THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY AND RAP SONGS: A STUDY OF SELECTED RAP SONGS OF GRANDMASTER FLASH AND THE FURIOUS FIVE

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation entitled ***The Relationship Between African American Identity and Rap Songs: A study of Selected Rap Songs of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five*** has been carried out by me in the Department of English and Literary Studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any other Institution.

_____ _____

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CERTIFICATION

This dissertation THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY AND RAP MUSIC: A STUDY OF SELECTED RAP SONGS OF GRANDMASTER FLASH AND THE FURIOUS FIVE by SAKIRAT IDRIS meets the regulations governing the award of Master in English Literature of the Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty.

To the loving memory of Khadijat Olabisi Abubakar Mayaki.

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ABSTRACT

Rap music as one of the elements of hip hop culture originated in New York's South Bronx neighbourhood in the late 1970s. Its lyrics provide a powerful lens through which to view the many dimensions of the African American predicament. As a form, Rap music is for African Americans the means to pen down their history and social circumstances and forge their identities out of the white oriented and white dominated American society and culture. The dominant discourses have relegated African Americans to the margin andexcluded them from the power, profits and privileges that Whites overtime have enjoyed in American society. By devaluing the blacks in every possible manner, Whites were able to hold in place the racial hierarchy of the American society. Thus, this dissertation explores rap songs as the medium through whichAfrican Americans reflect their predicaments and not only challenge dominant discourses but project their ethnic identities as well. The study deploys postcolonial theory in analysing the selected rap songs based on the relations between Whites and Blacks on American soil and how the songs are used in expressing identity related issues such as racism, marginalization, politics, legal and economic disparities. The study finds out that African American ethnic identity emerged from an identification that is rooted in perceived commonality of oppression, suppression and marginalization.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

African Americans are citizens of the United States of America whose forefathers were forcefully removed from Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such Africans were forced into slavery and were stripped of their cultural affinities. Consequently, this forceful removal had an effect on the Africans who found themselves in an alien world and had to learn new ways in order to survive. In the process, Africans were caught up between two cultures; an African one on one hand and an American one on the other. It is important to note that American culture is not universal, as Africans taken into slavery found it different from the culture they were used to. The slaves had to adapt to an alien culture. Thus, it is this dual identity that gave rise to the term African American, a term that deliberately recognizes the African and American cultures that have moulded the African American personality.

One important area in which researchers interested in African American culture focus on is "identity". The concept of identity has always been linked to the history of African Americans and their presence in what has now become the United States of America. For a long time, the image or view blacks had of themselves was largely defined by the way Whites in America described them in their writings, films and other forms of representation. In the past, in the course of domicile in the United States, African Americans have been called by such names as – Negros, Blacks, Coloured, but in the last thirty years, the term African American and Black American has been used. The mechanisms the Whites put in place to subjugate the blacks go a long way in making them think and feel inferior (Wikipedia). Slavery affected every aspect of their lives. The nearly 300 years of slavery have distorted

and caused great pain such that African Americans have had to create a new culture and identity out of their experiences in the new world. This is because the white masters did not acknowledge the right of African American to an independent ethnic or cultural identity. As historian T, Vaughan (1995) has noted that the Europeans rarely identified African arrivals in the colonies with terms denoting either nation or ethnicity (Quoted in Hornsby, 2005). For instance, Africans were referred to as Negroes, a term referring to their skin colour.

Before the beginning of slavery, Africans lived in a society that was predicated upon a religious system and cultural practices (Hamlet, 2011). As such the people's beliefs, values, norms, history, were transmitted by griots and other members of the society who were the custodian of African culture from one generation to another. The transportation of blacks from Africa to the Americas for slavery stripped them of their culture, identity, family and possessions. Language was the first cultural trait the slave traders and holders tried to suppress. On the slave ship, members of the same community were deliberately separated from each other to prevent communication (ibid). This notwithstanding and given that the blacks came from different backgrounds, the similarities in the basic structure of their culture allowed them to be able to form a different form of communication that was partly African and American (Gay and Barber: 1989). Oral tradition was a major cultural vestige that blacks took to the new world.In African American culture, oral tradition has served as a fundamental vehicle for cultural expression and survival. This oral tradition also preserved the cultural heritage and reflected the collective spirit of the race. African American oral tradition can be traced to Africa.African American cultural expressions have been some of the ways of resisting racial oppression and also a way of expressing African American identity. Although the institution of slavery was out-lawed in 1865 in United States, African practices continued to evolve in to newer modes of expression that provided a foundation for African American cultural or ethnic identity. These include folktales, ritualised games such as the dozens,

songs, spirituals, vernacular expression e.t.c. From the foregoing, rap can also be classified as a part of the African American cultural expressions as it is said to have developed from previous art forms such as the dozens and vernacular expression.

Overall, the goal of this study is to analyze the lyrics of the selected rap songs of Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five. The analysis of rap as an art form is to demonstrate how the form serves as a vehicle for promoting the identity of the African Americans as well as artistically articulating their diverse social and political experiences. Rap acts as a mechanism for retaining and disseminating African American cultural heritage. It is an avenue of speaking out about their predicament in America. The study also looks at the aesthetic features found in the lyrics of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (such as repetition, call and response, language) and deploys postcolonial theory as its theoretical frame work.

1.1 GENERATIONAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

The history of African Americans can be traced to the time of the middle passage when blacks were forcibly uprooted from Africa and were transported to a new and alien world. Blacks who were taken as slaves were stripped of their culture and language. This was important for the slave owners so that the blacks will forget who they were and accept a culture alien to them. For the enslaved blacks the new world and way of life created a new identity for them which was a result of the various mechanism put in place by their owners such as, religion, science and philosophy and also through the improvisation and adaptation that the enslaved came up with.

Therefore, stripped of their cultural vestiges, blacks brought with them a strong memory of rich cultural values; one of such is the importance of family. It is important to note that slave owners did their best in separating members of black families as children born by a slave were usually sold by his/her slave master/mistress to another master. But with all the

measures put in place to separate slaves, they were still able to survive and form family ties amongst themselves. Family can be seen in the African sense as a large number of blood relatives who can trace their descent from a common ancestor and the family was held together by a sense of obligation, as such, each member of the family is brought up to think of himself in relationship to the group as a cohesive unit. It is this family ties that Africans or blacks brought with them to America. Gutman (1976) observes that "African family resilience was transmitted to the Americas, and, thus, assisted in Africans' survival both during and after slavery (quoted in Hornsby et.al. 2005).

From the above, it is obvious that the African Americans did not forget their roots. They found strength in the memory of what their life used to be before being captured as slaves. The African slaves created a culture different from that of their masters, a culture they could call their own. Thus Gutman's argument can be compared to Howard Zinn's observation in A People's History of United States (1999). Zinn observed that "in a society of complex controls, both crude and refined, secret thoughts can often be found in the arts, and so it was in black society". In this respect, one can surmise that the African American experience in America created a fertile ground for the development of cultural forms ranging from work songs, negro spiritual, slave narratives, poetry, jazz, blues, to mention but a few.

The Southern states in America were rich in fertile soil and this part of the country depended largely on slave labour to maintain its farms. Some Americans in the Northern states thought slavery should not be allowed in a free country. In this respect, the American Anti-Slavery movement was formed in 1833 in Philadelphia and had several branches established throughout the free states. The goal of this organisation was to abolish slavery. This did not go down well with the whites in the South and they attempted to prove and justify slavery,

using scientific and biblical arguments to the effect that blacks were inferior to whites and were destined to be slaves (Race Timeline, 2003).

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected as the president of the United States. The southerners did not like the ideas of Lincoln because they feared he might free the slaves, which he did eventually (O'Callaghan:1990). The following years after Lincoln's election as the president resulted into a civil war between the Southern states and the North. The Northern states won the war and American slaves were consequently set free.

As a result of the emancipation proclamation and the thirteenth amendment southern states in reaction passed laws known as Black Codes which stipulated the inferiority of the blacks. Such codes stipulate that blacks would remain without property, education and legal protection. Blacks were denied the rights to vote and could not give evidence against the whites or act as jury members. Thus, this caused the United States Congress in 1866 to pass a Civil Rights Act providing full rights for all people born in the United States (Davis: 2008). The legislation was not effective as the southern states rejected this legislation, and this made the North in 1867 to pass the Reconstruction Act. The South was placed under military rule. This action taken by the North only increased the hatred the Southern whites had against the blacks. Whites in the Southern states created an organization called the Ku Klux Klan. This organization devised ways of threatening, murdering and lynching of blacks (ibid). Another means they used in suppressing blacks was the Jim Crow laws. The laws preached separatism. There were consequently separate hospitals, schools, public transport, restaurants, and theatres for blacks and whites (ibid). The fate of blacks was sealed. Although they were freed and enslavement was abolished by law, to be black still meant being a second-class citizen and one who was limited in terms of basic human rights. Nor did the 15thAmendment

passed on the 30th of March 1870, which forbade restricting of the right to vote due to race, colour or condition of former servitude able to improve the situation of blacks (ibid.).

The World War I and World War II created an avenue for the blacks to migrate from the South to the North. They moved to Northern states like Chicago, Michigan and New York City. This was because such places provided for African Americans a better access to education, economic opportunities and cultural institutions which they could not get in the rural areas of the South where blacks remained more isolated and uneducated. The movement of the blacks to the North allowed them to form a strong community with ingredients for the development of black culture (Stevens: 1991).

The Civil Rights Movement came to prominence during the mid-1950s in the United States and had its roots in the centuries-long efforts not only to abolish slavery but address the aberration of racism. It was a response to racial discrimination and was used to agitate for full civil liberties for blacks. In 1954 the Supreme Court decided that segregation in schools was against the constitution. In 1955 a black woman Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama because she refused to let a white passenger take her seat. This led the blacks to boycott the buses and the boycott was led by Martin Luther King who became the leader of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1964 the American Congress passed the Civil Rights Act which banned discriminations in schools, public places, jobs and in many other fields (Markova: 2008).

The Black Power movement and Black Arts Movement are movements that manifested during the Civil Rights Movement particularly in the 1960s. Black Power and Black Arts Movement were both related to the African American's desire to attain recognition as a full citizen of the U.S. Both concepts are nationalistic; Black Power Movement is concerned with politics and it also witnessed a period of cultural and artistic revival.

The Black Power Movement had been around since the 1950s, but it was Stokely Carmichael that popularised the term in 1966 (Coombs, 2004). He was the head of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The Black Power Movement instilled a sense of racial pride and self esteem in blacks. The movement encouraged African Americans to join or form political parties that could offer a foundation for real socio economic progress. The movement aspired for blacks to define the world in their own view.

The Black Arts Movement was an association of African American visual artists, writers, poets, playwrights and musicians. The movement took a definite shape around 1965 and lasted to the late 1970s. Blacks involved in this movement were united by a desire to cultivate a vital black aesthetic different from the standards of whites that reflected and addressed the particular experiences and sensibilities of African Americans. The movement set out to re-affirm the intrinsic beauty of blackness, an explicit challenge to centuries of racism (Neal: 1968). African Americans who contributed to this movement include; Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) to mention but a few.

Today, issues of discrimination remain, though African Americans have made and are still making a significant contribution to every part of American society, be it business, science, politics, art and entertainment.

1.2 AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC

African American art forms such as poetry, narrative, music and songs are related to the society from which they emerged from. Scientific and biblical arguments which were used as weapons to justify slavery served ironically as the foundation for African American arts. Africans who were taken as slaves had to readjust in a world alien to them. Throughout history, people of African origin in the United States otherwise known as African Americans have developed several music genres, beginning with Negro Spirituals, Blues and Jazz music,

to the most recent genre of Rap music. It is important to note that rap is one of the five elements of hip hop culture. Thus music is a vital component of the African American culture.

Music has always been a defining aspect of African American culture; ever since the passage of the slaves from both West and Central Africa to the New World. Through their music and songs, the first African Americans were able to keep a sense of their African identity. Music gave a sense of power, of control. If it did not improve the material being of its creators, it certainly did have an impact upon their psychic state and emotional health. It allowed them to assert themselves and their feelings and their values, to communicate continuously with themselves and their peers. They could partly drop their masks and the pretence and say what they felt, articulate what was brimming up within them and what they desperately needed to express (Daniel and Smitherman: 1976). Music along with other forms of the oral tradition allowed African Americans to express themselves, to derive pleasure and also to pass on these forms for posterity. In view of this, Franklin and Moss (1994:25-26) posit:

> African Slaves came from a complex social and economic life, and were not overwhelmed or overawed by their New World experiences. Despite the heterogeneity characteristic of many aspects of African life, African people still had sufficient common experiences to enable them to cooperate in the New World in fashioning new customs and traditions which reflected their background.

Franklin and Moss both surmised that as Africans of different experiences were forced to live together, there was an interaction of various African cultures which resulted to a new culture of their own. The African American culture must be seen as the product of the African American experiences in America. Although the content of the African American culture grew out of the American scene, its style did have African roots. It is these African roots that the slave brought with him--a highly developed sense of rhythm which was passed from

generation to generation, and an understanding of art which conceived of it as an integral part of the whole of life rather than as a beautiful object set apart from mundane experience. Song and dance, for example, were involved in the African's daily experience of work, play, love, and worship. In sculpture, painting and pottery, the African used his art to decorate the objects of his daily life rather than to make art objects for their own sake (Coombs, 2004). Out of the African American experiences and memory from their past lives grew a new culture which was passed down to subsequent generations of African Americans. This buttresses Coombs' point when he further affirms that the Africans brought their feelings for art with them, the content of their art was actually changed as a result of their American slave experience. As such, the African American cultural spirit became emotional, exuberant, and sentimental (ibid). This is to say the African American characteristics which have been generally thought of as being African and primitive--his naivety, his exuberance and his spontaneity--are, in reality, his response to his American experience and not a part of his African heritage. They are to be understood as the African's emotional reaction to his American ordeal of slavery. Out of this environment along with its suffering and deprivation, has evolved an African American culture (ibid).

The misrepresentation and marginalization of blacks in America created an avenue for African American culture to develop which is distinct from the culture of their oppressors. As such, African Americans attempted to reassert their identity instead of being represented by others by taking materials from African American culture and experiences in America. African American consciousness or nationalism became noticeable towards the end of the 19th century. A number of African Americans left the South to escape oppression and this led to the Great Migration. They moved to Northern cities like Chicago, Michigan, Philadelphia and New York to form strong black communities. The Great Migration expanded black communities which created a fertile environment for black culture to grow. The migration

fostered African American nationalism which contributed to the emergence of a new type of African American who was becoming increasingly conscious of his value as a black person. For instance, Harlem, a neighbourhood in New York, turned into the largest metropolis of the black world. It is therefore no coincidence that Harlem with its newly found self-confidence and African orientated racial feeling stimulated rich literary activities (Berghahn, 1977).

The Northern black middle class in the early part of the 20th century began to set up a number of political movements that advocated for racial equality, inspired racial pride and confronted the prejudices or stereotypes that blacks were ignorant, servile and not intelligent. One of such political movement is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Alain Locke a leading black intellectual edited a volume of critical essays and literature entitled *The New Negro (1925)*. Like Marcus Garvey, Locke preached the political and cultural rebirth of the black race. It was manifested by a creative outburst of art, music and literature as well as by a new mood of self-confidence and self-consciousness within that community. The centre of this explosion was located in Harlem and the period became known as the Harlem Renaissance (Coombs,2004). According to Locke the most important task for the African Americans was to rehabilitate the black man throughout the world, and to demolish the prejudices which had been carried over from slavery (qtd in Berghahn, 1977).

The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of an artistic and cultural movement among African Americans in America. At this time African Americans were fascinated with the African continent. They studied African art, language, culture and history. Thus Africa, not America was regarded as the real home of the African Americans (Berghahn, 1977). African Americans became more aware of their position within American society and tried to give it a constructive meaning. As such black intellectuals feel that African Americans have a justified claim to demand equality with whites in America. It is important to note that the

intellectuals of this period did not abandon the militant spirit which was reminiscent of the new Negro of the 1920s although some of the intellectuals' beliefs or ideas appear to be more cynical and disillusioned. This is because intellectuals of the 1920s like Garvey advocated for a return to Africa. The intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s though fascinated with Africa realised that they are of Africa but do not feel at home there because they have been disconnected or forcefully uprooted. At the same time African Americans remained as outsiders and rootless in the American society. Their bitterness, undoubtedly, springs partly from the dashed hopes of blacks in an anti-black America.

Richard Wright a black intellectual attempted to theorize the complex relationship between black America and Africa. He also tried to interpret the meaning of being black in anti-black America. Wright's upbringing, his experience with poverty and racism shaped his world view. Marxism appeared to offer an explanation to the great depression and it captured Wright's imagination. Wright created an assertive image of Black people that challenged traditional racist stereotypes. Wright is of the view that the Black intellectual responsibility is to contest white's conception of black existence in America and, in the process, to assert the validity and complexity of the Black experience. In his 1937 article, "Blueprint for Negro Writing," Wright argued:

> The Negro writer who seeks to function within his race as a purposeful agent has a serious responsibility. In order to do justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary; a consciousness which draws for its strength upon the fluid lore of a great people, and moulds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today (Gayle, 1970).

Hence, Wright, like other Black intellectuals such as LeRoi Jones, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, were forced to fight in order to legitimize the very humanity of Black people and to defend them against the cultural domination of white supremacist ideas and practices. From

the foregoing, African Americans use art, literature as well as music as an avenue through which African Americans question, resist and protest against oppression and marginalization in America.

1.3 EXAMPLES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSICAL STYLE

The first examples of African American music were during the period of slavery when slave songs were sung on plantations. Although Africans were restricted from practicing their culture, however the slaves brought over “whooping” and“hollering,” which were originally in Africa means of melodically calling out to one another to announce emergency or important news. According to Conyers (1997), these calls could travel extended distances. The purpose of these calls was to express deep emotional experiences such as lovesickness, hunger, or loneliness. These calls were a combination of song and spoken words. These melodic calls were performed in a free and extemporaneous manner. These structures served in later forms of African American music.

The spirituals developed during the period of slavery. According to Conyers (1997), spirituals were a product of improvisation and communal consciousness. Spirituals were created from many existing songs, embellished with new musical accompaniment and lyrics that fit into the traditional metrical pattern. The spirituals used traditional African religious structures such as the call response and repetition brought directly from Africa. The spirituals could take place at both sacred and secular occasions, at churches or praise houses and work places. The spirituals also drew on the important older worldviews among the slaves, and this perpetual testimony gave African Americans a strong sense of community.

Another example of African American music is the blues which emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. The blues took its essential ingredients from the Slave work songs and field hollers of the slave communities in the South of the United States. The blues grew out of the

bitter hardship following the American civil war. It contains African traditional musical elements, such as allusive lyrics, improvisation, and the call and response which is seen in black choral singing. Often containing commentary on current events; the blues made work and recreation time pass more easily. The “blues combine musical structure and poetic forms from the spirituals, work songs, and field cries with new musical and textual ideas” (Conyers, 1997).

Given that African-Americans have shared a horrible experience in the States, the blues became the medium that enabled them to speak about their sorrow. Ralph Ellison states accordingly that “The Blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one’s aching consciousness to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism” (quoted. in Dundes 1990). As such, musicians of this genre discussed the issues or problems that African Americans contend with in U.S.A.

The Blues music style is one of the most distinctive ingredients of Jazz. As Gilbert Chase points out, “the music that came to be called jazz had its matrix in the strongly distinctive traditions of Afro-American music, including the propulsive dynamism of African dancing, the hot rhythm of gospel hymns [and] the form and inflection of the blues” (Chase, 1987). Thus, as much as other African-American genres, Jazz was stronglyconnected with the African heritage and traditional musical expression. Jazz is an African-American music genre which originated around 1910 and is said to have been born “in the streets and parks of the New Orleans African American community” (Salaam, 1995). Jazz grew out of the interaction between several different musical and cultural traditions, most dominantly the African American and the Western European. “The African American influence might be considered

an oral tradition that expresses itself in the improvisatory actions of performance in contrast to the notated tradition of western Europe" (Megill & Tanner, 1995).

The style of jazz tells a story, displays emotions, and tries to elicit a response from the listeners. Jazz is a lively, energetic music with pulsating rhythms usually played by a small instrument (a combo) or a larger group (a big band). It includes a strong element of improvisation which gives individual performers the freedom to follow their own flights of musical fancy (Wright, 1992). Jazz is simply instrumentation without vocalization in most cases. The improvisational aspect of jazz music is mirrored in the hip hop music form when a rapper improvises lyrically.

Like jazz before it, hip hop was originally a type of dance music. Hip hop thrives on rhythm in its melody and lyrics. Paul Gilroy postulates that hip hop culture grew out of the cross fertilization of African American vernacular cultures with their Caribbean equivalent (1993:103). Although the term rap is often used interchangeably with hip hop, the former term is one of the elements of hip hop. Rap developed into a distinct form in the 1970s when black parties became common in New York City, particularly in the Bronx, a community well known for its large African American population (Light 1999). Rap is seen as part of African American cultural heritage. It is seen as a specific way of communication. It is linked to the streets, and the street is a place where African Americans learn about life experiences. Many rap lyrics paint a picture of urban daily life. Black culture places a high regard on creatively expressing people's real life experiences. Hip hop remains true to its cultural roots by promoting African values within African American communities. Conyer James (1997) states that as people of African descent struggled with enslavement, racist oppression, and intellectual bondage, their art and creative outlets tried to reflect the reality of the movement toward black liberation.

1.4 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF RAP MUSIC

Rap music originated in the South of Bronx, a neighborhood in New York City in the late 1970s. Rap is one of the four elements of hip hop which include; disc jockeys (DJs/ turntablists), emcees (MCs/ Master of Ceremonies), break dancers (B-Boys and B-Girls) and graffiti writers (Keyes: 2004). The most prominent of these elements is rap. The hip hop according to Tricia Rose (1994) is a social movement and a counter culture. This mean that this genre of music resists the existing notion of blacks as little more than a beast and also mobilizes blacks to agitate for change in their political, social and economic realities.

Rap is a way of communication. Rap, according to Shaw (1986:384) is a "rapid-fire street talk generally rhymed, spoken to minimal musical accompaniment of a percussive ostinato, punctuated by an occasional guitar or bass chord". Also Keyes (2001:1) defines rap music as "a musical form that makes use of rhyme, rhythmic speech, and vernacular language, which is recited or loosely chanted over a musical sound track".

As such one can surmise from the above definitions that rap music is singing in a speech like manner to musical instrument and its words are taken essentially from African American vernacular. Rap is a reflection of the social concerns of blacks and it is linked to the street (Folbs: 1980). As such Folbs (1980) observes that "The street is any place "cept home, a church or school". This observation made by Folbs suggests that the street is an important part or plays an important role in the life of blacks because the street is where the largest part of their lives are lived. The street is also known to be a place where friends and enemies are made. More importantly, it is a place where African Americans prove to be true to their roots.

It is important to note that the enslaved primarily lived on plantations in separate quarters away from the Whites with occasional interactions with their masters. Within this evolved what is called "slave culture". Concerning this, Bennett (1980:79) states that "in the slave

quarters, bondsmen developed their own society which differed in many ways from the society of the masters". This environment or society allowed the blacks to continue African practices in music making, oral narratives, and belief system e.t.c. Although the institution of slavery was out-lawed in 1865, African practices continued to evolve in to newer modes of expression that provided a foundation for rap (hip hop) which include storytelling, ritualised games such as the dozens, songs, spirituals, vernacular expression e.t.c.

The founding father of rap music is Dj Kool Herc. The history and emergence of rap as a musical form is linked to him. According to Alex and David (2001:13) hip hop began when Clive Campbel, later known as DJ Kool Herc (Hercules) who arrived in New York City from Jamaica. Also Light (1999) observes that before the term hip hop was used for this genre of music, there were out door parties in public places such as the park in Bronx and Harlem. A disc jockey would connect his sound system directly in the power box of a street light and play records where people gathered around to dance and rap. DJ Kool Herc is credited with propelling these parties into a musical style. Herc first performed at his sister's birthday party in 1973 which was held in the recreation room of their housing project in the West Bronx. This propelled Herc's career as a disc jockey (ibid).

The 1960s saw the birth of street gangs in New York. This was a result of the loss of charismatic leaders like Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The death of these aforementioned activists triggered unrest among those living in the black communities in New York. By the late 1970s street gangs increased due to violence, drugs, and black on black crimes. The reason for this according to Clerence Lusane (Quoted in Sullivan, 2001) was:

> The conservative, often the covertly racist policies of the government administrations during the 70s and 80s caused crisis in the inner city: thousand more people fell

> below the poverty level, educational spending dropped, and unemployment skyrocketed. The illegal economy blossomed, as one solution to widespread unemployment. The subsequent war on drugs incarcerated a grossly disproportionate number of young African American men, making it evident that this population had become the nations' scapegoat.

Also the laws that the government put in place to suppress and harass the blacks increased the high rate of poverty which in turn contributed to the creation of more gangs in the black communities. Street gangs developed from innocuous youth and were created in order to protect their territories against other gangs (Krejeova, 2011). One of such groups that developed is the Black Spades. The Black Spade is said to be one of the largest street gangs in New York. The group was involved in violence and the sale of drugs (Light 1999).

Afrika Bambaataa is said to belong to this gang the "Black Spades". Later on street gangs gave way to peaceful gangs such as the one Bambaataa created which is called "the organization" in 1975. It was later called "the Universal Zulu Nation" (ibid). This organization created a fertile ground for black youth to focus on singing out their pain and channel their energy into rapping instead of making a nuisance of themselves. Light (1999) states that Afrika Bambaataa was respected amongst his peers and shared a vision of what Blacks and Hispanics can accomplish if they work towards a common goal. He further observes that the hip hop platform created by Zulu nation upholds such principles as knowledge, wisdom, understanding, freedom, justice, equality, peace, unity, love and respect in its manifesto. Thus the organization united the blacks for it gave them or created a path way towards the freedom, love and equality they craved for, from the Whites who made life tough for them.

The first wide spread evidence of commercial rap or hip hop success is attributed to the Sugar Hill Gang, a music group that was signed by a music entrepreneur Sylvia Robinson. The

group released its first hit in 1979 titled “rappers delight”. Another group credited to have changed the focus of rap songs is the Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five group when they released “The Message” in1982. This song is socially inclined as it looks at the socio-political concern of the period. Thus Rose (1994) and Hoch (2006) see rap not only as a means of mitigating gang violence, but a way of resistance and protest which was rooted in the frustration caused by lack of freedom and power that African Americans have experienced in American society. To buttress their statement Alridge (2005:226) observes that the lyrics of pioneers such as DJ Kool Herc, Afrka Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash speak out against joblessness, lack of power, poverty, education, police brutality, crime and other social problems faced by the blacks in urban areas such as the Bronx and Harlem both in New York city.

By the late 1980s, rap was considered a male dominated genre. In the early stages of rap, women’s participation was deterred by gender-related opinions (Rose 1994). The first female rap group is the “Salt n’ Peppe” and they appear on the rap scene in the late 1980s. Their songs addressed African American women’s refusal tosubmit to African American male domination. The duo challenged misogynistic ideas that pervaded rap songs. Another female rapper that made her debut into rap scene was Lena Mitchelle Moorer better known as Lyte. Lyte was considered the first female rap artist whose lyrics challenged the unfair treatment of women like the duo Salt n peppe and she paved way for others likeDana Elaine Owens and a host of others. (Light: 1999).Dana Elaine Owens, better known by her stage name as Queen Latifah, is another successful female rap artist that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Ruth, 2000). She often rapped about the empowerment of women and addresses the problems faced by women. Women rappers questioned the representation of women as gold diggers within rap lyrics performed by male artists and addressed the fears women share concerning male deception and infidelity (Rose1994).

According to Chang and Watson (2007:62), hip hop saved a lot of lives in its early days, for it created an avenue for the black youth to stay off drugs or violence. Also Dick Hebdige (2004:223) contends that rap did for the poor blacks what reggae did for struggling Jamaicans a decade earlier. Rap got them noticed and it helps forge a sense of identity and pride for the blacks.

1.5 RAPAS POETRY

Rap like poetry is an expression of feelings, emotions and thoughts. Unlike poetry rap is achieved by combining vocal and instrumental sounds. It is pertinent to state that all artists, whether poets, novelists, or rap artists seek to share their experiences via the medium that most effectively lends itself to their personal abilities. They are performed most often in rhythm to a beat with vocal delivery that ranges from sing-song to conversational. Their most distinguishing poetic feature is rhyme, which rappers employ in full and slant, monosyllabic and multisyllabic forms at the end of and in the midst of the line. Rap verses make ample use of figurative language, most especially simile, though other less common rhetorical figures and forms are also used (Bradley and Dubois, 2010).

Through studying the lyrics of rap songs, one gets to understand it as a form of poetry. When the lyrics of rap songs appear on a page, aspects like simile, metaphor, alliteration, assonance, rhyme scheme, enjambment, repetition, and rhetorical questions become apparent. Thus, this dissertation examines rap as a poetic form, with the two forms not only sharing a lot in common but as the case is here, the rap form of music being deployed by Black American singers is used to interrogate their conditions in the United States.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Much scholarly effort has been devoted to rap music and songs in the past two decades. Its appeal goes far beyond the boundaries of United States. Nonetheless some critics dismiss the art form. This is because the critics believe that rap artists use offensive and profane language in their lyrics. As such they see rap music as a negative force in the society. Other studies in recent years have explored rap music as a popular cultural expression among African Americans. However, few of such studies distinguish rap music as a form of oppositional culture and a form that can be situated within postcolonial discourse.

Hence, the study focuses on the view that rap songs are a form of oppositional culture. The focus onrap and not the jazz or blues music types is because rap is a rebellious art form which is regarded as a lyrical poem which is crafted in verses. The study suggests that rap's oppositional culture and critique of the American society highlights the tenets of postcolonial theory. The study contends that rap songs incline towards resisting oppression, mediating social and cultural experiences as well as addressing identity related concerns. This feature points to the potential of rap songs as an art form which is a social movement and counter culture.

Furthermore, this research contends that beyond the claim about the profane and offensive use of language by rap artists, there lies in its lyrics the experiences of African Americans with respect to issues such as internal colonialism, racism, class, politics, poverty, education, legal and economic disparities which are the burdens that have been transferred to them via their forefathers who were carried or brought to the Americas as slaves. In the light of this, the study examines the selected rap songs as a form of African American cultural expression, and demonstrates that such songs also contribute to the understanding of the African American predicament in the United States.

1.7 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between African American identity and music, as music and songs are one of the media through which African Americans define who they really are. In the light of this, the objectives of the study are:

- To illustrate that African Americans, use music to negotiate and define their identity within the context of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts of the United States.
- To demonstrate that rap songs are used as a media to voice out and reflect the experiences and predicaments of African Americans.
- To look at the aesthetic features and the themes embedded in the rap lyrics. These aesthetic features include; the vernacular expression, figurative devices along with the techniques (call and response, improvisation, rhythm, toast and signifying) found in the lyrics. The themes include; racial oppression, marginalization, economic and legal disparities between whites and blacks e.t.c.
- To demonstrate that there exists a curious relationship between art and society, in this case, there is an obvious link between the contents of African American music and the context of their emergence.

1.8 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Rap music is one of the genres of African American music which is a part of African American cultural heritage. The music developed into a distinct form in the 1970s, and research or critical works on this genre commonly focus on the offensive and profane use of words in the lyrics, with little attention being paid to its content and aesthetic features. Thus, the justification for this study lies in the notion that the lyrics of rap songs resonates the ideas

of postcolonial theory as the ideas revolves around human needs to define their identities It also looks at how music and songs are used in expressing identity related issues. This study contributes to the efforts of writers, critics or scholars who portray how the black identity can be glimpsed not only from African American literature but also by focusing on African American music and the songs that characterize it. A study like this will provide an insight into the cultural history of African Americans and thus serve as an invaluable repository for scholars who are interested in African American literature and culture.

1.9 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

African American music includes Negro Spirituals, Gospel, Jazz, Blues e.t.c. This study however is limited to the rap genre because it provides social and critical commentary regarding African Americans and their community. The study pays close attention to how identity is expressed from the perspective of this genre. It also looks at the aesthetic features as well as the experiences of African Americans. The study is limited to a music group of rap artists, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. This is because this group is seen as one of the pioneers of rap music. The lyrics of the songs chosen for this study have been listened to orally and transcribed for interpretation. The songs focused upon include: “The Message”, “Beat Street”, “White Lines”, “New York New York”, “Message II (Survival)”, “It’s Nasty”, “What If”, “I Am Somebody”. The study is of the view that the selected eight songs sufficiently provide information about the African American experience in the United States.

1.10 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the postcolonial theory in analyzing the selected songs. The major or key concepts of postcolonial theory that have been used in the study include: language, margin/centre, cultural differences and dislocation which are all features of postcolonial theory. These concepts overlap and interweave with one another. A feature common to the

aforementioned concepts is that the concepts all revolve around human need to define their identities. The primary sources are the selected rap songs of Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five. The focus of the work is on the audio sounds of the selected songs which have been transcribed for analysis. The form of transcription and translation adopted here are verbatim scripts and intralingual translation. The rap songs transcribed for analysis include:“The Message”, “Beat Street”, “White Lines”, “New York New York”, “Message II (Survival)”, “It’s Nasty”, “What If”, “I Am Somebody”.The secondary sources include literary sources and internet materials such as text books, journals, magazines and unpublished works.

1.11 GRANDMASTER FLASH AND THE FURIOUS FIVE

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are an enormously respected group in the history of hip hop music. This group was formed in the South Bronx of New York City in 1978. The group is comprised of a DJ (Grandmaster Flash) and five rappers Melle Mel (Melvin Glover), Kidd Creole (Nathanial Glover), Cowboy (Keith Wiggins), Mr. Ness/Scorpio (Eddie Morris), and Rahiem (Guy Williams).

As the group rose to fame in the early 80s, several record executives approached Grandmaster Flash about recording which he refused because “he didn’t think that people rapping…would even sell” (Miller, 1997).But it wasn't until the Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" proved that hip hop music could reach mainstream that Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five group began recording. Their first single on Enjoy Records was "Supperrappin'", released in 1979. Afterwards, they switched to Sylvia Robinson's Sugar Hill Records. The group rose to fame in the early 1980s with their first successful single "Freedom" and later on with “The Message," which is often cited as among the best hip hop song ever produced.

However, in 1983, relations between Grandmaster Flash and Melle Mel began straining and the group disbanded. This resulted in the single "White Lines, (Don't Don't Do It)" which is credited toMelle Mel. Flash, Rahiem and Kidd Creole decided to leave Sugarhill and signed a new contract with Elektre and together they made the album *They Said it Couldn't Be Done*. In 1987, a reunion occurred, and the Furious 5 fully rejoined with Grandmaster Flash and released a new album. Despite setbacks, Grandmaster Flash didcontinue his career in hip hop. Almost 10years after the release of *On the Strength* (Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5's reunion album) Flash released *Sal Soul Jam* 2000. According to his official website, Flash has kept busy with performances and albums. In 1998, a year after Sal Soul Jam 2000 he performed at the Super Bowl. In 2005 Sean P. Combs (Diddy) requested he be the DJ for the MTV Music Awards. Along with performances Grandmaster Flash is being recognized for his contribution to hip hop.In 2007, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five became the first rap group ever to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, making them the first DJ and rap group to be honoured (Grandmaster Flash.com).

1.12 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Music: the rational organization of sounds and silences as they pass through time. It is concerned with combining vocal and instrumental sounds for beauty of form or emotional expression.

Song:is a composition made up of lyrics and music with the intent of the lyrics being sung for the purpose of producing a proportionate feeling or emotion in relation to a particular matter.

Lyrics:lyrics are a set of words that make up a song usually consisting of verses and choruses.

Beat: beat is defined as an even pulse in music that divides the passing of time into equal segments

Tempo: refers to the rate at which the speed occurs in music. The tempo of a piece of music is its speed. The tempo is classified as fast (allegro), medium/moderate (andante), and slow (adagio).

Stanza: a poetic unit of two or more lines with a consistent meter and rhyme scheme

Rhythm: is the organisation of time in music, dividing up long spans of time into smaller, more easily comprehended units. It can also be defined as the regular, repeated pattern of sounds in a song.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The representation of blacks in European literature, the trans-atlantic slave trade and the colonization of the African continent affirmed the identity and power of the colonial master (West). Charles Darwin's theory of evolution (1859) contributed to the Eurocentric view to justify the domination and enslavement of blacks. The transatlantic slave trade and Darwin's theory thus created a distinction between the whites and blacks; with the whites occupying a superior position and the blacks regarded as the inferior other. In the light of this, postcolonial theory has been adopted as the theoretical framework deployed in appraising the rap songs of this study.

2.1 POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonialism is rooted deeply in colonial power and prejudices and develops from a four hundred years history of strained cultural relations between colonies in Africa, Asia and the Western world (Bressler, 2003). The term postcolonialism takes into account the historical, psychological, and political complexities that resulted from the cultural and other experiences of the colonised. Ashcroft and others (1995) use the term postcolonial to describe "all cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present". That is, postcolonialism is concerned with colonial encounters and the effect of such encounter with the colonised.

Postcolonialism as a literary approach emerged in the late 19th century and thrived throughout the 20th century. Postcolonialism is a literary approach that gives a kind of psychological relief to the colonized for whom it was born. The focus of the postcolonial critic is to expose the mechanism and the evil effect(s) of colonialism on the colonised. Colonialism is a capitalistic and exploitative method used by a superior nation to lord itselfover a less privilege nation which leads to the impoverishment of the other. Superior in the sense that the colonialist is more advanced and educated than the colonized and the colonized is the complete opposite of the colonialist. Leela Gandhi (1999) says,"Colonialism marks the

historical process whereby the West attemptssystematically to conceal or negate the cultural difference and value of thenon-west" The concept of colonialism has political, economic and cultural implications and these implications can be linked to M.S. Nagaranja's remark when he opines that "postcolonialism tries to unearth the operations and ideologies, political, economic, e.t.c. at work during the period of colonialism. The aforementioned implications suggest that the colonised were subjugated economically, politically and culturally, as they were viewed as the other. Postcolonial theory sees literature as an avenue to probe into the history of a once colonized society by recreating its past experiences with the view of forestalling the repetition of history. It is important to note that postcolonial discourse extends over the domains of gender, race, ethnicity, resistance, difference, language. The four names, among many, that appear again and again as thinkers who have contributed their ideas to postcolonial theory are Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayathri Spivak. The ideas these writers contributed form thebases of postcolonial theory.

Frantz Fanon is one of the earliest writers associated with Postcolonialism. Fanon's text *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) is an account and an analysis of the effects of colonialism that defined and stereotyped non Europeans as inferiors. European culture was the yard stick that was used in judging non European culture. Thus his work was a psychoanalytical one and an attempt to understand the causes of racism and more importantly the effects of colonialism and racism on black people and how to overcome and deal with those effects. Fanon believed that to some extent black people internalized the inferior status and white men considered themselves superior to them. As such black men have to prove to the whites the richness of their culture, their thought and the equal value of their intellect. He states that it was not modernism but colonialism that distorted and dislocated the psyche of the oppressed (Loomba, 2007). Franz Fanon continues his psychological study of the colonized and the colonizers in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965). In this text, Fanon asserted that in

order to justify the colonialist rule on the colonized, colonialist classified the world of the colonized as the opposite of everything the European represents; civilization, morality, cleanliness, law and order, wholesome masculinity e.t.c. The colonized according to Fanon (1965) is by definition of the West or colonizer uncivilized or barbaric, childlike, feminine, unable to rule himself and superstitious. The colonized is supposed to have no historical monuments, no literature and hence no history. As such the colonized is denied any attributes of humanity. Thus Fanon's works contested the European insistence that the colonized were incapable of creating a civilization since it was argued that the Europeans brought progress, civilization and history to their subjects (www.Shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in.chapter%20).

While Fanon focused on the psychological study of the colonized and colonizer, Edward Said portrayed how the West created the Other. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is said to be the key text in the establishment of postcolonial theory. In this text, Said chastises the literary world for not investigating and taking seriously the study of colonialism or imperialism. He establishes several concepts that are central to postcolonial theory. According to Said, nineteenth century Europeans tried to justify their territorial conquests by propagating a belief called Orientalism. Orientalism is the creation of non European stereotypes that suggested so called orientals were indolent, thoughtless, sexually immoral, unreliable, and demented. Said believed that the European conquerors were describing the inhabitants of their newly-acquired lands in the East. Said posits that what the Europeans failed to realise is that all human knowledge can be viewed only through one's political, cultural, and ideological framework (ibid). As such, what the colonizers were revealing was their unconscious desires for power, wealth, and domination, not the nature of the colonized subjects (Bressler, 2003).

The experiences of various colonized people differ from one another depending on the needs and agenda of the colonizing power. The colonies of United States, Canada, New Zealand,

and Australia were established as settlements to which people of British descent were sent basically to acquire more living space for the empire. What these areas experienced is known as settler colonization. According to Young (2001) settlers found themselves in an ambivalent situation where there was confusion about whether they themselves were colonizers or colonized, or both at the same time. Young notes that as the history of United States shows, it is a common trait of settler nations first to be placed in the position of the colonized but then quickly to become colonizers themselves. Settlers from Great Britain were one of the largest groups of Europeans to settle in America. This British population was under the rule and influences of the mother country, but the British population fought for their freedom, and were ever since engaged in a quest for national self-consciousness and selfassertion. Simultaneously the settlers became the oppressors of the indigenous peoples of the land, (Young, 2001). Instead of seeking for a form of co-existence with the natives or rule them, which would have resulted in mixed or Creole societies, the settlers tried to exterminate the original inhabitants. Moreover, the settlers faced a need for slaves or indentured labour to cultivate the lands, and the problem was solved by importing blacks most especially from West Africa since the 1650s, around the time when plantation life and slavery were said to have emerged (Jarrett 2010). These black Africans becameyet another colonized group on American soil and were "allowed no rights, whose forms of social and political organization were removed, and who were therefore comparatively easy to control and to keep separate" (Young,2001).

Much attention in the field of postcolonialism has been devoted on the effects of colonialism on non western societies. Abrahams (2005) sees it "as the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourses that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and oter European imperial powers". Alabi (2005) frowns upon the idea or view that postcolonial literature is "an attempt to grapple with the literatures of

societies previously colonized by Britain (…) excluding the United States". However, since the end of 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, several studies on United States' imperialism have been carried out by scholars of American studies. One of such scholars is Rowe (2000) who focuses on American cultural narratives which demonstrate the role of cultural works both in the development and critique of United States' imperial practices outside the borders of the nation and of internal colonization, among which he includes, for instance, "slavery, criminalization, and racism as modes of colonizing African Americans".Itis important to note that postcolonial theorists have come up with critical issues which will be used in examining or interpreting the selected rap songs of Grand master flash and the Furious Five.

2.2 TENETS OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

The basic ideas of postcolonial theory can be regarded as its tenets. These ideas examine the position of the colonial subjects during and after European domination. These ideas were used to build the postcolonial debate or argument about the master-servant relationship between the West and non-West. It was through these ideas that postcolonial theorists were able to argue about the evil of colonialism and rejects Western values. The following section of the study undertakes to conceptualize the key features or tenets of postcolonial theory:

2.2.1 Centre or Margin

Colonialism divides the world into two parts; centre and margin. It represents people in binary opposition or in a hierarchical order; with the East (colonized), at the margin or at the bottom of the ladder. The West (colonizer) becomes the centre both geographically and metaphorically. The West is seen as the citadel of civilization, culture, refinement, power and authority. Whatever is outside the centre is at the margin hence at the periphery/margin of culture civilization and power. If people in the centre are civilized those out of the centre are

savage. Whatever is at the centre is good and that which lies outside is evil and threatening. It becomes the "colonial mission" to introduce people to and indoctrinate them with the civilization of the West and to bring them in the realm of "enlightened centre". This premise gives the colonizer all reasons to exploit the people at the margin both economically and politically. Postcolonial theorists oppose any idea such as centre with fixity of power and assert the independence, difference and otherness of the marginal (Ashcroft et al 2007).

All that is on the margin is marginal. Marginality is the product of dominant discourses such as imperialism and ethno-centrism. The marginal actually "indicates a positionality". It is defined as "the limitations of a subject's access to power." It involves various forms of oppression and exclusion (Ashcroft et al 2007). The colonized are the "other" of the colonial culture. They are highlighted by their difference from the centre. Imperial centre is denoted as "Other" (Ashcroft et al 2007).

2.2.2 Dislocation

Dislocation is displacement, as it occurs as a result of colonial experiences. It could be transportation of natives from one country to another as slaves. It could be a consequence of foreign invasion or settlement. It is also a movement from a known to an unknown place willingly or unwillingly. The term refers to those also who have moved from the imperial centre to the margin on their own accord. Dislocation is a characteristic of "invaded colonies" where local and original cultures are literally dislocated if not obliterated. Therefore, dislocation is possible both in cases of people, culture or language. The indigenous culture is set aside and colonizing culture is given importance and put into practice (Ashcroft et al 2007).

2.2.3 Cultural Differences

This is one of the issues discussed by postcolonial theorists. Homi Bhabha (1994) discussed this in his work titled "the location of culture". One of the mainstays or important arguments of colonial thought is the notion that non western population were less developed and were in need of western intervention. Bhabha sees such colonizer/colonized binaries as attempts by the colonizer to create cultural differences based on territorial ambitions of the colonizers rather than any scientific differences. This is relevant in that, often, anthropologists and anthropological lenses were used at the behest of colonial regimes in order to determine the "culture" of populations and prepare them for colonization (Prasad, 2003). By claiming a concrete and real difference between the two cultures, and the superiority of "the one" over the "other", the colonizer attempts to make known his/her authority and power. In effect, "cultural differences" is subtext for domination rather than a reflection of any "real" differences between people (Ozkazanc-pan, 2009).

2.2.4 Hybridity

The concept of hybridity occupies a central space in postcolonial discourse. Hybridity refers to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and colonized cultures. The notion of hybridity is central to Homi Bhabha's workin challenging notions of identity, culture, and nation as coherent and unified entities that exhibit a linear historicaldevelopment. For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonized (other) within a universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new in the process. Through this concept, Bhabha considers the possibility of speaking back to western epistemological domination. Hybridity intervenes in any attempt to create such a difference through binary opposition, as it creates ambivalence over the purity of identities and knowledge for either the colonized or the colonizer by remarking the co-implication of all colonizer-colonized (ibid). Thus, hybridity

denies the colonizer's superiority and, therefore, his/her anticipated recognition by his/her subject. Hybridity expresses a state of "in betweenness," that is a personwho stands between two cultures (Habib, 2005). This "in betweenness", is what Bhabha calls unhomeliness, which is a concept referred to as double consciousness.

2.2.5 Language

Language is always a vital element of a society. It is a fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in the domain of language. The control over the native language by the West – whether achieved by displacing native languages or by planting the language of the colonizer in a new place – remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. Language provides the terms by which reality may be constituted; it provides the names by which the world may be known. Thus, language becomes the system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded. The use of colonial language has generated several responses but two present themselves in the decolonizing process – rejection and subversion.

Some postcolonial critics advocate for a complete rejection of English language. Ngugi Wa'Thiongo is a good demonstration of this alternative. Ngugi Wa' Thiongo's programme for restoring an ethnic identity embedded in the mother tongue involves a rejection of English, a refusal to use it in writing, a refusal to submit to the political dominance its use implies. This stance of rejection rests upon the assumption that an essential Gikuyu identity may be regained, an identity which the language of the colonizer seems to have displaced. However, other writers believe that English language can be used in the process of resisting colonialism and they believe in the subversive potential of appropriation of a colonial language by an indigenous people. Chinua Achebe noted that language can be used to bear the burden of the colonized experience, and this has become one of the most famous

declaration of the power of appropriation in postcolonial discourse (Ashcroft et al, 2007). By appropriating the imperial language, its discursive forms and its modes of representation, postcolonial societies are able to counter the dominant discourse by describing their own cultural realities to a wide audience of readers.

Abrogation and appropriation of language is an important aspect of postcolonial studies. Abrogation refers to the rejection by postcolonial writers of normative concept of "correct" or "standard" English used by certain classes or groups, and the corresponding concepts of inferior dialects" or "marginal variants". It is a vital moment in the decolonization of the language and the writing in English. In this light,appropriation is the process by which the colonizer's language is taken and made to bear the burden of the native cultural experience (Ashcroft *et al.,* 1989). Appropriation is used to describe the ways by which postcolonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture – language, forms of writing, film, theatre and even modes of thought and argument – logic and analysis – that may be of use to them in asserting their own social and cultural identities (Ashcroft *et al.,* 2007).

2.3 THE COLONIAL STATUS AND EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

It is obvious that postcolonial theories are concerned with the complex relationship between the colonized and colonizer, and an attempt to recenter and listen to the voice of the colonized. It is in line with this that this theory has been used in examining the relationship between African American identity and music based on the relations between Whites and Blacks on American soil. Africans or blacks who were shipped under deplorable conditions to the Americas to work on sugar and cotton plantation as slaves were indoctrinated into the master's culture and taught that the whites were superior to them. The blacks alienated from their history and language, were given names which further stripped them of their culture.

Identifying with the master's tradition such as the language, religion and culture, the blacks were made to comply with their masters' way of life.

Gruesser (2005) states that "people of African descent, whose presence in the English colonies of North America dates at least far back as 1619, were certainly colonized and, in the process, spatially, linguistically, and culturally dislocated". His work makes a connection between postcolonial theory and African American literary studies. He notes that the history and birth of black presence in the United States should not be regarded as insignificant to the formation of a national identity and culture, since it involves issues as internal colonization, domination, displacement, enslavement, oppression, marginalization and colonial resistance. Thus, from Gruesser's statement, one can conclude that postcolonial theory is an appropriate tool of analysis for this study.

Slavery, like colonization, involves the deliberate destruction of a people's culture, dignity and identity, while consciously elevating the culture of the enslavers and colonizers. Thus in seeking to undo these destructive trends often championed by Eurocentric scholars and apologists about the other (blacks), postcolonial critics assert that the colonized had a history and culture prior to European domination. Achebe (1973) opines that:

> African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that theirsocieties were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy ofgreat depth and value andbeauty, that they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the co1oiia1 period and it is this that they must nowregain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity andself-respect. The writers' duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human termswhat happened to them, what they lost (Achebe 1973:8).

Slavery also resulted in displacing the enslaved blacks from their ancestral land. With regard to the African American experience of displacement, they were forcefully removed to a new world to serve the economic needs of their enslaver. Their experience of dislocation or

displacement also creates a psychological effect which was the result of the harsh treatment during and after slavery. This psychological effect is regarded by Homi Bhabha as "unhomeliness" which is the feeling of being caught between two clashing cultures (Bressler, 2003). The feeling of abandonment by both cultures causes the colonized to become a psychological refugee (ibid).

Marginalization is another aspect of postcolonial discourse which is inherent in the African American experience. African Americans were excluded from the power, profits, and privileges that whites over time enjoyed in the United States and were considered as the inferior other. They were placed at the margin so as to maintain the purity of western culture (Hall, 1999). Ed Guerrero (1993) declares that blacks have been marginalized and devalued in every possible manner so as to hold in place the racial hierarchy of American society. Thus, if the Whites could keep the Blacks at the margin, then the Whites could reasonably justify slavery and deny the Blacks full rights and privileges of American society even after emancipation.

Therefore, within the context of the marginalization that Black Americans have endured, African Americans developed a distinct culture and tradition which is different from that of the West and that of White Americans. Language, which is a carrier of people's history and culture, is an important aspect of colonial discourse and equally applies to the situation of African Americans. There appeared to be a policy not to have several slaves speaking the same language on a plantation for fear that they would teach others their language and it was illegal for the whites to teach slaves how to read or write, by so doing, it will make escape or slave revolt possible. As such, enslaved blacks were forbidden to speak their traditional African languages. Having come from a historical tradition of innovators, enslaved blacks used this in their struggle to learn their masters' language. It is no surprise that the African

slaves have in their speech the rhythm of their ancestors and this psycholinguistic memory shaped the form and nature of their speech. As Smitherman (2006) states:

> When the African came to the United States and encountered in English certain sounds not present in his native language, he did what any other person to whom English was a foreign language would have done under similar circumstances – he substituted sounds from his own language which appeared to him to resemble most closely those English sounds which were unfamiliar to him

This cultural disposition resulted in a speech pattern or English dialect for the African Americans. Thus, a common language evolved because of the practice of mixing Africans from different ethnic-linguistic groups. The development of black speech or African American English can be seen as a means of expressing difference and ethnic identity. Blacks developed their dialect because as noted earlier, slave owners forbade them to speak indigenous African languages and required them to speak the English dialect. The slaves developed an English dialect that the slave masters did not and could not understand (Holt, 1972).

Blacks were not only forbidden to speak indigenous African languages, slave masters also forbade them to learn to read and write so as to stop slave revolt or uprising. South Carolina's slave code of 1740 was spurred by the Steno Rebellion's of the year before. The act was designed for the "better ordering and governing of Negroes and other slaves in the province". The act mandated restrictions against the slaves owning canoes, breeding and selling horses (vehicles of escape), and against beating drums (used in the Stono Rebellion to summon other slaves to revolt). The law also enacted prohibitions against teaching literacy, imposing a substantial £100 on the instructor (Monaghan, 2000).

African American vernacular English or Ebonics evolved as a way for the enslaved blacks to communicate with each other (Qtd in Halloway 2011). The term Ebonics was coined in 1973 by Dr. Robert Williams, an American psychologist (Qtd in Konecna 2008).

There is no universal explanation of the roots of AAE. Green (2002) provides in her work a clear overview of theories on the origin of AAE (Qtd in Hajkova 2005). One of the theories claims that the beginning of AAE is dated to the period when first African slaves were brought to America, when theywere thrown into a place, people and language they did not know. Their need to understand and to be understood made them simplify and modify the language they heard, which was, of course, English. Another theory contends that the basis of AAE structurally comes out of West African languages and its similarity to English is only superficial. Another theory considers the basic role of African languages in structure and sound system in contemporary AAE, and assumes pidgin, Jamaican Creole and Gullah to be basic constituents of AAE (ibid).

African American English differs from the White American Standard English in phonology, morphology and syntax. This is because blacks assign to words, phrases or statements reversed meaning or change their functions from what they mean to White people. For instance, same words appearing both in African American English and white American Standard English may have different and, often, opposite meaning. For example, the word bad which means bad in White American Standard English, sometimes mean good in African American English. The following are some common examples of the grammatical features of AAVE as described by Smitherman (1997):

Switching alternation of'was'/'were\ single/plural:we was with it
me an' my girl was watchin' VHS
you's got to chill
while they all is gettin' together

The perfective 'done': look what you done did
I was done sneezin' an' cougbin'

The past 'seen': she stopped the car when she seen me lookin'
I seen him eatin' dogfood ·out of a can

Double or multiple negation: coz' ain't nothing but sweat inside my hands
I don't do no crime
it just ain't never gonna end

Contraction of 'going' to 'gonna' to 'a': I'm 'a make you dance
I'm 'a kill that girl next time I see her

The aforementioned grammatical structure represents only a part of the total grammar of AAVE (Qtd in Remes, 1991).

According to Holt (1972), black slaves developed their linguistic opposition because they recognized that to use English like their masters would mean alienating themselves from their history. Thus, this can be linked to an aspect of postcolonial discourse, language appropriation. Appropriation is the process by which the language is made to bear the burden of one's own cultural experience. This study finds it applicable to the African American experience because language invasion emerged during slavery and continued to be used by the enslaved Africans progenies (ibid). A clear example of this feature is the curious and dynamic way that rap singers have developed a language medium by which they express their lyrics and music.

Rap song is a good example of all that has been discussed above because it has a political location in society distinctly ascribed to black people and is derived from African American oral culture and musical tradition (Perry, 2004). Rose (1994) is one of the innovative academic writers that began to reflect on the depth of rap music as a space used for negotiating of meaning relating to politics, identity and other social issues. Martinez (1997)

argues that rap music is a form of resistance for African Americans who have historically never had a medium on such a large scale to express their lived experiences and frustrations with society. Erskine (2003) also shares similar belief and insists that music is a tool that is capable of enabling the poor and marginalized to acknowledge and celebrate their identities.

From the aforediscussed, displaced blacks through music, have been able to preserve their cultural heritage. Music thus became an avenue of representing the African American ethnic identity. Beginning with the Negro spiritual, blues, jazz and to the most recent genre rap, music has always been the platform for many relevant discussions, such as; politics, racism, marginalization, economics, e.t.c. African Americans have used their music as a form of resistance against oppression and to reflect the dichotomy between black and white in America, and this is aptly conveyed in rap music. It is in line with this that postcolonial theory has been adopted as the theoretical frame work for this study.

2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The experiences of blacks or African Americans in the course of their stay in the United States have led them to struggle and reassert their identities. The term or concept of "identity" has resounded in the minds of African Americans since they were forcefully removed from their ancestral land during slavery. Being labelled the inferior other, African Americans felt like outsiders within a white dominated society. Blacks have fought hard to fashion or define their identities out of the larger American and White oriented culture often experiencing exclusion and frustration in the process. Thus, before delving further it will be pertinent to define the concept of "identity". Identity has been studied by scholars in various fields such as psychology, political science, sociology, cultural studies and even in the humanities. According to the Oxford Companion to African American Literature, identity can be defined as "the search for self and its relationship to social contexts and realities" (Gates, 1997). This

definition captures the struggle by African Americans to search and reassert their identities, an event related to their economic, political, social and historical experiences. The African American experience in the United States can be seen as the impetus which pushed them to establish a sense of identity and also to carve a niche for themselves within the political and cultural space of the United States.

David Snow (2008) argues that there "are at least three conceptually distinct types of identity; personal, social and collective. Although they often overlap, one cannot be inferred from the other. Hence, the necessity of distinguishing among them". According to Snow (2008), Social identities are the identities attributed or imputed to others in an attempt to situatethem in social space. They are grounded typically in established social roles, such as "teacher" and "mother," or in broader and more inclusive social categories, such as gender categories orethnic and national categories, and thus are often referred to as "role identities" (Stryker 1980)and "categorical identities" (Calhoun 1997). Whatever their specific socio-cultural base, social identities are fundamental to social interaction in that they provide points of orientation to "alter" or "other" as a social object (ibid).

Personal identities are the attributes and meanings attributed to oneself; theyare self-designations and self-attributions regarded as personally distinctive. They are especiallylikely to be asserted during the course of interaction when other-imputed social identities areregarded as contradictory, as when individuals are cast into social roles or categories that areinsulting and demeaning (Snow and Anderson 1987). Thus, personal identities may derive fromrole incumbency or category-based memberships, but they are not necessarily comparable sincethe relative salience of social roles or category membership with respect to personal identity canbe quite variable (ibid).

According to Snow (2008), there is no consensual definition of collective identity, and the conceptinvariably suggests that its essence resides or depends on a shared sense of "one-ness" or "we-ness" anchoredin real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity. Snow further states that embedded withinthe shared sense of "we" is a corresponding sense of "collective agency." To Snow, "we-ness" suggest a collective pursuit of common interest.

During the last three decades' scholars have shifted their attention from personal to collective identity. Cerulo (1997) states that the major aspects of the collective identity are "gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class. For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on the race/ethnicity category of the collective identity, particularly with respect to the African American situation.

The term ethnic identity can be understood through an examination of its etymological origins. The term ethnic has Latin and Greek origin – ethnicus and ethnikas, both meaning "nation" (Trimble, 2010). It has been used historically to label people as heathens. In Greek, ethnicity is called ethos which means customs. Putting ethnicus and ethos, thus, means a group (nation) of people who share common customs. The second construct or word "identity" has a latin origin and is derived from the word identitas; which means same. Thus combining the two concepts or construct, one can surmise that they mean the sameness or oneness of a group of people who share common customs and historical experiences (ibid).

Yuet Cheung (1993) defines ethnic identity as "the psychological attachment to an ethnic group or heritage". Fredrik Barth (1969) states that ethnic identity was a means to create boundaries that enables a group to distance themselves from one another (Qtd in Trimmble, 2010). It is important to note that the concept of ethnicity has always been closely linked to racial discourse; at times both concepts are used interchangeably.

Culture which is the total way of life of a group of people is crucial to the idea of ethnic identity. This is because in identifying an ethnic group, its culture is used to differentiate it from another. Fox (2001) defines ethnicity as "a combination of cultural affinity, geographic roots, language, religion, sense of history and sometimes ascribed as race". He further defines race "as a biological concept now discredited by most (scientists) as a way of categorizing human beings because it is based on superficial, vague and inaccurate characteristics and because it has been used over the past 200 years to create a bogus hierarchy of cultural, moral and intellectual worth that has justified unequal treatment" (ibid, p14-20).

Scholars have asserted that slavery and its aftermath resulted in a collective ethnic identity formation which is based on the cultural, political, social, economic and historical experiences of African Americans who are the descendants of enslaved Africans. Africans who were brought to the new world were stripped of any cultural affinities; they were displaced from their ancestral land, culture and language. Slavery, thus, forced a new culture on them and a new identity which were linked to western epistemological claims that the blacks need to be subjugated for they are uneducated.

Allen and Bagozi (2001) state that since slavery, identity formation has been a part of African Americans conception of self, as their identity was primarily viewed in terms of white-black dichotomy and went on to define the African American identity "as an awareness and acceptance of specific cognitive and evaluative factors shared by members of the African American community".

In the light of the above, blacks partially lost their identity for they were judged based on the colour of their skin. White imperialists, thus put in place mechanisms which were used to subjugate the blacks for their own selfish desires for power and wealth. The voices of the enslaved Africans were silenced and language played a fundamental role in the process. The

white(s) neither accepted the language of the blacks, nor allowed them to master their language. The representation of blacks in western epistemology was done through language. Stuart Hall (1999) defines this representation as "the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the "real" world of objects, people or events, or to imaginary world of fictional objects, people or event". Therefore, to represent someone or people, it is done through language. The western representation of Blacks thus categorises them as the inferior other. Pickering (2001) states that "those who do the othering occupy privileged space in which they can define themselves in contrast to the others who are so designated as different, with this designation reinforcing and prolonging the inequalities involved by seeming to confirm and prove them".

The misrepresentation of blacks only shows the West's desire for power and wealth, and its intention to keep the blacks in subservient and inferior positions. This as such can be linked to Ed Guerrero's *(*1993) statement when he affirms that "blacks have been subordinated, marginalised, positioned and devalued in every possible manner to glorify and relentlessly hold in place the white-dominated symbolic order and racial hierarchy of American society."

Using language to strip the blacks of power and control are ways by which White people benefited from the institution of slavery. Rendering the enslaved powerless to communicate with others placed them in subjugation to their masters. Whites made use of language to suit their purpose of justifying slavery and denying the blacks rights and privileges even after emancipation. In order to keep the blacks in the lowest of rung, whites perpetrated stereotypes (such as barbaric, indolent, backward, illiterate) through the use of the English language and by denying them rights to basic social amenities and education. As Frederick Douglass (1997) sates "the means of knowing was withheld from me".

In the process of enslaving and denying the blacks, a language was created by the African Americans that not only allowed the blacks to survive, but also helps to sustain the culture and beliefs of African Americans, by extension their identity. Smitherman (2000) reveals that "enslaved Africans stepped up to the challenge and made English work for them by creating a new language using the English language vocabulary".

Berlin (2003) contends that "although denied the right tomarry, they made families, denied the right to an independent religious life, they established churches; denied the right to hold property, they owned many things. Defined as property and condemned as little more than beasts, they refused to surrender humanity".

The above quotation reveals that blacks' found ways to give voice to their feelings and helped create distinct cultural practices different from the whites' culture. Ngugi Wa' Thiongo (quoted in Ashcroft et al, 1995) states that "in doing similar kinds of things and actions over and over again under similar circumstances, similar even in their mutability, certain patterns, moves, rhythms, habits, attitudes, experiences and knowledge emerged". He further points out that it is through these experiences which was passed down from one generation to the next that culture is established and re-established over time.

As such one can infer that the African Americans adopted and recreated a way of life that distinguishes their culture from that of the slave masters or whites. Thus African American identity has over time become enduring through established practices. Winbush (1998) remarks that "African Americans, perhaps more than any other racial/ethnic group in the United States, by historical tradition and present realities, represent the radical otherness- of origin, appearance, speech, orientation to world, and (for most, even today) physical location" as with other races African Americans are distinguished by their physical features. However, that is not what makes African Americans different. What distinguishes them from

other race is their language, music, art, literature which variously combine to form black culture.

In African culture, music is an inseparable part of it. Music played a major role in fortifying the enslaved Africans and their descendants. Almost all their activities were accompanied by music. As such music is linked to the African American cultural or ethnic identity. Even though Africans were transported to the Americas and stripped of virtually all cultural affinities, enslaved Africans were able to create a unique culture distinct from that of their enslavers. This was done through the use of music and other literary output starting with the slave narratives. The enslaved Africans came from diverse backgrounds and culture. What united them is the fact that their culture shares similarities. These similarities in their culture made it possible for enslaved Africans to unite and develop an ethnic identity. This ethnic identity echoes in their cultural output most especially in their music. This is because African American music had its roots deeply embedded in their African and American experiences and drew from it an amazing evolution of sound that has penetrated the racist fabric and pervaded the entirely of American culture. It is important to note that the various forms as practised by various African groups may have had a number of things in common, that does not mean that all the other forms were the same for the different African groups. Thus music for them became a way to remain connected to their African heritage while protesting and resisting the bleak conditions that they faced as African Americans throughout their history and presence in America.

Music, thus, became the natural way of expression for the African Americans. The author of *The Social and Aesthetic Significance of the African American Music (1995),* Kalamu Ya Salaam who is also an African American, points out that more than any other form of communication, "the music" expresses…… the realities of our existence". He further emphasises the importance of music to the African American people when he states that "all

of our ways of expressing our concerns, what is on our minds and what is happening, appear in the music long before they are codified in literature, dance […] or the visual plastic arts […] Africans in the diasporas are probably the only modern people whose soul is expressed […] through our music" (Salaam, 1995). Against the foregoing, Salaam points out that music expresses the African American ethnic identity and also serves as a means of communication for successive generations of African Americans.

2.4.1 Rap Music

There are several works that have been carried out on African American music including the rap genre or style. Rap is a part of African American cultural heritage and it represents a response to a series of transgression against the African American individual and community. It discusses African American social and cultural realities such as religion, racism, politics, education, violence and poverty. Stewart (1998) sees it as the newest cultural and artistic development in black America. Although, rap may seem to be the most popular amongst African American musical genres, Perry (2004) notes that it is linked to previous musical genres. This is because the rap song borrows from them.

Charis E.Kubrin (2005) in an article titled, "Gangstas, Thugs, and Hustlas: Identity and the Code of the Street in Rap Music" discusses the street code, by presenting the reflection of the street code in rap lyrics. His research tries to see the complex and reflexive relationship between the street code, rap and social identity. Rap thus can be seen as a lyrical expression of the code of the street. An environment which is rampant with disadvantage combined with easy access to fire arms creates a fertile ground for the street code to emerge. This code regulates social relations among inner city residents. Social identity and respect are the most important features of the street code (Kubrin, 2005). Anderson (1999) defines respect as being treated right or granted the deference one deserves often forms the core of a person's

self-esteem (ibid). According to Kubrin (2005), one way of to acquire respect is by developing a reputation of being violent and at the top of the hierarchy is the "crazy, wild, and killer" social identity. The street code encompasses other related dimensions of street life such as material wealth which is another way of gaining respect. Likewise, recognition and respect are gained through sexual promiscuity and conquest (ibid). Sex is considered an important symbol of social status which results in objectification of women.

Kubrin examines 403 rap songs from 1992-2000 and found each street code theme prominently present in varying degrees; respect was the most commonly referenced theme in 68 percent of the songs, followed by violence with 65 percent, material wealth with 58 percent, violent retaliation with 35 percent, nihilism with 25 percent, and the objectification of women with 22 percent. Despite the common assumption that misogyny pervades rap songs, Kubrins work shows otherwise. The code of the street instructs listeners on how to react to any given social situation, gain respect and provides a manual on how to survive the streets. Social status can be a scarce resource in the inner city and the avenues to that commodity are augmented by factors in the immediate environment. Building a violent reputation is key to maintaining status as well as deterring future victimization or assault and Kubrin argues that rap song does not cause violence but extends the purview of the street code of violence and respect. Accordingly, rappers as Kubrin as noted, often project images of toughness in their music, referring to themselves and others as assassins, hustlers, gangstas, mercenary soldiers, killers, thugs and outlaws. Thus, their lyrics provide both a formula and a justification for violent street identities.

Charis E. Kubrin's (2005) work on rap song "I See Death Around the Corner: Nihilism in Rap Music" deals with increased violence in the inner city but also points to the changes occurring in criminal justice policy during the 1980s in the United States. The policy at this time was becoming increasingly more punitive which led to unparalleled levels of

incarceration. What was once a misdemeanour is now classified as a felony concerning fire arm use and gang membership. Mandatory minimum sentences for crimes were implemented and longer duration sentences were common. The paper points out the reason for increase violence aside the criminal justice policy was the isolation of black youth from mainstream America combined with the effect of poverty, unemployment, and family disruption. A key feature of increase violence is the limited opportunity structure available for blacks to obtain the types of social status or roles available to youth in other environments.

In response to this societal condition, black youth, according to Kubrin (2005), created a substitute social order governed by their own code- "street code ". At the heart of this street code is respect which is obtainable by developing a reputation for being willing and able to fight by creating a self image (ibid). When one is disrespected, violent retaliation is warranted if not expected. As such the conditions in extremely disadvantaged communities have led scholars according to Kubrin to cite a growing sense of nihilism in black youth culture, an outgrowth of living in an environment filled with violence and limited opportunities (ibid). As blacks grow up in this disadvantaged communities and become cognisant of the constraints of their existence, such as the lack of educational and job opportunities, their perceived or real powerlessness which shapes their psychological well-being can lead to anger, frustration and despair (ibid). Kubrin thus, selected platinum rap albums that sold over one million copies which contain street code elements; respect, willingness to fight or use violence, material wealth, violent retaliation, objectification of women and nihilism. This article which can be seen as a sequel to his 2005's paper titled "Gangstas, Thugs, and Hustlas: Identity and the Code of the Street in Rap Music" focus on an aspect of the street code. Since the paper's focus is on nihilism, Kubrin gives an important reason as to why; that scholarly literature focuses almost exclusively on other street code dimension, most notably respect and violence, profanity and misogyny, and little attention has been given to nihilism.

His research found out that nihilism emerged as a key theme and a number of sub themes materialised from the selected rap songs. The sub themes include bleak outlook on life, perceived or real sense of powerlessness, frustration and despair, fear of death and dying, resignation and acceptance of death

Martinez (1997) states that rap music is a form and medium of resistance for African Americans. He selected lyrics from the examination of six albums produced by well known gangsters or political rappers emerging in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The result of the study shows that the themes of distrust of police, fear of a corrupt system that plans genocide, disillusionment with health care, anger at racism and lost opportunities, action in the face of oppression and a plea for recognition was found in the lyrics. These themes constitute what Bonnie Mitchell and Joe Feagin (1995) argue to be how non-European groups under domination draw on cultural resources to resist the dominant culture. Thus, African American culture such as music became a viable form or way of undermining the dominant culture.

Martinez (2008) in "images of socially disinterested inner-city youth in rap music" reveals the stark contrast of how the media presents poor urban black youth to the society and their representation in rap music. Media depiction of inner city youth as violent criminals is quite common in American society. The reason for the negative depiction of black youth as violent criminal is because most. White Americans have very little contact with blacks (ibid). Martinez further contends that there is a great deal of research which suggests that the American media tends to associate issues of race, class, and gender with crime and delinquency. That is blacks and Latinos are perceived as the real crime delinquency threat in America. Martinez selected four artists namely; 2pac, Kenye West, Mos Def, and Immortal Technique because their songs deal with issues facing youth of colour in disenfranchised inner-city communities (ibid). Rappers depict these youths as victims of a racist system just trying to survive. Martinez lays out an analysis of media depiction of crimes and the

disproportionate attention received by black offenders and then uses rap lyrics from various rappers to illustrate the differences in portrayals of inner city black youth. Martinez concludes by postulating that rap is a culture of resistance and the medium through which those that have been rendered voiceless to speak about their situations.

An area of rap music that has received much attention is the issue of misogyny. Misogyny means the hatred of women. Armstrong (1997), Adams and Fuller (2006), Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) have all explored this topic within the lyrics of rap music. Armstrong in his research found out that 22% of the songs analyzed contain violent and misogynist lyrics. Adams and Fuller examine the use of misogynistic ideology in rap songs and traces the connection between its prevalence and how African American women have been characterized historically as Jezebel or whore. Weitzer and Kubrin's study also assesses the portrayal of women and identified five gender – related themes; derogatory naming and shaming of women, sexual objectification of women, distrust of women, legitimating of violence against women, and celebration of prostitution and pimping. The prevalence of the theme in this music is the reason some critics see it as profane and offensive.

The literature review provides insight into the different ways that researchers have approached the study of rap music. Some of the works cited above focus on street codes and misogynistic expressions in rap songs while other reviewed works see rap as a counter cultural expression and a critique of the American society. However, no studies to date, to the best of our knowledge suggest that rap's critique of the American society highlights the tenets of postcolonial theory. It is in the light of this aforementioned, this study investigates the relationship between African American identity and music in addition to its style and aesthetic features. A close analysis has been carried out which illustrates the point about how ethnic identity is portrayed in the selected songs. The crux of the argument in this work is that there abounds clear evidence that rap music shares a relationship with the identity of blacks.

This is because rap music has foundational roots in African and African American culture (Stephens, 1991). Blacks identify with this genre since majority of the artists are blacks who speak about their day to day experiences. Although rap songs have been portrayed positively and negatively by critics, the study argues that there is a connection between rap songs, the context of its emergence and the African Americans in the United States.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that there are distinctions within the genre of rap music. Boyd (1994) opined that the genre of rap should essentially be categorized into two classes: the political/Afrocentric and the popular genre of rap music. Afrocentric rap can be seen as a form of rap music that promotes the interests and ideals associated with African values in relation to African-American values and identity. It is used as a response and resistance to the dominant structures that impose oppression on the African American community (Rose, 1994). Rose continues to argue that rap delivers positive messages of pride in black culture, style, intelligence, strength and endurance (ibid). Political/Afrocentric rap also expresses a political, psuedo-Black Nationalist message (Newman, 2007). Rap describes the binary opposites of Black and White, rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Popular rap according to Boyd (1994) can be classified as mainstream rap. This is because this class of rap does not express political or racial issues but rather it espouses materialism (ibid).

From the aforementioned, rap can be used as an educational tool, educating the people from all ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic levels to better understand Black suffering, oppressive living and working conditions particularly in the United States. As such, political rap instils a positive ethnic identity in the social group of Blacks, due to the uplifting and creative messages shared to the other Black members that belong to the social group and community. Thus, the study examines the selected rap songs as political rap.

CHAPTER THREE

RAP AS AN EXPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNIC IDENTITY IN *THE MESSAGE, BEAT STREET, WHITELINES, WHAT IF AND I AM SOMEBODY.*

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Underlying the myth of the United States as unified and integrated is a complex network of people and places, styles and manners, occasionally concurring and frequently conflicting interest [….]. While countless voices speak, few rises above the din, the melting pot becomes convenient shorthand for cultural domination by people of European descent (Qtd in Saunders, 1993). This point to the fact that America consist of different ethnic groups. The Europeans and their descendants have established and extended their rule over all of the people or minorities in the United States. The whites have relegated African Americans and other ethnic minorities to the margins in the States. African American cultural output evolved out of this condition or situation of being at the margin. Rap being one of such materials provides a powerful lens through which African Americans portray their stories and forge their identity. Thus, this chapter looks at the African American ethnic identity in rap music and reaffirms the power of the collective in making their own history and identities.

3.1 THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PREDICAMENT IN "*THE MESSAGE*"

"The Message" was produced under the album titled "The Message", and it was released in 1982. The artists who performed or sang this song include Grandmaster Flash, Kidd Creole, Melle Mel, Cowboy, Mr. Ness/Scorpio, and Rahiem. The length of the song is seven minutes and twelve seconds with a rhythmic slow tempo. The song captures the inequalities faced by African Americans in their day to day experiences. The song is presented in a narrative style that brings forth the conditions of blacks in the ghettos. Postcolonial theory entails examining the conditions/positionsofthe colonial subject before andaftercolonialism. In the case of the African Americans, their conditions remain the same even after the emancipation declaration.

The black slaves were deemed inferior and likened to animals. The situation did not change with their descendants because they were still considered inferior to the Whites.

The song “The Message” is often mentioned as the most influential rap song. According to Dyson (1993) “the message” set the stage for the transformation of hip hop music/poetry into a form which could combine social protest, musical creation, and cultural expression. Seeing, knowing and speaking out about their situation, is the first step towards changing African American socio-economic situation in America. This can be seen as a way of resisting dominant discourse.

One criterion of postcolonial theory is the rejection of any idea such as centre with fixity of power and to demonstrate that marginality is a product of dominant discourse (Ashcroft et al 2007). For the postcolonial theorist marginality is the limitation of a subject’s access to power which involves various forms of oppression. This is obvious in this track as the song enumerates the different ways that blacks are oppressed or subjugated; politically, economically and socially.

The song describes the living conditions the African Americans endure while living in the inner-cities of America, a situation which they cannot escape. Again African Americans are shackled to an existence which leaves them questioning their rights and place as Americans. The artists paint a vivid picture of the living conditions of blacks:

> Broken glass everywhere
> People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don't care
> I can't take the smell; I can't take the noise no more
> Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
> Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
> Junkies in the alley with the baseball bat
> I tried to get away, but I couldn't get far.

These lyrics conjure up familiar concrete urban sensations in the images of the "alley" and "broken glass." Similarly, inner-city conditions and experiences that escape the eye are

captured in metaphoric references to sounds and scents. The abandonment of the physical and social environments is evidenced in the presence of “rats" and "roaches." Also the presence of the figure of “junkies ... with the baseball bat” suggests danger because they could hurt anyone.

To highlight the urban setting, the artists use words to give the image of the city traffic and the residence of blacks:

> Standing on the front stoop
> Hanging out the window
> Watching al1 the cars go by
> Roaring as the breezes blow
> Crazy lady living in a bag
> Eating out of garbage pails.

The front stoop and windows reference black residence which is followed by the traffic “the cars go by”. The song also portrays the image of homelessness with the lady eating out of garbage cans. The description of the abandonment of the physical and social environment, “broken glasses, rats and roaches everywhere, junkies in the alley and the woman eating out of the garbage can suggest the marginality of the blacks. Since all that is at the margin according to the West is evil, it becomes the mission of the colonialist to indoctrinate the blacks with western civilization. As such, marginality creates the avenue for the west to exploit the blacks economically. The song also describes urban existence, by pointing out the economic, physical and psychological effects such an environment can have on an individual:

> The bill collectors they ring my phone
> And scare my wife when I'm not home
> Got a bum education, double-digit inflation
> I can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station
> Neon, King Kong
> Standing on my back
> Can't stop to turn around
> Broke my sacrophylliac
> A mid-range, migraine,
> Cancered membranes
> Sometimes I think I'm going insane
> I swear I might highjack a plane.

From the lines above, it is obvious the residual effect of slavery, economic inequality and segregation had on the blacks. The Whites not only subjugated the blacks, but also perpetrate the belief that non-white are in need of western intervention as they were by virtue of their culture, religion less developed and different from the Whites. Thus, after emancipation, the blacks were not given the tools or aids they need to use to negotiate their new life in America. For instance, the song describes black education as "bum education" which means a vagrant or of poor quality, by extension blacks education is considered worthless. As such the living condition of the blacks and even to secure jobs became difficult as illustrated in the lines above.

The underlined lines of the lyrics above suggest or point to the experience of slavery which is still linked to the African Americans' present life. The song uses words such as "Neon" and "King Kong" which means a fluorescent light and ape respectively, put together the words can be seen as symbolical of the white slave masters who stood behind the blacks/slaves, watching the slaves every move. This is to make the slaves toe the lines or instructions prescribed by the whites. The difficulties that surrounds this experience broke the blacks "sacroiliac" which is the anatomy relating to the sacrum and ilium. Thus, the weight or pressure that broke the sacroiliac can be seen as the subjugation or oppression the blacks suffered, which in turn brings about psychological effect. The psychological effect is captured with words such as; a mid range migraine and cancered membrane.

The track also paint the problems associated with the school system in black community. A black kid refuses to go to school because his "teacher's a jerk" who thinks the black kid cannot make it in life, and all the black kids smoke reefers which is much more cheaper than cocaine. So the kid feels that it's better to get a job and learn to be street wise. Also if an individual attempt to better his situation, the track explains that the odds are stacked against him: "Cause it's all about money, ain't a damn thing funny / You got to have a con in this land

of milk and honey". Thus, the lines allude to the American dream, America being the Promised Land, a land overflowing with prosperity, equality and liberty. And yet, amidst this alleged syncretism, they find themselves in the throes of economic instability; and despite their attempts to better their situation, they find themselves, as well as their peers, turning to crime. With no escape offered by the "bum" educational system available to African Americans in the inner city, they are forced into a sordid lifestyle just to get by.

The song offers an admonition as the track goes on to describe the life of a child born into this sorrowful state and the environment mirroring his future is described as "one great big alleyway".

A child is born with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through
You'll grow in the ghetto, living second rate
And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate
The place you play and where you stay
Looks like one great big alley way

The track continues to elaborate further on the life of an African American child who because of his circumstance or situation begins to admire conmen, and cannot see any way out except crime, since only conmen actually achieve any monetary gain in their community. Thus the child admires them and wishes to be like them. The lack of options for such a child is observed, as

You'll admire all the number book-takers
Thugs, pimps, and pushers and the big money makers
Driving big cars, spending twenties and tens
And you wanna grow up to be just like them huh
Smugglers, scramblers, burglars, gamblers
Pickpocket peddlers, even panhandlers
You say I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool
But then wind up droppin' outta high school

As a result of the child's lack of education, it becomes difficult for him to find employment. A high school dropout and unemployed, the child turns to crime and does prison time. But in prison, the child is abused and eventually is found hanged in a cell:

> Now you're unemployed, all null and void
> Walkin' round like you're pretty boy Floyd
> Turned stick-up kid, but look what you done did
> Got sent up for a eight-year bid
> Now your manhood is took and you're a maytag
> Spend the next two years as a undercover fag
> Bein' used and abused to serve like hell
> Till one day, you was found hung dead in the cell
> It was plain to see that your life was lost
> You was cold and your body swung back and forth
> But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song of how
> You lived so fast and died so young

It is important to note that the track traced the life cycle of a black American kid who chooses the part or way of life of a conman. The lyrics of this song are meant to stir listeners to empathize with the real life conditions faced by all the people who live in the inner city ghettos. Although the singers do not want to go down the same road, crime seems to be the only means to better their situation.

The chorus of the song explains their condition in a society that is hostile and their response to such a situation:

> Don't push me 'cause
> I'm close to the edge
> I'm trying not to loose my head
> Its like a jungle sometimes
> It makes me wonder how I keep from going under

From the chorus, the blacks are countering the opinions of the Whites regarding the black race as docile, subservient or thoughtless. From the lyrics, it is obvious that the blacks are not ready to accept the role or images imposed on them by the dominant culture. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five through the song view themselves as beings who demand respect

and also worthy to be called, be seen as human and not as animal which was the identity given to them by the Whites. For the Whites do not believe in making the blacks rise in social status and left them to rot in the slums or the margins of the American society. The song is meant to be an eye opener for those who do not live in these conditions to realize the foul reality their American brethren find themselves in. In a land of promises of economic and social equality, there still exists this absolutely horrible condition. The image of the jungle is a metaphor and a jungle often means at least to Western culture and people who have never been in one, some place dark and confusing. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five equate their situation to being in a dark jungle, unable to find their way out. Thus for them, they feel like there is no way out of the jungle.

Language which is an important aspect of postcolonial theory is an aspect of culture that was stripped away from the blacks. The slaves had to learn their master's language. The slaves simplify and modify the master's language and this is obvious in their works. The language of this music is a blend of African American English and the Standard English. For instance one finds in the lyrics words like "I wanna (I want to), outta (out of), cause (because) e.t.c. Thus African American English can be seen as a tool of resistance against the whites or slave masters.

The track is aptly titled because it brings to the fore a message from the inner city or blacks neighborhood in America. It portrays their day to day experiences and the listener is forced to recognize the problems associated with being the marginalized ethnic group in America. The tale about the child who grew up in an hostile environment shows the fate that befalls blacks in the society.

3.2 THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR IN "BEAT STREET"

"Beat Street" was released in 1984 and was later compiled under the album titled *Message from the Beat Street* in 1994. The song has a length of about six minute twenty eight seconds with a mid rhythmic beat. The song "Beat Street" is rendered in a narrative style with no chorus. The song is divided into two stanzas. The first stanza introduces the song beat street as a lesson and at the same time signifies the sound of hip hop culture. The first stanza also describes the African American predicament in the United States. The song describes the world of graffiti art and how it could express a thousand words. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five expressed in the song if the world belong to the graffiti artist to do over, the artist will paint a better world where girls and boys would live in harmony and peace. The song expresses the groups feeling when they saw the art work of graffiti's painting

> I never knew art till I saw your face
> And there'll never be one to take your place
> Cause each and every time you touch the spray paint can
> Michelangelo's soul controls your hand
> Then serenades of blue and red and the beauty of the rainbow fills your head
> Crescendo of colors hang in tune
> Man, why oh why do you have to die so soon?

The government during the inception of hip hop culture rejects graffiti works done on walls, subways, and school walls e.t.c. To the postcolonial theorist, cultural differences is a subtext for domination, and this is obvious in the track as blacks were not allowed to practice or write graffiti which is an element of hip hop culture. Graffiti is considered inferior. Through the lines below, it is obvious that the dominant culture tried to suppress the African American cultural expression in graffiti. Through the first part of the song, the artist metaphorically makes reference to the African American predicament and struggle to be seen and heard: "cause I'm caught in the rat race, looking for my own space". Rat race conjures up the image

of scurrying hither-tither with no end in sight. This is similar to the African American experience which seems to have no end as they come to face different kinds of segregation and marginalization since the time of slavery.

I'm sittin' in the class room learning the rules
And it says you can't do graffiti in school
They can't be wrong in the hallowed hall
So my notebook turned into a brick wall
The heart of a lion and the courage of three
And the mind of a man much wiser than me
Who died in my arms on the rail road track
Cause I'm caught in the rat race
looking for my own space

Dislocation is one of the concepts or tenets of postcolonial theory and it is visible in the sentence "looking for my own space". Enslaved blacks were first dislocated from their ancestral home and in the alien world which became their new home; they were not accepted into mainstream American society. The themes in the song is further buttressed by the end rhyme employed, that is, by ending the lines with race and space, it point attention to the struggle that exist between blacks and white.

The song also paints the effect of western practices which sees the African Americans as inferior and relegates them to the margins of society:

You search for justice, what do you find?
You find just us on the unemployment line
You find just us sweating from dawn to dusk
There's no justice, there's huh, just us, ha!

To drive home the message, Grandmaster and the Furious Five employ the use of repetition. The repetition of "you just find us" shows that the marginalisation and economic segregation of blacks in the United States result in them being denied employment, justice, better education and other social amenities.

The second stanza of the song not only criticizes the period of the cold war between America and the Soviet Union, but also criticizes the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) in 1983 which

was a type of weapon that was to be designed and used to defend the United States against the Soviet. The government tried to invent a type of weapons which could intercept missiles coming from the Soviet Union to America. The SDI was dubbed "star war". The song explains that "the president just forgot about earth spending multi billions, and may be even trillions" on weapons. The struggle between the two super powers which the track describes as a game that left the world in shambles also describes the effects of the game in the following line:

*A fight for power
A nuclear shower
And people shout out in the darkest hour
Of sights unseen and voices unheard
Finally the bomb gets the last word

*Everybody's bodies is used and abused

*The children in Africa don't even eat
Flies on their faces, they're living like mice

The song describes the two super powers as egomaniacs whose superiority complex is deeply rooted in their ideas of how Europe should be restructured after World War II. The song also referenced leaders of different countries and eras. The track listed names of strong military men who were known for their strength and agility in ruling and wining wars during ancient or classical time. It also mentioned names of leaders who were involved in American civil war, World War I and II, and the cold war:

Hitler and Caesar, Custer and Reagan
Napoleon, Castro, Mussolini and Begin Ghengis Khan and the Shah of Iran
Mixed with the blood of the weaker man
The peoples in terror, the leaders made the error

The artists also refer to the consequences of the actions of the leaders on blacks as the artists states that "cause we get to suffer while things get rougher". As such Blacks need to get tougher to overcome their predicaments. Thus this song can be seen as an indictment to the

ways in which leaders or super powers are carrying out the affairs of the world without thinking about the consequences of their actions on humanity.

3.3 LEGAL AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN "WHITELINES"

The song "Whitelines" was released in 1983, and compiled under album titled*Message from the Beat Street* in 1994. The tempo or beat is slow and the length is about seven minute and twenty seven seconds. The song captures the legal and economic disparities in America in the 1980s during Ragan's administration. It is also an anti-cocaine rap song. Legal and economic segregation of the races became the latest form in a tradition of oppression and marginalization. Some artists saw the vestige of this tradition and continued evidence of systemic racism in economic and political climate of the 1980s, the manifestations of which even led to the blacks in believing in a white conspiracy against the black race. Rap drew upon a historical memory of four hundred years of oppression leading to the present. Rap became a powerful cultural vessel for a message from the largely black and poor ghetto residents. Rap confronted mainstream America and challenged the political discourse surrounding urban poverty and politics of race.

It is important to note that the world wars created an avenue for the blacks to migrate to the north for employment and access to better education. At the end of World War I and World War II, employment opportunities were withdrawn and given to returning White soldiers. This created an urban ghetto largely consisting of impoverished blacks. This heralded a new type of employment which has to do with the sale and use of drugs (cocaine or cracks). Blacks turned to the sale of drugs because any attempt at securing employment in the formal economy ends in failure which leaves the informal economy as the only viable alternatives for the blacks. Thus rap artist focus on the realities associated with the ghetto. The formal and informal economy shows the difference between the centre and margin, and the concept

"centre /margin is one of postcolonial tools which is used in unveiling the evil of colonialism/slavery and it effects.In the song, the artists rapped about "white line" which is a metaphor for cocaine or crack. The artist rapped about the effects of cocaine on the individual. The chorus describes the feeling one get after using cocaine:

Whitelines
Vision dream of passion
Blowing through my mind
And all the while I think of you
Pipe cries
A very strange reaction
For us to unwind
The more I see the more I do
Something like a phenomenon baby
Telling your body to come along
But white lines
Blow away

From the chorus one can infer that drugs stir the emotion and mood and can alter one's state of mind in minutes. The consequence of using drugs is obvious in the first stanza. To purchase the drug according to the artist costs more than gold and its gain is nothing but causing health problems for the drug user:

Ticket to ride white line high way
Tell all your friends they can go my way
Pay your toll, sell your soul
Pound for pound costs more than gold
The longer you stay the more you pay
My white lines go a long way
Either up your nose or through your vein
With nothing to gain except killing your brain

There is a relationship between drug (cocaine or cracks) and the rap music. This is because drug dealers use the money realised from the sale of drug to promote rap music. For instance, in the seasonal movie/film titled "Empire" (2015), the major character Luscious Lyon and his wife Cookie Lyon used money they got from the sale of drugs to promote Luscious Lyon's music. This is obvious in the second stanza when the artists claim that the informal economy has made some blacks multi billionaire overnight, but continues to state that if an individual

get hook, it's no one's fault. As such suggest that people should not get involve. The artists also were involved in sale or use of drugs which is illustrated below:

My whitelines go a long way
Either up your nose or through your vein

This suggest that the artists are trying to make the public aware that their drug is the best in the hood, and at the same time trying to dissuade people from getting involved in the sale or use of drug by telling the story of a black kid who sold his properties just to get high.

In the third stanza, the group details the perceived differences in the legal system between blacks and whites in America. The law is made to favour the whites. This is outlined below:

A street kid gets arrested
Gonna do some time
He gets out three years from now
Just to commit more crime
A business man is caught
With twenty four kilos
He's out on bail and out of jail
And that's the way it goes

Drug laws in the U.S are racist and unjust, since poor blacks tend to get much harsher penalties for drug offences than white business men. The third stanza subtly refers to the car manufacturer John Delorean, who in 1982 became involved in a scheme to save his company from bankruptcy using drug money. He was arrested by the FBI for trying to buy twenty four kilos of cocaine, but successfully defended himself against the charges as he proved his alleged involvement was because of entrapment by federal agents (www. Songfacts.com).

The track also state that the government and athletes were against the use and sale of drugs. But then "gangsters, thugs and smugglers are thoroughly respected" in black community. This is because people who are involved in the sale of drugs sometimes are brutal and carry guns to always defend themselves against the police or those they consider as enemies. From the song, it is glaring that the government did not fight the major causes of drug abuse (mainly poverty and lack of education) but emphasizes law enforcement on drug.

3.4 CULTURAL DIALECTIC IN "WHAT IF"

During the period of slavery, blacks were stripped of any cultural vestige and confined to the slave quarters and the fields. They had to learn to communicate in their masters' language. Their confinement, their American experience and the memory of their past lives resulted in the creation of new modes of cultural expression which evolved and developed into different styles or genres of African American music. Slavery and its practice of maintaining the illiteracy of blacks would allow very few opportunities for blacks to communicate in any other form other than the oral tradition of communication. Rap music is the most recent of African American music and is considered as one of the four elements of Hip Hop culture. Rose (1991) notes that:

> For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries black people were considered devoid of any cultural traditions, and thus their ―inferiority was said to be based on presumed racially determined biological differences in intelligence. The overall idea was that slavery wiped out African approaches to sound, language, movement, food, space, time, and so on, and that black Americans were not as evolved as whites and therefore represented a culturally clean slate

Culturally clean slate in this context means the way blacks were uprooted from their ancestral home, stripped of their cultural vestige, identities, languages, histories and transported to an alien world. Even though they were stripped of any cultural vestiges or identities, the memory of their past life and the new western traditions were brought together as a hybrid of two different cultures to make a new culture the blacks could call their own. Richard Wright (1937) states that "the culture of the Negro which is his and has been addressed to him […} stemmed mainly from two sources; the negro church, and the folklore of the Negro people". Wright further explained that it was through the church that the negro first came in contact with western culture, living under slave conditions and bereft of his African heritage.

Folklore according to Wright (1937) evolved out of the rigorous and inhuman conditions. It is from these experiences that the Negro achieved his most indigenous and complete expressions (ibid). The indigenous folklore include spirituals, work songs, blues, e.t.c. which are steeped in the deepest vernacular, and it formed the means through which the racial wisdom flowed (ibid). Rap music falls in this category as it develops or evolved from previous African American musical genres or styles. It is the creation of the new culture that gave blacks a sense of identity. Hence, the title of this song "what if" suggests that if the blacks had not created or generated a culture from their experience in America, African Americans would never had have a culture or identity.

The song "what if" was released under the album titled "The Bridge" in 2009. Grandmaster flash featured another artist called KRS One (The Teacher). The song's tempo and rhythm is slow. The song is about 4 minutes long. "What if" is a rap song that asserts the African American ethnic identity. The song opens with the chorus:

What if hip hop was never born yo
No Herc, no Flash, no band, no change yo
No Djs, no grab, no breakers, no Mc
What would the state of dope world truly be?
No throw your hands, no screaming, no noise, no Djs cutting
No b-boys, no b-girls, no graffiti, no nothing
<u>If hip hop was never born</u>
<u>Let me make this clear</u>
<u>Just the thought of it definitely brings me tears</u>

The chorus is rendered in questions and answers style. To drive home the message or theme of the song Grandmaster flash and K.R.S One employ registers or terms commonly used in hip hop. They used terms such as DJs, Graffiti, Breakers, B-boys, B-girls, MC. The terms can be seen as the elements of hip hop culture. Grandmaster flash through the song illustrates that the African American life is centered on this culture. The artists through the song opine that if hip hop was never born, African Americans would have nothing to hold on to. Rap music and hip hop culture defines and differentiates African Americans culturally from the whites.

"What if" is a rap song that traces the birth of rap music and hip hop culture locating such to the streets of black communities which is a reflection of the concerns of Blacks. The song expresses the artists feeling about hip hop culture. The artists' mood is one that is tinged with a bit of sadness.The underlined lines suggest the state of inbetweenness, that is of not being accepted in a white dominated society and cut off from the blacks' ancestral roots. The African Americans are located within the two cultures which Homi Bhabha calls unhomeliness.

The idea that hip hop is central to African Americans also runs through the lines of stanza one. The artists states in stanza one that "hip hop is the reality that creates all these salaries". That is hip hop is not only about the economic gain, but it captures or pictures African Americans day to day experiences, their feelings and emotions about their predicament in America. The artists state that rap/hip hop is "hauled from the streets of the hood of every family". Rap music as such, evolved in response to the economic, political, social deprivation and injustice that African Americans have continued to face in America. Mark Anthony Neal (2004) maintains that "hip hop may represent the last black popular form to be wholly derived from the experience and texts of the black landscape". This experience is one that is produced out of the cultural encounter between blacks and whites which is embedded in power relations. To many, not just African Americans, rap music became the voice of resistance, a counter-cultural expression of protest (Kitwana, 2005). Rap music as such gives voice to the voiceless. End rhyme employed in the lines below helps to create a rhythm which buttresses the message and is illustrated in the lines below:

Let me get this clear
Today you have a real choice
Because of hip hop existence
You have a real voice

When the genre first emerged in the 1970s, critics predicted a quick demise. It was deemed a passing fad, but rap music flourished. This is aptly captured in stanza three:

> Hip hop wasn't even supposed to last
> So I gotta laugh when I look at Flash
> Yeah, Grandmaster Flash is on the tracks
> But where would we be without the cut and the scratch
> So I ask

Through the tone of the song, the artistes pride and self esteem is projected. Rap music gave blacks the pride and self esteem that have been eroded by the prevailing social condition. It became a tool that blacks used to express and explore the history of race relations and their experiences in comparison to the ideologies of white people (Harkness, 2011). The track also shows a relationship between rap music and wealth. The track also listed the names of rap artists such as Queen Latifah, Public Enemy, Chamillionaire, Wayne, Diddy, Russel, and Will Smith, to show that despite the odds starked against them, the African Americans are able to overcome to create their own culture. Thus, marginality and hybridity are majar catalyst that moves African Americans to push beyond the limits imposed on them by the social and racial configuration of the American society. It is in an attempt to question these configurations that blacks are able to carve out an identity for themselves.

3.5 IDENTITY ASSERTION IN "I AM SOMEBODY"

The song "I am somebody" was released in 1987 under the album titled *Ba Dup Boom Bang* in 1987. It has a slow beat and the length of the song is about 3minutes and 45 second. This is a rap song that makes a case for blacks by pointing to the need for blacks to assert their identity rather than yielding to the oppression of their race. The song as such deals with the issue of racism and it is captured in the first stanza of the song:

> God made one no better than the other
> Every girl becomes a woman
> Every boy a man
> While you're livin' in your mansion

Driving big cars
There's another on the street
Cold sleepin' on the ground
So when you walk by, yo don't act cold blooded

Racism which is the believe that all members of each race possess certain characteristics or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to others. African Americans have been dubbed little more than beasts during and after slavery. They have been called using derogatory terms like Nigger or Negro, beast. These derogatory terms were coined base on the colour of their skin and not their intellect. It was a way of ridiculing their race and justifies them as less human. It is this justification that informs the experience of slavery.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five in this song emphasises the fact that "God made no one better that the other". This means that colour or gender should not be the basis for deciding who is more important. Colour or race is a major issue within the American society. Privileges and oppression are largely assigned on the basis of colour. According to John Bothwell:

> Privilege and oppression are not abstract ideas. Rather they are demonstrated by location and determined by social constructs where identities are valued on positive or negative social and physical configurations. These categories are often aligned with race, class, and gender.

This means that racism and all the derogatory terms that accompany it are social constructs valued on negative social configurations. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five however, call on African Americans to be positive about their identity. The artists question the binary of "self" and "other". They advocate equal treatment for everyone. This is further buttressed in the chorus which is repeated at intervals at the end of each stanza:

Cause he is somebody
Like I am somebody
You are somebody
Like I am someone.

The above lines (chorus) is repeated at intervals or in between the stanzas to emphasize that contrary to the belief that the blacks are beast, inferior to the whites, they are human beings worthy of respect or courtesy from the Whites. The chorus is characterized by words that emphasize the humanity of the blacks and other ethnic groups. The lines have a rhyme scheme of "aaab" which adds to the beauty and sound effect of the song. This can be seen as a way of rejecting the forced identity imposed on blacks since their arrival in the Americas.

Through the second stanza, the artists opine that the "moment one is born, he/ she is meant to be somebody". The artistes further state that people (whites) should not criticize and disrespect one another because it is not hard to consider the other as a brother. The artists also address other ethnic groups:

Stand up for your heritage, rejoice in that fact
Whether you are red, white, tan, yellow, brown or black.

The lines above suggest the artistes understanding and acceptance of other ethnic groups in the United States as they request for the various ethnic group to take pride in their identity, and not be limited by the racial constructs. It is important to note that the blacks through their struggle and experience developed a double consciousness. The song captures Dubois (1996) view which state:

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled

> strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

For Du Bois, the veil reference three things; first, the veil suggests the dark skin of the black race, which is different in colour to white skin. The veil also suggests white people's inability to see blacks as true Americans and lastly, the veil refers to the difficulties that blacks have in seeing themselves outside of what white Americans perceive them to be. In other words, the veil makes African American experiences invisible to the white man. Dubois further states that:

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be Negro and American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (ibid).

From this, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five like other African American artists or writers want to be seen without being cursed or spit on. They also want to re-represent their identity different from that of the dominant culture which has labelled them inferior or consider them invisible.

Dubois' references to double consciousness not only define an intrinsic aspect of the African American culture but also define the foundation of Afrocentric/political rap. For Dubois and rap artists, the society in which they live neither understands or tries to appreciate the plight of the blacks who are kept or shackled to an existence of invisibility. The whites consider them the dregs of the society and push the blacks to the margin. To help all the races understand their place and equality in the society the Furious Five put the ideas across in their song:

Stanza 3: If you feel you are somebody
Be proud and show it
Cause everybody is somebody
And ya know it
It doesn't matter if you're black, white or Chinese
Livin' in the States or resides overseas
You and I are special, same as everyone else
And if you don't believe me
You're only cheating yourself
Cause we all got a purpose in life to achieve

We underlined the last line of the stanza above to show Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five emphasis on the importance of everyone. The track also chastises the whites and contends that:

Stanza 4: You got wealth, good health, and you're stuck on yourself
Let me tell you that you're better than nobody else
Cause you got no self esteem so I'm richer
And when you leave this earth you can't take money witcha
So play your dumb game
Call me out my name
But there's nothing you can do that could make me feel shame
We're all created equal
We live and we die

The "stuck on yourself" suggest that the whites have a high opinion of themselves, that is seeing themselves as the dominant group in power and those with access to good things of life. The irony of this according to the artists is that the whites do not have self esteem; as such they define the blacks in relation to the whites. The artists contend that blacks and whites are created equal, they live and die which are intrinsic to life. Thus, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five posit that the white should not judge the blacks based on their skin colour when they state that "don't judge a book by its cover/cause its never what it seems". The main idea of this song is that it's a wake up call for black to acknowledge, respect, and embrace their heritage.

The language employed is a combination of Black English (Ebonics) and Standard English. This feature runs through the song and can be seen as language appropriation by the postcolonial theorist.Contraction of "with you" to "withcha" and "I'm going to" to "gotta":

> And when you leave this earth you can't take money witcha
> And I feel I gotta scream.

Thus, from the aforementioned, appropriating which is one of the features of postcolonial discourse is employed. By appropriating the language of the whites or Standard English, the artists are able to counter the dominant discourse by describing their own realities. Other examples seen in the track includes:

> So when you walk by, yo don't act cold blooded
> Cause it just ain't fair
> Whether you here or gone
> Ya know it

The misrepresentation of blacks in Western writing was to keep the blacks in a subservient position or role. This misrepresentation has supported western effort to continue to justify the discrimination and oppression of blacks. As such rap music can be seen as the medium through which blacks re-represent their culture, history and identity. Neal (1999) contends that rap music can be viewed as a mode of social resistance. This means that rap represents a counter narrative which is one of the aims of postcolonial theory. This is obvious in the song when the artists state that "you were meant to be somebody from the second you're born". This statement counters or rejects the dominant belief that the "other" or "blacks" were inferior. Frantz Fanon's idea of resistance towards domination centres on a deliberate search for cultural identity. Reactions towards oppression in marginalized societies have always been expressed via songs, writing, and direct protests. Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five like other rap artistes' have made a case for African Americans by "singing back" to assert their ethnic or cultural identity.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Rap music from the foregoing can be seen as an avenue of projecting African American ethnic identity. As the study has demonstrated, African American ethnic identification have emerged from an identification which is steeply rooted in a perceived commonality of oppression, suppression and marginalization in America. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are expressive about the problems of African Americans; their music makes some underlying statements about the relationship between African Americans, racism, economic, political and social justice. Their music refers to their conscious responses and reactions to the reality of blacks, which they share as well. Their songs demonstrate the power of rap as a dynamic social text which is used to project the voice of the voiceless. Rap music proves to be the powerful expression of the African-American predicament as well as the expression of their ethnic identity. In this context, rap artists can be considered as the "leaders of social movement who pull and shape identity in their community and foment action for social change" (Trapp 2005). Thus the rap artist provides a critical commentary on the social, cultural and economic issues in orderto draw attention to the plight of blacks in America.

CHAPTER FOUR

AESTHETIC AND STYLISTIC FEATURES IN *"NEW YORK NEW YORK", "SURVIVAL MESSAGE II" AND "ITS NASTY".*

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Basic to the African American music are unique elements that have been transported to the Americas by enslaved blacks as part of their oral tradition. These elements remain a prominent part of African American musical genres. These elements include rhythm, repetition, and call and response e.t.c. One of the goals of postcolonial discourse is foregrounding traditions and culture of the colonized countries. There are proponents who plead for decolonization, and maintain that blacks must assert the traditions of their culture, recover and rejuvenate their past in order not to be wholly consumed by foreign cultures. On the other side are those who believe in hybridity. They believe that culture always changes. Change is the condition for art remaining as art.

From the foregoing, the latter is in tune with the African American experience. We are dealing with a group of people who were first shipped to the Americas and stripped of their cultural vestiges. But then enslaved blacks were able carve a new identity and culture which was distinct from that of the slave masters. This could be seen as a hybrid culture. The new culture could thus, be seen as a way of resisting the imposed culture that was forced on enslaved blacks. By creating or forging a new identity or culture that was denied to the blacks, this challenge the view that the Europeans had against the blacks. The view that blacks has no historical monument, or literature. Since music is an important aspect of African American lives, this chapter aims to show that African Americans have perpetuated their ethnic identity using musical expression.

4.1 CALL AND RESPONSE TECHNIQUE IN "NEW YORK NEW YORK"

"New York New York" is a single that was released in 1983 and was also compiled under the album *Message from Beat Street* in 1994. The tempo of the song is moderate and is about eight minutes long. The song "New York New York" is set in New York and discusses the perils of being black, poor and dealing with the white in control and power. The song is rendered through three parts; chorus, hook and stanzas. The song is performed in a narrative style to bring forth the differences between blacks and whites in New York which is a microcosm of the United States. The track also shows that racism is one of the tools that was used to create cultural and economic segregation by the Whites in the United States. Contrary to the belief that America is constitutive of various groups of people that each considers itself as an important part of the United States, the fact is that some ethnic groups are considered inferior. This is aptly captured in the chorus and hook of the song:

Chorus: New York, New York, big city of dreams
And everything in New York ain't always what it seems
You might get fool if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law and I know my way around

Hook: Too much, too many people too much aha hah
Too much, too many people too much, rrrrah

The chorus and the hook describe the environment in New York as a façade that fools people from out of town because it is not what it seems. This can be linked to the American dream which proclaims that all men are created equal with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Ironically it's the opposite that is being experienced by the blacks.

One of the aesthetic features that runs through the track is the call and response technique. The artists sing the chorus together and also take turn in singing the stanzas. This technique mirrors the postcolonial tenet that rejects western values in favor of non western culture. The

use of this technique suggests a rejection of the constraint placed on blacks from practicing their cultures and speaking African languages.

Albert Memmi (1967) has noted that the tendency to classify people as the "other" is rooted in colonialism. The "other" writes Memmi is characterized by the colonizing elite as negativity or void, everything the colonizer is not. The colonized "other" is an anonymous collectivity, lacking in will and power to create its own identity. Whites tend to treat blacks as other, relegate them to the margins, and subsequently ignore them. Memmi's view can be seen in the first and fourth stanzas of the song:

Stanza 1: A castle in the sky one mile high
Built to shelter the rich and greedy
Rows of eyes disguised as windows
Looking down on the poor and needy
Miles of people marchin up the avenue
Doin what they gotta do just to get by
But I'm damn sure poor and I don't know why

From the first stanza it is obvious that blacks are considered the other in America. The word castle is a reflection of the disparity between slaves and their masters' during slavery and this is also the reality in the twentieth century. Slaves were relegated to the slave quarters and their progenies were pushed to the ghettos. The shelter built for the white is referred to as "castle". This points out that the whites are in control, while the blacks are powerless and are at the margin of the society. The word "castle" brings to mind the postcolonial concept of centre and margin.

The lines above are a critique of Reagan's administration in the 80s. Reagan's administration objectives pushed the blacks out of the picture and it resulted to the economic hardship suffered by many blacks. It is important to note that Reagan's administration did not cause the problems of the blacks in America, but rather increased the problems on ground. For instance, in the early eighties, Reagan's government lowered taxes in order to revitalize the slumping economy inherited from Jimmy Carters administration (Edward, 2004). By

lowering taxes and allowing more wealth to remain in private sector, spending will increase, and wealth will trickle down to the masses. Reagan hoped to achieve this by lowering taxes which lessened the burden on the upper and middle classes. By 1984, after several years of lowered taxes, conservatives had claimed victory in achieving Reagan's objectives while many liberals dissented and testifying to high unemployment, poverty, and the increasing disparity in wealth across America (ibid).

It is vital to note that the reduction in taxes means a drastic shortage of resources in meeting the social challenges liberalism has sought to undertake welfare, housing, and other federal programs and these were popular in black communities as they were the beneficiaries of such program. As the rich benefited from the lowered taxes, poverty escaladed for the already marginalized poor in the inner city in America. Recession pushed the blacks further to the fringes of society making the American dream elusive for blacks in America.

While the first stanza draws a picture of the disparities between the whites and blacks, the fourth stanza goes further to show the effect of the segregation and marginalization of blacks in America. The segregation between blacks and whites is captured with word such as "skyscraper" and "ghetto". The ghetto which is at the margin of the society suggests or indicates a positionality. This positionality according to Ashcroft et al (2007) is the limitations of a subject's access to power. This limitation in the context of the African American experience involves various forms of oppression and exclusion from the mainstream American society. This is captured through these lines "when over at the ghetto I'm living in hell/ nobody loves me nobody cares/ I dream about life but I'm living in a nightmare". The effect of being excluded and oppressed is captured in the underlined word below:

Stanza 4: Stand at a skyscraper reaching into heaven
When over at the ghetto I'm livin in hell

Just play ball or be an entertainer
Cause niggaz like me can't read too well
Nobody loves me nobody cares
I dream about life but I'm living in a nightmare
Paranoid, schitzo, set back, snow bound, bad news
Psycho, heart attack, break down

From the ongoing, it is glaring that whites created blacks as a separate segment of the United States through enslavement and segregation. Blacks continued to face marginalization even after emancipation as they were faced with economic segregation and exploitation. The consequences of being pushed to the margins of the society are discussed by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. The artists used the narrative style in presenting experiences that is common to them and the African Americans. The artists narrate the story of the man on ledge who wanted to commit suicide because he lost his job and his wife left him. They also narrate the story of the man eating dog food out of a can because he could not afford meat. The different stories suggest or describe the quality of life that was/is common for the blacks in the ghetto. For instance, the song describes the happenings on the forty second street:

On the 42nd street, lookin for some action
Women standin on the corner sellin satisfaction
One young punk just leanin on the fence
Tryin to make a dollar out of fifty cents
Really is a prankster tried to be a gangster
Real big wheel when a gun is in his hands
Just did a stick up just got picked up
One dead punk killed by the man

Other aesthetic features that are obvious in the song include alliteration, assonance, internal and end rhyme. The combination of these poetic devices in the above lines is to enhance the sound effect of the song and also to place more emphasis on what is obtainable in the ghetto. Thus, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are calling into question the American dream which for the African Americans seem elusive. This is aptly captured in the lines below:

What you watch on TV tells you what life is supposed to be
But when you look outside, the only thing you see

Is the poverty stricken reality, huh
Abandoned places angry faces
Much hate and hunger throughout the races

Another aesthetic feature noticeable is the use of the African American vernacular English. This suggests a rejection of the proper way of speaking which the whites favor. This is illustrated in the lines below:

*contraction of going to gonna----- a man on the ledge says he's gonna jump

*the past seen------ I seen him eatin dog food out of a can

*contraction of want to wanna-----I don't wanna be kissin nobody's behind

The use of African American vernacular English in rap song suggest that blacks are reasserting their own cultural or ethnic identities.

4.2 IMPROVISATION AND INNOVATION IN "SURVIVAL MESSAGE II"

"Survival" can be seen as a sequel to "the message". It was released in 1983 and similarly compiled under the album titled *Message from the Beat Street* in 1994. The song "Survival Message II" continues with the concerns and themes of "The Message". While "The Message" (1982) paints the poverty stricken reality of the blacks in the ghetto, on the other hand, "Survival Message II" (1983) portrays that the life of the blacks is rife with the problems of survival in America, of surviving the harsh treatment or condition they encounter as a result of racism.

The African American struggle in America is one that is filled with the aim of surviving in an environment that is hostile and harsh. The ghetto is usually regarded as a menace to be shunned but for the minorities or marginalized it is where they live, and where they learn to survive the racist and economic inequalities they suffer at the hands of the whites. The notion

of blackness for the whites conjures the image of the ghetto. Dominant discourse in America are constructed through history texts, news report and presented by those in power. The dominant discourse or voice places the blacks and other ethnic minorities and the ghettos at the margin. Rap music became an avenue or the tool that blacks used in challenging those discourses and also to reveal a different history that differs from the perspectives of the whites. As such rap can be considered as a counter discourse to the prevailing discourse on African Americans and the ghetto.The song describes the ghetto as a place solely governed by the need to survive:

Survival, only the strong can survive
It's called survival, only the strong can survive
It's called survival, in order to stay alive
It's called survival, survival, survival, survival.

An aesthetic element found in this song is that of repetition. The word survival which is repeated in each line of the chorus emphasizes the struggle of blacks in America and the harsh reality of their existence.The chorus is repeated several times in the song to mark the end of each stanza. This is reflective of the call and response technique. The successive repetition of the chorus enhances the meaning or makes obvious the predicament of the blacks described in each of the stanzas. The repetition of "survival" also adds to the rhythmic cadence of the sound. The ultimate idea of this song is that white America has demonized and ostracized black Americas. The whites have no concern for the blacks and the result of this is very much obvious in the chorus which is repeated at intervals to reinforce the various experiences each of the stanzas is describing. The artists also used alliteration, internal and end rhyme in the chorus to buttress the fact that the life of an African American is all about surviving the harsh conditions of their environment. The aforementioned poetic devices are also obvious in stanza 2 of the song:

In jail they got a game and they call it survival
They run it down to you on your first arrival

They tell you what you can and what you cannot do
So if you ever go to jail watch your mm mm

The jail can be seen as a metaphor and a jail is a place where people are kept when they have been arrested and being punished for a crime. One could state that Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are equating the African American marginalization/ oppression to being confined to a jail. Black slaves brought to the Americas were relegated to slave quarters, and were stripped of any cultural vestiges. Slave masters made them adopt western culture which was at odds with the slave culture. Thus, the rules given to blacks can be seen as the "game" mentioned in the above lines. It is this rules that slaves used so as to survive the harsh treatment they received at the hands of the slave master. It is not different with the slave progenies, as African Americans were also pushed to the margin of the American society.

To justify the conception of a superior and inferior people, Charles Darwin 1859's publication on "origin of species" was used. Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that "the concept of the survival of the fittest, used to explain the evolution of species in the natural world, was supplied enthusiastically to the human world. It became a very powerful belief that indigenous people were inherently weak and therefore, at some point would die out" (Smith, 1999). To Smith, this was used mainly as an excuse for the dominant to have a reason to oppress those that differ from them. From the phrase inherently weak, Smith means the uncivilized, culturally undeveloped, and backward, such as those from Africa. Thus, blacks were in need of intervention according to the west. Blacks were transported as slaves to the Americas under deplorable conditions. Rap music thus, echoes the slave experience of the past relating similar experiences in the contemporary period to those of slave ancestors. In real terms therefore, the only difference is that they are a modern generation of African American slaves. The song "message II (survival)" clearly outlines the African American experiences to emphasize the continuity between the racist attitudes of the past and those that

African Americans are still experiencing today. For instance, the third and fourth stanzas outline the economic and social segregation between the blacks and whites in America:

Stanza 3: I went looking for a job every day last week
But it turned into a crazy game of hide and seek
Because every place that I seemed to look, a job wasn't there
I might as well apply for food stamps of welfare

Stanza 4: Like Hercules, you body is strong
But your mind is like the devil
Your ideals are wrong
You hurt people's feelings and mess with their minds
Didn't have the nerve to call me brother and wear the peace sign
The young and the old they all hate your sight
Because of people like you
They're scared to work at night

Lack of employment was prevalent among blacks, and this is partly because most never get the quality education that could gain them employment in higher levels or post. So most apply for food stamp or welfare according to the song because they could not afford to meet their basic needs. The fourth stanza shows the antipathy the blacks have for the whites. This antipathy is as a result of their experience at the hands of the white. The track made use of simile which reinforces the artists view about the whites. The song indirectly refers to the white as the devil whose strength is likened to Hercules the Greek or Roman mythological hero. End rhyme is obvious in the lines above which places emphasis on the subject matter and also add to the beauty of the song.

Narrativising is another important aspect of rap songs. Rappers narrate the happenings that concern them and the African American community. These songs paint the different faces and standards of living among the African Americans. The song depicts and addresses the issues that occur as a result of racism in America. The song gives a social context to the ghetto and demonstrates the extent to which some African Americans are grappling with the

stereotype imposed on them. Rap music reveals the aspect of life overlooked in dominant discourse, for instance in literature, news e.t.c..

Lyrically the song is made up of several rhyming verses illustrating and describing the pressures and constraints faced by blacks in America. These verses are interspersed by the chorus. It describes the various problems faced by blacks in their everyday life: joblessness, racism, economic recession and depression, drug sale and abuse, black on black crime e.t.c. The song dares blacks to rethink their lives and think positively.

Another aesthetic feature found in the song is improvisation and innovation. This refers to the creation of a piece of song spontaneously. The artists picked from their old song and changed few words from the original lines. The lines were taken from "the message" which was previously released in 1982, and imputed into "message II (survival)". The lines below illustrate this:

"the message" -a child is born with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through

"message II (survival)" - Remember, a child is born with no state of mind
He was blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through

The improvisation is seen in the first two lines of "message II (survival)". It starts the line with "remember", which lays emphasis on the predicament of the African American child who is born into a hostile environment. The African American child has always had to live with the stigma of being black and second rate. God is portrayed in an ambiguous way, as God is stated to be smiling and frowning too. It is glaring that the artists acknowledge God's compassion to the African American plight, but at the same time shows that the presence of God makes no difference to their predicament.

The ghettoes are neglected by the government; as such the future prospect of an African American child is severely hampered by the surrounding ghetto, poor education and housing facility, drug abuse or addiction, high rate of crime, unemployment, racism and segregation. All these hamper the child's development. The reference to the fact that the child is born tabula rasa, suggests the child grows in this unpleasant environment, thus the child see no way out except to turn to crime.

4.3 BRAGGADOCIO AND TOAST IN "IT'S NASTY"

"It's Nasty" was released in 1981 and later compiled under the album *Message from the Beat Street*in 1994. The tempo and rhythm of the song is moderate. One noticeable feature of this song is braggadocio. Braggadocio meansself-praising in a rap, and it is similar to the word 'bragging'. This could be thought of as putting oneself or stating one's superiority over another. This is done by making or stating that one's rap is the best and original. Original in the sense that the artist is true to the street and the artist's songs capture what goes on in the street. The self-praise can be exaggerated in order to seem more superior, and consequently, win the battle over the less-superior opponent.Braggadocio is tied to confidence; a rapper expresses lyrical skills and confidence by bragging about wealth, power, and importance within the community. It reinforces the identity of the artist.

In the early days of rap, the practice of bragging about the skills or abilities of a rapper grew out of the competitive traditions of toasting and signifying. This is found in this song and brings to mind the creativity that is involved in rap music aside of the content. That is the way the rapper manipulates words which jars or calls the listeners attention towards the way the words are used to show the rappers' skills in the art of rapping. The song starts up by announcing that it's time for the Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five MCs to show their

rapping skills. This introduction alludes to the competitive nature of the art between different rap groups.

The MCs boast about their rapping skills which have made them popular, they also brag that they've been called "lords of afford" which points to their wealth. This is illustrated in the lines below:

We wanna rock you
We're the kings of swing
The tools set to rule
The deans of clean inside the cool school
We're the chiefs of relief
Contain my wild beast
The finesse of the west the master piece of the east
Hah, the boards have called us the lords of afford
The ones with the platinum vocal chords
We're the sires of desires
With the magical might
The monarch of the dark and the knight of light
We advertise
In the exercise that we energise
The young ladies thighs
Cause all the fly guys
Natures will rise before their eyes
We're the earl of the world
And the heir of flair
The duke of dare, the mayor of debonair
Got fine grape wine
Can dance and dine
Got a first class female
Oh so fine

The lines above are rendered or performed using the call and response technique or pattern. The rappers take turns in reciting more than a line. The call and response pattern employed here adds to the beauty of the sound because of the rhythm created by the rappers taking turn in singing the lines out. Internal and end rhymes visible in the lines above also add to the beauty of the song.

The inclusion of encoded messages in their narratives regarding sexual prowess is portrayed through a display of lyrical skills. Each of the rappers also boasts about his ability as skilled

rappers. One of the beauty of this song include the use of rhyming scheme, simile, repetitive and alliterative word play which points to how skilful the groups are in employing literary techniques or their poetic ability:

Scopio: I'm seeing this girl that I just adore
I'm seeing this girl that what I never saw before
The way she was swaying and doing the swing
I had to let her know just about my thing
I'm the M.R NE-double S
Come on fly girl and put me to a test
And I'll rock you until you give me the rest
I keep on it until you start to fess

Raheem: Raheem in your life what more can you ask
I think you can't think of a greater task
I make my light shine on your cloudy days
You can surf if you want to on my wave
I caress your soft body on those mellow nights
A continuous thing to the morning light
It's reality it's not a dream
It's nothing less than the best when it's from Raheem

Cowboy: Well I'mma cowboy and I' the real mccoy
I'm chocolate all over like almond joy
Bowlegged cool brother and you will agree
On top of the world for the ladies to see
Gonna hip gonna hop rock the spot
Gonna make everybody wanna rock rock rock
Gonna do it to the east wanna do it to the west
Gonna make you relax right upon your chest

Another aesthetic feature that runs through the song is the use of African American vernacular English. This is discernible in the lines above. The use of this variation of Standard English suggests that the rap song is intended to remind blacks of their roots.

Toast is one of the aesthetic features noticeable in this song. Rappers not only glorify themselves, but also glorify the DJ. Toasting is used to praise the skills of the DJ and this is illustrated below:

He's Grandmaster
He cuts faster

With the furious, serious, and ever so mysterious five that's rocking the house

The MCS went further to describe the DJ's skill on turntable to create sounds that the MCs rap to:

Grandmaster Flash is willing and able
He's the king of cuts on two turntables
He's Grand, Grand, the master man
He's so nice with his two hands
He don't need no band
Rocks fourty five's and thirty three's
Rock boys, men, women, and young ladies
He can slice so precise it's almost fun
And he makes better love than a mint makes money

This song captures the beginning of rap music in the late 1970s when different Mcs converge to compete and boast about their skills. This art is steeped in the oral expression of toast, the dozens and signifying. Djs search for Mcs to use the microphone when playing sounds. Battling became a way the Mcs prove their skills to the Djs. When competing, the mc who is able to perform better is declared the winner. The battling is obvious in this song through the way Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five describe and boast about their artistic skills.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The songs analysed could be seen as an artistic response to the neglect of African Americans in America. The songs captured the period of Reagan's administration in the eighties. Reagan's administration sidelined the blacks and uplifted the whites. This reinforces the already existing gap in economic, political and social conditions between the blacks and whites. As poverty rose in the black communities, a new culture was born out of this environment. That is, rap (hip hop) germinated and became a way that the African Americans used in protesting against marginalization.

Rap artists, besides narrating the experiences of African Americans also make use of black musical traditional elements such as improvisation, repetition and call and response. These unique elements tend to recur in rap songs and it is a way of preserving African American cultural heritage. The use of these features in rap music suggests the continuous and ever ubiquitous consciousness of the African American ethnic identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 CONCLUSION

This study examines the relationship between African American ethnic identity and rap music with particular attention on the songs that characterize this genre. The study illustrates that through the themes as well as the stylistic features of the selected songs; rap songs are created and consequently used to express a sense of ethnic identity because rap artists tend to draw from their own experiences principally from the urban environment. Through the analysis of the selected songs, the study confirms that art reflects the society as the songs portray the history of race relation and the African American experiencesin the United States. As illustrated in the study, Rap can be viewed as a collective expression of black experiences in urban America where economic and social segregation against blacks has been the norm for ages.

African American ethnic identity is formed by sharing a common history as well as the gap that exists between blacks and whites in America. From the analyzed songs titled; “The Message”, “Beat Street”, “Whitelines”, “New York New York”, Message II Survival”, “It’s Nasty”, “What If”, and “I am Somebody”, the various issues portrayed bring to light the reasoning thatAfrican American ethnic identity is predicated on race, colour, socio-economic background and class.This point out that African Americans makes use of songs to negotiate and define their identity within the social, cultural, political and economic experiences in the United States. This is because enslaved blacks were stripped of virtually all their cultural attributes, as such new culture, language and identity was created out of their struggle in America.

The study adopts postcolonial theory and argues that rap music is a counter culture to the racial injustice and social neglect of the African Americans in America. Through the

exploration of the songs the research has been able to portray that rap resonates the tenets of postcolonial theory as it examined rap as a way of resisting, responding and reasserting the African American ethnic identity in view of the overhanging colonial environment that blacks subsist in America. The rap songs, "The Message", "Beat Street", "Whitelines" and "Message II Survival", reflect the conditions of African American ethnic group and convey their struggle by blacks for survival in the face of America's abandonment of the descendants of enslaved blacks.Rap songs by appropriating diverse forms of the English languagebecame an extraordinary tool of social protest against the injustice ofAmerican institutions. In this way they comment on the state of blacks and the ghettos in America. Thus, the study confirms that rap songs are used as a medium to reflect the experiences and predicaments of African Americans. It is important to note that U.S racial oppression has not only configured the blacks as the "other" but has succeeded in constrainingthe America-ness of the African American citizen. This double consciousness of neither being fully accepted as American is tied to the ways that African Americans have constructed their cultural difference both within and against the dominant culture. The evolution of African American cultural practices continues to function as a key marker which differentiates blacks from whites. These cultural practices as the rap songs have shown assert markedly the ethnic identity of African Americans.

Throughout their history, African-Americans have used music and songs as forms of resistance against oppression, suppression as well as racial and economic segregation. Preserving characteristic features rooted in the African oral tradition and the acquired cultural behavior of the new world, African-American music and songs can be considered as a form of expression of the African-American collective consciousness. Through these means, displaced blacks in America and many generations of African-Americans later managed to preserve their cultural heritage. The innovative character of African-American musical

expression allowed them to recreate from their original musical forms and songs patterns retaining in the process some of the characteristic features of the music brought from their traditional and African cultures. These features include repetition, improvisation or innovation, call-and-response, toasting and signifying. These features can be found in African-American music genres including the rap genre and it is discernible in the rap songs "Message II Survival", "New York New York", "It's Nasty". Thus, this dissertation observed that by using these features of the cultural heritage that originated in the African musical expression and singing about the African American predicament, Rap music continues to be an artistic form of retelling and recalling the African-American experience from a group perspective, evincing their collective consciousness and sense of group identity, living as they are in a markedly divided and segregated American society.

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APPENDIX

THE MESSAGE

INTRO; It’s like a jungle sometimes It makes me wonder how I keep from going under

VERSE 1; Broken glass everywhere
People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don't care
I can't take the smell, I can't take the noise no more
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with the baseball bat
I tried to get away, but I couldn't get far.
Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car.

HOOK; Don’t push me cause I’m close to the edge
I’m trying not to loose my head
It’s like a jungle sometimes
It makes me wonder how I keep from going under

VERSE 2; Standin’ on the front stoop hangin’ out the window
Watchin’ all the cars go by, roarin’ as the breezes blow
Crazy lady, livin’ in a bag, eatin’ outta garbage pails
Used to be a fag- gag, said she’ll dance the tango, skip the light fandango
A zircon princess seemed to lost her senses
Down at the peep show watchin’ all the creeps
So she can tell her stories to the girls back at home
She went to the city and got so so seditty
She had to get a pimp, she couldn’t make it on her own

VERSE 3; My brother’s doin’ bad, stole my mother’s tv
Says she watches too much, it’s just not healthy
All my children in the daytime. Dallas at night
Can’t even see the game or the sugar ray fight
The bill collectors they ring my phone
And scare my wife when I'm not home
Got a bum education, double-digit inflation
I can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station
Neon king kong standin’ on my back,
can’t even turn my back Broke my sacroiliac
a mid-range migraine, cancered membrane
sometimes I think I’m goin’ insane
I swear I might hijack a plane

VERSE 4; My son said, daddy, I don't wanna go to school
Cause the teacher's a jerk, he must think I'm a fool
And all the kids smoke reefer, I think it'd be cheaper
If I just got a job, learned to be a street sweeper
Or dance to the beat, shuffle my feet
Wear a shirt and tie and run with the creeps
Cause it's all about money, ain't a damn thing funny
You got to have a con in this land of milk and honey
They pushed that girl in the front of the train
Took her to the doctor, sewed her arm on again
Stabbed that man right in his heart
Gave him a transplant for a brand new start
I can't walk through the park cause it's crazy after dark
Keep my hand on my gun cause they got me on the run
I feel like a outlaw, broke my last glass jaw
Hear them say "you want some more?" livin' on a see-saw.

VERSE FIVE: A child is born with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through
You'll grow in the ghetto livin' second-rate
And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate
The places you play and where you stay
Looks like one great big alleyway
You'll admire all the number-book takers
Thugs, pimps and pushers and the big money makers
Driving big cars, spending twenties and tens
And you wanna grow up to be just like them, huh
Smugglers, scramblers, burglars, gamblers
Pickpocket peddlers, even panhandlers
You say I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool
But then wind up droppin' outta high school
Now you're unemployed, all null and void
Walkin' round like you're pretty boy Floyd
Turned stick-up kid, but look what you done did
Got sent up for a eight-year bid
Now your manhood is took and you're a maytag
Spend the next two years as a undercover fag
Bein' used and abused to serve like hell
Till one day, you was found hung dead in the cell
It was plain to see that your life was lost
You was cold and your body swung back and forth
But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song of how
You lived so fast and died so young

BEAT STREET

Beat street
The king of beat
You see him rocking that beat from across the street
And huh huh!
Beat street is a lesson too
Because you can' let the street beat you!

Well a picture can express a thousand words
To describe all the beauty of life you give
And if the world was yours to do over
I know you'd paint a better place to live
Where the colours would swirl and the boys
and girls can grow in peace and harmony
and where murals stand on walls so grand
as far as the eyes are able to see, ho!
I never knew art till I saw your face
And there'll never be one to take your place
Cause each and every time you touch the spray paint can
Michelangelo's soul controls your hand
Then serenades of blue and red and the beauty of the rainbow fills your head
Crescendo of colors hang in tune
Man, why oh why do you have to die so soon?

Ashes to ashes and dust to dust
Where the good die young it's all thy must
Cause as life must live, death must die
And the tears shall fall from the living eye, huh!
The tear drops fall for the state of mind
Of the beautiful lady that you left behind
In love and alone, but you're dead and
She can't get you out of her head, huh!
More tears fall from all you've done
Trying to be a good father to your only son
But now who's gonna make sure that he's fed
Put a shirt on his back and a roof overhead?
Tell me who's gonna dream the impossible dream
Of the beautiful cities in the island genes?
When your works of art brought into being
All that the ghetto stopped you from seeing
Bums on the sidewalk, garbage in the street
Abandoned buildings, bricks of concrete
The ladies on the corner are selling their bodies
And everybody wants a part in that party
I'm hanging out tough, rocking late at night
Running wild in the town of neon light
You either play some ball or stand in the hall huh
You gotta make something out of nothing at all
I'm sittin' in the class room learning the rules

And it says you can't do graffiti in school
They can't be wrong in the hallowed hall
So my notebook turned into a brick wall
The heart of a lion and the courage of three
And the mind of a man much wiser than me
You're the soul of the brother who won't come back
Who died in my arms on the rail road track
Cause I'm caught in the rat race
looking for my own space there's gotta be a better place for you and me
there's pie in the sky, an eye for an eye
some people gotta die just to be free

You search for justice, what do you find?
You find just us on the unemployment line
You find just us sweating from dawn to dusk
There's no justice, there's huh, just us, ha!

Still life urban master piece
Your trademark is written on trains and walls
A million dollar gift only God released
And yet you got killed for nothing at all
So after this there'll be no more hard times
No more bad times, no more pain
No more chump change, none of that bull
Just movies, museums, and the hall of fame
So all you hip hops get on up
And lets take it to the top where we belong
Cause the age of beat street wave is here
Everybody let's sing along now c'mon
Say ho! (ho)
Say ho! (ho)
And let me know I'm rocking the microphone
Everybody say Ramo! (Ramo)
Ramo (Ramo)
Raah

A newspaper burns in the sand and the headlines say
Man destroys man!
Extra! Extra! Read all the bad news on the war for peace
That everybody will lose
The rise and fall of the last great empire
The sound of the whole world caught on fire
The ruthless struggle, the desperate gamble
The game that left the whole world in shambles
The cheat the lies the alibis
And the foolish attempt to conquer the skies
Lost in space and what is it worth, huh!
The president just forgot about earth
Spending multi billions and may be even trillions

The cost of weapons ran into zillions
There's gold in the street and diamonds under feet
And the children in Africa don't even eat
Flies on their faces, they're living like mice
And the houses in the ghetto even make the ghetto look nice huh!
The water taste funny, its forever too sunny

A fight for power
A nuclear shower
And people shout out in the darkest hour
Of sights unseen and voices unheard
And finally the bomb gets the last word
Christian killed Muslims and Germans killed Jews
Everybody's bodies is used and abused huh!

Minds are poisoned and souls are polluted
Superiority complex is deeply rooted
Leeches and lices and people got prices
Egomaniacs control thyeself righteous
Nothing is sacred and nothing is pure
So the revelation of death is our cure
Hitler and Caesar, Custer and Reagan
Napoleon, Castro, Mussolini and Begin Ghengis Khan and the Shah of Iran
Mixed with the blood of the weaker man
The peoples in terror, the leaders made the error
Cause we gotta suffer while things get rougher
And that's the reason why we got to get tougher
To learn from the past and work for the future
And don't be a slave to no computer
Cause the children of man inherits the land
And the future of the world is in your hands
And wave 'em like you just don't care
And if you belief that you are the future
Scream it and out and say 'oh yeah! (oh yeah)
Oh yeah! (oh yeah)
Raah!

WHITE LINES

Aaah, aaah, aaah, aaah)
Uhraah!
Bass!

Ooh White, White
Ooh White, White
Ooh White, White

(Ooh White Lines) Vision dreams of passion
(Blowin' through my mind) and all the while I think of you
(High fry) a very strange reaction

(For us to unwind) the more I see, the more I do
(Something like a phenomenon) Baby!
(Tellin your body to come along, but white lines blow away)
(Blow! Rock it! Blow!)

Ticket to ride, white line highway
Tell all your friends, they can go my way
Pay your toll, sell your soul
Pound for pound costs more than gold
The longer you stay, the more you pay
My white lines go a long way
Either up your nose or through your vein
With nothin to gain except killin' your brain

(Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock!)
(Blow!)

(Ahhh) Higher, baby
(Ahhh) Get higher, baby!
(Ahhh) Get higher, baby!
And don't ever come down! (Freebase!)

Rang dang diggedy dang di-dang
Rang dang diggedy dang di-dang
Rang dang diggedy dang di-dang
Diggedy dang di-dang diggedy dang di-dang

(Pipeline) pure as the driven snow
(Connected to my mind) and now I'm havin' fun, baby!
(High fry) it's getting kinda low
(Cause it makes you feel so nice) I need some one-on-one, baby!
(Don't let it blow your mind away) Baby!
(And go into your little hideaway 'cause white lines blow away)
(Blow!)

A billion magic crystals, painted pure and white
A multi-million dollars almost overnight
Twice as sweet as sugar, twice as pretty as salt
And if you get hooked, baby, it's nobody else's fault, so don't do it!

(Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock!)
Raah! (Blow!)

(Ahhh) Higher, baby
(Ahhh) Get higher, baby!
(Ahhh) Get higher, baby!
And don't ever come down! (Freebase!)

(Don't you get too high) don't you get too high baby!
(Turns you on) you really turn me on and on

(When you gonna come down) my temperature is risin'
(When the thrill is gone) no, I don't want you to go

A street kid gets arrested, gonna do some time
He got out three years from now just to commit more crime
A businessman is caught with 24 kilos
He's out on bail and out of jail
And that's the way it goes
Raah!

(Kane! Sugar! Kane! Sugar! Kane!)

Athletes rejected, governors corrected
Gangsters, thugs and smugglers are thoroughly respected
The money gets divided
The women get excited
Now I'm broke and it's no joke
It's hard as hell to fight it, don't buy it!

(Freeze! Haha ha ha! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock!)

Raah! (Blow!)

(Ahhh) Get higher, baby
(Ahhh) Get higher, girl!
(Ahhh) Get higher, baby!
C'mon!
Raah!

(White Lines) Vision dreams of passion
(Blowin' through my mind) and all the while I think of you
(High Fry) a very strange reaction
(For us to unwind) the more I see, the more I do
(Something like a phenomenon) Baby!
(Tellin your body to come along, but white lines blow away)

Little Jack Horner sitting on the corner
With no shoes and clothes
This aint funny, but he took his money
And sniffed it up his nose

(Hey man, you wanna cop some blow?)
(Sure, what you got, dust, flakes or rocks?)
(I got China White, Mother of Pearl, Ivory Flake, What you need?)
(Well yeah, well let me check it out man, just let me get a freeze)
(Go ahead man, stuff I got should kill ya!)
(Yeah man th-that's that's raw, wuh)

(Freeze! Haha ha ha! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock!
Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock! Freeze! Rock!)

WHAT IF

What if hip hop was never born yo
No Herc, no Flash, no band, no change yo
No Djs, no grab, no breakers, no Mc
What would the state of dope world truly be?
No throw your hands, no screaming, no noise, no Djs cutting
No b-boys, no b-girls, no graffiti, no nothing
If hip hop was never born
Let me make this clear
Just the thought of it definitely brings me tears

Stanza 1: it's not about the salary it's all about reality
And hip hop is the reality that creates all these salaries
Hip hop, hip hop, hip hop
Its in the academies
Hauled from the streets of the hood of every family
But what if hip hop didn't exist?
There wouldn't be this
There wouldn't be Chris
Or a Public Enemy with a black power fist
No Queen Latifa, no Will Smith either
There would oonly be tight jeans, tight suits and black sneakers
No tango hats either, no bandana headdress
No tv's in the headrest
We would be a big mess, trust me
Drew it, without rap I'd be saying this in country music
We be no stars, imagine b-boying over acoustic guitars
Not the sixtenn bars
Feel me
The art of sampling as well as cutting and scratching
It's all ours
But really think about it, feel me

Stanza 2: So what if hip hop was never born?
Nnever known?
Never forever wrong
Never critiquing our songs?
What if hip hop was never here?
Never that flavor in your ear
Never that thing that make you want to say oh yeah
No street millionaires, no billionaires
No Russell, no Diddy, no Wayne, no chamillionaire
Let me get this clear, today you have a real choice
Because of hip hops' existence
You have a real voice
But what if hip hop never came around to the boogie down
Never touched Herc and it touched another sound
You wouldn't know about James Brown

Pull in the funkdelic, the radio
And still have a play in the sound
It's like wearing the same gown as a model
Stepping off the runway and go eat at Mcdonalds
We was the models
And society was Mcdonalds
Complete with a presidential clown McRonalds
Really

Stanza 3: Now that would be something
No scratching no cutting
Now listen
No cars driving by with the boomin' systems
No prison coz non of us would be in 'em
No one would be advertising that rap to our children
Sure, there be murder, and thugs and drugs
But they be on the low and hardly heard of
Except if you watch the news, see
If there was no hip hop in society
Then there would be fewer alternative views
See we not about to lose
Real hip hop is like real estate
Its never going to move
I'd be singing the blues literally
If I didn't acknowledge and cultivate the hip hop living in me
So what's it going to be I asked
Hip hop wasn't even supposed to last
So I gotta laugh when I look at Flash
Yeah, Grandmaster Flash is on the tracks
But where would we be without the cut and the scratch
So I ask

I AM SOMEBODY

Stanza 1: Hey people, we got a little something that we wanna tell you all
So listen, understsand
YoGod made one no better than the other

Every girl becomes a woman
Every boy a man
While you're livin' in your mansion
Driving big cars
There's another on the street
Cold sleepin' on the ground
So when you walk by, yo don't act cold blooded
'Cause it just ain'tfairr to kick a man when he is down

Chorus: Cause he is somebody
Like I am somebody

You are somebody
Like I am someone.

Stanza 2: whether you're here or gone
Right or you're wrong, you were meant
To be somebody the second you're born
Don't criticize and knock one another
It ain't really that hard to just be a brother
So be good speak up
Don't wait for it to happen
Life is passing you by and homeboy you're cold knappin'
Don't get hung up on what you're not
Be proud of what you are and whatever you got
'Cause it's a cold cruel world causing kids to cry
If you're hangin' your head, cold kiss it goodbye
Stand up for your heritage, rejoice in that fact
Whether you are red, white, tan, yellow, brown or black.

Stanza 3: There are fireman, bankers, messengers, preachers, brokers, policeman,
Executitves, teachers, journalists, janitors, architects, doctors, restaurants workers, nurses,
Chief rockers
If you feel you are somebody
Be proud and show it
Cause everybody is somebody
And ya know it
It doesn't matter if you're black, white or Chinese
Livin' in the States or resides overseas
You and I are special, same as everyone else
And if you don't believe me
You're only cheating yourself
Cause we all got a purpose in life to achieve
That's a fact, and here's another that you better believe

Stanza 4: You got wealth, good health, and you're stuck on yourself
Let me tell you that you're better than nobody else
Cause you got no self-esteem so I'm richer
And when you leave this earth you can't take money witcha
So play your dumb game
Call me out my name
But there's nothing you can do that could make me feel shame
We're all created equal
We live and we die
So when you try to bring me down
I keep my head up high
Don't judge a book by its cover
'Cause it's never what it seems
Now I know what I'm sayin' and I feel I gotta scream

New York New York

New York New York, big city of dreams
And everything in New York ain't always what it seems
You might get fooled if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law and I know my way around

Too much, too many people, too much (aha-ha)
Too much, too many people, too much, Raaah!

A castle in the sky, one mile high
Built to shelter the rich and greedy
Rows of eyes, disguised as windows
Looking down on the poor and the needy
Miles of people, marching up the avenue
Doin' what they gotta do, just to get by
I'm living in the land of plenty and many
But I'm damn sure poor and I don't know why

Too much, too many people, too much
Too much, too many people, too much!

A man's on a ledge, says he's gonna jump
People gather round, said, "He won't he's just a chump"
'Cause he lost his job, then he got robbed
His mortgage is due and his marriage is through
He says he ain't gonna pay no child support
Because the bitch left him without a second thought
He got nothing to eat, no shoes on his feet
She even left his clothes out in the street
He keeps hearing noises when he's at home
He always hears voices when he's all alone
His wife took the kids, the car and the crib
In this man's world, so much for Women's Lib

New York New York big city of dreams
But everything in New York ain't always what it seems
You might get fooled if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law, and I know my way around

Down in the Village, you might think I'm silly
But you can't tell the women from the men sometimes
They're sugar and spice and everything nice
But when you get 'em home ain't no telling what you find
Right next door is a little old man
I seen him eating dog food out of a can
He says, "I got to eat, when I can't afford meat
I barely can stand, on my own two feet
I got a bad habit and I just can't break it
Something's on my mind and I just can't shake it

I need some time, and I want some space
I gotta get away from the human race"

Too much, too many people, too much (aha-ha)
Too much, too many people, too much! Raaah!

Staring at a skyscraper reaching into heaven
When over in the ghetto I'm livin in hell
Just play ball or be an entertainer
'Cause niggaz like me can't read too well
Nobody loves me, nobody cares
I dreamed about a life but I'm livin in a nightmare
Paranoid schizo, set back, snowbound
Bad news psycho, heart attack, breakdown!

Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh
Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh
Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh
Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, Huh, Hee, HUH!

If only I could sleep just ten more minutes
I might find the strength to make another day
If I didn't have to get up and do my thing
I would probably sleep my whole life away
I messed up a nice dream, somethin' bout ice cream
Whipped cream, fruits and a cherry on top
Now I gotta get up and face the world, huh
The pressure is on, It ain't never gonna stop
I sho' gotta learn to use my mind
I don't wanna be kissing nobody's behind
Just standin' on line lookin' like a jerk
Gotta get off my butt and do a full day's work
I ran into a pothole, got into a car crash
Should'a been thinking and tried to fake whiplash
A crowd gathered round, they're callin' me fat
Who you lookin at with a face like that?

New York New York big city of dreams
Everything in New York ain't always what it seems
You might get fooled if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law and I know my way around

On 42nd Street, lookin for some action
Women standing on the corner selling satisfaction
One young punk just leaning on the fence
Tryin' to make a dollar out of fifteen cents
Really is a prankster, tried to be a gangster
Real big wheel when a gun is in his hands
Just did a stick-up, just got picked up
One dead punk, killed by the man

New York New York big city of dreams
And everything in New York ain't always what it seem
You might get fooled if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law and I know my way around

Too much, too many people, too much (haha ha ha)
Too much, too many people, too much! Huh!

A baby cries and a mother dies
And the tears fall from the doctor's eyes
Because in this room, on this day
The Good Lord has giveth, and taketh away, huh!
The gift of life really means a lot
And in the ghetto your life is all you got
So you take to the streets, trying to exist
In the trash and slime of a world like this
What you watch on TV tells you what life is supposed to be
But when you look outside the only thing you see
Is the poverty stricken reality, Heh!
Abandoned places, angry faces
Much hate and hunger throughout the races
You say, "I'm grown and I'm on my own
So why don't everybody just leave me alone!"
Now you stay at home, talking on the phone
Doin ninety miles an hour in the fifty mile zone
They never took the time to tell you 'bout sex
So you had to learn about it in the discotheques
Nine months later, the baby is there
And the Nigga that did it said, "I don't care!"
You don't have enough money to help feed two
So you have to choose between the baby and you
The sky was crying, rain and hail
When you put your baby in the garbage pail
Then you kissed the kid and put down the lid
And you tried to forget what you just did, Huh!
The muffled screams of a dying baby
Was enough to drive the young mother crazy
So she ran in the rain trying to ease the pain
Huh huh, And she drove herself insane

New York New York big city of dreams
But everything in New York ain't always what it seem
You might get fooled if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law and I know my way around

Too much, too many people, too much (haha ha ha)
Too much, too many people, too much! HUH!

New York New York big city of dreams
But everything in New York ain't always what it seem

You might get fooled if you come from out of town
But I'm down by law and I know my way around

Too much, too many people, too much (haha ha ha)
Too much, too many people, too much

MESSAGE II SURVIVAL

Survival, only the strong can survive
It's called survival, only the strong can survive
It's called survival, in order to stay alive
It's called survival, survival, survival, survival.
Stanza 1: they smile in your face and they talk behind your back
And when you get the story its never exact
Some say, they're your friends but they really are not
Because they are only out to try and get what you've got

Stanza 2: In jail they got a game and they call it survival
They run it down to you on your first arrival
They tell you what you can and what you cannot do
So if you ever go to jail watch your mm mm

Stanza 3: I went looking for a job every day last week
But it turned into a crazy game of hide and seek
Because every place that I seemed to look, a job wasn't there
I might as well apply for food stamps or welfare

Stanza 4: Like Hercules, you body is strong
But your mind is like the devil
Your ideals are wrong
You hurt people's feelings and mess with their minds
Didn't have the nerve to call me brother and wear the peace sign
The young and the old they all hate your sight
Because of people like you
They're scared to work at night

Stanza 5: The problems of the world today are bigger than life
You have recessions and depressions
Men are cheating on their wives
Babies born each morn' with parts of their bodies gone
Because of some crazy drug that their mothers was on
This country is fightin' not unitin'
Always putting each other down
Blacks and whites don't realize that they're really pink and brown
You gots gun tootin' cut-throats, stress and strife
And looking out for number one is a way of life

Stanza 6: you've got to lock all your windows
Chain up all your doors to protect what's inside
Your houses' stores

Because of the food it might be no good
Cause there's someone trying to poison the whole neighborhood
Today they found something in somebody's store
They said killed ten people and hurt four more
You can't even trust a pill to make life easier
When there's sudden death on your grocer's freezer

Stanza 7: About to lose your mind because life is hard
And yet you believe in everything but God
Those pretty women lust of money, yeah
That's alright but don't you ever forget the man with the might
Now get a hold of yourself
Man, think positive because that's definitely the only way to live
Don't let you mind flow, like water from a cup
And don't you ever let me hear you say you're giving up

Stanza 8: Remember, a child is born with no state of mind
He was blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through

IT'S NASTY
We wanna rock you
We're the kings of swing
The tools set to rule
The deans of clean inside the cool school
We're the chiefs of relief
Contain my wild beast
The finesse of the west the master piece of the east
Hah, the boards have called us the lords of afford
The ones with the platinum vocal chords
We're the sires of desires
With the magical might
The monarch of the dark and the knight of light
We advertise
In the exercise that we energise
The young ladies thighs
Cause all the fly guys
Natures will rise before their eyes
We're the earl of the world
And the heir of flair
The duke of dare, the mayor of debonair
Got fine grape wine
Can dance and dine
Got a first class female
Oh so fine

Chorus:
Hey baby, whatever you doing right girl
I just want you to always be easy and keep on shaking that thing

And I want you swinging it swinging it swingin
Tell me how now
Like dy---na—mite before it blows
Who needs a band when the beat just goes boom

He's Grandmaster
He cuts faster
With the Furious serious and ever so mysterious five that's rocking the house

And everybody say play (play)
Say play (play) well ok

People call me crazy people call me sneak
Just because I'm nasty, they call me a freak
Hehe
I am coming over, to your house tonight
I promise to you baby, that I'll do you right
I'm nasty

I wantcha4x (shake your booty)
I wantcha 4x (we want to rock you)
Just let us rock you

Scorpio: watch your girl and watch your wife
I got the kiss of death, to touch your life
Cause i am the man they call scorpio
I like fine girls that don't say no

Raheem: hey girl, grab my hand hold on tight
Don't you worry bout a thing
Raheem'll do you right
I'm a mint that's fresh, huh
A woman's pet
There ain't a thing in the world that I cant get

Kid Creale: in the history books or the picture show
It's the golden voice on your radio
I'm the rapper never printed voice in solid gold
I'm playing the role, they call me Kid Creole

Cowboy: and I'm the Romeo of the nasty show
All the ladies in the place to my hose we go
Freakin' in the den just to make you move
Cause I'm cowboy and I got the groove

As DJ Flash cuts so mean
That he wanna know your favourite jean
Is it Jordache? no!
Gloria Vanderbilt ?no!
May be it'sSassoon ?no!

How about Sergio? I don't care
Could it be Calvin Klein? No!
What is it?
Back to the bridge y'all

Everybody, shake your body
Keep movin and groovin
and screamin and shoutin and helping
us turn it out
Is everybody saying play? (play)
Say play (play) well ok.
Scopio: I'm seeing this girl that I just adore
I'm seeing this girl that what I never saw before
The way she was swaying and doing the swing
I had to let her know just about my thing
I'm the M.R NE-double S
Come on fly girl and put me to a test
And I'll rock you until you give me the rest
I keep on it until you start to fess

Raheem: Raheem in your life what more can you ask
I think you can't think of a greater task
I make my light shine on your cloudy days
You can surf if you want to on my wave
I caress your soft body on those mellow nights
A continuous thing to the morning light
It's reality it's not a dream
It's nothing less than the best when it's from Raheem

Cowboy: Well I'mma cowboy and I' the real mccoy
I'm chocolate all over like almond joy
Bowlegged cool brother and you will agree
On top of the world for the ladies to see
Gonna hip gonna hop rock the spot
Gonna make everybody wanna rock rock rock
Gonna do it to the east wanna do it to the west
Gonna make you relax right upon your chest

Grandmaster Flash is willing and able
He's the king of cuts on two turntables
He's Grand, Grand, the master man
He's so nice with his two hands
He don't need no band
Rocks fourty five's and thirty three's
Rock boys, men, women, and young ladies
He can slice so precise it's almost fun
And he makes better love than a mint makes money