

NCLC 375: Black Voices in Hip-hop
Prof A.J. Ryan

Spring 2004
Assignment 2

Due: April 2, 2004

Via e-mail: NOTE NEW ADDRESS ONLY FOR ASSIGNMENTS:
hh_prof@comcast.net

Over the last few weeks, you were given two music CDs. The first CD contained mostly old school tracks from the early period of rap. Most of the tracks are party tracks, with simple rhymes mostly aimed to excite a crowd. The second CD was a mixtape which was released in February of this year. Besides the advanced style, the lyrics on the second CD speak more to past and current issues which affect the generation. Unlike their predecessors, these rappers are privy to their marginalized status and openly rhyme about their experiences. Surprisingly, many of the themes we have discussed in class have come up in these rhymes:

For instance, Young Buk of G-Unit rhymes:

"My partner got 4 strikes and won't come back unless he dies and comes back like he's born twice."

Here Young Buk is talking of the three strikes legislation (see: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov1999/thelegacy/glossary.html#threestrikes> for more info) which requires that when a person is convicted of three [felonies](#), he or she must serve a [mandatory](#) fixed sentence of 25 years to life usually without [parole](#). For more on the timeline of this legislation, see: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov1999/thelegacy/timeline.html>.

Some of the issues we have spoken about in class: unemployment, housing, transportation, education, family structure, welfare, police bias, distrust in government, distrust in the power structure etc. all come up in the music. The Jadakiss and Ghostface track on disc 1 probably has at least 5 on its own.

Jadakiss refers to having '5 years on him' [a reference to minimum drug sentencing in NY State – also known as the Rockefeller Laws]

Your assignment is to identify 10 tie-ins between the issues discussed in class and the lyrics from the CD, then annotate each with 2 or 3 supporting sentences describing the connection to class materials. I'd like an official reference, i.e. a book, reading, or other credible source to support your assertion. The goal is to tie in the issues of the 1950s thru

1970s with today's music, **resist the temptation** to use contemporary examples to draw parallels.

For extra credit, comment on your reasoning as to why early rappers did not rhyme about their environment, the conditions which were oppressing them. Please hand in your response as a separate file/paper.

As always, I ask you to take pride in your work and put forth your best effort. Part of this assignment is the listening and interpretation of the music. The writing aspect is a distant second. A numbered list with annotations below each lyric is fine. I only ask that you cite the track and the disc # (with disc 1 being the old school tracks, with 2 newer ones, and the second disc being 23 tracks with a more 'new school' sound.).

I encourage you to use your group as a support group. All papers must be handed in individually, but collaboration, VIA WEBCT, is permissible. **Please note the WebCT clause**, I'd like to be able to see your collaboration on WebCT so I can give you credit for it in grading. Any other collaboration will be considered plagiarism.