California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

2010

Tupac Shakur and the search for the lost tribe

Christopher Jacob Marcos

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Part of the Hip Hop Studies Commons

TUPAC SHAKUR AND THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST TRIBE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition:

English Literature

by

Christopher Jacob Marcos
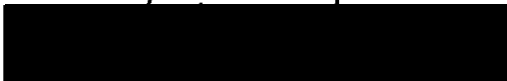
March 2010

TUPAC SHAKUR AND THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST TRIBE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

---

by

Christopher Jacob Marcos

March 2010

Approved by:

Kimberly Costino, Chair, English   3-17-10
                                          Date

Holly Henry

David J. Carlson

ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the ideas of Michel Foucault and Gloria Anzaldua to analyze the interviews, music, and poetry of Tupac Shakur in a way that will work to create a space within Hip Hop culture that does not focus on race, class, or region as the basis for inclusion and genuine participation in the culture. Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* provides a template to discuss the formation of the "normal" versus "delinquent" binary in our society. Anzaldua's *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* provides a way to critique how hybrid identities are derived from subverting dominant power structures and can create a new identity from existing cultural traditions. Shakur contested his culturally disenfranchised position as the "delinquent" in an attempt to spark dialogue between members of Hip Hop culture, those traditionally deemed "delinquents" and those in power in ways that would bring about social awareness, education, and positive social change. He also attempted to intervene in "the authenticity debates" within Hip Hop culture, debates that worked to exclude participants based on their race, class, and regional position, in an effort to reconstruct who Hip Hop culture can represent. In his last

interview, Shakur calls for a new political party, and

alludes to the lost tribe metaphor to describe the

diversity of backgrounds that he wanted to include. The

lost tribe works to include rather than exclude

participants of Hip Hop culture. My thesis is an attempt to

contribute to his project.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members Kim Costino and Holly Henry for their direction and time throughout my thesis project. Without their guidance and time my thesis would not have been possible. Thank you to all of my family and friends, I will always appreciate the love and support you all have shown me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, Adam Krims

argues "that understanding how identities are formed –

whatever they do to whomever – will remain a basic aspect

of rap and hip hop studies" (9). This thesis follows in

this vein in that it examines Tupac Shakur's ability to

challenge the notion of Hip Hop as "delinquent," to contest

cultural binaries, and to situate Hip Hop as a place that

invites unity among the socially ostracized. More

specifically, I use theories by Michel Foucault and Gloria

Anzaldua to analyze Tupac Shakur's music, poetry, and the

documentary *Tupac: Resurrection* in ways that explore how

Shakur's words function to reconstruct Hip Hop culture as a

hybridized space that invites cross-cultural dialogue and

acts as a voice and force for change for the culturally

disenfranchised.

I have chosen to focus on Shakur's role in

reconstructing Hip Hop for two reasons. First, he straddled

multiple cultures and embodied a hybridized identity. He

moved from ghetto to ghetto with a Black Panther turned

crack-addicted mother, and also attended the Baltimore

School for the Arts, studying acting, poetry, and ballet.

1

The second reason I chose his work as my object of study is that his voice, which sought to make his life of contradictions visible, was wide-spread and powerful enough to play a role in reconstructing Hip Hop's identity and function. In order to examine the ways Shakur challenged the notion of Hip Hop as "delinquent," I will draw on Foucault who, in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, uses the juvenile facility Mettray to show how discourses of "normality" and "delinquency" are created and enforced. As Foucault explains, the "delinquent" is a product of the judges of normality, yet inextricably constitutive of the "norm." This concept is useful in understanding how Hip Hop, and the Black urban culture associated with it, has been constructed as "delinquent" and how Shakur sought to challenge this from government power structures, as well as within his own community. Michael Eric Dyson discusses in the book *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur*, Shakur's relevance in our society, the Black community, and the reception of Rap music. Dyson states, "From its origins, rap music was dismissed or denigrated, even by blacks," in part for rap's sometimes explicit or violent lyrics but also because these genres were associated with "poor blacks" (110, 3). The

2

perception has continued to be enforced through the "Parental Advisory-Explicit Lyrics" label on Hip Hop. Well-read in "high literature" and influenced by a variety of social activists, Shakur purposely used the harsh language and images of urban violence in the streets to force the judges of normality to recognize poverty, rather than explicit lyrics or a particular race or ethnicity, as "the problem."

Shakur also challenged the construction of Hip Hop as "delinquent" by creating an awareness of the conditions of poverty in order to challenge cultural stereotypes and to encourage more cross cultural understanding. For example, in "Smile" Shakur raps, "Some see me stranded in this land of hell, jail, and crack sales / Hustle too hard to think of culture." In so doing, he highlights the ways the landscape of poverty makes hustling necessary for survival and the dream of college and a future unthinkable. Another example occurs in "Changes":

> I see no changes, all I see is racist faces
>
> Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
>
> We under, I wonder what it takes to make this
>
> one better place, let's erase the wasted
>
> .
>
> […]

3

> Cause both black and white, is smoking crack
>
> tonight
>
> [...]
>
> It takes skill to be real, time to heal each
>
> other.

Shakur speaks over the music: "Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live, / and let's change the way we treat each other." These lyrics demonstrate that poverty and racism affect both Black and White societies and that both judge and delinquent participate in "misplace hate." In so doing, these lyrics work to break down traditional representations of Black and White cultures and to invite cross cultural dialogue and understanding.

In addition to attempting to intervene in mainstream culture's debate about Hip Hop, Shakur also attempted to intervene in the "authenticity debates" within Hip Hop culture that worked to exclude participants based on their race, class, and/or regional position. We see in Krims' discussion of authenticity, for example, that the formation of the notion of "keeping it real," which emerged from gangsta rap ideologies, contributed to problematic binaries in Hip Hop culture that excluded participants on the basis of race, class, and regions within Hip Hop culture. Shakur

also sought to broaden the notion of who Hip Hop culture could speak for and represent Following his role in contesting power structures and the various formations of Hip Hop identities is a way to show how gangsta rap, an important part of Hip Hop culture, is not the only fixed identity and way to be part of Hip Hop culture. In the interview "Last Testament", with Rob Marriott, Shakur stated:

> [W]hen I was in jail, I was, like, No politician is even getting' at us. I represent five million fuckin' sales. And no politician is even check' for us. But by next election, I promise you! […] I guarantee we will have our own political party. It won't just be for blacks. It's gon' be for Mexicans, for Armenians, all you lost-tribe muthafuckas. We need to have our own political party 'cause we all have the same muthafuckin' problems. We built this nation and we get none of the benefits. (126)

With these words, Shakur worked to construct Hip Hop as a space for those who feel ostracized from their own culture and society—those Shakur dubbed the "lost tribe" in ways similar to Anzaldua's concept of "la mestiza."

In *Borderlands/LaFrontera: The New Mestiza,* Anzaldua
argues that hybrid identities derive from being
simultaneously of, and not of, several cultures and she
discusses how challenging the cultural and physical borders
in both "Anglo" and Chicano/a cultures creates a chance for
her to define and claim her place through the "new
mestiza." Shakur was of and not of many different
backgrounds, and experienced many aspects of different
cultures in American society. The "lost tribe" metaphor can
be read as a space within Hip Hop culture that works from
the diversity of Shakur's call for a political party.
Shakur's ability to bring commonality and unity to his own
community was made visible for the public through his
storytelling, poetry and his voice, which captivated
everyone who would listen from academics, to those in
poverty, to those in a position to rebuild urban ghettos.
Shakur challenged his own community and mainstream culture
to create understanding between cultures, rather than
perpetuate negative assumptions and stereotypes. Anzaldua
claims that "the future depends on the breaking down of
paradigms; it depends on the straddling of two or more
cultures" (102). My thesis explores how Shakur worked to do
just that.

Chapter One uses Foucault's theory to examine how Hip Hop, specifically gangsta rap and those identified with this culture, have been constructed as "delinquent" and how Shakur challenged this construction. Drawing on Krims' work, Chapter Two discusses the social force of Hip Hop, and its role in identity formation through the discussion of how the authenticity debates influenced notions of "keeping it real" that created problematic regional, and race and class binaries, in terms of who has claim and who could represent Hip Hop culture. Chapter Three uses Anzaldua's ideas of "borders" and the new mestiza to analyze the role Shakur played in subverting cultural binaries, and in reconstructing Hip Hop as a space where Shakur's version of the lost tribe metaphor might be realized.

CHAPTER ONE

PLEASE LISTEN TO MY DEMO: TUPAC SHAKUR AND

SOCIAL MISUNDERSTANDING

The genre of "gangsta rap," also known as "reality rap," prevalent during the 1990's functioned in our society in two ways: it brought out censorship debates, specifically because the lyrics were obscene and attacked cops, and it also allowed rap artists to illuminate the struggles and injustices in poverty in the "hood" or the "ghetto." Discussions and debates about gangsta rap exemplified how a lack of knowledge about the Hip Hop culture and the intent of gangsta rap led politicians and community leaders to focus on negative stereotypes of the young Black male, which was misconstrued through media outlets, and contributed to social misunderstandings between Hip Hop culture and those in power within mainstream society. The social misunderstanding stemmed from the debate between politicians, who placed rappers' lyrics as the basis for immorality, and the counter argument by rappers that showed how unemployment, missing role models, such as a father or mother, and the affects of drugs and violence all contributed to their daily

8

experiences and especially to their lyrics. Both sides blamed each other, and the outcome was that the social misunderstanding about poverty began to play on the fear that the stereotypical young Black male would begin to influence and infiltrate the morality and values of family, and influence individuals that would otherwise never see or hear such graphic lyrics. This misunderstanding about the social function of gangsta rap led to attempts at censorship, binaries of moral versus immoral, rich versus poor, and rapper versus politicians. In order to contextualize the different sides and perspectives of what was being debated as "reality" and "normal" by rappers and those in power and to show how these problematic binaries emerged, I will draw upon the theories laid down by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, and focus on Foucault's use of the juvenile facility Mettray to show how the discourse of "normality" and "delinquency" are created and enforced.

Tupac Shakur, one of the most prominent faces for this music, meandered his way through different ghettos and social classes in American society, living in poverty, attending the Baltimore School for the Arts, and reaching fame through his role as a rapper in Hip Hop culture.

Shakur's ability to interpret his life through rap music and his discussion of poverty in the film documentary *Tupac: Resurrection* provides an opportunity to critique how mainstream society has perceived, debated, and constructed rap music's representation of poverty in the United States. In the interview "On the Line With…2Pac Shakur: The Lost Interview" with Davey D, Shakur discussed the main social issues concerning poverty that he attempted to address throughout his career: "Police brutality, poverty, unemployment, insufficient education, disunity, and violence, black on black crime, teenage pregnancy, crack addiction. Do you want me to go on?" (30). Shakur would address such issues in his music and interviews to bring attention mostly to police injustices, but also to bring to light how a lack of a father and mother contributed to the lack of direction that he and those in poverty encountered. In order to show how Shakur's words function to reconstruct Hip Hop culture as a hybridized space that invites cross cultural dialogue, we must first follow how the interaction between mainstream gangsta rap and those in power in mainstream society created problematic social binaries that illuminated issues linked to living in poverty, but also perpetuated negative perception of the Black community and

those in poverty. Shakur's ability to contest power

structures through his lyrics and poetry will also show how

he is a voice and force for change for the culturally

disenfranchised. This is the subject of this chapter.

Politicians, the media, and community leaders all

attempted to censor not only gangsta rap lyrics, but also

rap lyrics that were deemed "offensive" and "obscene" and

that placed artists such as Shakur into a culturally

disenfranchised position. The work of Michel Foucault is

useful to understanding how this happened. Foucault

discusses the carceral network and the elements that it is

comprised of: (1) the carceral society is comprised by

institutions of power, (2) there is no outside of the

system, (3) the power to punish seems natural and

legitimate, (4) the judges of normality are everywhere, and

(5) the carceral society renders human subjects as docile.

If we apply these concepts in the context of mainstream

debates over gangsta rap lyrics, we see that politicians

and community leaders are proponents of "institutions of

power" and can be viewed as "judges of normality" because

they attempted and succeeded in censoring offensive rap

lyrics. Shakur wanted politicians and other community

leaders to recognize how the inner-city environment,

11

violence, and the lack of a stable family unit are American

problems, not just problems for the Black urban community,

and to recognize that legislation and laws that the

"institutions of power" put forth also contribute to the

culturally disenfranchised and "delinquent" positions those

who live in poverty are forced to occupy. Shakur did not

hold back his anger and emotions, and he did not attempt to

deliver the lyrics of the injustices he felt in a tactful

and politically correct manner. What gangsta rap and Shakur

represented was a voice that had been muffled, and Hip Hop

culture, through gangsta rap, gave them an avenue to speak.

We can also parallel Foucault's critique of the

carceral network with the social sphere known as the "hood"

or the "ghetto," which was the social sphere at the heart

of the debate about the formation of "reality." Shakur's

place in the "ghetto" and his unapologetic lyrics

concerning the injustices and problems associated with

poverty were heard by mainstream culture, which added to

the fears that Shakur and others like him could infiltrate

the homes, the family unit, and the lives of American youth

in a negative way. This led to the social misunderstanding

I described earlier as well as to the moral vs. immoral

binary, which was debated in connection with how images and

the expression of those in poverty should be seen and heard. Foucault states:

> In the classical period, there opened up in the confines or interstices of society the confused, tolerant and dangerous domain of the 'outlaw' or at least of that which eluded direct hold of power: an uncertain space that was for criminality a training ground and a region of refuge; there poverty, unemployment, pursued innocence, cunning, the struggle against the powerful, the refusal of obligations and laws and organized crime all came together as chance and fortune would dictate. (300)

Foucault then goes on to state that, "Replacing the adversary of the sovereign, the social enemy was transformed into a deviant, who brought with him the multiple danger of disorder, crime and madness" (299-300). With these words, Foucault describes how those in power may have perceived the social sphere of poverty, and the "hood" or the "ghetto": an uncertain space that was for "criminality." The notion that criminals' and "outlaws'" actions could begin to have an influence on and bring crime and anarchy to the suburbs or to the door step of "normal"

13

American families is what politicians feared. Thus, Gangsta rap and Shakur were viewed by politicians and community leaders as the epitome of the "outlaw" because their lyrics threatened the "direct hole of power" by bringing violence, drugs, and obscene lyrics to mainstream audiences. Conversely, however, Shakur and the gangsta rap genre more generally, tried to force the politicians, community leaders, and lawmakers to address and see the reality that poverty creates. Foucault comments, "The delinquent is an institutional product" (301), and Foucault's idea can be a parallel to the sentiment that Shakur and other rappers tried to make politicians and community leaders realize, which was that legislation, lack of social programs, and the dismissal of those in poverty all contribute to and create the "delinquent."

In this way, Gangsta rappers participated in the construction of a "moral" versus "immoral" binary that would further confused the intent and purpose of what gangsta represented, but it is also important to establish how the "technicians of behavior" were coming not only from Shakur's immediate community, but also from the those in power within mainstream society, who functioned as what

14

Foucault refers to as the "judges of normalcy." According to Foucault,

> The judges of normality are everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, and his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements. (304)

As a result of the words and actions of these "judges of normality," Shakur and other rappers became the "delinquent," "outlaw" or "deviant" within our society, and this not only sparked, criticism against them, it would later influence censorship laws. In the book, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, Cheryl L. Keyes points out such "judges of normality," and cases that emerged. Keyes states:

> The advent of gangsta and explicit rap resulted in a wave of censorship hearings in the 1990's. Among the first was the case of 2 Live Crew and their album *As Nasty as They Wanna Be*, deemed to be so sexually explicit that the district

attorney's offices of Florida and Alabama charged

2 Live Crew with violating their states'

obscenity laws. (104).

The gangsta rap genre became the basis of what was wrong

and obscene in our society, and they became the social

enemy by which "judges" measured "the universal reign of

the normative." The politicians were correct, "normal," and

"moral," and the rap artists were the basis for what was

deemed "abnormal," "delinquent," and detrimental to

society.

Within the context of these binaries we would

eventually see the most heated debates, debates that

furthered the social misunderstanding between what gangsta

rap attempted to show, and the greatest fears of those in

power, that the violence in the "hood" would spill out to

the rest of society. Important to note here is that Gangsta

rap was not at all completely innocent; the words and

lyrics were very offensive, but the politicians and

community leaders did miss out on an opportunity to listen

to what the lyrics were about, and then to make informed

decisions about how their approach to social programs and

legislation directly affecting those in poverty. Thus,

continuing with Foucault and his idea that "there is no

outside of the system" and "the delinquent is not outside the law," we can begin to see how this sort of social misunderstanding ultimately perpetuated negative social binaries in our system, and that if we do not get passed this, then the relationship between the delinquent and the inextricably linked power structure will continue to be negative and halt any positive social change. Gangsta rap is -part of our social institution and cannot simply be discarded based on obscenities or offensive images and symbols. As Foucault mentioned, "there is no outside," therefore, further investigation into the function of early gangsta rap in terms of the formation of "reality" and the social context of gangsta out of which it emerged as well as investigation into how Shakur fought to change perceptions of those in poverty are all important in challenging the delinquent status of the culturally disenfranchised.

A brief history of the genre gangsta rap and its origins can provide a way to view how gangsta functioned within hip hop culture to represent the notion of "keeping it real," as well as provided another perspective of what gangsta first attempted to achieve. In the book *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* Cheryl L. Keyes also maps out the

origins of rap's musical form in order to foster a broader understanding of rap music and the hip hop youth arts movement, as well as discusses her place and role as a woman in the Hip Hop culture. Keyes eventually discusses and gives a much needed outline of the different uses and representations of the genre and term "gangsta rap." Keyes states:

> Concomitant with the Jamaican dance hall gun lyrics style is Philadelphia's Schoolly D, whom some credit with making the first gangsta rap recording. Schoolly D debuted the single "Gangster Boogie' (1984) [...] But on the West Coast, the rapper Ice-T, apparently unaware of Schoolly D's activities at that time, identified himself as the 'original gangsta' (O.G.). His single "Six in the Morning" (1985) is considered to be the first commercial West Coast Gangsta rap recording. (91)

What is interesting to see is how the gangsta genre story was emerging simultaneously unbeknownst to other artists. Keyes' assertions of Schoolly D and Ice T as the first gangsta artists are corroborated in an interview entitled "The Adventures of Schoolly D: Snowboarder," which is

included on the special edition DVD *King of New York*. Alan

Light, the editor of *Vibe* magazine, *The Vibe History of Hip

Hop*, and *Tupac Shakur 1971-1996: by the Editors of Vibe*, a

collection of work that I rely heavily upon, also echoes

Keyes claim that Boogie Down Productions, which consisted

of group members Scott La Rock and eventual Hip Hop

philosopher KRS ONE dealt with themes about East Coast

gangs. In a 2003 interview, Light discusses "The Roots of

Gangster Rap" and RUN DMC as a pivotal group that marked a

change from the flashy "stage costumes" adopted by rap

artists and fathers of hip hop culture like Afrika

Bambaataa and the pioneering rap group Grandmaster Flash

and the Furious 5. Light states:

> And what you started to see were in different
>
> places in the country, artists that were picking
>
> up on that dress down plain spoken, straight
>
> ahead approach that RUN DMC took, and making it
>
> harder, and making it more real, and making it
>
> more about what life in their streets was really
>
> like. And that started happening more or less at
>
> the same time in different parts of the country.
>
> There was Boogie Down Productions, making the
>
> "Criminal Minded" record in New York, there was

Too Short starting to make his more sort of sex

rhymes, taking more of the pimp approach in the

Bay Area, Ice T starting to write songs like

"Battle Ram" and songs about the gangs in L.A.

And in Philadelphia there was Schoolly D.

Light gives an important distinction about what the origins

of gangsta established early on, before the genre was

demonized in mainstream culture. Gangsta rap during the

time of Schoolly D and Ice T did not have the negative

stigma and mainstream media attention that rappers and

groups like Snoop Dogg and N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitudes)

would later receive. However, early gangsta represented, as

Light noted, "what life in the streets was really like."

This idea is important because it begins to show how rap

lyrics brought a sense of being a part of something that

fans and participants could relate to, and it also signaled

how the genre of "gangsta" began to shift towards notions

of "keeping it real," and how rap artists experiences in

their social environment would influence their lyrics.

Also, if gangsta represents life in the streets, then the

lyrics and words can also be viewed as a glimpse into the

struggles of drugs, violence, teenage pregnancy, the crack

epidemic, and unemployment. Everything that would begin to

20

influence the lyrics and world of gangsta rap stemmed out

of how poverty affects their experiences. In the 1980's,

the era that preceded the popularity of mainstream gangsta

rap in the 1990's, Shakur and other rappers saw and

participated in the war on drugs, governmental policy

changes, and the horrors of poverty, which all contributed

to the "reality" that politicians, community leaders, and

other social activists groups would later attack in the

lyrics of rap artists.

Moreover, Ronald Reagan's economic policies, what has

come to be known as "Reaganomics," heavily influenced the

emergence of gangsta rap lyrics and Shakur's view towards

those in power; these policies also exemplified the attacks

on the poor from "institutions of power." Before the

gangsta genre was known, those in poverty were viewed as

culturally disenfranchised by those in power in our

society. Such a position laid the groundwork for the

problematic binary of rapper versus politician because both

sides blamed the other for the problems of poverty.

Reagan's conservative message focused on improving the

economy, as well as our role internationally, but it also

blamed those in poverty for their position. In "The

Changing Map of American Poverty in an Era of Economic

Restructuring and Political Realignment," Janet E. Kodras

follows the historical discourse about poverty post World

War II, and argues against the conservative theory that

those in poverty have no initiative or are lazy. This was

one idea that rappers consistently used as a way to attack

government policy. Kodras states:

> Rather than viewing the failures in the welfare
>
> system as a consequence of problems in the larger
>
> economy, however, the argument was reversed.
>
> Ronald Reagan rode to victory in the 1980
>
> presidential election, identifying profligate
>
> state spending, particularly in welfare, as the
>
> source, rather than the result, of national
>
> economic problem. (73)

Reagan's claim that welfare and other social programs were

the source of America's economic problems and a waste of

time and money was important then, and is still a current

issue of debate. Kodras continues with Reagan's stance

stating: "He argued that the country's prosperity had been

squandered on social programs for the indolent and that

only the elimination of such programs would restore the

United States to its previous position of global dominance"

(73). Words like "profligate," "squandered," and "indolent"

have a direct affect on the public's perception of poverty; and serve as an example of social misunderstanding because the negative images on television would be intertwined in people's perceptions of those living in poverty. It also worked to strengthen Reagan's argument that those who are in poverty lack the knowledge or initiative to find help. Reagan echoes this idea in the film *Tupac: Resurrection* in a press conference when he asserts, "I don't believe that there is anyone that is going hungry in America simply by reason of denial or lack of ability to feed them, it is by people not knowing where or how to get this help." Shakur wanted to challenge these ideas through his music both by attacking the government, and by attempting to bring an empathetic approach to the poor by creating the sense that poverty was an American, not just a "Black" or "minority" issue.

Shakur's adolescence coincided with the 1980's crack cocaine epidemic and out of this epidemic the drug dealers, pimps, and violence would be seen by rap artists, and would influence their lyrics and personas. Shakur's experiences during that time, and the government's war on drugs can be analyzed to echo Foucault's notion that "[T]he delinquent is not outside the law; he is, from the very outset, in the

law," as the policies set forth by Reagan and other legislation have a direct effect on those in poverty, especially Black males. In terms of crack cocaine, many people became addicted, died, or went to jail, and the government tried to combat this with ads for a drug free America. Nancy Reagan told kids to "Just Say No," and McGruff, the crime dog, used the tagline "Take a Bite out of Crime." However, catch phrases would not stop the crack epidemic, or crack babies from being born. Shakur fired back at this idea in the song "Changes," which discusses drugs, war, poverty, the penitentiary, and calls for social change. Shakur raps, "Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares / one less hungry mouth on the welfare / First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal to brothers / Give 'em guns step back watch 'em kill each other." Legislation and harsher penalties for drug offenders would follow the crack epidemic, making it especially more difficult for the Black community. In the article "Less Disparity Urged in Cocaine Sentencing," Christopher S. Wren looks back at the affects of the epidemic stating, "An outbreak of crack-related crime in the 1980's prompted Congress to enact legislation in 1986 that punished a first-time offender with five years in prison for possessing 5 grams of crack cocaine" (1).

Legislation in 1986 only added to the problems and issues

in the Black community, and would have repercussions into

the 1990's. As Wren explains, "[I]n 1993, 88.3 percent of

Federal defendants convicted of selling crack were black"

(1). Wren's article addresses how powder cocaine came with

less punishment, and how those in the Black community were

ultimately targeted.

Shakur and his peers became the focus and product of

police brutality because crack cocaine was rampant in the

Black community. Black men filled penitentiaries at an

alarming rate. Shakur echoes this in "Changes," rapping,

"It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact / The

penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks." Since

drug dealing and violence were common themes in gangsta

rap, the rappers were perceived as perpetuating the

"disorder" of our society. On one side of the spectrum, we

have the politicians, teachers, and preachers, who Foucault

deems as the "judges of normality," condemning the use of

drugs, yet creating harsher punishments for crack cocaine

users that would have the effect of more Black males in

prison. On the other end of the spectrum, we have those who

Shakur spoke for, the drugs users, hustlers, and most

importantly those in poverty who ultimately were turning to

what was in their immediate environment. This is another example of social misunderstanding between the delinquent or deviant, and those in power who seemed to only care about the negative aspects of poverty without taking any responsibility or diving deeper into its causes or effects.

Discussing the images and symbols that would emerge out of the popularity of mainstream gangsta rap is important to shed light on what politicians were worried about and the negative images that would perpetuate negative social binaries. Gangsta rap was and is violent, misogynistic, and hedonistic, yet the genre was one of the strongest and most popular during the 1990's. In the book *Nuthin' but a "G" Thang: The Culture and Commerce of Gangsta Rap,* Eithne Quinn discusses the symbols and images that gangsta rappers were putting out to mainstream audiences to give a sense of what politicians and community leaders were cautioning against. Quinn follows the path of the G-funk era (gangsta funk), Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg, and Shakur and argues that "gangsta (more than any other rap subgenres) was at pains to expose and critically engage its own commercial impetus and commodified status" (5). Quinn analyzes the affects of using the St. Ides brand of forty ounce bottles of malt liquor to bring to light the notion

of how rappers attempted to "keep it real." Quinn states,

"Instead of incurring the common accusation of 'selling

out' from its core audience, the promoting of St. Ides

·actually worked to enhance rappers' 'keeping it real'

image" (5). What Quinn brings to light is the notion of

"keeping it real," which is a problematic paradox that

rappers used to defend their lyrics in that in trying to

justify their role in society by "keeping it real," the

artists' lyrics and images of forty ounces simultaneously

perpetuated the negative images that politicians and

community leaders were concerned about.

Quinn's critique of the St. Ides imagery, in songs and

in the monumental gangsta film "*Boyz N the Hood*," which

stars Ice Cube and contains "many scenes in which he

prominently displays and consumes St. Ides" (4) reflects

the commercialization of gangsta rap and sheds light on the

formation of how the public perceived what it meant to be

gangsta. It is at this intersection that early views of

what gangsta meant would change, and the emergence of

lyrical conflict and debate would turn gangsta rap into the

most demonized form of rap music ever. Some songs in the

gangsta genre dealt with day to day life, such as Ice

Cube's "It Was a Good Day," and the song "Gin and Juice" by

then named Snoop Doggy Dogg. Others perpetuated

politicians' and community leaders' worries, such as

gangsta and pimp ideologies. Dr. Dre and Snoop's

collaboration, "Nuthin' but a "G" Thang" could arguably

encompasses the whole genre of gangsta, and other symbols,

such as hydraulics and 1964 Chevrolet Impalas from the

video would become synonymous with gangsta and West Coast

rap identities. Snoop raps, "[B]ack to the lecture at hand

/ Perfection is perfected, so I'ma a let em understand /

from a young G's perspective /And before me dig out a bitch

I have to find a contraceptive." Snoop's "young G's

perspective" or gangsta perspective is what rappers claimed

their lyrics represented, and use of "bitch" is what

community leaders and politicians deemed as obscene. Snoop

continues, "Showin' much flex when it's time to wreck a mic

/ Pimpin hoes and clockin' a grip like my name was

Dolomite/Yeah, and it don't quit/ I think they in the mood

for some motherfuckin G shit." Snoop draws on the "pimpin'"

theme that Too Short rapped about, and the term "hoes"

would also contribute to the attacks on the misogyny, and

demeaning lyrics about women found in Snoop's "G shit."

Shakur's first album *2Pacalypse Now*, however, sparked

the debate and demonization of Shakur in mainstream media

(led largely by then Vice President Dan Quayle) and is illustrative of Foucault's ideas about how an individual is "transformed into a deviant" (299). Songs such as "Soulja's Story," "Fuck Tha Police," by N.W.A, and "Cop Killer" by Ice T's heavy metal group Body Count can be viewed as protest songs because they were a response to years of police brutality, but they were still problematic in terms of creating social binaries that perpetuated conflict and social misunderstanding between those in power and "the delinquent." In a song called "Soulja's Story," Shakur had lyrics directed at cops such as, "'Remember Rodney King?' and I blast on his punk ass" and "What the fuck would you do – drop them or let 'em drop you? / I chose droppin the cop." Quayle heard the song, and was one of the first politicians to criticize Shakur's lyrical content. In *The Los Angeles Times* article, "Quayle Calls for Pulling Rap Album Tied to Murder Case," John Broder reported that, "Quayle charged that the record was responsible for the death of a Texas state trooper, who was shot to death in April by a suspect who allegedly was listening to the album on the tape deck of a stolen truck" (1). Quayle goes on to say "There is absolutely no reason for a record like this to be published by a responsible corporation" (qtd. in

29

Broder 1). Other politicians jumped into the fray as well, attempting to stop the violence that they felt rappers perpetuated through misogynistic and demeaning lyrics, and from this point on, the genre of gangsta and the lyrics began to shape and mold national debates, and more importantly, placed the rappers at the heart of censorship laws.

But even before the popularity of the gangsta genre in the 1990's, obscenity was being fought by social groups that would later attack gangsta rap, and this social binary positioned the "delinquent" at the heart of "immorality." In 1985 Tipper Gore and Susan Baker created the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) and forged the Parental Advisory sticker on compact discs deemed obscene. As Keyes states:

> By the 1990's, this [Rap] music also encountered
> countless foes, including the Parents' Music
> Resource Center, the Anti-Defamation League,
> former civil rights advocates and politicians,
> and Christian ministers, all of whom rejected the
> street bravado and explicit lyrics that began to
> reach mainstream America. (163)

In short, gangsta rap music was labeled "immoral" and blamed for the moral decline of America. Keyes goes on to say:

> [C]rusades against 'gangsta rap' were led by Senator Bob Dole (especially during his 1996 presidential campaign), [and] the education secretary and drug czar William Bennett [...] Labeling gangsta rappers as misogynistic and violent. (4)

Moreover, the themes of drug dealing and violence that stemmed out of the crack epidemic of the 1980's, made matters even worse, and the negative images that were already embedded in the psyche of Americans by media outlets strengthened fears that "gangsta" would begin to infiltrate the suburbs, and the very structure of morality and values was at stake.

Important to note here, however, is that these attacks on gangsta rap's morality came not only from the rich, white, powerful judges of normalcy, they also came from Black community leaders who felt that the lyrics were not representative of the Black community and perpetuated violence, which means that gangsta rap also created problematic binaries within the Black community. One of the

most ardent enemies of Shakur in the Black community was C.

Delores Tucker, who was the National Chair of the National

Political Congress of Black Women. In "The Culture of Hip-

Hop," Michael E. Dyson discusses the generational

difference in how Rap was being perceived within the Black

community, and sheds light on why Tucker may have attacked

Shakur. Dyson states that:

> [R]ap music is emblematic of the glacial shift in
>
> aesthetic sensibilities between blacks of
>
> different generations, and it draws attention to
>
> the severe economic barriers that increasingly
>
> divide poor blacks from middle- and upper-middle-
>
> class blacks. (63)

C. Delores Tucker further asserts in *Tupac: Resurrection*,

"It glorifies violence. It's creating a culture of guns and

rape." Other community leaders, such as Reverend Al

Sharpton, Reverend Calvin Butts, and Rev. Jesse Jackson all

expressed their concern of how violence was being used to

perpetuate negative stereotypes of young Black men, as well

as having a negative affect on the Black community as a

whole. In short, then, it seems fair to say that at this

point, gangsta rap's culturally disenfranchised position

was the result of criticized from the full spectrum of

society, members of all races and classes who viewed the culture dangerous. This distinction is important because it showed the power of Hip Hop culture's ability to spark debate, and the debate around gangsta rap, poverty, and normality showed that Hip Hop culture caused conflict in the Black community, the White community, and the demonization of Hip Hop culture came from all directions. In essence, gangsta rap became an identity within an identity that caused conflict all around. Shakur puts this idea into perspective in *Tupac: Resurrection* when he states, "I'm not looking for approval from the Black community...We are a part of the Black community. I'm a thug and I rap about the oppressed fighting back." What makes Shakur different from other gangsta rappers is that he was not a gangster; his life and experiences in poverty are an open book about the struggles of a young man trying to find his way in society. Just as we saw the other side of gangsta rap and other aspects of poverty that it represented, it is important to dive into the experiences and life of Shakur to illuminate his ability to contest power structures, as well as show another side to his artistry, as a human being that mostly is dismissed by those who view him only as a gangsta or "delinquent."

Examining aspects of Shakur's biography through his word in the film documentary *Tupac: Resurrection,* and following the cities where Shakur developed his voice as a young man is important because he lived and experienced every aspect of poverty, and consistently contested power structure and his place as a "delinquent" in society. In this documentary, Shakur discusses how the media images of the Vietnam War influenced our society and helped to end the war by showing images of poverty. Shakur states: "So I thought, that's what I'm going to do as an artist, as a rapper. I'm gonna show the most graphic details of what I see in my community.and hopefully they'll stop it quick" (qtd. in Hoye 70). Education and the Black Panther movement would give him a perspective on society that many of his peers living in poverty did not have, and this is one example of how he straddled multiple cultures and embodied a hybridized identity.

What Shakur attempted to do in his rap lyrics and life was bring to light social issues. The Baltimore School of Performing Arts represents another shift in Shakur's perspective on different social classes, and fueled his artistry, as he experienced Broadway theatre on school trips, was exposed to literature, and studied ballet. This

would all add to his view of the binary of rich vs. poor, and how he attempted to subvert negative notions of those living in poverty, and to attempt to explain what it meant to be Black and poor in America. Many of his initial identity issues came as a result of going back and forth from school to poverty stricken areas, and seeing the difference of life in each social sphere. In short, living in poverty with his family gave Shakur the perspective of "the other" or the culturally disenfranchised. Shakur saw the difference between those in his high school who had a future, and those where he lived who could not grasp the notion of education or a future. In *Tupac: Resurrection* Shakur states:

> But at my homeboy's high school it's not like
> that. They don't have trips to go see Broadway
> plays, they don't read things we we're reading,
> and they didn't know what I was talking about
> when I was like, 'Yo Shakespeare's dope.' They
> don't have the same experiences that we had. Then
> I started thinking, like damn, why is that? Cuz
> our school that I went to is mostly for white
> kids and rich minorities...I would have been

totally different person had I not been exposed

to these things. (qtd. in Hoye 54)

Going back and forth from one element to another, whether

it is from moving from poverty to spheres of education, or

moving from one social class to another, is an example of

the hybridized space that Shakur occupied. Shakur also

comments on the idea of a "rich minority," and how class

brings about different realities that he saw at his school.

Had Shakur stayed on the path of Broadway, Shakespeare, and

literature, he may have been viewed as a more powerful

intellectual speaker and had a longer acting career.

However, Shakur goes on to say, "Hell no, I was living in

the ghetto. We didn't have any lights, no electricity. We

was about to get evicted" (54). However, even in the face

of hunger, homelessness, and the ills of poverty in

Baltimore, Shakur never gave up on the idea of change. In

Thug Angel a documentary about Shakur's life, Shakur

states, "Being the person I am, I said no no. I'm changing

this, so I started the stop the killing campaign…AIDS

prevention campaign and everything." The potential of

Shakur's education and acting career was, in part, halted

by the realities of poverty, but Shakur would carry the

idea of social awareness and change as he moved to Marin County, California.

In Marin County, Shakur met the person who would ultimately give him a place to stay and much needed direction, and would also ultimately provide an avenue in which Shakur could harness his urge to change the world, through his poetry and music. Leila Steinberg is a teacher was involved in putting together poetry workshops and concerts for the community, and is part of the reason that Shakur's voice made it to mainstream attention. Shakur tried to make sense of his world during his time with Steinberg, and in her workshops, and from his writings came the collection of poems found in *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*. Steinberg and others recognized Shakur's charisma and glow, and helped guide his path to poetry. In the documentary, *Thug Angel*, Steinberg states, "At seventeen he was wide eyed and really believed that he could change the world." Steinberg provided stability for the young seventeen year old, and Shakur finally found a place where his literary curiosities and poetic prowess could be nurtured and challenged. Thus, Shakur's experience living in poverty was not necessarily the same as others in poverty because he had these sorts of intellectual and

educational opportunities, which counters the ideas that
one must attend high school in order to become an intellect
and well read and that those in poverty are ignorant.

The first poem that I would like to critique puts into
perspective how his experiences in poverty and his search
for knowledge intersect, and give him a unique outlook on
his life. The sixteen lined poem, "Untitled" also provides
an opportunity to explore the reach of the poem:

> Please wake me when I'm free
>
> I cannot bear captivity
>
> where my culture I'm told holds no significance
>
> I'll wither and die in ignorance
>
> But my inner eye can c a race
>
> who reigned as kings in another place
>
> the green of trees were rich and full
>
> and every man spoke beautiful
>
> men and women together as equals
>
> War was gone because all was peaceful
>
> But now like a nightmare I wake 2 c
>
> That I live like a prisoner of poverty
>
> Please wake me when I'm free
>
> I cannot bear captivity

4 I would rather be stricken blind

than 2 live without expression of mind (15)

The poem begins with "Please wake me when I'm free" as if

Shakur is dreaming about being trapped, and situated in a

culture that "hold no significance." Shakur had to see the

ills and violence of his community in Marin County and,

even worse, feel the sting of poverty. Lines five through

nine provide the idea of "But," which signals hope. Shakur

felt that his culture was relevant and "kings in another

place," and also hoped for a brighter future of peace and

equality. However, lines eleven and twelve not only wake

him, but remind him of the nightmare that he lives in, and

lines one and two are repeated, in a way that recycles his

status of being trapped and captive. However, lines fifteen

and sixteen provide the essence of Shakur's perseverance

and drive: "4 I would rather be stricken blind/then 2 live

without expression of mind." This poem is important because

it shows the range of a young man contending with life in

poverty who still dreams of achieving more in life for

himself and his community.

Shakur's early poetry as a young man is also important

because it gives a sense of Shakur's ability to challenge

perceptions of the poor, specifically such attacks by

Reagan and our government, and exemplifies his yearning to
change society. The poem "Government Assistance or My Soul"
is a simple one stanza poem that sets the tone for Shakur's
style, and sums up his ability to challenge prescribed
ideas:

> It would be like a panther
>
> Asking a panther hunter
>
> 4 some meat, all
>
> High school dropouts R not DUMB
>
> All unemployed aren't lazy
>
> and there R many days I hunger
>
> But I would go hungry and homeless
>
> Before the American Government gets my soul (113)

This poem is a glimpse into the canon of Shakur's writings
and comes from a young man, but the themes of hunger,
homelessness, anger, and shots at the government echo the
many issues he dealt with in his lyrics. Similar to his
ability to challenge those in power in his rap lyrics, this
poem is an example of how Shakur's words function to
reconstruct the notion of poverty. It shows how Shakur's
voice from an early age acted as a voice and force for
change for the culturally disenfranchised. Lines one
through three are a simple simile which compares the prey

and the predator, and one binary in nature. Lines four and five reassess the conclusions that Americans, such as Reagan, may have at one point held as truths. In lines seven and eight Shakur decides to "go hungry," which is a stance that allows him to keep his soul, exhibiting his sense of pride despite his social position, and parallels his choice to "rather be stricken blind," in the poem "Untitled." The word "soul" can also be viewed as not giving in to what the judges of normalcy say is obscene. Instead, Shakur claimed and defined who he was by keeping, and not selling, his soul. This may reflect Shakur's first-hand experiences while his family was on welfare, and his soul yearned for a better life. Shakur's soul is rebellious towards government assistance because it was something that he did not want to be on and hated. Going hungry is an assertion of his pride, and his soul becomes something that the government could never possess. This poem proposes two opposing sides of Shakur's world: disenfranchised people and the government. Shakur always attempted to find his voice and to make sense of the more complex rich-and-poor binary that he saw and contended with in life, as he rose to mainstream status.

If we listen to and critique the lyrics of Shakur's critique of the family unit, then we can begin to see how it influences his perception of society, and reflects how the absence of a father and a mother heavily influences and perpetuates negative issues in poverty. This is very typical in poor neighborhoods; many times the father is nonexistent, and the mother is too busy working to supervise her children. In his album *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.*, Shakur uses the song "Papa'z Song" to express anger towards a father who is back and forth, and who eventually disappears. In the first verse Shakur raps: "Please send me a pops before puberty / the things I wouldn't do to see a piece of family unity / My moms always work, I barely see her." The father is missing, but so is the mother and the son suffers as a result. The family unit is where society begins, and without a sense of security or values people become hopeless and lost. Shakur goes on to rap: "I'm starting to get worried without a pops I'll grow to be her/It's a wonder they don't understand kids today […] / How can I be a man if there's no role model?" From these lines we can see how the perspective of children is constructed in poor neighborhoods. Shakur's expression and imagery creates a new way of looking at the development of

the delinquent. For Shakur, not having a father is at the core of many of his insecurities as a man, and in finding his role in society. The song goes on to say:

> You grabbed your coat, left us broke, now ain't
>
> no runnin back / Ask about my moms like you loved
>
> her from the start / Left her in the dark, she
>
> fell apart from a broken heart / So don't even
>
> start with that 'wanna be your father' shit.

In this line, Shakur's anger and frustration is evident. Shakur has not even left the confines of his home, and is already resentful of his father, and protective of his mother. In this song, the judges of normalcy are irrelevant because the home hierarchy is in disarray, and Shakur has insecurities before he even enters society. There is no direction, no sense of security, and no sense of family. Yet, politicians and community leaders continued to criticize and blame rap artists and those in poverty for not wanting to change or seek help. Although a missing father or mother occurs in all classes of society, Shakur wanted to show aspects of how an unstable family unit in poverty is at the source of the problem. Without any sense of discipline, structure, education, or extra curricular activities the notion of change and upward

43

mobility is irrelevant. Many turn to what proliferates within poverty stricken areas like drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and hustling. Although the song says that Shakur's father is dead, in reality, his father was alive, but this song shows how Shakur was able to take fiction and apply it to social issues such as the family unit.

Shakur's relationship with his mother and the many hardships they faced became a source of musical inspiration, and another outlet to bring attention to the family unit. Shakur's ability to articulate what he experienced and transform it into his music led to one of his most beautiful songs. In the song "Dear Mama," on the album *Me Against the World*, Shakur both appreciates his mother, and conveys the good and bad times. There are many atrocities that happen in poor neighborhoods, but this song gave Shakur a chance to express love and appreciation for what he did have growing up. The song is filled with compassion and love for his mother and reflects the hardships of life without a father. Shakur's compassion and sympathy for women would be reflected in other songs like "Brenda's Got a Baby," and "Keep Ya Head Up." "Dear Mama," is another example of Shakur's style of blending his life

with fiction to create a picture that speaks to a larger audience. In the middle of the first verse Shakur raps:

> I reminisce on the stress I caused, it was hell / Huggin on my mama from a jail cell / And who'd think in elementary? / Hey! I see the penitentiary, one day / And runnin from the police, that's right / Mama catch me, put a whoopin to my backside / And even as a crack fiend, mama / Ya always was a black queen, mama / I finally understand/for a woman it ain't easy tryin to raise a man / You always was committed / A poor single mother on welfare, tell me how ya did it.

Portraying his broken family was a reflection of those in poverty, and the struggles of trying to keep a family together. However, it is the genre of rap music that exposed Shakur as an easy target for the judges of normalcy, and hip hop music became the venue in which the judges could begin to criticize and gain public support.

Shakur's placement into the genre of gangsta can be problematic in the context of examining where Shakur came from and Quinn sheds light on how Shakur's difference from other gangsta rappers worked to assert his social resonance

45

within our society. Quinn focuses on the different aspects of Shakur's career and puts into perspective the trajectory of his career, which sets up the dichotomy of Shakur's personality, and the rich and poor binary. In chapter 8 of *Nuthin' but a "G" Thang*, entitled "Tupac Shakur and the Legacies of Gangsta," she lists the reasons that Shakur's rap career and life are studied and why he is arguably the most important rapper in the history of Hip Hop. In so doing, she gives us a spectrum that we can follow when discussing Shakur's work and social importance. Quinn asserts: "[Shakur's] trajectory, unlike most gangsta rappers, was broadly from a stance of political and communal engagement to one of nihilistic disengagements" (174). Here Quinn establishes a binary in Shakur's early life: on one hand, Shakur's early frame of mind was "political and communal"; this is found in songs like "Keep Ya Head Up." Shakur, as a young man, created a version of the Black Panthers called the New Afrikan Panthers that sought social awareness and education in his community. On the other hand, however, Shakur throughout his career and his life would give into nihilism and this is evident in songs like "Ambitionz Az A Ridah," "2 Of Amerikaz Most Wanted," and "Hit 'Em Up," which would place him in the

gangsta rap genre, and perpetuate images and symbols of gangsta.

These later songs and images have been much discussed, debated, and, in many instances, demonized. In an attempt to shed light on the complexities of Shakur's life and work and his ability to challenge traditional power structures and the binaries that they have produced, my thesis focuses on the former by attempting, like Quinn, to illuminate the rich and poor binary that Shakur contended with in his lyrics. Quinn states:

> In symbolic terms, Tupac's trajectory is readily understandable as an expressive rejoinder to the confounding conditions of contemporary America […] gangsta rap profoundly engaged with and responded to the decline of class- and race-based consciousness in times that saw, paradoxically, huge increases in the number of rich and superrich, and interdependently, or 'superpoor' – many of whom came from gangsta's core constituency of black urban youth. (174)

Quinn eloquently puts into words what I am attempting to show in this chapter, which is how Shakur is in fact a "rejoinder" to the conditions of contemporary America, how

he really is not a gangsta rapper, but instead, a living

example of huge gaps between rich and poor. Shakur would be

viewed late in his career as a gangsta rapper, but I would

disagree with this specific label, and argue instead that

Shakur was the epitome of representing poverty, and in

doing so, he represented all of the struggles, good and

bad, that came with living in this class position.

Shakur had the ability to bring a sense of unity to

his fans, and that is one of the main reasons why Shakur's

music and image spans the globe. In *Tupac: Resurrection*,

Shakur states, "But many of my fans don't have ID. Some

have jobs, some don't. Some are on welfare, you know? Some

are not. Some are rich and some are poor, but they all

share that hopeless feeling." Shakur illuminated the issues

in poverty by contesting his place as "delinquent" by

showing the ills of poverty in our society. Shakur

continued to contest power structures, within Hip Hop

culture's identity formation and authenticity debates.

Shakur's position on the West Coast, and his stand against

guardians of Hip Hop who would deem his position on the

West Coast as inauthentic and not real Hip Hop would place

him in the middle of the most problematic coast war in Hip

Hop culture's history. Shakur's assertion of West Coast's

place in Hip Hop culture created another element of
inclusion for those on the West Coast to feel part of the
larger Hip Hop culture, as well as work from existing hip
hop identities. Shakur's lust for the limelight would
ultimately see him turn into a Hip Hop superstar, and place
him at the heart of many of its problems and issues.
However, Shakur's ability to contest power structures would
follow him into the world of Hip Hop culture. Just as
Shakur fought his disenfranchised position of poverty in
society, he would also continue to fight for his place
within hip hop culture by engaging in the authenticity
debates, and ideas of "keeping it real."

CHAPTER TWO

HIP HOP CULTURE: A CRITIQUE OF IDENTITY FORMATION
AND THE AUTHENTICITY DEBATES

In the previous chapter, I illustrated how the demonization of mainstream gangsta rap created negative perceptions of the Black community and those in poverty, which led to problematic social binaries that perpetuated fears about and social misunderstandings between people of different races and classes. If we continue to critique this process of binary construction within Hip Hop culture and in conversations and debates that took place between participants in this culture, we can see how the prevalence and popularity of the "gangsta," "thug," and "hood" identities began to dictate "authenticity," and "keeping it real," and that such identities began to exclude participants as only fans of the culture because they could not truly "keep it real" based on their race and class positions. Shakur and other rappers, such as Ice Cube, fought from the position of gangsta and political rap to create an identity that was opposed not only to the governmental power structures, but also to those in the Black community that criticized them and their place Hip

Hop culture as "inauthentic." In *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, Adam Krims argues "that understanding how identities are formed – whatever they do to whomever – will remain a basic aspect of rap and hip hop studies" (9). This chapter follows in this vein in that it shows Shakur's ability to contest the power structures within Hip Hop that created an authentic/inauthentic binary that worked to exclude people of various races, classes, and regions from participating in and belonging to Hip Hop culture. The authenticity debates that created culturally disenfranchised positions in Hip Hop came about due to Hip Hop culture's movement through various race and class positions as well as from underground to mainstream, from the East to West coast, and from "the streets" to academia. Focusing on how Shakur and others created an identity from gangsta and the position of the West Coast is an example of how an identity can be formed from elements of existing Hip Hop culture identities.

Although Gangsta rap and political rap offended (and continues to offend) the sensibilities of politicians and community leaders, it also created a way for the culturally disenfranchised in the Black community to have a voice against the power structures that would otherwise dismiss

51

their place, for the elements that were often most

offensive to those in power were also the elements that

were most important in staking out an identity within this

culture. We see this, for example, in Shakur's "Thug Life"

philosophy, which reflects Krims' notion of creating a

position within an ethnicity. In "Asking for It," Michael

Small discusses his and Shakur's frustrations surrounding

the blame of rap music as the source of all that is wrong

in America. Small gives some insight as to why Shakur and

Cube may have developed an identity within an identity.

Shakur states, "Nobody gives a fuck about some juvenile

delinquent from the ghetto" (37). This assertion echoes how

Shakur and other rappers were a defiant voice against power

structures, as I discussed in Chapter One. "Thug Life"

illuminates Shakur's ability to construct an identity

through his experiences. In "Violence is Golden," Danzy

Senza addresses the violence that was in rap music, as well

as notions of authenticity within Hip Hop, and follows

Shakur's problems with the law. Senza describes Shakur's

philosophy when he states, "'Thug Life,' brazenly tattooed

across [Shakur's] stomach like a banner, is Shakur's street

manifesto, an expression of the rage of young black men in

America – rage against the system that denies them and

fears them" (41). Shakur's Thug Life philosophy was a raw,
uncut, and unapologetic assertion of identity that reflects
the hardships that Black America had to contend with daily;
it was not meant for middle class Whites or Blacks, and it
was, at times, offensive.

Indeed, as Krims' analysis of Ice Cube's song "The
Nigga Ya Love to Hate" shows, these images often offended
not only middle class whites, but middle class Blacks as
well, which meant gangsta rap not only created racial
conflicts between Blacks and Whites, it also caused class
conflicts within the Black community. According to Krims,

> Ice Cube establishes, in the musical poetics of
> the song, a certain vision of black ethnicity. Or
> rather, I should say, a specific position *within*
> an ethnicity, for with this song, Ice Cube
> defined a political stance within his community,
> not only against the hegemonic culture, but also
> against fellow blacks that he sees as helping to
> perpetuate the culture's injustices. (96)

Like Shakur, Cube defined this political stance through
images of violence, police brutality, and the "thug life"
and although this imagery was important in bringing out
issues of police brutality and violence in poverty, it also

began to dictate what "keeping it real" in Hip Hop culture is and should be and who could and could not be considered "authentic" participants and members of this culture and this caused conflict and division within the Black community.

Shakur and gangsta were problematic in the Black community because the notion of what it meant to be "Black" in America was being debated. Politicians such as C. Delores Tucker cautioned that the misogynistic lyrics of rap were dangerous to the Black community. Shakur fired back at Tucker in the song "How Do U Want It." He raps, "Delores Tucker you [is] a motherfucker / Instead of helping a nigga you destroy a brotha / worst than the others." Shakur felt Tucker, someone in his own community and background, should have supported him, and Shakur felt she was ultimately worse than the power structure that oppressed him. In the article "Black Empires, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip-Hop," Davarian L. Baldwin discusses ideas of class and identity within the Black culture and addresses how Shakur was perceived by some, like Tucker, in his community. She also points to what Krims' critique of Cube's song illuminated. Baldwin states, "In some regards, nation-

conscious rap assumed that everyone agreed on the

definition of 'knowledge of self' and, in turn, blackness.

Gangsta rap, however, provides another perspective on black

life" (165). The other "perspective" of Black life offered

by rappers is what would ultimately engage leaders in the

Black community because they sought to challenge the idea

of "Black" identity rappers offered. Again, if we view Hip

Hop as a culture that molds and shapes identity, then

gangsta rap worked to forge a different identity within the

Black community, and we see how Hip Hop culture stood on

its own in terms of being attacked by the full spectrum of

identities. What makes gangsta problematic in the overall

Hip Hop identity formation is that "hood" images and

narratives began to become synonymous with "authentic" Hip

Hop identity.

What Shakur and Cube accomplished is how one aspect of

Hip Hop culture, gangsta rap, can create a path to an

identity. The social resistance of gangsta rap is necessary

and important to counter attacks from those in power within

society that deemed them "delinquents," but they can be

problematic in Hip Hop culture if their image of

authenticity becomes the only image that can represent true

authentic Hip Hop participation. If we parallel Shakur's

ability to call for an identity with his future call for an inclusive political party later in his career, then we can stake out an identity from Hip Hop culture that is inclusive, and counters the notion that "hood" or "urban" identities are the only entrance into Hip Hop culture. Just as Shakur and Cube aspired to create an identity, it is important that the new hybridized identity that I seek break through binaries of Black and White, and different class levels, so that fans who are not "hood" or "urban" can begin to stake an identity that works from existing aspects of Hip Hop culture, and creates a space of inclusion that continues the tradition of Hip Hop culture.

Before we can truly conceive of ways for Hip Hop culture to function as a hybridized space for all who wish to participate, we must first analyze how the authenticity debates within Hip Hop and the notion of "keeping it real" has worked to create dichotomies such as "hood" versus academic, and East Coast versus West Coast in which one side is considered "authentic" and therefore empowered within Hip Hop, while the other side is deemed "inauthentic" and therefore disenfranchised within Hip Hop culture. I begin with Hip Hop's movement into academia.

The dichotomy of hood versus academia is a binary of "authenticity" that brings division, but, more importantly, it is also another way of ostracizing a person out of Hip Hop culture. The hood or ghetto position becomes problematic when scholars, community leaders, and fans face rejection from those considered authentic members of Hip Hop on the grounds that they lack hood authenticity. An analysis of how "keeping it real" moves past hood identities, and into the realm of academia is another problematic binary that keeps Hip Hop culture divided. In the book *Hip Hop Matters*, S. Craig Watkins discusses Hip Hop culture as a movement, the culture's relevance, and the struggles and debates within Hip Hop culture. Watkins contextualizes the position of those in academia when he states, "By virtue of their position in academe, hip-hop academics are perceived as too scholarly and, therefore, largely irrelevant to the movement" (246). Watkins reinforces this idea saying:

> The criticism reflected the general tension that
> continues to strain the relationship between hip-
> hop scholars and the movement: the belief that to
> be down with hip hop (i.e. supportive of the

movement) you must be immersed in street culture.
(247)

Hip Hop culture is deemed culturally disenfranchised from all spectrums of society's judges, and those in academia, and other participants must begin to stake a claim of Hip Hop identity that is not dictated by those who would place urban identities, or any other Hip Hop identity, as more important than the other.

One example of how "hood" or "urban" notions of authenticity are problematic within the Black community is through the writing and academic study of Shakur. Shakur represents an artist that touches each side of the thug and intellect binary because on one hand he is the epitome of the young Black male through his Thug Life philosophy and on the other his profound and articulate expression of poverty is worthy of intellectual study. Michael E. Dyson's book *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur,* which is a book that my thesis relies heavily upon, is one important example of how the notion of urban or hood identities as authentic is problematic in the representation of Hip Hop culture in other social spheres. Dyson's book is a reflection on Shakur's life, his search for knowledge through many literary works, and his

relevance to the Black community. Dyson exemplifies the hood versus academia binary debate because he is an established writer, scholar, and intellect, yet he may, at first glance, not be representative of hood culture. Referring to the issue of authenticity and Dyson, Watkins discusses how Dyson's authenticity was criticized, and how this criticism also reflects the class conflict within the Black community:

> One of the more telling moments was when Suge Knight, co-founder of Death Row Records, openly challenged Michael Eric Dyson, a widely respected author and scholar, and his license to write a critical biography of Tupac Shakur. In essence Knight argued that despite his hefty intellect, Dyson's assessment of Tupac and the lessons the movement might learn from his tragic legacy was invalid because he did not know Tupac or have any intimate connection to the thug-life exploits associated with the slain rapper. (246)

Knight's accusation called attention to class issues in the sphere of academia, as well as the Black community. Knight's accusations assert that hood identities are the only criteria needed to be truly considered authentic in

the Hip Hop culture. Knight's argument about Dyson having no connection to Shakur is an example of why authenticity should not be from one fixed position in Hip Hop. The claim that many critics of Hip Hop have made towards other academics and non-Black participants of Hip Hop culture is the idea that their participation is irrelevant because they do not know or represent the hood. However, if this premise holds true, then Hip Hop culture can only come from the perspective of urban and hood identities, and Dyson technically should not write about Shakur.

We see a similar sentiment in Krims' discussion of the notion of Hip Hop authenticity when he claims that he "is by no means close to hip hop's original cultural existence or to rap's current authenticity" (7) and then later when, as a "[W]hite, middle-class academic," he simply "claim[s] some proximity to rap *fan* culture" (6,7). Accusations like Knight's against Dyson means that Krims' dilemma of not being from the hood and Black creates the need for him to acknowledge his lack of authenticity when he writes about Hip Hop culture. I am not criticizing his move to do so; I am simply bringing to light that when the focus of true authenticity of Hip Hop culture begins with hood narratives as the basis of authenticity, then the move to academia

will continue to be problematic. Hood and urban narratives and identities are vital in bringing to light social issues, such as unemployment, poverty, police brutality; they provide a voice for the culturally disenfranchised. However, in terms of Hip Hop culture, they or any other identity should not dictate inclusion into Hip Hop culture because claiming that only one position can be considered authentic perpetuates Hip Hop binaries that have caused conflict in bringing about as stronger more unified Hip Hop culture for the future.

Questions concerning "authentic" Hip Hop identity, however, have pervaded Hip Hop culture since its inception. Criticism of the theorization and appropriation of Hip Hop culture comes with the worry that Black culture or the origin will somehow be lost. However, Shakur and Cube challenged those in their own culture by working from existing Black identities to create an in your face assertion of Black identity that was not politically correct or the status quo. In doing so, they created an avenue to bring out and challenge important issues such as police brutality, unemployment, and violence. My approach to creating an identity through Hip Hop does not attempt to appropriate or forget Black culture; instead, in my

conception, identity is forged by breaking through existing binaries in Hip Hop culture based on only certain race and class positions being deemed "authentic." The intent is to harness the potential of Hip Hop culture as a unified movement for those who love and appreciate what Hip Hop culture has done in society, such as bringing together different races through rap artists, breakdancers, and the continued tradition of Hip Hop culture. My intent is to create an identity in Hip Hop that enhances the already existing elements of unity and traditions of Hip Hop culture and creates a way for non-Black or even Black participants who are not from the hood to participate without being culturally disenfranchised.

Middle-class Blacks, Whites, and academics have not been the only victims of the authenticity debates and the notion that only "hood" and "urban" identities are true representatives of real Hip Hop culture. Indeed, just as those who write and participate in Hip Hop culture from a different class and race position have had to fight for a place and space within the larger Hip Hop culture, West Coast rap aka "gangsta" rap was also ostracized by being deemed "rap" and not true "Hip Hop." Hip Hop culture began in the streets of the Bronx, New York, and urban narratives

have been at the heart of the culture since the beginning, and it is from the position of the streets of New York that "keeping it real" has been both measured and debated. In the article "Keepin' it (Un) Real: Perusing the Boundaries of Hip Hop Culture," Alexander Weheliye states, "In contemporary Hip Hop, for instance, most performers insist on 'keepin' it real,' being from 'the streets," and 'representin'," grounding musical personas in their version of reality" (303). As we saw in Chapter One, "keeping it real" became problematic as Hip Hop moved into mainstream culture because artists' articulations of their "version of reality" were viewed as obscene, hedonistic, violent, and misogynistic by those in power within mainstream society. But notions of "keeping it real" have been with Hip Hop culture from the beginning, and the cultural disenfranchisement that it prompted has not stopped its guardians from trying to protect it from "inauthentic" outsiders.

From its beginnings, Hip Hop culture has always had its guardians, people who were interested in defining who is or is not an "authentic" participant. Watkins' examination of Hip Hop culture also brings to light the

status of how Hip Hop culture can be its own enemy in

bringing about a sense of unity and purpose. He states:

> There has never been a consensus within hip hop
>
> about its purpose, identity, or destiny. In fact,
>
> the most robust debates about hip hop have always
>
> taken place within the movement. Hip hop has and
>
> continues to be its most potent critic and
>
> courageous champion. (5)

The lack of consensus and purpose came about because of Hip

Hop culture's movement from New York to the masses of

mainstream culture.

One pioneer that initially resisted the movement of

Hip Hop culture is DJ Grandmaster Flash, an innovative DJ

and pioneer of Hip Hop culture. Flash stated, "Let's keep

it underground. Nobody outside of the Bronx would like this

stuff anyway" (qtd. in Watkins 9). Flash's comments reflect

the sentiments of those who feel true Hip Hop identity came

from New York's representation because that is where the

culture was born. Although Flash would later change his

stance, examining Flash's comment further shows how being

"outside" or culturally disenfranchised was an idea

established since Hip Hop's inception. Krims recounts

similar origins of Hip Hop culture when he states:

The most commonly recounted story of hip-hop

culture traces its origins to New York,

specifically to the South Bronx; and regardless

of whether one acknowledges New York as its

birthplace […] the representation of New York as

the cradle of hip hop culture and music is

extremely well established. (123)

Essentially all versions of Hip Hop culture are reworked or

influenced by New York, and this idea will be an important

factor in Shakur's criticism of the East during the West

versus East conflict that will be discussed later. The

notion of true Hip Hop, authenticity, and "keeping it real"

has kept much of Hip Hop culture segregated through race,

class, and regional difference, and it is important to take

steps towards finding a purpose and definition of Hip Hop

culture.

One specific way to view the underground versus

mainstream binary is to examine how lyrics can be a

measurement of "keeping it real," and would also be a point

of criticism for West Coast artists. Underground

participants in early Hip Hop had to go to the parks or

block parties to hear rap music. In the article "Organizing

the Hip-Hop Generation," Angela Ards discusses the social

implications of Hip Hop culture, as well as its roots. Ards contextualizes underground and mainstream, as well as introduces the first group I will discuss. Ards states:

> Underground tapes showcasing a DJ's skills or an MC's rhymes were all the outside world knew of rap music until 1979, when the Sugar Hill Gangs released 'Rapper's Delight' on a small independent black label. It wasn't the first rap album: many of the lyrics were recycled from artist with more street credibility. But it was a novelty to the mainstream. (312)

From Sugar Hill Gang we see how street credibility translates into authenticity. The idea that "lyrics were recycled" into mainstream rap acts like Sugar Hill Gang was one of the first jabs at mainstream artists, and exemplified how underground was keeping it real and mainstream was not. It is interesting to see how the group's mainstream status was America's first glimpse into Hip Hop, yet for true Hip Hop participants, the Sugar Hill Gang was not necessarily a true reflection of real underground Hip Hop culture. Watkins echoes the issue that the group provided for those in underground Hip Hop; he states:

The Sugarhill Gang's success, like the success of

the movement years later, produced a gripping

paradox: At the same time that commercial success

established hip hop as a legitimate cultural

force it also made it much more difficult to

control who participated in the movement. (9)

Controlling who participated in the movement would

essentially be impossible, yet there are those who did

attempt to control one's participation by the notion of

"keeping it real." In the case of "Rapper's Delight,"

lyrics provided a way to show how the artists copied their

"street" counterparts. In the interview "Hip-Hop's Founding

Fathers Speak the Truth," Nelson George interviews DJ

Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa about the

development and roots of Hip Hop culture. Bambaataa, a

father of Hip Hop culture, states that Hank of the Sugar

Hill Gang "[N]ever gave credit to Grandmaster Casanova Fly,

who is called Grandmaster Caz these days from the Cold

Crush Brothers, for the rhymes" (53). This is one example

of a father of Hip Hop culture criticizing the group

because they did not really write their rhyme; moreover,

they did not even acknowledge this important truth. As a

result, Sugar Hill Gang was "never embraced by those who

considered themselves true guardians of hip hop" (Watkins 18). This is one of the first instances where authenticity was questioned, in the form of lyrics, and also illuminates the criticisms and fears of those who believe that something is lost, in this case lyrical credit, in the mainstream consumption of Hip Hop culture. If an MC does not write his or her own songs, then he or she has no lyrical "skill." This is also another example of how keeping it real is established. Lyrics would continue to be an issue later during the rise of popularity of West Coast rappers and sounds.

The first region or genre to ultimately challenge mainstream East Coast dominance was the West Coast or gangsta rap. Before the genre of gangsta was known by mainstream audiences, lyrical ability and being other than New York created binaries of difference. Krims puts this notion into perspective when he states, "as with so many processes of cultural hegemony, New York's eclipsing was not a simple matter, and its presence was not so much lost as transformed" (124). The idea of New York being "transformed" is vital to understanding how regions create their view of Hip Hop culture, specifically through music. Krims continues:

Here it is important to recall how consistently
geographic and localized notions of
'representing' generally are, and the extent to
which establishing an identity may often become a
process of negation. The presence of New York
often becomes a matter of the effects of its
absence. (124)

As we see here, and from the origins of Hip Hop culture,
New York becomes the basis, and the "oppositional relation"
to other regions that participate in Hip Hop culture. From
the beginning of Hip Hop culture, the position of "the
other" was any region other than New York. Before the major
East versus West Coast battle, there existed bias because
all things Hip Hop came from New York.

Eithne Quinn discusses differences in West Coast rap
and why it may have been neglected. She states:

The LA bias 'lingered' partly because hip-hop
media – crucial to the process of defining and
distributing subcultural knowledge – was East
Coast – based. MTV and magazines *Rap Pages*, *The
Source*, *Billboard*, and later *VIBE* were all New
York-based. (68)

The cultural and media base was in New York, and movement from this base gave way to attacks on lyrical credibility. Quinn continues, "Eazy's [Eazy E] delivery was widely considered weak. The credibility of Eazy's, as well as Too Short's, lyrical flow seems to inhere precisely in its lack of artifice and skill" (72). Too Short and Eazy E's "flow" was not at the level of the East Coast, yet Short and Eazy did not care because their flow was a new approach and sound to the larger rap music of Hip Hop culture. The simple straightforward flow of the West Coast would be embraced and criticized by fans and critics. The boundaries and terms were set in the form of lyrical content, as they once were in the movement from underground to mainstream.

The rise of California rap music signaled a shift in popularity from New York, and as a result, debates ensued about whether or not West Coast rap was true Hip Hop culture. Shakur's assertion of West Coast rap's relevance can also be viewed as a way to reconstruct Hip Hop culture's identity and function in terms of who has the right to claim Hip Hop culture as one's identity because that is what Shakur was attempting to do with West Coast rap. Shakur wanted to show that true Hip Hop identity can also be a separate, yet inextricably part of New York, the

birthplace of Hip Hop culture. In the larger society, Hip
Hop culture can show how diversity can be harnessed to look
past issues of race and class difference that plague our
society. Hip Hop culture can create a stronger unified
movement that defines itself from diversity without letting
race and class identities and differences interrupt the
potential of Hip Hop culture as a movement for social
change.

Much of the social misunderstanding concerning
poverty, race, and class discussed in Chapter One
perpetuates fear that keeps much of society separated.
Rather than perpetuate fear and social misunderstanding,
Hip Hop culture can bring about social change that works
against those restraints and brings about positive social
dialogue concerning, race, class, and difference. The idea
that Shakur could challenge power structures in our society
and power structures within Hip Hop culture is the essence
of my focus on Shakur's voice and why following this line
of rebellion in Shakur's voice and life can be important to
the larger Hip Hop culture movement.

Shakur questioned why West Coast identities were being
deemed "the other," and this can bring to light debate
concerning the definition of who and what Hip Hop culture

represented. Understanding and establishing the underground versus mainstream binary of authenticity continued through the East Coast versus West coast battle of the 1990's. The battle made those in Hip Hop culture address the many underlying issues that divide the culture, such as which region is true or representative of real Hip Hop culture. Essentialized race and class conflict worked against a hybridized space or unified Hip Hop because the definition of keeping it real is defined differently in each class, as is the reworking and reformation of the expression of Hip Hop culture in each region. Shakur is unique because he can be viewed as a hybridized participant of Hip Hop culture because he was in the middle of the East versus West conflict, yet he was born in New York, lived in a second city on the East Coast, Baltimore, and represented and felt part of the West Coast identity. Shakur can be looked at as a participant in Hip Hop culture who experienced and participated in both East and West representations, and his physical movements in life also parallel the mainstream popularity of the move from East to West. Thus, Shakur is the ultimate example of someone who is deeply rooted in Hip Hop culture, yet still in a culturally disenfranchised position because of his position on the West Coast.

The underlying issue of lyrical ability was one issue

that erupted out of the West Coast versus East Coast

battle, but it is important to first discuss how Shakur's

role and reason for sparking the war was personal. The

"battle" began out of Shakur's personal vendetta against

the Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace), and from two

people the East Coast versus West Coast battle would

explode out of media, radio, and fans' choice of which side

they represented. In the book, *Labyrinth*, Randall Sullivan

writes in depth about the murders of Shakur and Notorious

B.I.G., specifically through ex-LAPD detective Russell

Poole. The Notorious B.I.G., aka Biggie Smalls, and Shakur

were friends at one point, but everything changed when

Shakur was robbed and shot five times at the Quad Recording

studios in New York. Sullivan puts a perspective on the

aftermath of the incident: "Tupac was plotting revenge

against those he believed were responsible for the shooting

at Quad Studios: Puffy Combs, Andre Harrell, and Biggie

Smalls" (82). Shakur felt these individuals had something

to do with the shooting. However, Sullivan continues:

> When Tupac made his accusations public in an
>
> interview with *VIBE*, Biggie, Puffy and Andre
>
> Harrell replied with a brief letter to the editor

in which the three denied they had anything to do with the shooting, then expressed the hope that the feud between the East and West Coasts could be brought to an end. (82)

Shakur had a personal vendetta mostly against Biggie, and Puff Daddy's Bad Boy record label, but the media, and all of Hip Hop culture perpetuated the conflict by choosing sides between the East Coast represented by the Notorious B.I.G. and the West Coast represented by Shakur. Shakur's song "Hit Em Up," would be the precursor to the larger battle, and was a personal and vindictive attack on Biggie, his wife, and other artists that Shakur felt "dissed" him. Shakur's attack was personal, so Shakur crossed certain lines and boundaries of "battling" that rap artists at the time did not really cross. For example, Shakur raps, "You claimed to be a player but I fucked your wife." Shakur attacked Biggies wife openly, and that was considered a taboo or "low blow." Shakur keeps going with lyrics like, "[T]his ain't no freestyle battle, all you niggaz getting killed with ya mouths open" and "Five shots couldn't drop me, I took it and smiled." The song is a reflection of the darker side of Shakur, but it is important to articulate why fans, the media, and Hip Hop participants were so

involved and entrenched in the East versus West Coast

battle. In essence, the problem that Shakur had with Biggie

illuminated the existing underlying issues and division

within Hip Hop culture, and that is why the East vs. West

binary was, and in a sense still is, important to break.

While this song can be considered a "battle" rap, I

view the song more as a song about revenge, more than a

battle rap, which consists of dissing a rapper's

credibility, lyrics, style, or region. For example, KRS ONE

attacked MC Shan over the song "The Bridge," battling over

the birthplace of Hip Hop culture in the song "South

Bronx," and MC Shan replied with "Kill That Noise." That

battle is viewed by Hip Hop historians, such as Davey D, as

one of the first significant battles in Hip Hop culture. A

later battle would ensue by two Hip Hop juggernauts with

Jay Z and Nas. In the "Takeover" Jay Z criticizes Nas'

career, and Nas replied back with "Ether" attacking Jay Z's

record label and his style. Rather than focus on the

content of the lyrics of both battles, what is most

important to note is that the battles ended peacefully, and

are two examples of how a battle should proceed and end.

However, the song "Hit Em Up," Biggie never made a song to

counter Shakur, and they were never able to "squash" the beef because of Shakur's death.

The East Coast versus West Coast was the most dangerous binary that emerged out of the history of Hip Hop culture because the battle subsided when Shakur and Biggie on separate occasions were shot and killed. The battle had rap artists, magazines, radio stations, and fans choosing sides. In the article "No Time for Fake Niggas: Hip-Hop Culture and the Authenticity Debates," Mark Anthony Neal discusses the different political, hood, urban, and different approaches to Hip Hop culture's mainstream identity formation, as well as White fans, women, and the evolving aspects of the Hip Hop nation. Neal comments and puts into perspective the battle or war:

> Because of the significance of New York City in the lore of hip-hop, the East Coast had always been seen as the symbolic center of the hip-hop world. This "coast supremacy" was challenged in the early 1990's as artists such as N.W.A, Ice Cube, Snoop Dog, Warren G, Digital Underground, Tupac, and even Hammer emerged as some of the genre's most bankable performers. At the core of the East Coast versus West Coast conflict was a

fundamental belief that the experiences of those

on one coast marked them as more authentic – more

gangsta, more ghetto, more hardcore – than those

on the other. (58)

Neal's explanation makes clear that the dominance of the

East Coast was in decline because of the emergence of West

Coast artists. As we saw earlier, early rap artists like

RUN DMC and LL Cool J were very successful and popular East

Coast artist. However, when the focus of Hip Hop started to

shift to the West Coast, the argument was that West Coast

rap lyrics were weak began to dictate their "fake" approach

to true Hip Hop culture. The issue of "one 'hood was deemed

more authentically hip-hop, and by extension, more

authentically black, than the other" (58) also echoes my

earlier idea that hood identities began to overshadow other

representations of Hip Hop culture. Gangsta was only one

version of West Coast rap, and West Coast rap also signaled

another version of Hip Hop identity formation.

West Coast hip hop has influenced the overall make up

of Hip Hop culture, and needs to be recognized for the

sense of commonality that it established within the diverse

cultures in California. Watkins discusses how in

California's Bay Area, "[Y]oung people of different colors,

creeds, and cultural ancestry have made Hip Hop an incredibly vital foundation of identity and creativity, expression and exploration, pleasure and politics" (163-4) Watkins goes on to mention, "'In the Bay Area, Adreana Clay says, 'there is no way hip hop can be simply a black or white thing. There are so many other groups'" (164). Watkins also discusses the political scene and discusses how Hip Hop is more than a consumer culture in the Bay Area: "Hip hop does not simply determine the music young people listen to or the clothes they wear; it has, in many instances, become a significant way of life" (164). The expansion of West Coast Hip Hop culture from Los Angeles to the Bay Area extends the reach and potential of what Hip Hop culture has done for the multi-racial landscape of California. Shakur acknowledges this idea, as well in the song "California Love (Remix)" and maps out the different cities that encompass West Coast identity. Shakur raps, "Let me serenade the streets of L.A. / From Oakland to Sac-town, / the Bay Area and back down / Cali is where they put they mack down, / Give me love!" In the lines of his lyrics, and speaking over a track, these two songs focus on Shakur's ability to bring a sense of togetherness to West Coast artists and cultural participants. This version of

Shakur's commonality and unified identity is from a diverse perspective, and shows the range of Shakur's ability to create an identity from existing cultural elements.

The strength of West Coast rap and identity came from the diversity of cultures that encompassed California, as well as the idea of coming together, along with Shakur and Cube, to counter the notion that West Coast was not real Hip Hop. In the article "Never Shoulda Been let out the Penitentiary: Gangsta Rap and the Struggle over Racial Identity," Michael Quinn discusses how the notion of gangsta can be a positive place for one's identity. Quinn states, "The music therefore marks an assertion of individuality as well as group identity, becoming a way to deal with one's disenfranchised status on both a personal and political level" (80). Listeners of West Coast Rap music (poor or not) not only rallied around the music in clubs and in the streets, they also became a part of Hip Hop culture. Their participation in our society came from the perspective of Hip Hop culture, and the culture gave them a place in society. The reason that California identity was popular was because of Hip Hop culture's move in terms of mainstream consumption and popularity. As the culture moved from the East to West in the early 90's,

people in California began to unite through Hip Hop. Pancho McFarland, in his article "Chicano Rap Roots: Black-Brown Cultural Exchange and the Making of a Genre," comments on this notion. McFarland states that the West Coast group Cypress Hill:

> [...] believes that hip hop culture and rap music are venues for positive multiracial youth dialogues-places where young people of different races can 'feel' each other, can enjoy each other's company and share culturally, politically and emotionally. (950)

Shakur's insistence that California culture was vital to the larger formation of Hip Hop culture ultimately echoed those who felt culturally disenfranchised by the guardians of Hip Hop culture. At that moment in time Shakur influenced others to assert themselves as being part of the movement and culture. Shakur's words marked a source of pride for California identity within Hip Hop culture, and more importantly for the socially disenfranchised.

Shakur was a voice that stood up against the "guardians" of Hip Hop culture, and as a result, the diverse identities that influenced Shakur's upbringing in California had him defending West Coast identities within

Hip Hop. In the "Interview on the Westside Radio Show,"
with the then DJ, and eventual Video Jockey from MTV, Sway,
puts into perspective what the issue was:

> [H]ow could you [East Coast] look at us and say,
> 'You're not good enough'? We're from a broken
> home. Y'all [East Coast] didn't teach us this, we
> ain't got no subways and graffiti. In spite of
> the gangs and all of that we still came up with
> this culture. I feel like we never got what we
> deserved. I took it personal because I'm from the
> East Coast and I know about that culture but I
> know about this [West Coast] culture because I
> was here when it was being put down. (61)

The lack of "consensus" that Watkins discussed is
paralleled here by Shakur when he states "we're from a
broken home," which was partly because of the new ways Hip
Hop culture were being presented and absorbed by mainstream
audiences, but more so, because the grip of mainstream East
Coast dominance was beginning to weaken. The idea that
Shakur expresses about the West Coast not being "good
enough" is a sentiment that fans and others view as their
position in Hip Hop culture.

Consensus within Hip Hop is problematic because any position in Hip Hop culture can be culturally disenfranchised, whether it is West or East Coast identities, or Black and White involvement because "authenticity" and "keeping it real" are constantly being questioned and reworked in each region. The movement of Hip Hop culture from New York to the West Coast, the South, and the Midwest were all a reconfiguration and expression of Hip Hop culture. Krims discusses this idea when he states:

> Each genre, in addition, carries its own regimes of verisimilitude […] if one of the principal validating strategies of rap music involves 'representing' and 'keeping it real' – in other words, deploying authenticity symbolically – then that ethos is formed (and reflected) differently in each genre. In fact, fans of each genre not infrequently tout theirs as the true rap genre, asserting likewise that fans of other genres have somehow betrayed something essential about rap music, perhaps hip-hop culture as well. (48)

Each region approached "keeping it real" in Hip Hop culture differently because the environment, and even physical elements, such as weather and landscape, would influence

their lyrics, as well the immediate state or city. Debates

and arguments about other forms or regions of Hip Hop

culture as "inauthentic" by fans has always been part of

the culture, and the numerical growth of Hip Hop culture's

exponentially broadened the breadth of the debates and

arguments. What is important is that the focus of the

debates and arguments do not propagate the notion that one

position is better than the other because it will continue

conflicts that have added to the lack of consensus and

unity. As Krims stated, the fans are the ones who create

the debates in rap music, and it is vital that fans attempt

to break through binaries of race, class, and regional

positions that hinder positive movement and growth in Hip

Hop culture. Moreover, it is the debate from the fans, such

as who is the best lyricist, producer, group, or region

that invites the most heated arguments. Therefore, as fans,

it is important to assert a claim that would counter fans'

culturally disenfranchised position based on race and

class. Those who are culturally disenfranchised must resist

their ostracized position in Hip Hop, and assert their

relevance as part of Hip Hop culture, and, in doing so,

binaries of difference that plague Hip Hop culture can be

broken within that space of inclusion. Hip Hop culture, as

seen in Chapter One, is powerful enough to resist

politicians and power structures, and if we can harness

this energy into breaking binaries that perpetuate

difference within the culture then their can be a space for

the already hybridized identity to become a whole without

adhering to the race and class categorization that the

government and Hip Hop culture has continually insisted on.

There must be steps to begin an identity that is

forged from those who participate in, listen to the music,

and know the history and importance of Hip Hop culture. In

the article "Off the Gangsta Tip: A Rap Appreciation, or

Forgetting about Los Angeles," Tim Brennan discusses the

different discussions of rap criticism in magazine and

newspapers, and academia, and his observation asserts that

most rap critics are uninformed listeners who try to bring

doses of politics, and contextual criticism to a genre that

brings its own. This is an interesting point because if we

hold this premise as truth, then the position of the

informed fan can become stronger than that of a critic.

Moreover, what is vital to focus on is that those who

participate in the culture, not those who do not or attempt

to make a political career out of a culture or music they

do not listen to, begin to define and stake a claim of Hip

Hop identity. Referring to uniformed intellectuals, Brennan asserts:

> How can one get to the tactical point of
> insisting on rap's formal expertise when the very
> sense of it as art is so weak? […] For the
> perceptual blockage here, I will argue, has not
> only to do with class but with that other
> dissonance known as the generational conflict.
> (665)

The notion of generations is also an important element in Hip Hop culture because Hip Hop culture is viewed as a youth culture in some circles, but it is also a culture that has influenced at least three generations. Brennan brings to light how even writers and critics of Hip Hop culture are not prone to being questioned about their authenticity or validity. Brennan states, "And it continues to be a mistake to assume that many of its critics, even the interesting ones, listen to very much of [Rap]." (666). Brennan illuminates how the assumption that critics are all knowing or do listen to the music should be approached with caution. Class, different generations, and the fact that some critics, more specifically, the politicians, community leaders, and critics discussed in Chapter One who do not

even listen to the music, should be a factor when taking into consideration how much validity that "critics" attacks have on Hip Hop culture.

The discussion of realness, authenticity, and keeping it real that stemmed from the East Coast versus West Coast war was mostly initiated and maintained from a fan standpoint. This is an important idea because if the fans are initiating, maintaining, and perpetuating debate and argument it is important to begin to shift our perspective on fans and recognize them as authentic participants or members of the culture and not simply as outsiders. This idea echoes Krims' notion that "fans of each genre not infrequently tout theirs as true rap genre" (48). Fan criticism is important in the binaries that perpetuate difference, and fans needs to be discussed in terms of how they participate in the cultural criticism within Hip Hop culture. Krims puts into perspective the role of the fan when he states "The degree to which a rap (or more generally: hip-hop) fan will defend the authenticity, originality, and sophistication of her/his favorite rap style/genre/artist/album/song is virtually unparalleled" (3). We see this, for example, in the film *Notorious*, which is about the life of Christopher Wallace aka Notorious BIG

aka Biggie Smalls. One scene exemplifies how fans perpetuated the negative elements of the West versus East battle when one fan in the scene states, "We created all this rap shit anyway, East Coast," and another from the West Coast says, "Westside! They might think they started the game, but we elevated that motherfucker." Biggie also discusses how the media's perpetuation of the East Coast versus West Coast war was not about Hip Hop, and was geared toward selling magazines. What is interesting to see is the how popular culture sparks fan debate, and the film reflects both fans' pride for their respective sides at the time. Moreover, the character of Biggie illuminates the idea of how the media's involvement was in terms of monetary gain that would translate into CD sales, and magazine sales. Therefore, it can be beneficial to embrace the idea of a fan as a participant, if that fan participates in Hip Hop culture.

A deeper look into aspects of West Coast identities as "the other," and Krims' place in Hip Hop both as an academic and a "White" man can begin dialogue towards opening the door to what and who Hip Hop culture can represent. Krims states:

> [T]he discussions in this book – principally
> involving rap's musical organization and its
> involvement in various cultural processes in
> various places – while they do look toward
> identity formation, do not necessarily take the
> further step of locating social resistance in
> those identities. (8)

Krims' reference to "locating resistance," is where I take
his words further and attempt to find a niche in the
current identity formation in Hip Hop culture. Just as
Shakur and Cube created their own resistance of identity
within their Black culture, I attempt to create resistance
against those who would deem one's participation in Hip Hop
as "the other" based on their race, class, or region. The
social resistance that I speak of comes from those who
would like to be part of Hip Hop and are excluded because
they are not "authentic," and are part of the culturally
disenfranchised. Weheliye brings to light an important
point that may create an avenue of locating the resistance
I seek when he states:

> Hip Hop can no longer be constructed as simply an
> anti-hegemonic authentic African American art
> form, as it was once presented by early

nineties pundits. Now critics are forced to
confront its popularity and mainstream
acceptance, as well as its resistant forces.
(292)

It is my contention that Hip Hop culture should recognize
that the move into mainstream culture was necessary because
gangsta rap brought out issues of violence and poverty that
would have otherwise been left out, and portrayed in film
or other media outlets. Ironically the location of the
social resistance that I speak of is from those in the
mainstream who have accepted and participated in the
culture of Hip Hop. As I have shown, the fans are in a very
important position, and asserting oneself passed the
position of a fan to a legitimate participant is the
resistance that is necessary to bring about a stronger
unified Hip Hop movement. Rather than continue to adhere to
the notion that "hood" identity is the true authentic Hip
Hop identity, it is vital that diversity of race and class
begin to be celebrated within Hip Hop culture as a positive
element. It is from that position that the culturally
disenfranchised, the fan, critic, and scholar within Hip
Hop culture must resist their ostracized position, and
reject and dismiss those who would keep them out

The movement of Hip Hop culture from underground to mainstream, East to West was positive for Hip Hop culture because the culture grew and different sounds and lyrics were being added to the overall culture. California's diversity and approach to Hip Hop culture can be a micro version and template for the larger culture of Hip Hop to work from. When mainstream Hip Hop culture made its way to the West Coast, it gave those who participated in Hip Hop culture a chance to feel part of the culture because California's sound and culture was being reflected. Shakur understood and respected the roots and origins of Hip Hop, but also understood that for the culture to stay alive it must grow. Shakur is a social activist whose words of social change and awareness influenced not only our society, but Hip Hop culture as a whole. Shakur's voice is a profound statement of the ability for the socially marginalized to create a voice out of hardship, and Shakur is a testament to how the search for knowledge can bring about influence and change. Rather than viewing participants of Hip Hop culture as culturally disenfranchised and "the other," steps towards developing who "we" are in the Hip Hop culture is necessary. Shakur's call for commonality and his view of community organizing

is paramount to a stronger and more developed Hip Hop identity. If Hip Hop culture can harness its diversity without ostracizing participants based on race and class, then Hip Hop culture can begin to fight against racism and work as a mediator to bring about social understanding.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LOST TRIBE: AN ASSERTION OF HIP HOP IDENTITY

The purpose of exploring how Shakur's words function
to reconstruct Hip Hop culture as a hybridized space that
invites cross cultural dialogue is to highlight Hip Hop
culture's ability to contest power structures and to show
how hybrid identities in Hip Hop culture can be harnessed
to work against racism and class difference. The "cross-
cultural" dialogue between the rapper and politician that I
discussed in Chapter One can then work toward true social
understanding that can translate into better social
programs, and diminish fears of violence, negative
stereotypes of the young Black male, as well as show how
poverty is a social problem that can be addressed in a
positive light. In Chapter Two, I critiqued gangsta rap in
ways that showed how it functioned to create a niche of
identity in the Black community, as well as how it sparked
the authenticity debates about Hip Hop identity formation.
The focus of this chapter is to point to ways to subvert
the cultural binaries that exclude participants based on
race and class, and to illuminate how Shakur's use of the
lost tribe metaphor can work to create a space that is not

concerned with participants' race or class positions, but instead works from existing Hip Hop traditions and identities.

To do this, I draw on the work of Gloria Anzaldua, who develops the "new mestiza" by subverting existing power structures in Mexican, Chicano, and Anglo power structures. Anzaldua's critique of "borders" helps to contextualize the diversity of Hip Hop culture and works as a way to counter the continued exclusion of participants (by relegating them to "fan" status) based on their race, region, or class position. Anzaldua does not dismiss or devalue her Mexican roots; instead she discusses how the rise of the Chicano culture was a claim of identity that worked from existing Mexican and immigrant traditions and values in American society. The hybrid space that I speak of works from Hip Hop culture, and focuses on how Shakur's use of the lost tribe metaphor can also work to create an identity within Hip Hop culture that does not commit the kind of discrimination against particular race, class, or regional identities that was rampant in hood identity formation. The lost tribe metaphor works to include the many other participants who have been left out of the story of Hip Hop culture. The lost tribe can be viewed as an identity within

an identity that is inclusive, and does not focus on Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, or any other ethnic category or class level. The notion of authenticity and "keeping it real," in the lost tribe would then become the assertion of identity that begins from Hip Hop culture.

Anzaldua constructs her own assertion and claim of identity out of existing power structures. In *Borderlands/LaFrontera: The New Mestiza*, she argues that hybrid identities derive from being simultaneously of, and not of, several cultures, and she discusses how challenging the cultural and physical borders in "Anglo" Mexican, and Chicano/a cultures creates a chance for her to define and claim her place through the "new mestiza." The reason that the notion of hybridity in this chapter is so important is that it takes the power from politicians, community leaders, and others showing how the power of hybrid identities is that they do not subscribe to binaries or the notion that one fixed identity is more important than the other. The lost tribe's diversity becomes its strength, and it is time for the culturally disenfranchised to stake a claim of identity through Shakur's use of the lost tribe metaphor. If we can break through the binaries of perception, such as those fought by Shakur in Chapter One,

94

break through binaries within Hip Hop such as those
discussed in Chapter Two, and focus on unifying the
diversity in Hip Hop culture towards a consciousness of
identity and way of perceiving oneself in American society,
then the culturally disenfranchised can claim their own
place, status, and relevance without the permission or
continued criticism from those in power who have no clue or
idea what Hip Hop culture truly represents.

As I made clear in the previous chapter, within Hip
Hop identity formation, race has played an important part
in terms of inclusion and authenticity, and my critique of
the importance of race attempts to bring to light how much
ethnicity should dictate one's approach to Hip Hop
identity. The issue of being non-White in our society has
brought about the term "minority" to describe everyone
else, the "others." Anzaldua discusses the notion of White
power structures in her cultural critique when she states
that "The whites in power want us people of color to
barricade ourselves behind our separate tribal walls so
they can pick us off one at a time with their hidden
weapons; so they can whitewash and distort history" (108).
Shakur's work and Hip Hop more generally, are indeed an
extension of Black history, struggle, and triumph against

all odds, and work to fight against Anzaldua's notion of "whites in power." Anzaldua also brings to light why it is important to have counter culture, such as Hip Hop, that resists power structures that would distort and "whitewash" history. However, in terms of inclusion to Hip Hop culture, the "White" position has been excluded because they are not Black. My attempt at reconstructing Hip Hop culture is from the perspective of breaking down the notion of "white" power, exclusion from Hip Hop based on race, and breaking through the "tribal walls" that Anzaldua discusses. If we can create a space within Hip Hop culture that breaks away from traditional set patterns of racial identification and the racism that stems from this, then Hip Hop culture can exemplify how racism can be fought in American society.

In the "Thug Immortal" interview with Rob Marriott, Shakur provides a way to critique how one's race should dictate identity. Shakur states: "This really taught me about, like, this black people thing…I'm black, I believe in my people… But I believe in my people as it relates to my tribe." Shakur continues with this idea in the song, "Krazy," when he raps, "Watchin time fly; I love my people do or die / But I wonder why, we scared to let each other fly." In both of these statements, Shakur brings attention

to how much being Black, or Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, or

any other ethnic culture for that matter, should influence

identity. If I was not born in Mexico, do not speak

Spanish, and have a Filipino background, how much should my

Mexican and Filipino heritage dictate my approach to

American identity? Perhaps, Anzaldua provides an answer

when she states, "Yet the struggle of identities continues,

the struggle of borders is our reality still. One day the

inner struggle will cease and a true integration [will]

take place" (85). What hip hop provides for me and others

is a way to approach American identity through, an

arguably, American art form, and the space that I am

calling for within Hip Hop is an attempt towards a "true

integration" of the diversity of Hip Hop culture.

Ultimately, I am closer to Hip Hop culture than my own so

called ethnic "tribe." Shakur understood that ultimately

his experiences in his life would dictate who he would be

in society, and being Black was a huge part of his

identity, but the issue that remains is how much

"ethnicity," which is a construct to keep us divided,

should dictate how we approach identity. Shakur did speak

and represent the thug life, and the Black community, but

it is also important to illuminate how aspects of his life

reflected an approach to identity that incorporated

multiple racial identities and positions, rather than

adhere to or follow one fixed identity.

Anzaldua illuminates how the Chicano identity came

from different parts and identities that made up the

Mexican American and immigrant experience, and when their

collective experiences of being Mexican, immigrants, and

minorities in America were brought together, a stronger and

more political assertion of identity would be the outcome.

Anzaldua describes how language strengthened and brought

together a whole community to form an identity. Anzaldua

states:

> Something momentous happened to the Chicano soul
>
> – we became aware of our reality and acquired a
>
> name and language (Chicano Spanish) that
>
> reflected that reality. Now that we had a name,
>
> some of the fragmented pieces began to fall
>
> together – who we were, what we were, and how we
>
> had evolved. We began to get glimpses of what we
>
> might eventually become. (85)

If we can parallel the realization of how language created

a sense of identity for Chicanos in American society, then

why not use Hip Hop as a way to break the racial binaries,

and speak to future generations in our own country? The
social change that I am attempting to bring about all stems
from and is a response to essentialized race and class
binaries that create misconceptions and misunderstanding on
all sides. Michael Small's article "Asking for It,"
provides more insight into Shakur's view of rap's
potential. Small states, "[Shakur] told me that he believed
rap could erase racism among the members of the younger
generation who would then grow up and pass this onto their
children" (38). This is the ultimate hope for bringing
together different races, and breaking through set
binaries. There must be a space within Hip Hop that does
not discriminate or perpetuate prejudice against particular
races because it can potentially shift notions of racism
into understanding for future generations. Hip Hop culture
has already brought American culture to the footsteps of
Japan and Germany, among other countries, yet within our
culture it is still viewed primarily in terms of Black
urban identities. Therefore, it is important to work from
Black urban identities of Hip Hop culture, rather than let
one race or one fixed identity dictate inclusion into Hip
Hop culture.

Rejection of those who participate in Hip Hop culture comes from the power structures in our society and within hip hop culture; such ostricization creates a culturally disenfranchised position. The notion of being lost or in the middle of Hip Hop culture is at the heart of my thesis, and it is what can keep the culturally disenfranchised in a state of limbo in terms of their position within Hip Hop culture. Anzaldua creates a template for how my assertion of Hip Hop identity can function, but more importantly, she points to ways to create a new identity out of rejection. Anzaldua states, "if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – una cultura mestiza – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture" (44). Shakur's philosophy of community and unity are the "lumber" and "bricks" for how my approach to using Hip Hop culture as the "architecture" will create the place for the culturally disenfranchised. It is vital that Hip Hop culture break through fixed and deeply rooted binaries that have kept the culture divided. Reconstructing Hip Hop culture from the words of Shakur is not an attempt to change Hip Hop culture; instead it capitalizes on the diversity of Hip Hop culture as a way to bring about unity that will in turn

100

bring about social change from the conflicts discussed in Chapters One and Two.

Anzaldua creates a way to view how adherence to power structures can hinder a movement, and the ability to stake out a claim of identity. Her ideas suggest that if we continue to let the existing power structures deem us as the "other," or, more importantly if we continue to "barricade ourselves behind our separate tribal walls," then Hip Hop culture will remain a counter culture based on a limiting notion of Black identity. Counter cultures have been crucial in the Black struggle and experience, functioning as a way for the Black community to subvert power structures, but if Hip Hop culture is to move forward as a more inclusive and unified diverse culture, then it is important to subvert any power structure that would deem Hip Hop culturally disenfranchised. Anzaldua states:

> But I exist, we exist. They'd like to think I
> have melted in the pot. But I haven't, we
> haven't. The dominant white culture is killing
> us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our
> self-determination, it has made us weak and
> empty [...] Ignorance splits people,

creates prejudices. A misinformed people is a

subjugated people. (108)

Anzaldua's words exemplify the cultural misunderstanding

that I discussed in Chapter One; they also show how the

binaries created within Hip Hop culture are problematic and

can bring about "a misinformed people [as] a subjugated

people." If we continue to place the notion of "White"

power on a pedestal, and continue to let inclusion of Hip

Hop culture be based on race, then those who wish to

participate in Hip Hop culture will be "misinformed" and

"subjugated" by the power structures they wish to subvert.

What is most important is that participants in Hip

Hop culture do not become complacent, that they begin to

challenge notions of power, and that they begin to

communicate definitions, debate, and opinions of Hip Hop

culture that are not determined by the judgments and

definitions of those in power.

Hip Hop culture is a culture of resistance, and if we

can harness the diversity of its many participants, then

Hip Hop culture can begin to take steps in subverting the

power structures that continue social misunderstanding and

categorize and perpetuate racism. In the article, "Popular

Culture as Oppositional Culture: Rap as Resistance,"

Theresa A. Martinez uses the 1992 Los Angeles riots and gangsta rap music in order to expose its message to the nation that rap music is a legitimate plea for the recognition of the issues that face not only African American, but other cultures that have been oppressed by historical discrimination and racism and gives those a form of voice and opposition. Attempting to find a voice of resistance for the culturally disenfranchised to claim a place in hip hop culture must begin with acknowledging how Hip Hop has already been representative of that idea in our society. Martinez states:

> Subordinate groups, in fact, may not yet have discovered a language to oppose it – a discourse of resistance; may be effectively barred from voicing opposition by economic and / or political constraints; may fear that they will be defined as 'deviant' if they subscribe to an oppositional belief system; or may act in ways that work against their own interests – as accomplices in their own subordination. (269)

Martinez echoes how Hip Hop culture can be viewed as "subordinate and how participating in resistance can lead to a "deviant" position." As we have seen, Shakur embodied

103

resistance, and the "deviant" position in our society, but so has Hip Hop culture. By exploring his continued voice of resistance and opposition to power structures in society and within Hip Hop, we can begin to take steps towards defining hip hop culture on the terms of those who participate in Hip Hop culture rather than continue to give power to those who wish to demean and tear down Hip Hop culture.

In the article, "Rap and Race: It's Got a Nice Beat, but What about the Message?" Rachel E. Sullivan discusses perceptions of rap music from Black and White adolescents, as well as how rap music influences and affects their views of life in our society. Sullivan also sheds light on then Vice President Dan Quayle's and then President George Bush highly racialized attacks on Ice-T and Body Count's song "Cop Killer," Sullivan asserts: "Ironically, neither politician had heard these albums; in fact, Dan Quayle did not even pronounce Tupac's name correctly, and Bush failed to realize that Body Count was in fact a heavy metal group" (608). Although Sullivan goes on to say that the politicians' concerns were legitimate, the point I am attempting to show is that Hip Hop culture as a whole must

stop letting politicians and others dictate and inform Hip
Hop identity.

Hip Hop culture does have its own language and
discourse; what is important is how this language can begin
to bring about eventual social change and unity in Hip Hop
culture that is positive, such as taking away the power of
racism. Anzaldua discusses how language played an important
role for Chicano's. She states,

> [F]or a people who cannot entirely identify with
>
> either standard (formal, Castillian) Spanish nor
>
> standard English, what recourse is left to them
>
> but to create their own language? A language
>
> which they ca connect their identity to, one
>
> capable of communicating the realities and values
>
> true to themselves - a language with terms that
>
> are neither *espanol ni* ingles, but both. (77)

If we continue to discuss and bring to light how Hip Hop
culture is positive and has already worked to bring
different races and classes together, one day the
discussion can overshadow the negative aspects of Hip Hop
culture that politicians and even the guardians of Hip Hop
have brought out. Again we see the reoccurring theme of
Anzaldua's approach to language and culture as not set or

bound to any deeply rooted singular way to exist. By disrupting definitions of Hip Hop culture offered by those in power by reflecting the varied identities and values that Hip Hop can embody, we can take away the power they have, and begin to redistribute the power among the variety of people who participate in Hip Hop culture. To do this, those in hip hop must begin to communicate and share their various lived experiences, which will in turn create a stronger and more unified Hip Hop culture defined by those who live the culture, rather than ignorant uniformed outsiders. The language of Hip Hop that is reflective of participants in Hip Hop culture can be a way to break down set binaries of race and class, and turn the language into a philosophy, an identity, and an expression of Hip Hop culture.

There are many elements that influence identity, such as race, class, and experiences, but what Hip Hop culture can do is bring about a space where the only element that matters is continuing the tradition of Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop culture has a vast amount of participants from many different backgrounds, and Anzaldua's new mestiza provides a way to step away from solid binaries of race and discrimination, and embrace the idea of hybridity. Anzaldua

106

states, "The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (101). The notion of "ambiguity" is paramount to creating a stronger more unified Hip Hop movement. Ambiguity provides a step towards inclusion that veers away from static, essentialized notions of race and class identities, by creating "tolerance" for different approaches or backgrounds. Tolerance for each other within Hip Hop is necessary, if the common goal is to strengthen the reach and influence of Hip Hop culture. As Anzaldua stated earlier "a misinformed people is a subjugated people," and it is important that Hip Hop does not adhere to what media or those in power say about the culture. Instead, participants must communicate that the old binaries that exist within Hip Hop culture that are based on essentialized notions of race and class must be broken, and participate in a Hip Hop culture that has a more varied and hybridized state of mind and identity.

If we can disrupt set patterns of identity and power then change can eventually come in hip hop culture. Anzaldua's ideas of border-crossing and hybridity provides a context as to how the different regions, races, and classes that make up the whole of Hip Hop culture can

co-exist while still maintaining the common goal of Hip Hop identity and unity. Anzaldua states: "La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; […] to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (101). This idea is interesting, and parallels Leila Steinberg's view of Shakur's spiritual side. According to Dyson:

> Steinberg says that Tupac aimed to use his spiritual beliefs to tear down ethnic and national barriers. The worlds' 'others' would be instrumental in such a project. 'Pac really thought that [these] 'others' would usher in a new consciousness where to be… black or 'other' would be okay. And that was his dream to embrace diversity. (qtd. in Dyson 204)

Hip Hop provides the place for the world's "others" already because participants can come from all races and classes. Anzaldua's notion of ambiguity is important to embrace because in reality one's race and class is not always expressed in a singular mode. To say that participation in Hip Hop one must shed his ethnic or class background is not my intention. Hip Hop culture provides

108

more than a counter culture, it provides a way to embrace
diversity, and "shift out of habitual forms," which is
important because in spite of the guardians efforts to
exclude those who are deemed "inauthentic" from being true
participants, Hip Hop culture is already diverse—this is
evidenced by the many rappers of different ethnicities, as
well as the many philosophical approaches to lyrics and
styles. Any genre of music can bring about instant change
or gratification because the music's sound is pleasant or
sparks an emotion. One can enjoy Hip Hop culture by
listening or dancing to the music, however exploring the
tradition, history, and culture of Hip Hop, and claiming
hip hop identity is a step further, and must be
acknowledged. It is important to know and continue the
tradition of Hip Hop culture, so that origins are not lost
in the process of expanding the Hip Hop culture. If we
continue the knowledge and the history of Hip Hop culture's
origins then the appropriation can be transformed into
something positive in the proliferation of hip hop culture.

What is important is that the culture of Hip Hop
creates a new consciousness that works towards a stronger
niche in our society. The niche would be for those who are
culturally disenfranchised, but more importantly Hip Hop

culture would become an identity that is reflective of all of the people who participate in it. Taking Anzaldua's notion of "shifting habitual forms" further can be seen in the context of how racial identity operates in our society. In many cases, ethnicity can be the basis of one's identity more than being an American can. The same might be said for Hip Hop culture, as both Chapters One and Two show how closely Hip Hop has been tied to the Black community, particularly the poor, Black community. But I would argue that all members of Hip Hop culture would be better served if we, as a society, recognize that Hip Hop culture was cultivated in the urban streets of the United States, and that in this way it is American, it is not necessarily Black or White. Hip Hop culture literally sampled from so many other cultures, so to say that it "belongs" to or represents only one race or class would be incorrect. It may sound contradictory to dismiss diversity on one hand, yet embrace it on the other. That is why Anzaldua's critique of her own search for identity is critical to my thesis; she puts into context my approach when she contends with her own identity; she states, "We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that

110

sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing. No one" (85). What is beautiful and profound about Anzaldua's struggle is the idea that her identity can begin from "nothing," and that her identity is from "various degrees." Diversity is one of the pillars of our society, as well as one of the elements that allow the power structures to continue to keep us separated by race. Again, my heritage is Mexican and Filipino, yet when I visited Rome and Mexico City I was definitely American, and my heritage was not brought up. Moreover, when I took a Chicano studies class I realized I'm also culturally disenfranchised within that sphere of society, and after taking that class I was even more confused about my position within the Mexican America, Hispanic, or Latino communities.

Hip Hop culture stems from Black culture, but it is American because it borrowed from other traditions, including musical genres that were cultivated in American society. To say that Hip Hop culture is specifically Black in 2010 is problematic, because there have been many breakthroughs, such as Kanye West's approach that is a complete and new approach to Hip Hop identity, sound, and innovation. Eminem is also a testament to how lyrics and

111

drive are more important than his skin color. Hip Hop

culture should begin to develop a way to approach the

identity and movement that celebrates diversity in a way

that continues the tradition of Hip Hop, rather than adds

new categories that create more and more difference and

keeps participants separated.

Those who participate in Hip Hop culture and are still

ostracized based on race and class should look within the

culture, stop trying to be politically correct, and stake a

strong claim and assertion of inclusion. Perhaps we can

take a cue from Shakur, who states, "I feel like I shine.

And I don't give a fuck how much white people, the media,

niggas, black people, playa haters, police, whoever, try to

darken my shine, I'ma always shine through" (qtd. in

Marriott 126). Shakur provides a vulgar and offensive way

to dismiss and challenge those who would try to "darken"

his shine. However, it is time for Hip Hop culture to work

from Shakur's words, and focus his energy towards those who

want to darken the shine of Hip Hop culture and its

participants. What is "normal" to, as Shakur stated,

"[W]hite people, the media, niggas, black people, playa

hater, [and] police" should not dictate what is normal and

sufficient for those who participate in Hip Hop culture.

Rather than subscribe and accept terms such as "minority group," it is important to distinguish the function of identity of Hip Hop culture separate from those who are deemed "the culture deviant," the "delinquent," and the "obscene."

Shakur was a strong voice in American society because he believed that what he was saying and doing would bring about social change, and my approach to changing the status of the culturally disenfranchised was inspired by his call for a new and inclusive political party. Shakur's call for a unified political party can be the basis for how Hip Hop culture's language can communicate a stronger more unified movement. Taking Shakur's reference to the lost tribe metaphor further and replace the term culturally disenfranchised with it, signals a way to encompass a major shift in terms of who Shakur felt he represented. He was the voice for those in poverty, for those living "the thug life," and he had a major impact on the position of the West Coast in hip hop culture, but Shakur also had an innate ability to bring a sense of commonality and called for unity of different races. In his final interview Shakur's words encompass the definition of the "culturally disenfranchised," as well as reflect my notion of how

ethnicity can be reconfigured into "hybridized" identities within Hip Hop culture that work towards changing racism and class division. Two weeks before his death in an interview with Rob Marriott, Shakur stated:

> You know what I thought when I was in jail, I was, like, 'no politician is even getting at us. I represent five million fuckin' sales. And no politician is even check' for us. But by next election, I promise you! [...] I guarantee we will have our own political party. It won't just be for blacks. It's gon' be for Mexicans, for Armenians, all you lost tribe muthafuckers. We need to have our own political party 'cause we all have the same muthafuckin' problems. We built this nation and we get none of the benefits.
> (126)

This quote was the basis, reason, and inspiration for my thesis because it reflects the many positions that Shakur inhabited in his life. In the first portion Shakur was in jail, and represented those in the penitentiaries. Shakur goes on to say he represents "five million fuckin' sales," which represents his place in Hip Hop culture, and, finally, that a new political party must be established.

Shakur's reference to the lost tribe can be taken further and can be reflective of the diverse participants and identities of Hip Hop culture. If we view Shakur's political call for unity, and apply it to Hip Hop culture, then Shakur's call for unity can be a parallel to the call for a more unified hip hop culture. From Shakur's voice we can begin to reconstruct the function and role of a more unified culture without the problematic race and class binaries. Shakur discusses how he represents five million sales, and his assertion that "no politician is even getting us," is reflective of the idea that Shakur's political party would then become the voice that does not need politicians or community leaders. What politicians ignored was the positive elements of Hip Hop culture, and the negative aspects were being brought to light. However, Shakur may have felt that the positive elements were ignored, but the lost tribe can become the voice of redemption for Shakur, and the lost tribe can finally bring about social change in terms of race, class, and social understanding.

The lost tribe is for those who I have stated are culturally disenfranchised. The people that create those five million selling CD's are not only Black; they are

White, Hispanic, Asian, and many others. Shakur understood this, and his call for unity, was not meant for all, it was meant for those who felt and related to what he was saying. That is what makes Hip Hop culture unique; the fact that if you want to buy the music you can, but if you want to be part of and participate in Hip Hop culture then there is a rich and important history that can be explored and studied. Similarly, my assertion of Hip Hop culture for all is not for everyone, instead it is for the lost tribe, or those who feel that Hip Hop culture has been their identity but still are culturally disenfranchised by society and within Hip Hop because they are somehow considered "inauthentic." The lost tribe identity does not reject on the basis of race and class, as Anzaldua's new mestiza did not; what is most important is that the culture of Hip Hop is taken seriously as an identity and a way to perceive oneself within the larger American culture. Hip Hop culture already represents diversity, but the culture also carries the conflicts that stem out of our society that I discussed in Chapter One, such as the Black and White binary and the resulting social misunderstanding. Hip Hop culture cannot follow the same approach to diversity that our power structures have set in place such as using ethnic

116

backgrounds as a means to create "the other." If those who participate in the culture continue to essentialize race and class in Hip Hop culture then the potential to harness the diversity in Hip Hop will become stagnant, and the diversity will be a way to divide the culture. Ultimately, the notion of Hip Hop culture would then become a counter culture that was a trend, and a "cool" way for people to see what it was like to be engaged in a Black resistant tradition. What is powerful about Shakur's words is how he can be a descendent of the Black Panther Party, represent the "young black male," come from poverty, yet still call for and establishes a sense of "We" that is inclusive of other races and classes.

We have to fight against notions of purity and segregation within Hip Hop culture, so that eventually the movement of Hip Hop can create more understanding between different cultures and those in power to help our nation as a whole. Rather than let politicians and community leaders define Hip Hop culture, those in Hip Hop must work towards a consensus, and let Hip Hop culture's positive diversity begin to influence society. This is what Shakur sought to do. We see this particularly in the song "Changes," which contends with racism, notions of war, and poverty. In the

first verse, Shakur raps, "I got love for my brother / But we can never go nowhere unless we share with each other / We gotta start makin changes / learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers." The notion of "sharing" can be instrumental in Hip Hop culture, sharing different rap styles, dances, and most importantly, dialogue that revolves around the potential of Hip Hop culture. Shakur speaks over the track, saying:

> It's time for us as a people to start making some changes / Lets change the way we eat, lets change the way we live, / and lets change the way we treat each other / You see the old way wasn't working so its on us to do what we got to do, to survive.

In this formulation, Hip Hop culture becomes the glue that brings participants together, but more importantly, it communicates a Hip Hop identity. If we continue with the "old way" or paradigms that keep the potential of Hip Hop culture as a movement confined because of race and class then there will never be steps towards creating unity and consensus of what the purpose of Hip Hop culture is. Shakur raps:

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces /

Misplace hate makes disgrace to races / We under,

I wonder what it takes to make this / one better

place let's erase the wasted / Take the evil out

the people they'll be actin right / Cause both

black and white, is smoking crack tonight / And

only time we chill is when we kill each other /

It takes skill to be real, time to heal each

other.

The "misplaced hate" is reflective of the issues of poverty

and misconceptions that I discussed in Chapter One. Shakur

understood how "racist faces" work against positive social

change, because both sides blame each other. By taking on

the issues that Shakur brings up in this song, we can begin

to see how misplaced hate, racism, and old power

structures, operating both in and outside of Hip Hop

culture, all contribute to a lack of unity in Hip Hop

culture.

To truly bring about the kind of changes that Shakur

and I seek, all participants must be seen as culturally

authentic in order for Hip Hop culture to become a stronger

cultural movement that could in turn, eventually become a

political movement or political party. Hip Hop philosopher

and social activists K.R.S. ONE has already exemplified much of what my thesis is trying to illustrate, through the Temple of Hip Hop, as writing the book, *The Gospel of Hip Hop*, which takes the culture of Hip Hop and converts it into a gospel. KRS ONE also illustrates the mindset of what should be deemed truly keeping it real and an authentic in terms of dismissing race and class binaries as a way to ostracized or dismiss inclusion into Hip Hop culture. KRS ONE sums up what Hip Hop culture should be, he states, "rap is something you do, Hip-Hop is something you live" (qtd. in Krims 10). If that is the case, then Hip Hop culture is a mental approach to identity, and rap narratives are not necessarily restricted to hood stories or a particular race or class position because Hip Hop culture becomes a way to approach life and our society. This idea is also reflected by Anzaldua when she asserts, "Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates" (38). If we view Hip Hop as a culture and what it "communicates" as a whole, then we can dissect KRS ONE's assertion that Hip Hop culture is a living and tangible way of life that represents an identity within American society.

Hip Hop is a culture that has been cultivated since the 1970's, and arguably before that, and if we do not begin to define and theorize Hip Hop culture's potential, then we do ourselves a great injustice The lost tribe becomes a banner for those who want to be included, and are tired of being called inauthentic by those in Hip Hop culture and the broader American culture. Being White or Black should not matter, the assertion of Hip Hop culture as one's identity is an assertion of viewing oneself in American society. Shakur understood that Hip Hop culture would go through many changes that he would eventually perpetuate, spark, and influence. In the same interview with Davey D in Chapter One, Shakur is asked early in his career where Hip Hop culture would go. Shakur states:

> It's gonna go through some changes. It's going through a metamorphosis so it will blow up sometimes and get real nasty and gritty, then the leaches will fall off and hip hop will be fit and healthy […] but no one can make judgments until it's over. (35)

Davey D goes on to ask what will hinder the movement, and Shakur responds:

Egotistical rappers. They don't want to open up

they brain. It's foul when people are walking

around saying things like 'Oakland is the only

place where real rappers come out. New York is

the only place where real rappers come out. They

booty out there or they booty over there…' All of

that just need to de or hip hop is gonna have

problems. It's gonna be so immature. That's just

conflict in words. We can't be immature, we gotta

grow. (35)

It is ironic that Shakur would contribute to the most

problematic "beef" in Hip Hop culture, as well as become

one of rap music's most egotistical rappers, yet early in

his career he cautioned against the very things he would

become. However, Shakur's early words are important and

bring to light issues that hinder a more unified Hip Hop

cultural movement. Shakur, the contradictory artist, is

still vital today as he was when he was alive, and the lost

tribe is an attempt to encompass his view of commonality

and togetherness so that Hip Hop culture will be one.

In a speech during the 2008 presidential campaign

trail the then Senator Barack Obama, stated, "We are

the Ones We have been Waiting for. We are the change that

we seek." Obama may have borrowed the title of Alice Walker's book, but Obama focused on the idea of "We" to emphasize his message of change. If we can attribute this sentiment to the culture of Hip Hop, then "we" must take steps to define ourselves and move towards a unified and stronger constituency. If we are deemed "the other," "culturally disenfranchised," or "minority," then Hip Hop culture can create an avenue to resist these prescribed terms, and assert the idea that it is our time to define ourselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ali, Karolyn, and Jacob Hoye, eds. *Tupac Resurrection:*
1971-1996. New York: Atria Books, 2003.

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*,
2nd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.

Ards, Angela. "Organizing the Hip-Hop Generation." *That's*
the Joint: the Hip-Hop Studies Reader. Eds. Murray
Forman and Mark Anthony Neal. New York: Routledge,
2004. 311-323.

Baldwin, Davarian L. "Black Empires, White Desires: The
Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip-Hop."
Forman and Neal 155-176.

Brennan, Tim. "Off the Gangsta Tip: A Rap Appreciation, or
Forgetting about Los Angeles." *Critical Inquiry*. 20.4
(1994): 663-693. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Jul. 2009.

Broder, John. "Quayle Calls for Pulling Rap Album tied to
Murder Case." *The Los Angeles Times*. 23 September
1992. Web. 5 Oct. 2009.

Brown, Sam, ed. *Tupac: A Thug Life*. London: Plexus, 2005.

D, Davey. "On the Line with…2Pac Shakur: The Lost
Interview." Brown 30-35.

Dr. Dre, and Snoop Doggy Dogg. "Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang."
The Chronic. Death Row Recordings, 1992. *The Original*

Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive. Web. 5 Jan 2010

    <http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/dr_dre/chronic/g_thang

    .dre.txt>.

Dyson, Michael E. *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for*

    Tupac Shakur. 2nd ed. Basic Civitas Books: New York,

    2006.

---. "The Culture of Hip-Hop." Forman and Neal 61-68.

Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal, eds. *That's the*

    Joint: the Hip-Hop Studies Reader. New York:

    Routledge, 2004.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the*

    Prison, 2nd ed. Vintage Books: New York, 1995.

George, Nelson. "Hip-Hop's Founding Fathers Speak the

    Truth." Forman and Neal. 45-55.

Keyes, Cheryl L. *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*.

    Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2002.

King of New York. Dir. Abel Ferrara. Lions Gate, 1991. "The

    Adventures of Schoolly D: Snowboarder." and "The Roots

    of Gangster Rap" 2003.

Kodras, Janet E. "The Changing Map of American Poverty in

    an Era of Economic Restructuring and Political

    Realignment." *Economic Geography*. 73 (1) (1997): 67-

    93. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Nov. 2008.

Krims, Adam. *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity.*

    Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2000.

Marriott, Rob. "Last Testament." *Tupac Shakur 1971-1996: by*

    the Editors of Vibe. Ed. Alan Light. New York: Three

    Rivers Press, 1997. 125-126.

---. "Thug Immortal" *Makaveli Nation.* Web. 31 Aug. 2009

    <http://makavelination.com/page81.html>.

Martinez, Theresa A. "Popular Culture as Oppositional

    Culture: Rap as Resistance." *Sociological Perspectives*

    28.4 (2000): 265-286. *JSTOR.* Web. 2 Dec. 2009.

McFarland, Pancho. "Chicano Rap Roots: Black-Brown Cultural

    Exchange and the Making of a Genre." *Callaloo.* 29.3

    (2006): 939-955. *Project Muse.* Web. 20 Sep. 2009.

Neal, Mark Anthony. "No Time for Fake Niggas: Hip-Hop

    Culture and the Authenticity Debates." Forman and Neal

    57-60.

Notorious. Dir. George Tillman Jr. Fox Searchlight, 2009.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Super

    Tuesday." *Organizing for America.* Web. 9 Dec. 2009

    <http://www.barackobama.com/2008/02/05/remarks_of_sena

    tor_barack_obam_46.php>.

Quinn, Eithne. *Nuthin' but a "G" Thang: The Culture and*

    Commerce of Gangsta Rap. New York: Columbia UP, 2005.

Quinn, Michael. "Never Shoulda Been let out the
        Penitentiary: Gangsta Rap and the Struggle over Racial
        Identity." *Cultural Critique*. 34 (1996): 65-89. *JSTOR*.
        Web. 28 Sep. 2009.

Scarface. "Smile." *The Untouchable*. Rap-A-Lot, 1997. *The
        Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive*. Web. 9 Sep. 2009
        <http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/scarface/untouch/smile
        .scf.txt>.

Senza, Danzy. "Violence is Golden." *Tupac: A Thug Life* Ed.
        Sam Brown. London: Plexus, 2005. 41-46.

Shakur, Tupac A. *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*. New
        York: Pocket Books, 1999.

Shakur, Tupac. "California Love (Remix)." *All Eyes on Me*.
        Death Row Recordings, 1996. *The Original Hip-Hop
        Lyrics Archive*. Web. 17 Oct. 2009
        <http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/eyezonme/calilov
        e.2pc.txt>.

---. "Changes." *Greatest Hits*. Death Row Recordings, 1998.
        The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive. Web. 23 Oct. 2009
        <http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/greatest/changes
        .2pc.txt>.

---. "Hit 'Em Up." *How Do You Want It 12*. Death Row
        Recordings, 1996. *The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive*.

Web. 15 Feb. 2010

<http:www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/rm/bside/hitemup.2
pc.txt>.

---. "How Do U Want It." *All Eyez On Me* Death Row

Recordings, 1996. *The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive.*

Web. 7 Jan. 2010

<http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/eyezonme/how_do_
u.2pc.txt>.

---. "Krazy." *Makaveli: The Don Killuminati.* Death Row

Recordings, 2005. *The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive.*

Web. 19 Jan. 2010

<http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/don_kill/krazy.2
pc.txt>.

---. "Papa'z Song." *Strictly for my N.I.G.G.A.Z.* Interscope

Records, 1993. *The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive.*

Web. 15 Feb. 2010

<http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/str_4_my/papason
g.2pc.txt>.

---. "Soulja's Story." *2Pacalypse Now.* Interscope Records,

1991. *The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive.* Web. 17

Feb. 2010

<http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/2_pac/2pclypse/soulja.
2pc.txt>.

Small, Michael. "Asking For It." Brown 36-38.

Sullivan, Rachel E. "Rap and Race: It's Got a Nice Beat,

but What about the Message?" *Journal of Black Studies*

33.5 (2003): 605-622. *JSTOR*. 20 Jan. 2010.

Sullivan, Randall. *Labyrinth*. New York: Grove Press, 2002.

Sway. "Interview on the Westside Radio Show." Brown 58-64.

Thug Angel: The Life of an Outlaw. Dir. Peter Spirer. QD3

Entertainment, Inc., 2002.

Tupac: Resurrection. Dir. Lauren Lazin. MTV Films/Amaru

Entertainment, Inc., 2003.

Watkins, S. Craig. *Hip Hop Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press,

2005.

Weheliye, Alexander. "Keeping it (Un) Real: Perusing the

Boundaries of Hip Hop Culture." *The New Centennial*

Review. 1.2 (2001): 291-310. *Project Muse*. Web. 15

Jan. 2010.

Wren, Christopher S. "Less Disparity Urged in Cocaine

Sentencing." *The New York Times*. 5 November 1996. Web.

5 Aug 2009.