Bundle of sixty-two, they ain't got a clue what we about to do
My whole team we shittin hard like Czar
Sosa, Foxy Brown, Cormega, and Escobar
I keep a fat marquis piece, laced in all the illest snake skin
Armani sweaters Carolina Hebrera
Be The Firm baby, from BK to the 'Bridge
My n---- Wiz, operation Firm Biz, so what the deal is
I keep a phat jew-el, sippin Crist-ies
Sittin on top of fifty grand in the Nautica Van, uhh!
We stay incogni' like all them thug n----- in Marcy
The Gods, they praise Allah with visions of Gandhi
Bet it on, my whole crew is Don Juan
On Cayman Island with a case of Cristal and Papa Chula spoke
N----- with them Cubans that snort coke
Raw though, an ounce mixed wit leak that's pure though
Flippin the bigger picture, the bigger n----- with the cheddar
Was mad dripper, he had a f----- villa in Manilla
We got to flee to Panama, but wait it's half and half
Keys is one and two-fifth, so how we flip
Thirty-two grams raw, chop it in half, get sixteen, double it times three
We got forty-eight, which mean a whole lot of cream
Divide the profit by four, subtract it by eight
We back to sixteen, now add the other two that 'Mega bringin through
So let's see, if we flip this other key
Then that's more for me, mad coke and mad leak
Plus a five hundred, cut in half is two-fifty
Now triple that times three, we got three quarters of another ki
The Firm baby, volume one uhh..

Artist: Nas
Album: The Lost Tapes
Song: Fetus

[Intro]
Yeah..
I want all my n----- to come journey with me
My name is Nas, and the year is 1973
Beginning of me, therefore I could see
Through my belly button window, who I am..

[Verse 1]
I existed in a womb, just like an abyss
Came from behind the sun, my hands balled in a fist
Punching on my moms stomach, kicking on her cervix
Twitching cause I'm nervous, thought my intended purpose
Was to be born to reign, not in scorn or vain
But to take on a name, that my pops chose for me
Bloodstream full of indio, developing eyes
Nine month process, infant size
A prophet in his early stage, his mother in the early 30s
Was married to pops within what she carried would drop
I'm not worthy to come from a women so pure, Ann Jones
Flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood, her blood and bones
Hearin prayers, she axin for my good health
That I become a man and learn to make a way for myself
Nervous she was, and her paranoia got in my blood
Mixed with marijuana from my daddy's genes
Lotta screams I'm hearin, it's crazy
Both parents is scrappin, I'm not even a baby
A miscarriage can happen

"I shot my way out my mom dukes" x4 (*scratched*)

[Verse 2]
Yo
They must wanna keep me, cause 4 months pass, I'm still alive
Guess I got what they call a Ill Will to survive
When I look hard the lights is killin my eyes
I know when moms is layin down, I get bored, start to get live
Move side to side, hear loud music and vibe
All black babies are born with rhythm, that's no lie
Solar energize, mineralize food flowin through my mothers tube
I'm covered in this thick layer of goo
Month two was the least most comfortable
My umbilical cord choking me
But month 3 was closer, see
Thats when pops took moms to see the doc at the clinic
But I was saved, he changed his mind in the last minute
Watchin 'em yell, heard my moms voice well
Feared fist fights, so terrified when we fell
While they broke up furniture and smashed plates on the wall
I wondered if I am born, will I be safe at all
This place they call the world though my view was so large
Couldn't wait to get out, and grow up and take charge
Month 5, Month 6 went by, hopin I'm born in July
But the Lord already figured out a date and time
September 14th, '73
Get ready world, doctors in the front waitin for me
Arms open cause they know when I drop, alot of s---'s gon' stop
See how the government will start re-training cops
Month 9, I'm a week over due, the labor induced
Pops told my moms "Push and take deep breaths too
Stay calm", holdin her arm, I'm trying to hold on
Surgical gloves touching my scalp, my head pops out
Everything is blurry, my first breath screams out
Tears pouring down my pops face he's so proud
Wantin to hold me, but I was so bloody
They washed me off and he said "At least that n---- aint ugly!"
Placed me in his arms snuggly, laid me on my mother
Finally, I got to see who held me in her body
She love me, and yo I plan to overthrow the devil
Y'all about to see this world in trouble
Motherf------

(*Baby screams*)

**Artist:** Nas  
**Album:** The Lost Tapes  
**Song:** Poppa Was a Player

To My n---- who brought me in this world
Taught us right n----

My old dad imported to the family structure
Provide her God
My moms a queen at university civaliza
My pops maybe was late but always came home
My moms would put us to bed and she would wait on
Soon as he walk in the door she barking
I turned out the Jonny Carson
Jumped out the bed
We grabbed both his legs
Me and my brother
Not knowing the pain he gave my mother
Night after night, fighting yelling at each other
My papa played the street all day
Mama was either home, at work, while we played inside the hall way
She sacrifices all she got to feed us
When she was alone she cried by the phone pepping out the window heeding
But still I didn't see it
Mama hid it from us
We was kids younger
Till we got bigger, on to
Bigger things that we knew what the time was
That daddy was leaving the crib and moms love

Papa was player, player wasn't papa
Papa loved the ladies
Never got enough of
Pretty brown round
Running round town (Shhhhh)
Don't tell your mother what's going down
(Repeat 2x)

So many kids I knew, never knew what Pap was
That's why I show my pop love
He was still around when I f----- up
He could have left
My moms pregnant shock to death but stayed
Watch me crawl till I took my first step, to the first grade
To my first fist fight
Right behind me he would stand
No matter how big or tall he made me fight you like a man
Throw dirt in your eye, swing my right scoop you're a-- and slam
He watched me so I wouldn't get jumped by shorty's fam
Roaches and weed all over my crib him and moms relaxing
Next thing you know he packing
So then I asked him
What's this white s--- on that plate and your facing?
Papa why you butt a-- from the waist
And who's this lady I'm facing
Dark skin you're not my mommy
He grabbed me up to run some smooth words by me
Promise things that he would buy me
If I kept my mouth close and don't tell mommy
He said one day I'll understand little me
Was in you to side me

Papa was player, player wasn't papa
Papa loved the ladies
Never got enough of
Pretty brown round
Running round town (Shhhhh)
Don't tell your mother what's going down
(Repeat 2x)
Pop's told me hold my own
Pop's told me value home
Could I help it papa was a rolling stone
Who loved the pretty brown round
Out of town bound
Jumping in his jazz Benz he touring
At home I play his latest recordings
And it's strange now how, I do my thing now
I'm in the game now
And heard of it his brain pow
To pull strings and gain power
From weed habits are same now
No white lines to trumpets to tight rhymes
And beats that be pumping
Before he left he taught me something
A child's young years the most important time to be there
That's why he stayed till we grew up, respect is still here
I'm older now see what having a father's about
One day they can be in your life next day they be out
It's not because of you, you know the deal
Him and your moms feel
If they stay together then someone will get killed
I love you still
Always will
Cause that's my n----
Although you felt you was wrong
I still feel you kid
Life goes on

Artist: Nasir Jones  
Album: God's Son  
Song: Last Real N---- Alive

[Intro]
Uh, uh, uh, uh

[Chorus: repeat 2X]
Lord have mercy, Jesus Christ
He's just nice, he just slice like a ginsu
Look at the life that I been through
I'm the last real n---- alive, that's official

[Nas]
Y'all don't know about my Biggie wars
Who you thought 'Kick In The Door' was for?
But that's my heart, y'all still trippin of this Jigga s---
Real n----- listen up and I'ma tell you how the whole thing start
Off top I brung Queens up from hard times
Rockin at the Fever, streets was all mine
It was my version of the blues, droppin our schools
The crack epidemic had rap representin new rules
So I, got in 'em shoes, tried 'em wore them
Wasn't a perfect fit, so I couldn't sport em
Young murderers ride, I knew all them
Jungle got shot, Will died, we was warring
I wrote it in my album
I was 18 when Lake seen the Island
And Lord held me down and
My surroundings started changing
I had a baby, I was making my rounds with AZ
N----- started noticing my flow and was open when
The Golden Child closed 'em in with more style than them older men
Puff tried to start a label, Prince Rakeem had formed Wu-Tang
Snoop and Dre had a new thang
So Puff drove his new Range through Queensbridge Projects
He let me drive it, before Ready to Die hit
BIG and I hit blunts performing at the Arc
Next thing you knew, BIG blew and all the balling starts
He had Kim and his crew, I found Fox
Only n----- in New York with number one charts
B.I.G. was ahead of his time, him and Raekwon my n-----
But dig it, they couldn't get along
That's when Ghostface said it on the Purple tape
Bad Boy biting Nas album cover way(?)
BIG told me Rae was stealing my slang
And Rae told me out in Shaolin BIG would do the same thing
But I borrowed from both them n-----
Jigga started to flow like us, but hit with 'Ain't No N-----'
Had much Versace swagger
B.I.G. admired the Brooklyn knight and it took him in as Iceberg the rapper
Today don't know nothing, about this bulls--- There's more s--- than wanting to be this
King of New York s---

[Chorus]

[Nas]
Rap became a version of Malcom and Martin
Rest In Peace Will, Queensbridge live on
There's some ghetto secrets I can't rhyme in this song
There's some missing pieces I had to leave out
I had lot trust for Steve Stoute
At some point till I got to know him
We old friends, but what's loyal?
Puff soaked Interscope offices
With champagne bottles on Steve, and Steve thought the drama is on me
Cause previously it would have been, against whoever
Friends forever .
However, I learn, with some n----- it's all business
But I'm a street dude with morals
To diss n----- with Jigga too much, he used to say Jay wanted my spot
I laughed, stayed home, never hung a lot
A quiet man who used to be alone planning
Baby moms thought I was too quiet, couldn't stand it
She hit the streets, later on she hittin the sheets
With a rapper who wanted me on his songs, thinking he strong
I taught her how to watch for cars that might follow
Taught her street s-- that I know
Her weakness was shine yo
But that's her, I ain't mad baby, it made me stronger
Now I get my paper longer
Illmatic I was boss
It Was Written I flossed
One of the most creative LPs ever to hit stores
In the Firm I learned I am Nastradamus
QB's Finest, Oochie Wally, faced more problems
I gave it all up so I can chill at home with mama
She was getting old and sick so I stayed beside her
We had the best times, she asked would I make more songs
I told her not till I see her health get more strong
In the middle of that, Jay tried to sneak attack
Assasinate my character, degrade my hood
Cause in order for him to be the Don, Nas had to go
The Gam-B-I-N-O rules I understood
What you want, see, I already had
The Gift and The Curse? F--- that s----, the first shall be last
I'm the man's man, a rapper's rapper
G-O-D S-O-N, they'll be none after
I was Scarface, Jay was Manolo
It hurt me when I had to kill him and his whole squad for dolo..

Uhh, uhh, uhh
[Chorus]

Artist: Nas
Album: Stillmatic
Song: Ether

[gunshots]

[Nas talking]
("F--- Jay-Z")
What's up n----, ay yo, I know you ain't talkin 'bout me dog
You, what?
("F--- Jay-Z")
You been on my d--- n----, you love my style, n----
("F--- Jay-Z")

[Chorus]
(I) F--- with your soul like ether
(Will) Teach you the king you know you
(Not) "God's son" across the belly
(Lose) I prove you lost already

Brace yourself for the main event
Y'all impatiently waitin
It's like an AIDS test, what's the results?
Not positive, who's the best? Pac, Nas and Big
Ain't no best, East, West, North, South, flossed out, greedy
I embrace y'all with napalm
Blows up, no guts, left chest, face gone
How could Nas be garbage?
Semi-autos at your cartilage
Burner at the side of your dome, come outta my throne
I got this, locked since '9-1
I am the truest, name a rapper that I ain't influenced
Gave y'all chapters but now I keep my eyes on the Judas
With Hawaiin Sophie fame, kept my name in his music
Check it

[Chorus]

talking
Ay yo, pass me the weed, pour my ashes out on these n----- man (no doubt)
Ay, y'all f-----, y'all kneel and kiss the f----- ring
[Chorus]

I've been f------ over, left for dead, disses and forgotten
Luck ran out, they hoped that I'd be gone, stiff and rotten
Y'all just p--- on me, s--- on me, spit on my grave (uh)
Talk about me, laugh behind my back but in my face
Y'all some well wishin (b------), friendly actin envy hidin snakes
With your hands out for my money, man, how much can I take?
When these streets keep callin, heard it when I was sleep
That this Gay-Z and Cockafella Records wanted beef
Started cockin up my weapon, slowly loadin up this ammo
To explode it on a camel, and his soldiers, I can handle
This for dolo and his manuscript just sound stupid
When KRS already made an album called "Blueprint"
First, Biggie's ya man, then you got the nerve to say that you better than Big D---- suckin lips, why'n you let the late, great veteran live

[talking]
(I...will...not...lose)
"God's son" across the belly, I prove you lost already
The king is back, where my crown at?
(Ill...will) Ill Will rest in peace, let's do it n------

[Chorus]

Y'all n------ deal with emotions like b------
What's sad is I love you 'cause you're my brother
You traded your soul for riches
My child, I've watched you grow up to be famous
And now I smile like a proud dad, watchin his only son that maçe it
You seem to be only concerned with dissin women
Were you abused as a child, scared to smile, they called you ugly?
Well life is harsh, hug me, don't reject me
or make records to disrespect me, blatant or indirectly
In '88 you was gettin chased through your buildin
Callin my crib and I ain't even give you my numbers
All I did was gave you a style for you to run with
Smilin in my face, glad to break bread with the god
Wearin Jaz chains, no tecs, no cash, no cars
No jail bars Jigga, no pies, no case
Just Hawaiian shirts, hangin with little Chase
You a fan, a phony, a fake, a p------, a Stan
I still whip you're a--, you thirty-six in a karate class
You Tae-bo hoe, tryna' work it out, you tryna' get brolic?
Ask me if I'm tryna' kick knowledge
Nah, I'm tryna' kick the s--- you need to learn though
That ether, that s--- that make your soul burn slow
Is he Dame Diddy, Dame Daddy or Dame Dummy?
Oh, I get it, you Biggie and he's Puffy
Rockefeller died of AIDS, that was the end of his chapter
And that's the guy y'all chose to name your company after?
Put it together, I rock hoes, y'all rock fellas
And now y'all try to take my spot, fellas?
Philly's hot rock fellas, put you in a dry spot, fellas
In a pine box with nine shots from my glock, fellas
Foxy got you hot 'cause you kept your face in her p---
What you think, you gettin girls now 'cause of your looks?
Ne-gro please
You no mustache havin, with whiskers like a rat
Compared to Beans you wack
And your man stabbed Un and made you take the blame
You a--, went from Jaz to hangin with Kane, to Irv, to Big
And, Eminem murdered you on your own s---
You a d----ridin f-----, you love the attention
Queens n----- run you n-----, ask Russell Simmons
Ha, R-O-C get gunned up and clapped quick
J.J. Evans get gunned up and clapped quick
Your whole damn record label gunned up and clapped quick
Shaun Carter to Jay-Z, damn you on Jaz d---
So little shorty's gettin gunned up and clapped quick
How much of Biggie's rhymes is gon' come out your fat lips?
Wanted to be on every last one of my classics
You pop s---, apologize, n-----, just ask Kiss

Artist: Nas f/ Olu Dara
Album: Street's Disciple
Song: Bridging the Gap

*Nas talking*
"The light is there."

[Intro: Olu Dara singing]
See I come from Mississippi
I was young and runnin' wild
Ended up in New York City, where I had my first child
I named the boy Nasir, all the boys call him Nas
I told him as a youngster, he'll be the greatest man alive

[Verse 1: Nas]
Let's go!... Hey-Hey-Hey-Hey --
Tribrary of these rap skits, styles I mastered
Many brothers snatched it up and tried to match it
But I'm still number one, everyday real
Speak what I want, I don't care what y'all feel
'Cause I'm my own master, my Pop told me be your own boss
Keep integrity at every cost, and his home was Natchez Mississippi
Did it like Miles and Dizzy, now we gettin' busy
Bridging The Gap from the blues, to jazz, to rap
The history of music on this track
Born in the game, discovered my father's music
Like Prince searchin' through boxes of Purple Rain
But my Minneapolis was The Bridge, home of the Superkids
Some are well-known, some doin' bids
I mighta ended up on the wrong side of the tracks
If Pops wouldn't've pulled me back an said yo
[Olu Darasing]
Greatest man alive (Nas: Yeah, turn it up!)
Gre-Gre-Gre-Gre-Greatest man alive!

[Verse 2: Nas]
The blues came from gospel, gospel from blues
Slaves are harmonizin' them ah's and ooh's
Old school, new school, know school rules
All these years I been voicin' my blues
I'm a artist from the start, Hip-Hop guided my heart
Graffiti on the wall, coulda ended in Spoffard, juvenile delinquent
But Pops gave me the right type'a tools to think with
Books to read, like X and stuff
'Cause the schools said the kids had dyslexia
In art class I was a compulsive sketcher of
Teachers in my homeroom, I drew pix to mess them up
'Cause none'a them would like my style
Read more books than the curriculum profile
Said, "Mr. Jones please come get your child
'Cause he's writin' mad poems and his verses are wild"
[Olu Darasing]
Greatest man -- The great-greatest man alive

[Verse 3: Nas]
Hey-Hey-Hey -- My Poppa was not a Rollin' Stone
He been around the world blowin' his horn, still he came home
Then he got grown, changed his name to Olu
Come on, tell 'em 'bout the places you gone to
[Olu Dara singing]
I been to Saudi Arabia, Mozambique
Madagascar, Paris, Greece
The Middle Africa is where we lived
Better known as Queenbridge
[Nas]
Nas, Nas you don't stop
Olu Dara in the house, you don't stop
Muddy Waters' Howling Wolf you don't stop
From the Blues to Street Hop you don't stop
Tell 'em Pop

[Outro: Olu Dara singing / Nas adlibbing]
See I come from Mississippi (Let 'em know)
I was young and runnin' wild (Runnin' wild)
Ended up in New York City (Yeah!)
Where I had my first child (That's me)
I named the boy Nasir (Yeah, Daddy!)
All the boys call him Nas (Luh ya, boy)
I told him as a youngster
He'll be the greatest man alive (You the greatest, Pop)
Greatest man alive (You the greatest, Pop)Gre-Gre-Gre-Gre-Gre-Greatest man alive!
Rest In Peace Ray Charles

Artist: Lil' Flip
Album: The Leprechaun
Song: Da Freestyle King

(talkin')
Nigga, 2000, Y2K
Me and Ron C all in yo muthaf-----' s---- n----
fo sho, ha, man it's goin' down
y'all boyz need to fo sho get that cotton candy
cotton mouth, all in yo' face n----
Uh huh, Lil' Flipper, The Leprechaun aka Da Freestyle King
Sucka Free, f-----' with that Ron C
Dat Dodo, y'all blowin' bulls---
Indo n---- this what we blow...

(Lil' Flip)
We blow Indo, I might be on Jay Leno
They be like Flip, can you listen to my demo
I say naw n----- I got shows to do
After the concert, I got hoes to screw
If I'm on stage, I don't wanna be close to you
I got money n-----, I ain't gon' boast to you
What I'm supposed to do, is keep rappin'
Some n----- got gold in they mouth, I got platinum
I ain't cappin', what happened
I done blew up too quick
I'm the Lil' Flip, Da Freestyle King of the Screwed Up Click
I represent, I get head
Ride blue, ride black, I ride red
F---- a Fed, I shake heads, when I'm in the club
Ball outta control, I got Indo dub sacks
How you love that, I ain't the Hot Boys
But you might see me in a drop top boy
I roll rolex, I got baggets, princess cuts
If I'm in the club, you'll see me, pimpin' sluts
That's what i do, n----- all the time
Get rotation on 97.9, that's The Box
N----- got a TV sitcom on Fox
Used to be on blocks, slangin' rocks
Now I'm changin' dots, in my drop top prowler
Go to court, throw away the case, I got a prowler
Call her, n-----, Caller ID, a baller I be
She wanna f----, I'ma call her and see
Take that hoe to Motel 6 or go to Tweety's
Pour a duece in the can, sold a four in Tahiti
Now I'm leanin', n-----, I'm in the green Beamer
Supa dupa fly like I'm Missy Misdemeanor
I'm Lil' Flip, n-----, I know you know me
Baggets and 30 pointers all on my roolly's
You might see me in a Expedition
With a sign on the back, that say let's go fishin'
I'ma balla, n----- I told you that
If I ain't ridin' green then I'm rollin' 'Llacs
I'm from the Clover, I'ma solja, I write rhymes in my folder
Hell yea, I got mo' crystals than Folgers
That's coffee, hoes wanna toss me, get off me
Cause I be ballin' outta control, hoes they stalk me
From Milwaukee, my Nextel, inhale, exhale
Half of my n----- locked up in jail
But I'm still on the block, puttin' it down
N---- when I smile, bling, platinum puddin, you gotta frown
You be mad, cause you see me in a drop top Jag
50 G's for a car, that's not that bad
I can do that, if it's too fast, I can screw dat
Get the brand new drop, royal blue dat
Now I'm cruisin', n---- I be bruisin'
Gettin' all mad cause in the club, I be choosin'
I like yellabones, talk on PrimeCo telephones
Got hoes from Hine-Clark to Yellowstone
I'm in Homestead, killin' with the real n----
We wearin' Platinum Fubu, y'all still wear Phil Hilfiger
I almost f----- up, but n---- I'm the king
I can freestyle all night til the doorbell ring
And all I do, is ride on chrome
And all I got, is DVD's inside my home
I got a Jacuzzi, I might watch Scary Movie
Hell yea, I get head from yo mama every Tuesday
This Lil' Flip, I bet cha know dat, show dat
Hell yea, you owe me some money, n---- you owe dat
So pay me, the radio gon' play me
Look at my yard, I got mo' toys than Kay-Bee
Who I am, The Leprechaun, Freestyle King
Change the color of my teeth and my byzletine
Now I'm platinum, n---- got a n---- name Crime
Open up my mouth, my piece shine, but Johnny got my blinded
y'all can just parallel park, when I open up my mouth, its farewell to the dark
I sip drank, flip pints, sip 8's, got hoes at Worthing, Sterling and Yates
And when I pick 'em up, n----, I'ma take 'em to the room
N----, I'ma be the witch and you can ride my broom
Then you gone, I freestyle, I'm off the dome
I got all, satellites from the top of my home
I get gone in my zone, n----, I'm in a Bentley
N---- mad, they got Guess glasses, I wearin' Finley's
And S classes, jumpin' out, n---- Da King
F---- y'all n----, I'm jumpin' out limosuines
(talkin')
Nigga, Lil' Flip, Sucka Free, Swishahouse n----,
we over here too n----, we puttin' it down n----,
the North and the South, n----, how you do it, that was freestyle...

Artist: Boogie Down Productions
Album: Criminal Minded
Song: South Bronx
Scott La Rock: Yo, wassup Blastmaster KRS-ONE. This jam is kickin'
KRS: Word! Yo, what-up D-Nice?
D-Nice: Yo, wassup Scott La Rock?
SLR: Yo man, we chillin' this funky fresh jam. I wanna tell you a little somethin' about us. We're the Boogie Down Productions crew and due to the fact that no-one else out there knew what time it was, we have to tell you a little story about where we come from...

South Bronx, the South South Bronx (4X)

Many people tell me this style is terrific
It is kinda different but let's get specific
KRS-One specialized in music
I'll only use this type of style when I choose it
Party people in the place to be, KRS-One attacks
Ya got dropped off MCA cause the rhymes you wrote was wack
So you think that hip-hop had it's start out in Queensbridge
If you popped that junk up in the Bronx you might not live
Cause you're in...

South Bronx, the South South Bronx (4X)

I came with Scott LaRock to express one thing
I am a teacher and others are kings
If that's a title they earn, well it's well deserved, but
without a crown, see, I still burn
You settle for a pebble not a stone like a rebel
KRS-One is the holder of a boulder, money folder
You want a fresh style let me show ya
Now way back in the days when hip-hop began
With CoQue LaRock, Kool Here, and then Bam
Beat boys ran to the latest jam
But when it got shot up they went home and said "Damn
There's got to be a better way to hear our music every day
Beat boys gettin blown away but comin outside anyway"
They tried again outside in Cedar Park
Power from a street light made the place dark
But yo, they didn't care, they turned it out
I know a few understand what I'm talkin about
Remember Bronx River rollin thick
With Kool DJ Red Alert and Chuck Chillout on the mix
When Afrika Islam was rockin the jams
And on the other side of town was a kid named Flash
Patterson and Millbrook projects
Casanova all over, ya couldn't stop it
The Nine Lives Crew, the Cypress Boys
The real Rock Steady takin out these toys
As odd as it looked, as wild as it seemed
I didn't hear a peep from a place called Queens
It was seventy-six, to 1980
The dreads in Brooklyn was crazy
You couldn't bring out your set with no hip-hop
Because the pistols would go...
So why don't you wise up, show all the people in the place that you are wack
Instead of tryna take out LL, you need to take your homeboys off the crack
Cos if you don't, well, then their nerves will become shot
And that would leave the job up to my own Scott LaRock
And he's from...

South Bronx, the South South Bronx (8X)

The human TR-808, D-Nice
The poet, the Blastmaster KRS-ONE
The Grand Incredible DJ Scott La Rock
Boogie...Down...Productions
Fresh for '86, suckers!
(Ha ha ha ha ha)

**Artist: Boogie Down Productions**
**Album: Criminal Minded**
**Song: The Bridge is Over**

Intro:

I say, the bridge is over, the bridge is over, biddy-bye-bye!
The bridge is over, the bridge is over, hey, hey!
The bridge is over, the bridge is over, biddy-bye-bye!
The bridge is over, the bridge is over

Verse One:

You see me come in any dance wid de spliff of sensei
Down with the sound called BDP
If you want to join the crew well you must see me
Ya can't sound like Shan or the one Marley
Because Shan and Marley Marl dem-a-rhymin like they gay
Pickin up the mic, mon, dem don't know what to say
Sayin that hip-hop started out in Queensbridge
Sayin lies like that, mon, you know dem can't live
So I, tell them again, me come to tell them again, gwan!
Tell them again, me come to tell them agaaaain
Tell them again, me come to tell them again, gwan!
Tell them again, me come to te-ell them
Manhattan keeps on makin it, Brooklyn keeps on takin it
Bronx keeps creatin it, and Queens keeps on fakin it

Verse Two:

Di-di di-da, di di-di, dida di-day, aiy!
All you sucka MC, won't you please come out to play, cause
Here's an example of KRS-One, bo!
Here's an example of KRS-One
They wish to battle BDP, but they cannot
They must be on the d--- of who? DJ Scott LaRock
Cause, we don't complain nor do we play the game of favors
Boogie Down Productions comes in three different flavors
Pick any d--- for the flavor that you savor
Mr. Magic might wish to come and try to save ya
But instead of helpin ya out he wants the same thing I gave ya
I finally figured it out, Magic mouth is used for suckin
Roxanne Shante is only good for steady fuckin
MC Shan and Marley Marl is really only bluffin
Like Doug E. Fresh said "I tell you now, you ain't nuthin"
Compared to Red Alert on KISS and Boogie Down Productions
So easy now man, I me say easy now mon
To KRS-One you know dem can't understand
Me movin over there and then me movin over here
This name of this routine is called Live At Union Square
Square, square, square, oooo000000000000000000
What's the matter with your MC, Marley Marl?
Don't know you know that he's out of touch
What's the matter with your DJ, MC Shan?
On the wheels of steel Marlon sucks
You'd better change what comes out your speaker
You're better off talkin bout your wack Puma sneaker
Cause Bronx created hip-hop, Queens will only get dropped
You're still tellin lies to me
Everybody's talkin bout the Juice Crew funny
But you're still tellin lies to me
You love to hear the story, again and again
Of how it all got started way back when
The monument is right in your face
Sit and listen for a while to the name of the place

"The Bridge"
"Queensbridge"

Hip hop was set out in the dark
They used to do it out in the park
Every place they said his name it rang an alarm
Otherwise known as Mean Teen Tom
A brother who's known for his rap
Jabby Jack, Larry Lah, third least not last
A cool brother by the name of Gas
Face Brothers made you get loose
They was down with the brother called Cousin Bruce
They used to jam in the center
You had to pay so you could enter
Go to the door, get frisked
Just in order to get in
And if you wasn't from this town
Then you couldn't fight and win
But everytime they had a jam
They couldn't get no peace
So that's why the jams out there
In the parks, they had to cease
Cause you was in

"The Bridge"
"Queensbridge"

Dimples D, the girl, she was great
Her and Marley Marl went and cut a plate
They used to rock it out in the place
And the title of it was 'Sucker DJ's'
And then he strolled along one day
And then he walked into a girl named Shante
Third in line, you know it's me
MC Shan, ha ha, in the place to be
MC Man, he made them beg
He is the man who is known as Craig
The newest member out to get loose
Now he is down with us and he got the Juice
This is the place where stars are born
And we are the only ones that can't be worn
Out by any place, any part of the world
And while I'm out on tour keep your hand off my girl
While she's in

"The Bridge"
"Queensbridge"

Dead dreams, bought and sold
You gotta try and receive your goal
However you do it, however you may
Don't ever listen to what nobody say
Cause I will tell you the deal
You gotta go by what your heart feel
Cause if you don't, you'll be misled
By stupid little things put inside your head
By someone else that you will see
They're trying to lead your destiny
Grab hold of your heavy chain
Which people always pull and always trying to restrain
You heard just what I said
They're always pulling you back when you wanna get ahead
They pull you back cause they're not with it
You talk about school, they talk about 'quit it'
Soon you'll see that time does fly
But you spent most of it out gettin high
Thought about it, much, much later
Could've went to school and been much greater
But you chose to lead that fate
Now you're sucking on a bone when it should've been steak
The whole purpose of the story I told
Was mainly to inspire you to reach your goal
Stop walking through life as if you were blind
You should reach for your goal cause I'm reaching for mine
And I'm from

"The Bridge"
"Queensbridge"
Artist: MC Shan  
Album: Down By Law  
Song: Kill That Noise *

[*reply to BDP's 'South Bronx']*

(Warning)
(Warning) (Warning) (Warning)
(Warning)

(Devastating to your ear)

Rhyming is a thing that I do at will  
Be glad to rock a party just to prove my skill  
J-u-ice is what I'm gaining  
With a style so fresh that it's self-explaining  
Never bite a rhyme, I don't live that way  
But when I get dissed, violators pay  
I'm a crowd motivator, MC annihilator  
Never front the move cause I'm not a perpetrator  
I don't really mind bein criticized  
But those who try to make fame on my name - die  
Rhymes of all styles, all categories  
>From fresh freestyles to real fly stories  
This jam is dedicated to you and your boys  
And if you knew what I knew, then you'd kill that noise

(Devastating to your ear)

I devastate the crowd while the record spins  
So call, competators have no wins  
I laugh at MC's who call me wack  
You ordered, and now I'm gonna serve you, Jack  
We're respected by all, treated just like kings  
How could you have the nerve to say such things?  
If you knew at the time what you were saying  
You wouldn't be on your knees - praying  
You gotta understand I'm not the average MC  
At the first sign of trouble grab the mic and flee  
Grab the mic, plug in the beat box jacks  
Prepare for the battle, then proceed to wax  
Takes much time I feel is ample
To deafen an MC, to make an example
This goes for all sucker MC chumps
Who hear my name, and suddenly Kool-Aid pumps
So if you're thinkin 'bout dissin me, better think twice
Cause next time, brother, I won't be so nice
You can come all alone or bring all your boys
But if you knew what I knew, then you'd kill that noise

(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise
(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise
(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise
(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise
(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise
(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise
(South Bronx)
Kill that, kill that noise

I must say MC's got a lot of spunk
To get up on stage and pop so much junk
I'm not worried cause I don't get waxed
And you wouldn't believe how hard I max
School's in session, I'm about to teach
Versatile with a style that you just can't reach
Lesson number one: first strike aim
You shouldn't do things to degrade my name
Your records won't sell cause the people won't buy em
A sucker MC's like chicken - I fry him
I started with a smash, I'ma leave with a bang
And to put it to you bluntly - MC's can't hang
Your boys and your family will be grieving your death
Weeping while they're sweeping up the pieces I left
You can come all alone or bring all your boys
But if you knew what I knew, then you'd kill that noise

[ Marley Marl ]
Yo Shan
I didn't hear you say hip hop started in the Bridge on your record?

[ MC Shan ]
I didn't
They wanted to get on the bandwagon

Because I... rhyme so fly, girls can't resist
But her man can't understand, so he gets pissed
Like a preacher at ??? when she hurt I'll heal her
I'll leap, you sleep, and believe I steal her
My mama used to say: "Be a ladies man"
I used to always wonder why she named me Shan
Not hard to pronounce, easy to spell
And oh how I love it when the ladies yell
Her man better chill when my jacket's unzipped
I got a .25 with an 8 shot clip
You're sayin to yourself: 'that's a b.b. gun'
But the place that I'ma shoot ya it'll take just one
I'll blow you into parts, little pieces and specks
You'll be saying to yourself: 'what can happen next?'
This jam is dedicated to you and your boys
But if you knew what I knew, then you'd kill that noise

(Hey, listen to the man)

Shoulda stayed in school, learned comprehension
Tryin to state facts that I did not mention
Sucker MC's I hate the most
Next time I make a record you should listen close
Cause MC's like me are the real McCoys
So you sucker MC's better kill that noise

(Baby)

...tryin to diss us, man
What's wrong with that...
Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha
KRS-One and Scott La Rock
Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha
Yo, he talk about 'strung' on somethin
Man, we cold coolin in the place
Drivin fresh Audis and coupes
What's wrong with y'all
Strung?
The only thing we strung on is music
And you're strung on ours

**Artist:** 2 Live Crew  
**Album:** As Nasty as They Wanna Be  
**Song:** If You Believe in Having Sex

[ ] = the fellas  
() = the ladies  
{} = the crowd  
<> = Luke using white accent

Luke:
If you believe in having sex, say hell yeah! {Hell yeah!}  
If you believe in having sex, say hell, f--- yeah! {Hell, f--- yeah!}  
When I say S, you say E, when I say X, you say sex!  
S! {E!} X! {SEX!!} Let's go!!

*the beat starts here*

Do the ladies run this mutha------? (Hell yeah!)  
Do the fellas run this mutha------? [Hell yeah!]  
Do the ladies run this mutha------? (Hell, f--- yeah!)  
Do the fellas run this mutha? (Hell, f--- yeah!)  
All hoes! [Suck d---!] All n-----! (Eat p----!)  
All hoes! [Drink d----!] All n------! (Eat p----!)  
Bull--------! (Suck p-----!) All f-------! [Suck d----!]  
Bull--------! (Suck p-----!) All f-------! [Drink d----!]

Now, now hold on, hold up, fellas, I wanna know ALL the fellas out there who gon' get some p----! Aaight? I want y'all to repeat after me.

Say "I'm gon' get some p----!" [I'm gon' get some p----!]  
Say "I'm gon' get some p----!" [I'm gon' get some p----!]

Now ladies, I want y'all to repeat after me if y'all got somethin' to say to these n----- out here, all right, ladies? Y'all ready to do this, ladies?

Say "You ain't gettin' no p----!" (You ain't gettin' no p----!)  
"Cause you ain't got no money!" (Cause you ain't got no mon-ey!)  
Say "You ain't gettin' no p----!" (You ain't gettin' no p----!)  
"Cause you ain't got no money!" (Cause you ain't got no mon-ey!)

Oh s---! Oh s---!
These women gettin' loose on y'all fellas. But hold on,

fellas, we gon' get these women, all right,
I got somethin' for y'all to say:

"Take, your crabby, a-- home, B----!"
[Take, your crabby, a-- home, B----!]
Lemme hear ya say "Take, your crabby, a-- home, B----!"
[Take, your crabby, a-- home, B----!]
All the ladies say, "Eat, my p----! Eat, eat, my p----!"
(Eat, my p----! Eat, eat, my p----!)
All the ladies say, "Eat, this p----! Eat, eat, this p----!"
(Eat, this p----! Eat, eat, this p----!)

Okay, okay, I-I-I can't forget about my white-boy friends at the depot;
<F----'ey, dudes, you wanna get yer c---- sucked?? Repeat after me!!>

"Suck, my c---- and I'll eat yer p----!!"
[Suck, my c---- and I'll eat yer p----!!]
You guys, say, "Suck, my c---- and I'll eat yer p----!!"
[Suck, my cock and I'll eat yer pussee!!]
Now I know why everybody like having sex, more than they
like doin' anything else in the whole world. Okay, fellas,
I wanna know what y'all like about havin' sex.

Is it less fillin'? [No, it tastes great!]
Is it less fillin'? [No, it tastes great!]

Now ladies,
I wanna know what all y'all fine---- ladies like about havin sex.
Aaight, ladies, y'all gon' tell me? Y'all gon' tell me?
Okay, y'all tell me.

Does it taste great? (No, it's less fillin'!)
Does it taste great? (No, it's less fillin'!)

(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
*the beat stops here*
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
(Less fillin'!) [Tastes great!]
*the group gradually stops*
and we hear them making comments as they leave the studio*

**Lil’ Flip Freestyle response to T.I.’s “Welcome Back” recorded on the Tim Westwood Radio Show in the United Kingdom**

Look, First of all I’m a Clover G Veteran
And y’all already know who I’m better than
Y’all know T.I. can’t f--- with me
You’re a featherweight, you don’t even weigh a buck fifty.
N---- you lucky my plane got delayed
‘cause I would’ve knocked your p---- a--- off the stage
You a seven-time felon
What you care about a case yeah,
You got of jail early ‘cause you working for the state snitch

You a b----, been a b----, still a b----
And yeah that leprechaun suit got me filthy rich
I should’ve known you was a snake
When you was at the Source photo shoot just smilin’ in my face
Tryin’ to get on the “Game Over” remix but I told you “No”
I only do tracks with n----- that I think dope
You n----- know, the streets I’m the hardest
So why in the f---- would I dis a gold artist?
I’m from the dirty-dirty and I represent
I get head like the mother f----- president
Southside and we ride on twenty inches
I got a million dollars; I’m not just a penny pincher

Holler back, I’m straight from the streets
Jump out the jeep with the K and the heat
With you layin’ in your lap, your brain in your lap
I’m reppin’ H-town put Clover on the map
Holler back, I got my nine and my strap
Everybody, you better get the Hell back
When Flip pops up, I’ll leave you’re a—dropping dead Southside, we don’t trip over blue or red
I’ll leave you cripple with my pistol in your back end
Make your chest do a f------ back bend
Holler back I’m from the streets dog
And I’ll knock you off your feet dog
What’s Beef?  Beef is when a n---- like you can’t eat
Wake up with an appetite and you can’t eat
Look both ways when you walk across the street ‘cause you don’t want to bump heads with a n---- like me
Rubber man with you A-K s---
But your first album flopped with that wack s---
Reggae s--- holler back n-----!!!

Artist: T.I.
Song: 99 problems (Lil’ flip ain’t one)
Album:

Gangsta Grizzeal!!! (Down with the King!)

[T.I. talking]
Live and direct from the traps of the A-town, n----
Westside, Bankhead, n----
Pimp Squad Clique, n----
Grand Hustle, pimp
Say I’m mad, huh?
Your f----- a-- gon' be mad in a minute (Sissy a---n----)
(Hey, let's go, n----) Imma hit your f----- a-- in the mouth when I see ya, n----
F--- what you heard, homie, leprechaun a---n----

King of the place, called home of the bass
He emerged at the trap, from the zone of the flake
Caught a case, and he still keep a chrome on his waist
For the haters in the face, gettin' thrown in the waist
Like a p---- n---- named Lil' Wesley, tryna test me
On your best behavior what your f----- a-- best be
Choose words carefully when you address me
You ain't gotta like me, but you're gonna respect me
(Or else) or else you get wet like a jetski
Take ten of these and live, that'll impress me
Say I wanna rap on your songs but you ain't let me
See you on the front of The Source, like that upset me
F--- you in the a--, I aint mad 'bout s----
Try Tip, shot quick, that's all you're a-- gon' get
And I aint finna put a mass on Flip
Imma empty out the clip and you're a-- gon' flip
Bet your mom and your dad gon' trip
But them the consequences tryna mash on Tip
N----, lyrically I'll murk you
Physically I'll hurt you
You ain't never ran the streets, you had a curfew
Pussy nigga playin' with me, you'll be in the dirt soon
Look you in the eye see you sweet like perfume (muah)
So go on, keep runnin', you d--- sucker
Imma swing, show the world that you just a big sucker
Daddy shoulda got some head, wish he woulda worn rubber
But he didn't, so now I guess the world gotta suffer
You the kind of wanksta, gangsta's done had enough of
So imma take pride when I ride through and bust you
Tip will be the reason for the saddest day your momma seen
When I let this case slay a nigga like the Drama King

Try nigga, I aint the one
I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one (ha, hey, hey)
I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one
This pussy nigga wanna beef when he find him some
I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one (ha, hey, hey)
I said, I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one
Fuck, boy you wanna beef when you find you some
I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one

(Lil Flip>) Scarface the king of the South
P---- n----, shut the f--- up
I'm cool with face and even he know that you're a sucker
Paul Wall runnin' Texas along with Slim Thug
Mike Jone he a genius he rode some real hustlers
Never been a potent boy, you just a buster
Never been seen outside on the southside
Sucka, now you puttin' on like you run s----
At the third go to jail with this leprechaun s---
Half time you don't like what I'm saying then buck
Nigga, swing when you see me, nigga, I don't give a f---!
Cause I know you just a lame and your partners ain't tough
Know your aim ain't s----, know your fight game suck
So I couldn't image you what G's wanna listen to
Just some kids, women, and alot of homosexuals
Imma stand up high, man, I set the principle

All you do is lie, and everything you say is fictional
I demand my respect, and I'll die about that
But imma hit you with the take, and let you lie about that
So keep me out your raps or this s--- ain't done

I got 99 Problems, Lil' Flip ain't one (come on)
I say, I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one
This p---- nigga wanna beef when he find him some
I got 99 problems, Lil' Flip ain't one

[T.I. talking]
Lil who?
Say f---, n----
I heard you talking about me, n----
You wanna see me, n----? Come see me, n----
ATL, Westside's only one, you understand that, n----? (Bankhead)
Matta fact, I'll come see you, n----
In the suburban are of Houston, n----, I know you can't come to the city, n----
F--- boy
N----, wasn't you a janitor in highschool?
You sucka a---n----, you thought we forgot?
N---- Hump said he made you put on the mothaf------ leprechaun suit, n----
You talkin' bout you got rich off that s---, n----
You ain't even get no c---, n----, till this next album
(You lil' bow tie wearing a---n----)
And it's leased, too, n----
You better not go over 20,000 miles, n----, that's fifteen hundred extra
You know what I'm saying, you sucka a---n----
(Top hat, wearing a---n----)
N----a How I'm livin'? N---- what? N----, n----,
you rented that mo'------ house
in Galveston, Ohio, n---- for six thousand, n----,
you think I didn't know about that, don't ya, n----?
Imma expose yo' p---- a---n----
You ho a---n----
Wait till I see ya, Imma slap you in them white gold teeth you got n----
That ain't no mothaf------ platinum, 30 g's my a---, n---- (ha)
N----, you must've forgot, n----, Paul Wall made grills, n----, that's my mothaf------ partner, n----
30 g's my mothaf------ a--, n----
Imma get a grill, n----, just to show yo' mothaf------ a-- what 30 g's look like
F---Boy! (ha)
Lil' Flip, man, how dare you, for real, man

King of the mothaf----- South, n----
We are bout to tear this ho, n----, can you belive it?
Lil Flip, man, will you get me one of them bow tie's and one of them top hats, n----, please, I need one
A glitter bow ties, and one of them top hats
I want... This halloween I wanna be the leprechaun, ha this halloween
Could I please get a glitter bow tie and a top hat, please?
And my very own little pot of gold to squat over like a b----, you sucka a-- sweet boy n----
  N----, I'll mothaf------ beat yo' a--, man
You gon' make a n---- do somethin' to yo' little p---- a--
Keep on talkin', n----
I'm done with you for now, n----, I'll be back, though
I'm done with you for the moment
Ha (gunshot)

(Lil' Flip>) And I'll adore you, I'll treat you like milk,
I'll do nothing but spoil you
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