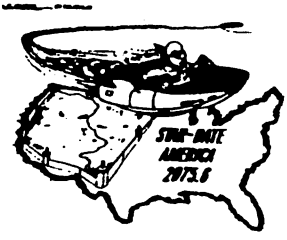
HIP HOP... A WAY OF LIFE AND A MOVEMENT!







Since the beginning of time, the merciless oppression of tyrants, dictators, and so-called "democracies", have reverberated throughout communities, villages, and entire nations, forcing the oppressed masses to unite, mobilize around their direct, immediate needs, and meet that oppression with significant, necessary, and very capable resistance, forcing us to recognize as true, the old axiom: repression breeds resistance!

Capitalism of any kind is a cancerous threat to all of humanity, and spawns oppression, racism, poverty, and death, while the "rich get richer, and the poor don't get a f@#&ing thing"-as G-Money, and Kareem Akbar so aptly recognized in **New Jack City.** And it is from the poor masses that the ruling class's systematic repression-which is necessary for it's own existence-will meet the only resistance that can crush such a dangerous and exploitative system as capitalism.

This resistance however, isn't typically the result of the oppressed masses' total consciousness or awareness of the inner-workings of the dominant system. Rather, it is the result of an entire group of people being pushed so far back into a corner, that their survival depends wholly on whether they can scratch and claw their way out of it.

In fascist Amerika-particularly in this instance-that group of people scratching and clawing, are Black, Brown, and poor White. And in fascist Amerika, after the Civil Rights, and Black Power movements were successfully repressed by the government, the next wave of resistance came with a new name: Hip Hop. However, the resistance of the Hip Hop generation-though capable of

achieving the results desired by previous generational movements-has so far proven not to be immune to the same forms of governmental repression used to quell the Civil Rights, and Black Power movements.

But there is still hope for the waning Hip Hop generation, and I believe that the Hip Hop generation can, should, and will play a decisive role in destroying the most brutal political/social/economic system that this world has ever seen.

In order to accomplish this, egos have to be checked, consciousness has to be raised, and those who live, breathe, and are Hip Hop, must be actually willing to partake in such a monumental task as destroying one mortifying culture-a culture based on the accumulation of capital, exploitation and subjugation of women, and the pillaging of planet earth-to replace it with another-a culture rooted in true egalitarian values, community cooperation, and a sincere understanding, appreciation, and respect for the only earth that we have.

THE STATE OF HIP HOP

When most of us of the Hip Hop generation think of the state of Hip Hop, we tend to think that Hip Hop has "made it". That Hip Hop has finally been given the respect that it deserves-and along with it, so have the masses of the Hip Hop generation. In a nation where the dominant narrative proclaims that material gains equal true success and happiness, we mistakenly believe that we have achieved both success and happiness. Our focus-and therefore, our message-has been less on the struggle to survive, and more on the struggle to accumulate as much capital as we possibly can. And this process of accumulating capital-within the framework of patriarchy-is what's killing ourselves, and our communities, and has completely redefined the true meaning of Hip Hop.

Real-organic-Hip Hop has been hijacked, commandeered, used and abused, and co-opted, much in the same way that previous popular social movements of resistance against empire have been-

such as the aforementioned Civil Rights, and Black Power movements.

The tricks used to stifle the Civil Rights movement, caused the frustrated youth to mobilize and create what became to be known as the Black Power movement. This youth felt a very similar disconnect from their previous generation, as the Hip Hop generation now feels from our previous generation, and as a result, have set out to take action into their own hands, hoping that it would bring them the self respect and dignity that those previous generations were also searching for-with or without the help of those previous generations.

The commitment, dedication, and raw energy of the Black Power youth, proved to be such a significant threat to the ruling class, that the government devised a genius plan that would not only mobilize and destroy the Black Power movement, but would also have dire consequences for the following generations. COINTELPRO-along with other tricks-were used by the government against the youth of the Black Power movement, and the inexperience of the young Black leaders proved to be no match for those tricks-many of which were created by seasoned psychological experts.

But instead of destroying those movements, government experts learned how to harness the energy of a frustrated youth, and redirect it, taking it's focus off of toppling a corrupt regime, and putting it onto another avenue that would seemingly lead to acquiring the much-needed and sought-after respect and dignity.

That new path to self respect and dignity encompassed such irrational methods as idolizing the "new-age gangster". I say "new-age" because all you have to do is look at it for yourself: the white gangsters in the movies-Cagney, Bogart, E.G. Robinson-became Black/Brown gangsters-Black Ceasar, Superfly, Scarface. These criminal images were given to us as perfect examples of what we should aspire to be-even though many of our on-screen Black gangsters emulated the previous on-screen white gangsters, proving that even in fiction, Blacks needed to be given an identity!

It's not a coincidence that the Black Power era coincided with-and was followed by-the Blaxploitation era in the film industry. 4

This was in perfect harmony with getting the masses to believe that the more material possession one had, the happier one would be. Consequently, the focus turned to using "gangsterism" to acquire capital. After all, in order to acquire the desired material trappings, one had to first acquire the capital needed to purchase those trappings-all in a search for self respect, dignity, and happiness.
When applying this "science" that says that money and possessions equal success and happiness, we can only conclude that to not have money and possessions means that one is a failure, and destined to remain unhappy, until they acquire such things.

With the former-positive-leadership now destroyed or adequately neutralized, new leadership was presented in the form of the "new-age" gangster/drug dealer/pimp. And with the overall conditions of Black, Brown, and poor Whites actually worsening across Amerika, it was these seeds-tricks-which bore the fruit that the newly arriving Hip Hop generation would have to contend with-with extremely limited guidance from the previous generations, as most of them had been eliminated in some way or another.

HIP HOP'S ARRIVAL

The Hip Hop generation arrived under unique circumstances. With industry jobs being shipped over-seas, and the flooding of Black communities with crack-admittedly by the CIA-a "perfect storm" was created. One where a racist president could use the Black community as a scapegoat, going after it under the pretext of a war on drugs, causing the prison boom, and cutting as many social programs as possible-with very little backlash.

Once again, Black, Brown, and poor White youth rebelled against the ruling class's onslaught, and the Hip Hop generation was the result. Though this movement created it's own leadership, it was

still doomed to suffer the same consequences of past generations-due wholly to the fact that the dominant narrative was still predicated on the "new-age" gangster, and the non-stop acquisition of capital.

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In fact, the argument could be made that the Hip Hop generation was more vulnerable than the previous generations, because the previous generations-Civil Rights, and Black Power-were already aware of the inner-workings of empire. But learning from their mistakes, the ruling classes won the war of attrition with the Black Power, and Civil Rights movements, while at the same time creating a poisoned culture for the next generation, that would eventually nullify any revolutionary potential. A culture of greed, distrust, disunity, and competition-all within the paradigm of capitalist patriarchy!

So while the FBI's COINTELPRO worked on the past generations, at least those generations had a fighting chance **before** COINTELPRO went into effect. The Hip Hop generation had no such opportunity, being as though they were born into an already well-rooted, systematic, and-by this time-more formal version of COINTELPRO.

As a consequence, our role models weren't the likes of Kwame Ture, or Malcom X. For every Assata Shakur, there was a Foxxy Brown. For every George and Jonathon Jackson; every Russell Maroon Shoats, there was a Scarface, or a Superfly.

The fascist Amerikan elites were successfully guiding and shaping the thinking habits and mentalities of a new and very naive Hip Hop generation. And with the focus now solidly off of community, family, and revolution, but solidly on competition in the never ending quest to acquire capital-money-we start to see the very obvious shift in attitude action, and priorities.

Proof of the government's success in this regard, manifests itself in many aspects of the Hip Hop culture, but none more than the entertainers who chose-and still choose-to take on the monikers of past gangsters, pimps, and drug lords. Bennie Sigel, Rick Ross, 50 Cent, Freeway, etc. Of course all of these gangsters, drug dealers, and pimps have to have victims. The drug dealers have

drug addicts; gangsters have a petrified community; and pimps have the women...and even other men! Yes, even the women play a prominent role: the sex icon; the nasty chick. We'll get into that a little later.

THE COLONIZATION OF HIP HOP

Still, amongst the madness, the misinformation, the imminent curve of Hip Hop culture, there existed the "socially conscious" rapper, and other underground Hip Hoppers, who were forced underground by the emerging commercial influence on true Hip Hop. Though these Hip Hoppers weren't underground actually dodging bullets-like our comrades in the BLA and other revolutionary cadres-they were still fighting much in the same manner against a common enemy!

The message, beauty, raw sincerity, and purity of Hip Hop, couldn't be ignored, even though the Amerikan ruling class, with it's mainstream media, conspired against it wholeheartedly, and suppressed it as much as it could-to no avail. And before anybody knew it, Hip Hop culture was permeating White suburban Amerikan households. White parents did all in their power to keep it out of the hearts and minds of their children, but it was still appealing enough that those suburban white youth embraced it fully, to the point where they began to walk, talk, dress, dance, and even take on many of the same beliefs and doctrines as those in the Hip Hop community.

The fears of the ruling class were being realized literally right in front of their faces, as Hip Hop's social message threatened to engage the nation's next generational mainstream, and thus threaten the entire Amerikan empire-the same way that it was threatened by the Civil Rights, and Black Power movements! But we know that "power" responds to <u>all</u> threats.

Now here's where many of my peers in the Hip Hop generation mistake the failures of Hip Hop, as actually being successes.

The ruling class-whose very security was now under direct threat of collapsing-used it's money

and power to grasp control of the emerging Hip Hop-social-movement, and change it's direction by agreeing to embrace Hip Hop, help spread it, and take it to new heights never before imagined. All the young Hip Hoppers had to do, was sign on the dotted line!

The lack of experience amongst the young Hip Hoppers was evident, and now that the big record labels had them bound legally, record executives could now legally control what kind of music was and-more importantly-wasn't distributed to the rest of the nation. Rappers could continue to rap about anything they wanted-even the "struggle"-but nobody would ever get the chance to hear it, due to them being virtual property of empire. In fact, the ball was wholly in the court of the capitalist record labels, as they began to exert total control over the artists by telling them what they could and couldn't rap about. If they refused to submit to the demands of the executives, then not only would those struggling artists not get paid, but their music was guaranteed to never be heard-bound legally by contract.

It was a simple dilemma, with very costly repercussions: refuse to sell out, and starve; or sell out, and be "successful".

The ruling class knew that Hip Hop had the potential to inspire the impoverished masses to confront, and possibly destroy empire's grip on the entire world. But in dealing with armed guerilla fighters, and real revolutionary vanguard elements during the 1960s 1970s, they were sure that co-opting an unarmed, unorganized, and less hostile Hip Hop movement would be much easier. And they were right.

It was then that Hip Hop was presented to the world as a mere form of artistic expression, and representation of what the young poor Black, and Brown masses-allegedly-aspired to be: The Nino Brown; the John Gotti. And it showed the world what we-allegedly-aspired to acquire: the jewelry, cars, and women. And it even showed the world what credos we-allegedly-aspired to live

by: "Get rich or die tryin'", or in the words of AZ, "More money, more murder, more homicide". All self-destructive mantras that had real Hip Hop artists burning on the inside-but without a voice, due to them refusing to conform to the new norms of the "game".

In changing the message of Hip Hop, record executives were able to effectively change the values of an entire culture-from family, community, and egalitarian practices, to materialism, sexism, violence towards one another, and the accumulation of capital, by any means necessary! It didn't empower women, but instead continued our oppression of them, so much so, that the rapper, Nelly, had the nerve to swipe an "Amerikan Express" credit card-one of fascist Amerika's top exploitative, and capitalist branches-down the backside of a nearly naked woman in his "Tip Drill" video (Since then, I wonder how many other misguided individuals have mimicked Nelly's sordid actions!).

Now, with Hip Hop's message fully neutralized, and thus made safe to commercialize and therefore spread, it has been fully "accepted" by mainstream Amerika, and anybody can have a look or listen...for a fee!

Some may look at Hip Hop's message-with it's violence, and negativity-and rightfully assume that the content of today's Hip Hop is more of a threat than the content of yesterday's, and if this is the case, why is it now accepted in suburban white Amerika?

The fact of the matter is that white youth in suburban Amerika don't suffer from systematic discrimination, unemployment, prison, and other socially endemic restrictions exclusive to minority communities. As a result, the criminal activity being propagated in Hip Hop doesn't relate to their economic status and needs. Hip Hop is 100% entertainment to them; a fetish; a fantasy with a very clear line between it, and their reality. And their affluent parents make sure that that line is very distinct!

The colonization of Hip Hop stretches far beyond the boundaries of rap. In fact, all of Hip Hop's four elements-rapping, DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti-have been colonized and co-opted. Years ago, breakdancers expressed their talent using refrigerator boxes on the sidewalks. Outside of the Hip Hop community, it was for the most part considered unacceptable, and not even a "real" form of dance. That was until corporate Amerika saw profit-making ability, and decided to "humanize" it by suppressing it's social implications, and ultimately commercializing it. In doing so, the capitalist entertainment industry presented the dance form to the rest of the world as simply a new manifestation of a creative Amerikan youth-while at the same time taking credit for allowing such diverse cultures to "flourish" in the "land of opportunity". Now we see breakdancing everywhere from movies to television shows, and now the latest exploitative arena: MTV's "America's Best Dance Crew", hosted by multi-millionaires who have made careers out of manipulating Hip Hop. College courses even exist today where you can learn how to "Hip Hop dance"...for a fee!

The exact same thing can be said for graffiti. Once considered criminal, graffiti is now under the control empire. It's been completely separated from it's true meaning. The street "tags" sprawled across government buildings, have been dismissed as trashy, non-artistic, and criminal. In their place, the large colorful "burners" are allowed to exist, due to their being more marketable through books, museums, and such-thus more acceptable. However, in the Hip Hop world, the "street tagger" is the one who gets the respect. The Tagger is the one scaling buildings and outsmarting the police, while those who put the big colorful burners up usually have permission to do so. The tagger risks her/his freedom-and sometimes their life-in their quest for respect and acceptance amongst their peers. Not for the acceptance of mainstream Amerika. Why? Because mainstream Amerika doesn't-can't-understand the non-corporate description of Hip Hop!

So, the street taggers, the conscious rappers, the breakdancers, and the basement DJs, are all one and the same, both in their true representation of Hip Hop, and in their being forced to exist underground as a result of the commercialization, co-option, and colonization of Hip Hop. If any of these underground elements tried to compete with the mainstream, they'd be forced back underground by the now corporate-backed Hip Hoppers, simply because years of brainwashing has taught the masses what is and isn't popular and meaningful.

THE CONSCIOUS RAPPER

Most people's response to my claim about Hip Hop's corporate takeover, is that the industry has an abundance of "politically conscious" rappers who are signed to major record labels. This is only half true. The so-called "politically conscious" rappers most often referred to are: Common, Lupe Fiasco, Most Def, and a few others. While these rappers are considered "politically conscious", they only exist within the framework of an already heavily commercialized industry. Therefore their messages are tempered for the purpose of likability, and are allowed to exist within the superficiality of today's industry.

These "politically conscious" rappers only stand out as politically conscious because their music is more "political" than the next rapper's. But in order for their messages and records to receive air-time, these same rappers are forced to compromise and submit to the will of the industry, which is why in one verse we may learn about "Bombs over Bagdad", but in the next verse we find out that the new "Benz" comes standard with twenty-inch rims.

Even if an artist of today had a message of true substance, the industry would simply commercialize it-which is why you can purchase a "Stop Snitchin'" t-shirt, or a "Black Power" medallion...for a fee. Because the corporations make so much money off of our struggle, they have

no incentive to give us what we need to stop struggling. And we seem to be perfectly fine with this arrangement.

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PATRIARCHY IN HIP HOP

Maria Mies describes the nuclear family as a "family, which was put under the specific protection of the state, [and] consists of the forced combinations of the principles of kinship and cohabitation, and the definition of the man as 'head' of the household and 'breadwinner' for the non-earning legal wife and their children."

There's no question that the "nuclear family" is designed to reflect the state-and vice versa. In Amerika, the "head" of the state-family-is white man. The "breadwinners". Any contributions made by the women are strictly complementary-regardless of the arena.

The same paradigm exists in Hip Hop. At the top of the hierarchy are the white record executives. Even if the record executive is Black, he/she still beats to the drum of white patriarchy.

The rules of Hip Hop within the framework of patriarchy, tells the women of Hip Hop that in order to compete with the male hierarchy, they too must take on a patriarchal mentality, which is why we see female rappers womanizing other women-the same way that the men womanize them! But at the end of the day, patriarchy puts the competing women of Hip Hop back in their "place"-to be dominated by men. The result is always the women of Hip Hop acquiescing, and going on to accept their "roles" as objects, appealing to the nature of men through displays of hypersexuality and other gender inferiority complexes.

It goes past the point of "domination", and reaches the point where men are declaring war on women through violent rap lyrics. I know that right now, many of you reading this may think that I'm taking things too far; too literally. But in a racist society where patriarchy is the norm, Black men are dominated in almost every other arena in life, and feel as if the only way left for them to assert their seemingly "god-given" patriarchal birthright is through sex!

Violent expressions of sex. Which is why we hear an artist such as Kanye West, boasting about how he bruised a woman's esophagus in one of his verses-and he just so happened to be on tnat song with a female!

These lyrics become a way of life as they are constantly played over and over, and become a part of our memory. This way of life takes root in our communities, and as we continue to compete with each other, we brag to our "boys" about, "beating it up last night", or "knocking the bottom out of it", or many other violent descriptions of our sexual escapades with the "lesser"-other-woman.

It's often all in a name. While the male perpetrators identify themselves as pimps-Superfly, Don Juan-the women adopt monikers-and attitudes-which reflect, and complement their male counterparts: Foxy Brown, Trina tha Baddest B@#$ch, and Nikki Minaj (a Trois?). Or their rap lyrics explain-in lurid detail-how willing they are to degrade themselves sexually, to please a man-or hurt another woman.

But before we go on to criticize the women of Hip Hop for their degrading behavior, we-men-have to first understand that the script being followed by the women was written by us! We rap about dominating and humiliating women. We rap about wanting to see women wearing clothes that leave little to the imagination. The women's response is just that; a response. In a male-dominated game, you play by the rules, or get pushed out!

Even the "indy" movement, designed for artists to take their destinies into their own hands has so far failed, because they continue to stick to the script that has been laid out by the ruling class's record labels. And because these "indy" artists receive 100% of their earnings, they deem this a success. But it's not a success, because they remain fixated on materialism, sexism, and many other harmful behaviors.

Sadly, the rules of this "game" have taken over, and now rule most of our lives. Women are still considered "second-class", both in the workplace and at home. "Housework" is still considered "women's work", yet most people laugh at the thought of women being paid for this "housework".

Their roles are still considered to be complementary to that of men. Patriarchy has consumed Hip Hop. It's in our hearts, minds, and homes, and causes us to perpetuate a fascist culture based on dominating the "other". 13

Let me explain something at this point, because it gets deeper. See, in this particular instance, the "other" is "woman"-specifically Black, Brown, or any other minority woman. But for all of you "pimps" out there who remain content with playing the role of "dominator", remember this: On the bigger scale of patriarchy, the White male is at the top, and you're at the bottom-right along with the woman you've been dominating!

White Man
White Woman
Black/Colored Man
Black/Colored Woman

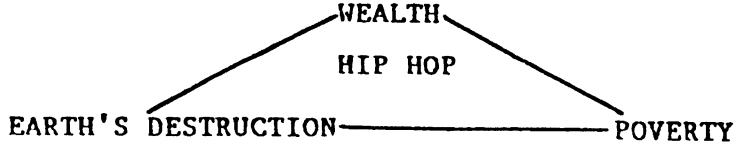
The only hope that Hip Hop has in stopping this painful trend, is to first recognize the real social dynamics-natural, and constructed-of life under (inside of) empire! No advancement can be made in our quest for true freedom until men finally learn how to stop equating physical endowment-superiority-with mental, spiritual, and social endowment-superiority. Because for one to be superior, the "other" has to be inferior. The cycle continues...

THE "GOOD LIFE"

It is extremely important that the Hip Hop generation understand the potential ramifications that the ongoing materialist life style is having on our planet. The jewelry, cars, and clothes look good, but what needs to be exposed are the effects of not only acquiring these trappings, but also what they require in order for them to be maintained.

Just recently there was a huge controversy over the USA's Olympic uniforms being made in China. This is only a microcosm of what is actually taking place on a world scale as third-world humans and land are being exploited in order to fulfill the material desires of the so-called "first-world". The accessories draped around the necks, wrists, and hands of rappers, are more

than likely the products of slave-wage labor in third-world colonies. As we speak, wars are being waged against indigenous people-especially women-over the gold, platinum, and diamond mines of Afrika, Asia, and South Amerika. Animals, wildlife, and the rest of the planet are being legally destroyed, just to falsely satisfy our craving for happiness. But at the end of the day, we aren't any happier then we were before.



The correlation between earth's destruction, poverty, and wealth (in Amerika), is undeniable. And the Hip Hop generation is right in the middle of it-though we have the potential to eliminate it. The products that we purchase are the result of forced labor, and in order to continue production, the Earth's resources are devoured without regulation. The Ozone layer is decaying, and Global Warming is real! The United States and Europe consume well over half of the world's energy, while the rest live in darkness. The system that the Hip Hop generation has been conditioned to support, is not one of love and unity, but one of exploitation, and polarization. In order for one to be rich, another has to be poor. We claim to love each other, yet we willingly participate in a life style that cannot be maintained, and is in fact, on a collision course with time.

What happens when the well runs dry? Or when the Earth's resources disappear? What will your "wealth" mean at that moment? Of course we may not live to see that day, but what about our children? What about the future generations who we owe?

Hip Hop is as much an ecological movement as it is any other kind of movement. We have only one choice in this regard. That choice is to do all we can to counter the destructive ideologies that capitalist patriarchy has been propagating through Hip Hop!

IN CONCLUSION

The Hip Hop generation has no choice but to wake up and realize that we're being played. We need to realize that we possess the potential to change the world. The industry that the Hip Hop generation has taken on as partner is inherently racist, sexist, and ultimately fascist, and in no way desires to help the poor masses who the Hip Hop generation actually represent. Doctors don't make their money teaching "prevention", and neither do slave owners make their money teaching "liberation". Real Hip Hop-organic Hip Hop-teaches "liberation".

We have to remember under what conditions we were created. Patriarchy is a relatively new concept to most of us in the Hip Hop generation, but it's been around since the beginning of time. Capitalism on the other hand, is a system that we re all familiar with. Unfortunately, most of us tend to only see the "good" side of capitalism-which is a mirage, because there is no good side to capitalism. We can't continue to view Hip Hop as just another means of making money!

This cutthroat competition that we've been indulging in over the last few decades is threatening our survival, along with the survival of future generations, and will end up spawning a new generation of resistance. The same way that the Hip Hop generation was spawned.

Will our inaction be the reason that the next generation puts us in the same category as empire? Will they look upon us as de facto accomplices with empire? Only time will tell. But as members of the Hip Hop generation-especially the artists-it is incumbent upon each of us to resist fascism's agenda, and abandon our capitalist patriarchal ideologies. Success is not a new car, house, or diamond ring. Success is loving each other, and making sure that each other's basic needs are met...not for a fee!

Suggested Reading Materials:

1. Liberation Or Gangsterism: Freedom Or Slavery, Russell Maroon Shoats

2. Sex & War, Stan Goff

3. Agents Of Repression, Ward Churchill

4. Patriarchy And Accumulation On A World Scale, Maria Mies

5. Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon

We have too much talent. We don't need to rely on an abusive power structure who kills us and throws us in prison, simply for doing what they taught us to do. We represent the masses. True Hip Hop is love-centered. Not material-centered. Men have to break through the thought process that says we-men-are biologically determined to dominate women and the planet, simply because we may have size, strength, and science on "our side".

There's still time to rescue Hip Hop. There's still time to inspire the marginalized masses in Amerika and around the world. Let's start loving each other again. Let's start cooperating with each other again. And let's not forget that Hip Hop isn't simply entertainment. Hip Hop is a way of life and a movement.

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