

The Real Ambassador: How Hip Hop Culture Connects and Educates across Borders

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Abstract : This paper explores how many Hip Hop artists have intentionally and strategically invoked sustainability principles of people, planet and profits as a means to create community, compensate for and cope with structural inequalities in society. These themes not only create community within one's country, but the powerful display and demonstration of these narratives create community on a global plane. Listeners of Hip Hop are therefore able to learn about the political events occurring in another country free of censure, and establish solidarity worldwide. Hip Hop therefore can be an ingenious tool to create self-worth, recycle positive imagery, and serve as a defense mechanism from institutional and structural forces that conspire to make an upward economic and social trajectory difficult, if not impossible for many people of color, all across the world. Although the birthplace of Hip Hop, the United States of America, is still predominately White, it has undoubtedly grown more diverse at a breath-taking pace in recent decades. Yet, whether American mainstream media will fully reflect America's newfound diversity remains to be seen. As it stands, American mainstream media is seen and enjoyed by diverse audiences not just in America, but all over the world. Thus, it is imperative that further inquiry is conducted about one of the fastest growing genres within one of the world's largest and most influential media industries generating upwards of \$10 billion annually. More importantly, hip hop, its music and associated culture collectively represent a shared social experience of significant value. They are important tools used both to inform and influence economic, social and political identity. Conversely, principles of American exceptionalism often prioritize American political issues over those of others, thereby rendering a myopic political view within the mainstream. This paper will therefore engage in an international contextualization of the global phenomena entitled Hip Hop by exploring the creative genius and marketing appeal of Hip Hop within the global context of information technology, political expression and social change in addition to taking a critical look at historically racialized imagery within mainstream media. Many artists the world over have been able to freely express themselves and connect with broader communities outside of their own borders, all through the sound practice of the craft of Hip Hop. An empirical understanding of political, social and economic forces within the United States will serve as a bridge for identifying and analyzing transnational themes of commonality for typically marginalized or disaffected communities facing similar struggles for survival and respect. The sharing of commonalities of marginalized cultures not only serves as a source of education outside of typically myopic, mainstream sources, but it also creates transnational bonds globally to the extent that practicing artists resonate with many of the original themes of (now mostly underground) Hip Hop as with many of the African American artists responsible for creating and fostering Hip Hop's powerful outlet of expression. Hip Hop's power of connectivity and culture-sharing transnationally across borders provides a key source of education to be taken seriously by academics.

Keywords : culture, education, global, hip hop, mainstream music, transnational

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