



Hip-Hop 4 Black Unity

Hip-Hop For Black Unity is a movement that seeks to address the many problems faced by the Hip-Hop generation and to offer tangible strategies to alleviate negative conditions that impact Hip-Hop as an Industry and as a component of a larger Black Culture as well as those who practice it professionally and those who are affected by it, both locally and thus globally. In recognition of the global impact of Hip-Hop and the critically serious ramifications of that impact we are determined to develop a network and coalition of individuals who seek to use their expertise, influence and resources to create a radical and revolutionary change in Hip-Hop on several levels that parallel the same problems we deal with as a people. Hip-Hop was not birthed in a bubble but rather is a microcosm of a larger society where problems such as racism and white supremacy have affected everything from law to politics to business and banking and Hip-Hop did not escape these harsh realities. The Hip-Hop generation is the offspring of the Soul/Funk Music generation of the 60's & 70's and the Civil Rights, Black Power and Black Arts Movements of the same period. We are the collective children of Reggae, Latin, Funk, Soul, Gospel, Jazz, Blues, Rhythm & Blues (R&B), Rock & Roll, we are steeped in the ancient African Oral Traditions and the 1-2 Heart Beat of the African Drum.

The African Roots of the 5 Elements of Hip-Hop

Historically there are 4 elements of Hip-Hop. I have added one correcting what I long saw as an oversight and unfair neglect of a very important element in Hip-Hop. I have added the Beat Box. There are others I have heard in discussion who seek to add Fashion or Style as an element which may have some validity as much like the DJ, through the use of African Innovation/Invention we gave new use and “flavor” to something that was not intended for that use, in this case items of clothing and various accessories that were not intended to be Hip-Hop but when we added on they became Hip-Hop by our individual tastes and our overall style as a people. Ex: Adidas, Pumas, Kangol, Fatigues, Levis or Lees, Graffiti Jean Jackets, Goose Down, Baseball Hats, Overalls, Hankerchiefs, etc.

(All elements of Hip-Hop are equal. There is no order of importance or distinction of which element is best.)

1. The MC is the modern griot, storyteller, scribe, and oral historian. The MC has roots in the Dozens, Scat, Doo Wop, Bee Bop, the rhyming intonations of Preaching, the Pimp “Toasting”, the art of the Con, Poetry. Modern Influences: The Last Poets, James Brown, Reggae “DJs” who talked over sound systems, Chat & Dub

2. The Graffiti Artist or Writer is a modern day Pictorial story teller and artist, hieroglyphics and developer of written scripts and variations of current script **Ex:** Arabic written language is not merely communicative but has actual artistic value depending on the style in which the language is written. Comparable to calligraphy.

3. The B-Boy is the modern embodiment of Dance an integral part of our culture. Break Dancing in particular has roots in Capoeira which traces its roots to Africa as well as a host of other movements from a collage of diasporic dance. Dance was and is central to African culture in Praise, Expression, Celebration, Communication as well as Art.

4. The DJ is the spirit of African Innovation, Invention. The DJ and art of scratching or blending or looping is the one of only a few musical advancements in the last century. They created a new instrument by using something that was only intended to play prerecorded music and making it an instrument in and of itself by attaching pieces of other music to create new music. (see note)

5. The Beat Box using the human body as an instrument and as a tool of communication is very African indeed. From African tribes who use clicks and whistles as a form of language to the modern jazz offerings of Bobby McFerrin. From the guttural moans that birthed the blues and gospel to the art of mimicking the sound of animals. The modern Beat Box illustrates the point “necessity is the mother of invention” giving voice to many urban hip-hoppers who did not have the financial means to invest in equipment to produce music, so they used their bodies to make music.

Note: FYI the other innovations in music were also made by us... The Steel Drum (Pan) in Trinidad turning the abandoned oil drums of big white businesses from environmental hazards into instruments.... Jazz, one of the few forms of music indigenous to America this is Black Classical Music mathematically, aesthetically and audibly superior to the compositions of Europeans supposed Classical music.

Focal Theories & Concepts

For the purposes of introduction these concepts have been condensed and simplified as much as possible. What is presented here are the short versions of these concepts. These concepts have and will continue to be developed, researched and refined and I am also sure there will be other concepts and theories added as we grow and increase in number. **Note:** The terms or phrases “*Commercial Consciousness*” and “*Artistic Accountability and Racial Responsibility*” were coined by J. Crawford in a series of Hip-Hop writings.

Commercial Consciousness

Commercialization in the modern context by itself is not a bad thing. To commercialize something simply means to prepare it for consumption in a mass market. We believe that we need to Commercialize Consciousness. This must be done without diluting a positive and progressive message but rather make the positive and productive message the popular one.

Artistic Accountability & Racial Responsibility

Artists must be accountable for the art they create, the messages they send and the images they project. There must be a system that can advise and consult with artists before they make major decisions and challenge them when bad decisions are made. Furthermore there is a Racial Responsibility that dictates that no Black Artist should promote messages and images that are clearly detrimental to the development of Black people. The propagation of such negative and detrimental images is ignorant if done innocently and traitorous if done purposely.

Major Components and Issues to be addressed

A) Negative Images in Hip-Hop

Nigger/Bitch: An exploration of the terms, the cultural connotations of these terms, their connection to White Supremacy and finally a plan to combat their popular use.

Misogyny, Exploitation of Women: An investigation into the patriarchal and white male dominated music industry and their historical view of women in general and Black Women in particular, the current images of Black Women in Entertainment (Film/TV/Music/Videos, etc), the Historical context of the exploitation of

Black Women Rape, Breeding, Slavery, the Historical images of the Black Woman as mammy, jemima, vixen, jezebel. The hyper sexualization of the Black Woman.

Dehumanization and Demasculinization of the Black Male: The **Dehumanizing** image of the Black Man as a Thug or Gangsta, unfeeling and unemotional, cold blooded killer, absentee father, baby daddy and sexually unbridled are all parallels to the Historically negative images of the Black Man as savage, boogey man, coon, black buck run amuck, and Mandingo. If the Black Man is not dismissed as invalid by his projected uncontrollability and violent nature then he is made unthreatening by a softening process which parallels Black Male Castration. This **Demasculinization** of the Black Male is why most conscious or intelligent rappers are often 'softer' or become so after time. This is part of Acceptability and Mainstream Appeal **Ex:** The Bohemian projection of Common Sense, the friendly boy next door and non threatening projection of Mos Def, the clothes and hair and metamorphosis of Andre 3000. We can see this more clearly displayed in R&B where there is a certain level of Androgyny and Racial Ambiguity where artists become neither Black nor White nor Man nor Woman **Ex:** Michael Jackson, El DeBarge, Prince, Cisco.

Drug Use, Drug Sales: How does the glorification of **Drug Use** influence Black children and impact their decision whether or not to defile themselves by using drugs, therefore exposing them to a high risk lifestyle which could lead to a diminished mental capacity, diminished Health, Disease (namely HIV/AIDS), Incarceration, Death or Zombification (ex: crack or base heads)? How does the glorification of **Drug Sales** and the high rolling, baller/hustler lifestyle associated with it influence Black children to covet materialism and engage in the pursuit of illegitimate and illegal finances through drug sales therefore exposing them to a high risk lifestyle which could lead to death by violence or incarceration, and contributes to the negative condition of our people addicted to drugs and further supports and perpetuates the system of White Supremacy and the Amerikkkan Government which supplies the drugs as a tool of genocide? Further damage is caused when the fascination in this fleeting lifestyle also shifts children's focus during their most crucial formative and developmental stages from viable educational and career opportunities and consumes precious time in pursuit of temporary and very risky benefits.

Black on Black Violence, "Beef", Guns: What is the root of the promotion of **Black on Black Violence** versus the absence of any outward display or public expression of displeasure, anger or retaliation to the White Supremist Power Structure and Amerikkkan Government which has us in our unpleasant situation? Where is the current Hip-Hop generations admonishing cry of "You're Headed for Self-Destruction"? What is the motivation behind "**Beef**" between individual artists as a public display of male machismo and bravado when the cowardice of silence on serious issues is so clear? Why are **Guns** promoted so heavily in Hip-Hop, why are guns so prevalent in our communities and who is responsible for and benefits from the influx of guns into the Black Community and the promotion of their use in popular music?

Note: I submit that the government has used AIDS, Crack and Guns as tools of genocide and not only created these things and distributed and/or dispersed them to the Black Community but also created horrible conditions and promoted these things through the use of their media (of which the entertainment industry is one component) to encourage their use amongst black people as a means of population control and ethnic cleansing. (In the case of AIDS, AIDS itself is not promoted rather unprotected and/or casual sex is promoted to thereby increase the AIDS infection rate.)

Black on Black Crime: Not only is Drug Use and Drug Sales glorified and promoted through Hip-Hop but there is also an overall endorsement or acceptance of a variety of criminal behavior, Assault & Battery, Theft, Rape, Underage Sex, Car Theft, Extortion, etc. While these types of behaviors are problematic in and of themselves what is even more troubling is that these activities almost always have Black People as the victims of these crimes and Black People as the perpetrators of these crimes. It is stereotypical to continue to promote Black People as a criminal people and furthermore factually baseless as historically we were the creators of Law and Justice and Morals and Ethics while Europeans were the practitioners of Crimes even going so far as to establish guilds and unions for illegal activities.

B) Racial Hypocrisy, Inconsistencies and Contradictions

Nigger vs. Cracker, Kill Niggers vs. Kill Whitey: Clearly Nigger is a word very heavily used in Hip-Hop. In comparison negative terms used to identify white people such as cracker, devil, ofay, honkey, are almost never used. This is clearly one more example of Mental Slavery; it illustrates the affects of Racism & White Supremacy and points out Institutional Amerikkkan Hypocrisy and Double Standards. It has been established in industry practice that the discussion of the killing of 'niggers' is fair game for Hip-Hop music; conversely the killing of white people is not. This contradiction must be addressed and corrected.

Race in Hip-Hop, White Supremacy in the Industry: With the current co-optation of Hip-Hop ala Jazz, Blues, Rock & Roll what role does race play in the creation/origin of Hip-Hop, the practice of Hip-Hop and the business of Hip-Hop? Who are the white people and the corporations who control and own the mechanisms through which Hip-Hop is processed? What is the personal History and Politics of those white people and what is the History of those corporations and do their policies and practices indicate a particular position either for or against Black people.

Music as a tool of Black Liberation/Black Power in Hip-Hop: How can music be used as a tool to edify our people, raise our collective consciousness, challenge our practices and encourage and nurture our future development? Can Hip-Hop be used as a weapon against the enemies of Black People and simultaneously be used as a healing and instructional vehicle for Black People?

C) Industry/Economic Development

Financial Irresponsibility: Young men from impoverished backgrounds with limited world view and education and no frame of reference or training are suddenly thrust upon new found wealth and expected to behave in a fiscally mature manner when there is no process to prepare or train them. The effect is that these individuals not only spend their own money frivolously but also encourage others to do the same who may not be in the same position by promoting bad spending habits and unsound financial practices by spending large amounts of money on rims, furs, jewelry, liquor, etc.

What to do with money?

1. **Personal Financial Advice;** That advice which is offered to the individual to improve their own quality of life so that they are able to better provide for their own family and self.
2. **Political Involvement/Charitable Donations/Revolution Funding;** save your people; With the combined wealth at the disposal of just Hip-Hop entertainers it is reasonable to say that Black Entertainers and Athletes could collectively solve some of our peoples problems such as Starvation/Famine/Drought in Africa and could have a huge impact on current deficiencies in education and health for instance funding independent AIDS research for a cure.

The Promotion of Products that do not benefit our people: Items such as Champagne and other liquors, Clothes and Cars are all items that artists promote in Hip-Hop through their endorsement of those products just by mentioning them. Hip-Hop artists have a great power to influence fashion and behavior and we must be wise about this. Constantly Black Artists promote products of White Corporations for free for no personal benefit and often are not respected or liked by these companies which they are rescuing from financial ruin in some cases. What has Hip-Hop done to impact the sales of products like Mercedes Benz, Lexus, BMW, Cadillac, Hennessey, Courvosier, Cristal, Moet, Adidas, Nike, Kangol, Lee, this must be investigated and these companies need to give donations to the Black Community or a designated Trust Fund based on these impact

findings and the fact that they have received what amounts to Free Advertising and Free Entertainer Endorsements which is a very lucrative industry in itself.

***DIAMONDS:** Special Attention should be given to the case of Diamonds which is beyond a product and instead an entire industry and also, unlike the aforementioned products, Diamonds can be directly linked to the Theft of Africa's Resources for the benefit of White Corporations and heavily contributes to Africa's perpetual poverty and political instability fueling wars and causing the deaths and amputations of hundred of thousands and even millions of African Men, Women & Children. This may be the most crucial issue facing the Hip-Hop generation today. It is the ultimate Black on Black crime and speaks to the core of White Supremacy and the African Holocaust. We only need look at companies like DeBeers and locations like South Africa and Sierra Leone to see the seriousness of the matter.

The Next Generation of New Artists

Much like in Black leadership and activism, one problem we face in Hip-Hop is that we have not prepared those who will come after ourselves. We must establish a mechanism to nurture, support and develop new artists. The artists who are out now cannot be expected to do it all. Some artists may not want to risk their own safety of comfort or their family's future, which is realistic and must be respected. Everyone can not be expected to make the ultimate sacrifice. What we should expect though, is that a way needs to be prepared for those who are willing to put themselves on the line in order to advance our people and for those who are formulating messages that can speak to our liberation. Groups like Public Enemy, X-Clan, Poor Righteous Teachers, KRS established a certain level of quality and commitment in expressing an alternate view. Today beyond Dead Prez, there is virtually no Hip-Hop artists who could be seen as a Black Nationalist or Revolutionary, there is very little detectable influence of the Nation of Islam or 5% Nation teachings or Afrocentric Studies in today's Hip-Hop. We must dedicate ourselves to the promotion of new artists who will produce the future conscious classics that can continue the work and have the same type of impact that groups like PE in particular had on the minds of a people at one time (remember Fight the Power in Do The Right Thing?)

Black Business Initiatives

Creation of Black Business to exercise control over our product and implement a system to benefit financially from the creation of our own Art.

Discuss the feasibility of Entertainment related businesses and begin planning for their creation.

Black Distribution Company? Could there be a distribution company which could be under Black ownership and control which could provide a fair rate to Black artists and take away our financial contribution to White industry and the accumulation of White wealth built on the creations of Black people.

Black Record Label? Currently there are only 7 or 8 actual Record Labels and none of them are Black Owned. "Labels" like Bad Boy, Death Row, Roc A Fella are not record labels at all, but rather they are glorified Production companies which have sub-contracts with real Record Labels and outsource Distribution.

Black Media Conglomerate? Master P, Roc A Fella, Def Jam, Puffy, Snoop, Ice Cube and others have all broken into related avenues of Film, Television, Internet, Radio, etc. Currently White corporations like Viacom control supposedly Black companies like BET. Def Jam is no longer owned by Russell Simmons. Could we join forces and resources to create a better representation of Black Culture as an alternative to the White Controlled Entertainment Industry that uses some Black People to exert control and influence on other Black People? Could we create an entertainment vehicle that does not promote negative images, creates cutting edge programming and incorporates a cultural component of Edutainment to undo what has been done?

Hip-Hop Union? Could we establish some sort of economic pool to develop a **retirement fund for Hip-Hop pioneers**, a **loan program** for up and coming artists who may want to be **1st time home buyers** or need **business loans**, a **credit union** of some kind, a national **Hip-Hop archive or museum**, a **Hip-Hop theme restaurant chain**, could we **buy the catalogues of Hip-Hop artists**

Network? Establishing a network and directory of Artists, Websites, Magazines, Independent Record Labels, Promoters, DJs, etc who can unite under the umbrellas of Hip-Hop and Black Unity

Bootlegging? Can bootlegging be coordinated, controlled and regulated so it serves as the frame of a grassroots distribution network. There are several Continental African People involved in the Bootlegging Black Market as well as Black People from here who bootleg as a Street hustle. These people must be contacted and encouraged to unify in order to increase production and quality and legitimize bootlegging, transforming it from a vehicle that further robs our artists into an alternative to mainstream and white-controlled distribution.

D) Preservation of Culture

In Recognition of what has happened to Jazz, Blues, Reggae and most notoriously Rock & Roll, we stand to ensure that yet another creation of Black People is not co-opted, controlled and the industry that Hip-Hop has become does not continue to turn over the financial benefits created by this industry. Furthermore, we claim the right and ability to define our own culture and determine its direction and identify what our priorities are and what our agenda should be. We will aggressively fight to protect and preserve Hip-Hop and to combat the Co-optation of Hip-Hop culture, and the commercialization of negative messages and images within Hip-Hop. We will produce a working definition of terms and culture that will assert and establish clearly the fact that Hip-Hop is Black Music, its origins are Black its roots are African and Hip-Hop remains the intellectual property (to use the legal terminology) of Black People collectively.

Working Definitions

Black People: In our definition of Black People, Latino and Cape Verdean People are included. This does not in any way diminish their own very distinct cultures but rather for a convenience of terms suggests that we are all the same people, from one source. Latino culture whether South American or Island, is a component of African Culture not only due to the TransAtlantic Slave Trade but to our own interactions centuries and possibly millenia before Columbus or any other European Exploiters came on the scene. We recognize that Hip-Hop was created and developed from its inception by the Black and Latino Youth of the Bronx, NY.

Hip-Hop: Hip-Hop as a music can only be defined as Black Music because it was created by Black People. Any other assertion is in support of the White Supremist ideal that Black People can own nothing of their own.

White Supremacy says "What is Ours is Ours and What is Yours is Ours"

Can a people own a music or art? It seems to only be a problem when you are discussing the property of Black Peoples'. There is Celtic Music & Dance, Russian Music & Dance, Italian, French, etc. etc.

People all around the world practice Salsa and Karate, but there is no move to redefine these things as belonging to everyone. Rather, it is quite clear that Salsa is a product of Latino Culture and Karate a product of Asian Culture, The River Dance belongs to the Irish and Opera to the Italians, why then can Black People not have Hip-Hop? How does Hip-Hop belong to everyone? To assert this is to disrespect the very clear origins of Hip-Hop and to neglect the rich legacies which combined to become the soil that nourished the seed that became the tree.

Hip-Hop Culture: Hip-Hop is not our culture. Hip-Hop is a facet, a component, a portion of our culture. Our culture is Black Culture, it is African Culture. To assert Hip-Hop as our culture means we had no culture prior to the 70's and does not recognize the fact that Hip-Hop was not born in a vacuum. To acknowledge Hip-Hop as our Culture is dangerous because it forsakes the very ancient and very sacred wealth of accumulated wisdom of all of our ancestors for something that is not even 40 yrs old. Our Culture is much bigger than Hip-Hop and while it encompasses Hip-Hop, Hip-Hop is a byproduct of a combination of several components of our true culture. We define Hip-Hop, Hip-Hop does not define us.

THERE IS HOPE FOR US YET.....

Look what Ghostface Killah said..

excerpt from MTV News Story **Ghostface Killah Confirms Wu-Tang Clan Will Reunite In 2004** 12.01.2003 7:56 AM EST

....The rapper was speaking from the Bowery Mission, a homeless shelter and church, where he was passing out sleeping bags to the homeless. In association with Troop (yes, the old-school clothing line), Ghostface donated 1,000 sleeping bags to help curb the chill of sleeping on the city streets for the winter. "It's giving somebody a little warmth. It gets cold. And [this is] instead of having to be wrapped up in cardboard and stuff that night."

Passing out sleeping bags might seem like an odd altruistic gesture and Ghostface agreed that it's not a solution. But he added that if nothing else, it is a start. "You've got to crawl before you walk," he said. ***"There are too many millionaires out here for the whole world to be starving out here."***

10 Best Rapper Quotes of 2003 by RoPorter

from: <http://www.rapnewsdirect.com/News/2004/01/05/Best.RapQuotes2003/>

1. "Politically I beg to differ in the views of freedom. We are victims of a capitalist system. As workers we are exploited. As people we have no power over our own lives. No self-determination and no ability to reproduce the things we need for ourselves. So we are dependent in people who historically have beaten us, jailed us, lied to us etc. I don't see any freedom in that."--Stic from Dead Prez
2. "Its not really my problem." [Jay says in an Italian mobster voice]. My thing with the industry is... I was inspired by cats that made different songs. I was inspired to make a hotter song. I didn't want to make "Who Shot Ya." My thing is, I think when people hear albums or anybody that's hot, they try to do tha same thing. They try to duplicate success by making the same thing. It's like, the more you hear it, it gets weaker every time. Hopefully if they don't have one of those things to follow, they will have to make their own stuff. That's what hip-hop is about. It's like if this guy is wearing brown and gold, I'm never gonna wear that. I want to wear this. It's not about going to get the same thing.-Jay Z Black Album Inner-view
3. To have the opportunity for the 'Bling-Bling' era & to have the opportunity for the 'Conscious' era & have the opportunity of people mixing it together this is all a part of the art & all art to me. It's like a painter; every painter can't paint the same. Every painter paints different, so everybody has a different stroke. But all painters criticize each other's paintings. That's what makes it art, that's what makes it interesting. Is that everybody has an opinion '. It gives it an opportunity to grow & lead the house of Hiphop to be much stronger then rock & roll music, to me & my opinion.- CL Smooth innerview with Playahata.com
4. And a lot of people caught offense to that: "What do you mean you are Hip-Hop?" Obviously, that was not my point of view - that I alone, am Hip-Hop and no one isn't. The point was that I declared that I am not just doing this art-form, representing Hip-Hop like it's over there somewhere - distant from myself, I Am Hip-Hop. Hip-Hop is my being! Hip-Hop doesn't happen until I do it. And that goes for others. --- KRS1 Word Perfect Inner-view
5. "they all keep on because they have comfort in numbers--numbers that result from the propaganda that everyone buys into. Lies are now being exposed to the point where people are basically choosing to believe what they WANT to believe, not necessarily the truth. So a lot of times the division line falls along racial and class lines"---Paris
6. "What I was saying was that it f*cked me up when I see my little cousin sittin' around looking depressed thinking she aint hot 'cause she don't have this sh*t to wear. She can't afford it. So what she do next, she's hustlin' now 'cause she wants n*ggas to look at her as the hot girl. Now your clothes is determining who you are? Really that Kay-Slay freestyle was for the kids. Don't let the TV fool you and make you feel like you aint nothing 'cause you can't afford it, you still beautiful"--Amil 'All Money Isn't Legal' Inner-view
7. "I think the powers that be, whether it's the government, labels, or who knows who, it seems like they had a little meeting and decided to get rid of all the Hip-Hop that was threatening or underground. They basically are only letting a certain amount of acts live, which are the commercial acts. I'm not knocking those acts at all, because those kids got to eat. They have been able to do away with, for instance, the Gang Starrs, the BDPs, the Rakims, the Black Moons, and so forth. It's basically commercial or bust." Dray from Das EFX to allhiphop.com
8. If you even talk about the world outside the US to a lot of Americans it's as if your reminding them of something they don't want reminding of. 'Cos it fucks with all their myths of self-improvement and that whole ostrich thing of sticking your head in the sand telling yourself everything's getting better, when above ground everything's falling apart. It's not just that some Americans think the States is the only country in the universe. It's as if the rest of the world is an invention." - RZA of Wu Tang Clan, Bang, June 2003
9. But at some point, you gotta get tired of going back and forth. You gotta get tired of walking around not knowing who's about to come up and say or do something. And if you look at the bigger picture and you say, How many people would run to the stores if Jay Z and Nas was on a record together? If Ja and 50 was on a record together. Let's get paper. Lets take advantage of it now. It's over Let's go get that money. It would be history Breaking." -Missy Elliott to XXL Mag 12/03

10. Although, from afar, I have liked EMINEM meeting him once in ATLANTA my evaluation is reversed to many of these cats. I know better to say I like somebody based on their art, movie, TV show or record. Saying I like somebody doesn't mean I respect them, and this is beyond their skill or how much money they've got. I can't say I respect EMINEM at all, I like DRE I can't say I've respected him as much. Same with SNOOP, MASTER P, LUDA, R KELLY, THE SOURCE and many others. I happen to like them more than respect them, whereas they may feel more respect than like for me or my beliefs on things. And that's fine I guess but like and respect are two different things. Respect only comes with integrity, and that's not necessary to exist in today's amerikkkan cultural world.-Chuck D. "TerrorDome" column

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