

Hip Hop's Influence on Social Welfare by Kinga Jakab

Written by Kinga Jakab ID3623
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In today's hip-hop culture, it is beneficial to narrate the stories of those that cannot tell their stories - the people of poverty-stricken lifestyles.

Rappers like Tupac Shakur (2Pac) and rap group Dead Prez declare that hip-hop culture and rap music will be around as long as poverty is around, because these cultures' stories have to be told. Ironically, anti-rap movements looking to ban rap music, namely gangster rap, are ignorant to these declarations as promises, and instead attempt to eliminate the middle man, hoping to abolish rap music via anti-violence movements, women's right and gay rights reminders, and the like.

It is ignorance that fuels anti-rap movements, because the messages in rap music (passed on from generation to generation) are real and enlightening. As well, there is something about acclaimed rappers rapping about their mothers that is less than threatening and quite endearing. Save for Eminem.

Tupac (2Pac) believes that one must live the thug life to credibly rap about it, but understanding the "thug life" is not as easy as one might believe. Tupac would sometimes answer reporters' questions with simply "Thug Life. Thug Life," which left them confused.

A fan understands that Tupac moralized what it meant to have fear without hope, at the core of every thug. Cyclical in nature, it is unclear whether the ghetto produced the thug or the thug produced the ghetto, but a thug must survive in the ghetto no matter what. Simply, the thug life is the life that rappers rap about, and there are very vivid stories of what life is like. It is unknown territory for a vast majority and therefore misunderstood, but definitely not misrepresented. There must be a reason Mos Def refers to it as "Brook-nahm," and finding this reason is important to understanding the intentions of rap music, thereby better understanding societies that exist in every culture. "All the doubters and believers adjust your receivers," so to speak. Rappers went from raising issues, to raising soldiers, to raising the roof - arguably, a steady decline in quality of message in recent years. Rap is about telling stories, and so rappers tell their stories.

Correction, told their stories. Anti-rap movements sprang up and people like C. Delores Tucker, who heatedly protested against degradations of women in rap music, demanded that rappers remove the crack-whores and crack-babies from their music. Without reciprocity, the

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crack-whores and crack-babies are gone from the music, but still in the societies.

The acknowledgment of poverty-stricken societies and assistance these societies require was what rappers like Tupac Shakur and Dead Prez were fighting for; instead, they were met with attempts at silence, avoidance by the public of the real issues the music was detailing, and complete disrespect to the artists as artists for art's sake. In addition to that was a disregard for cultural norms specific to hip-hop culture, like colloquialisms and cursing.

Again, since the "thug life" is a rut, of sorts, the more time that passed without any assistance to inner-city youths, the patriarch's of modern rap music, the angrier and more frustrated the artists became. It is easy to see the angry influence in rap lyrics, much easier than seeing the truth; and it is easier to attack these angry lyrics staring the public right in the face, than searching for real messages.

Anti-rap movements, and unfortunately the fans, will have to settle for rap music that is lacking in soul, truth and realism, because that is what popular rap music has become. Whether it is a lack of talent or because anti-rap groups have succeeded in their mission to rip out the soul of hip-hop culture, rap music has become about glam and glory and no longer about survival.

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