

**Words, Sounds, Power: The Afrikan Lineage of the Contemporary Hip-Hop Artist**

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Though the people of the African continent are diverse in their cultural practices, oral history has a very integral purpose throughout many countries and is tied to many ancient traditions. An analysis of Afrikan oral histories reveals the immense value of these traditions in cultural maintenance and perpetuating prosperous value systems. These traditions function to transmit the wisdom of several generations of life experience. The genius of these histories lies in how practitioners were able to engage and captivate the minds of the people. Many Afrikan oral histories took the form of songs, stories, and proverbs. This was to ensure that foundational information and values would always be a part of the cultural fabric of the people as opposed to arbitrary events that do not connect to one's everyday life. In many West African cultures this is especially true. For centuries the people of this region which includes Mali, northern Guinea, most of Senegal and the Gambia as well as Guinea Bissau and others have preserved and propagated their cultures through the musical functions of the griot or jali, a professional musician, storyteller and historian. These individuals stood as a cornerstone and a testament to the importance of functional art in these Afrikan societies.

During the Transatlantic Slave trade, the Gold coast or West Coast of Africa was devastated by the loss of millions of its sons and daughters. The European need for free labor in the forcefully acquired Americas fueled a holocaust that is still affecting people of African descent worldwide. Consequently, the victims of this "Maafa" (holocaust) did their best to maintain familiar cultural practices under the inhumane oppression of the American slave

system. Slave owners made painstaking attempts to prevent such cultural preservation by outlawing traditional practices among enslaved Afrikans and proactively separating people of the same ethnicity. Even with these rigid structures in place, Afrikan descendants managed to keep some of their practices, oral traditions in song and poetry being among them. Throughout their evolution, many of these traditions manifested into similar but different form of expression. They have taken shape in the ways in which Afrikan descendants in america have had to adapt to their experience. These forms have included [Negro] spirituals, jazz, blues, soul music, spoken word poetry and hip-hop. Contemporarily, hip hop is one of the most potent forms of these evolved oral traditions that can be closely linked to the institution of the West Afrikan jali and their imperative role as musicians that preserve culture.

Initially, hunters held a high caste because of their dual function as providers who physically sustained a society and oral historians that maintained societal history and family lineages through song; however, griots/jalis emerged out of a need for a shift in tradition. In Griot Time: An American guitarist in Mali, Banning Eyre discovered that:

In ancient times...a special caste of hunters held the responsibility of knowing societal history and family lineages and expressing them publicly in song. Hunters were the most exalted and treasured people in Africa... Hunters provided many essentials: meat to sustain people; horns, claws and fur to decorate ceremonial finery; and the skins lutes, and harps...there came a time when the musical and historical responsibilities of the old hunter bards with their simbis passed on to the griots with their balafons and ngonis, and later koras and guitars (227).

As a result, the griot tradition developed a finite and powerful purpose in these societies. In Classical Music and the Griot Tradition, Tunde Jegede expressly defines the role of the griot and his/her relationship to the societies in which they lived. Jegede states, "The Griot Tradition is an ancient classical art form found throughout Africa where poetry, history, philosophy and music are integral. The griot or poet-musician was a chronicler with the responsibility for maintaining the national historical memory (62). In the western world, historical accounts are only valid if they have been written by state sanctioned sources. Conversely, in Western regions of Africa, oral histories were just as much if not more valid than written accounts. It is for this reason that griots were forced to undergo such rigorous apprenticeships to train their memories. Jegede speaks directly to this process in his work. He asserts:

The training of the griot was a long discipline. Introduction to poetry came early in life and music was the vehicle of the griot's recitative. Listening was the key, and the young student would follow the master from village to village absorbing the unbroken centuries, and to acquire his status the griot traveled to the famous medieval centers of learning. With his philosophical insight he learned to weave with subtlety the intricate tapestry of history (12).

Such diligence and discipline becomes necessary when one's primary function is the keeper of a people's entire history. Griots were the indelible link between an ancient past and a promising future. Moreover, their historical knowledge gave them an enormous amount of political capital such that a nation's ruler kept a griot in his or her court just as a contemporary president has close councilors.

Jegede offers that:

The role of the griot as the source of the historical and political knowledge has long been recognized and valued by the Manding

rulers of ancient Mali. Griots occupied a specific place in society and ruling families had one as a symbol of prestige. They were councilors of kings and preservers tradition, the link between the leader and people. It was also the griot who kept poetry in the heart of the people, and the power of his words could make or break a king (12).

In this statement, the cultural magnitude of the griot is apparent. Their historical and political knowledge gave them royal esteem. During the height of their prominence in Songay Empire of Mali, they were not jesters in medieval courts, but rather intimate advisors to national leadership. Not only could they relay the intricate details of their people's history, but they also could direct it.

Moreover, the power in their performance is said to have the ability to incite action with words. In Performing Africa, Paula Ebron's in depth analysis of jali/griot performance throughout the Afrikan continent, she specifically addresses this:

For a jali, performance is not just a medium of transmission for history. History is made in performance, as one can see in the telling of the story of Sunjata; a jali's words move the patron (ruler or employer) to action. Words themselves have the charisma to make history, and jali performance is the enactment of the mastery of words...Foday Musa Suso explains: "Griots would ride along beside kings, singing their praises. They recited the warriors' names and words of inspiration and encouragement: *Tell me what you will do on the battlefield*, they might sing. *Do something that I can pass on to future generations so you'll never be forgotten*" (1996, 36, original emphasis). Jali performance is an active process appropriating and linking the past to the present in a way that can chart the direction of future action (100).

In Griots and Griottes, Thomas Hale further substantiates this notion of powerful words that connect the past and present and also impact future action. Hale offers, "But griots function not only in a retrospective sense,

linking past to present, but also...in a prospective sense, because of the impact of their words on the future activities of those listening (40).” The act of inciting future action with words is a core aspect in the cultural maintenance a griot is charged with. It is here that his/ her musicianship and poetic talents have their most intense significance. This action is what many scholars of African literature and culture categorize as ‘call and response’. In fact, Jegede alludes to this in his analysis: “The skill of conversing in proverbs was considered the mark of excellence and this concept of ‘call and response’ was both the foundation and essence of griot musicianship (14).”

Furthermore, According to Thomas Hale, the griot is said to wield a special power called nyama. Nyama is released during a griot’s performance and is described as a hot, wild energy that is the animating force of nature. Nyama is present in all the rocks, trees, people and animals that inhabit the Earth. It is said to be the occult power to incite action with words and a true sculptor of the universe. Hale posits:

By situating the roles of griots in a broader context, that of nyama, the mysterious life force or occult power that one must have in order to overcome nyama emerging from other sources, human or otherwise, Hoffman learned that griot language—what she termed in the Mande context as *jelikan*—is “the most laden with the dangerous force (nyama), the most powerful in its impact on the hearer, and the most empowering for its speaker (119).

Hale gives a tangible example of the affects of such a power indicating the potential for its misuse or abuse:

Griots prompt people to immediate action with their words. This is particularly significant in the context of war...The power of the

griot's words to inspire men about to go into action has of course, a negative side...griots can drive men and armies to their destruction by their words and deeds. The impact can work on both sides of the conflict. (40)

In the Healing Drum, African Wisdom and Teaching, Yayo Diallo describes

learning to revere this power in his musical apprenticeship;

Throughout a musical apprenticeship, you need to be conscious that you are emitting sounds and that these sounds have an impact on people. You see it when you play music and people cry in response to some sounds and dance in response to others (97).

Traditional griots did not take this power lightly because of their understanding of its affects. They knew that the power of their music and performance not only had the ability to influence the political decisions of leadership, but also had the potential to affect the spiritual, physical and mental well being of any audience member. Subsequently, the origin of this knowledge of "words of power" finds its root in ancient Kemet (Egypt) and is attached to that Afrikan civilization's doctrine of universal principles. Muata Ashby makes explicit reference to this in Egyptian Yoga: The Philosophy of Enlightenment with a discussion of the 'Hekau' or word of power and prayer. He explains:

Sounds, words, religious songs or scriptures from any language may be used by understanding the meaning and repeating it for several minutes. It is important to understand that the hekau will be given power by you the user and not the other way around. Therefore, it should have the effect of elevating the mind. The more they are used the more mental power one will have to transport...oneself to a higher psychological-spiritual plane of consciousness (79).

Diallo thoroughly explores this view as it relates to music. In his work he speaks specifically about the traditions of the Minianka people's of Mali. He is very

matter of fact, candid and unapologetic in the way he presents this information it seems because of the sacredness in which music is held among his people. He writes, “Musicians were expected to maintain high moral standards because of their power to influence people through music (3).” Diallo goes on to state that, “In Minianka tradition, music serves a sacred healing function for the individual and the society. A remedy for both physical and psychological imbalances, music facilitates communication with the ancestors, the spirits, and the Creator. Music harmonizes forces of the visible and invisible worlds (4).” Consequently, this is an accurate depiction of a musical ideology that has no parallel in the western worldview. No form of art in the western world has such a core societal function or is in any way explicitly linked to maintaining the holistic well being of society. In fact as Diallo posits:

In the Minianka villages of Fienso and Zangasso, the musicians were healers, the healers are musicians. The word musician itself implies the role of a healer. From the Minianka perspective, it is inconceivable that the responsibilities for making music and restoring health should be separate, as they are in the west (79).

This ideology of music and understanding of its power also has a physiological component that holds substantial weight in this cultural equation and may explain its absence in the west. As aforementioned, the words of the griot hold a significant power; however, when accompanied with music the affects are exponentially magnified for people of Afrikan descent because of specific properties of melanin or skin pigment.

The vibration created during the playing of the drum has a particularly distinct relationship with people of high melanin content. In Rocks of Ages:



Ancient Technology for the New Millennium, Ras Ben explains that as a resonator, melanin changes its internal frequency to match and vibrate in unison with an external frequency. The human ability to perceive external vibrations is governed by melanin or one's lack thereof. He writes :

Melanin is also considered a resonator. A resonator is a material that can change its internal frequency to match and vibrate in unison with an external frequency...Melanin encodes and decodes external vibrations, processes them into mental information, and then transmits then information throughout the nervous system. The human capacity to perceive and react upon environmental vibrations is directly related to the amount of melanin present in the sensory organs and nervous system (34).

The drum, a vital component of Afrikan musical expression, is a primary source of such vibrations. The Djembe is one of the most popular drums in western regions of the Afrikan continent due to its integral function in healing traditions. It is a sacred drum used in healing ceremonies, rights of passage, ancestral worship, warrior rituals, and social dances. African drum masters attribute supernatural power to the drum because of its ability to make people dance. In fact, during the transatlantic slave trade the drum was outlawed as a deadly communication tool of Afrikan unity.

In addition, during the horrifying centuries of the slave trade many West Afrikan cultural traditions were tortured out of enslaved Afrikans for fear of unity and consequent rebellion among them. Afrikans from the same culture were intentionally separated to ensure disunity and confusion. Slave masters implemented strategies that were designed to increase the enslaved Afrikans dependence on their captors. At their foundation, these strategies worked to

sever Afrikan cultural ties and to dilute the ultimate power that exists in Afrikan culture and ritual. In his Lessons From History: A Celebration in Blackness, Dr. Juwanza Kunjufu explains this process of seasoning, which was brutal and barbaric:

Before Afrikans were sold to slave owners, they had to be “seasoned.” Seasoning had four objectives: To make the slave fear the owner and fear death or torture for disobedience. To make the slave identify with and be loyal to the owner (even against fellow slaves). To make the slave believe that the white race was superior to the Black race (thus justifying white people owning Black people). To make the slave hate Africa and anyone Black (again destroying the slave’s pride) (19).

Europeans had seen the power of many of these oral/musical traditions and knew they had to be counteracted to support the success of America’s ‘peculiar institution’. In his informational masterpiece, Culture Bandits, Del Jones sheds light on this aspect of a brutal reality: “Yet to the outside observer, it was clear that the enslavement and continued subjugation of our culture depended not on just a remote appreciation for the song, but the destruction of it (42).” As a result, many of these cultural traditions were forced to go underground, changed to fit the circumstances or lost. A number of them were manifest through different forms of expression.

As aforementioned, sacred oral tradition of Afrikan people took the form of [negro] spirituals, jazz, blues, soul music, spoken word poetry and, for the purposes of this discussion, hip-hop. In the case of blues, scholars were more readily accepting of its connection to African oral traditions. Hale contends that, “...Blues scholars now routinely refer to griot music in discussions of the origins

of this form. William Barlow claims that early blues performers were “African American variations on the famous West African ‘griot’ tradition. (329).” He goes on to say, “In Rap Attack2: African Rap to Global Hip Hop (1991), David Toop suggests that contemporary rappers may have roots in the griot tradition...Many musicians, however, see an obvious link in the narrative elements in the art of griots and the same features of rap (329).” In this same discussion, Hale is very adamant about the fact that more research must be done to solidify the claim that hip-hop finds its roots in the oral tradition of the West Afrikan griot; however, other scholars are firm in acknowledging the existence of a connection.

Interestingly enough, David Toop, the author Hale references, is a scholar at the forefront of the campaign to connect the griot tradition to contemporary hip-hop artists. In Rap Attack 2 he unequivocally states:

Whatever the disagreements over the lineage in the rap hall of fame or the history of hip hop, there is one thing on which all are agreed. ‘Rap is nothing new’, says Paul Winley. Rap’s forbears stretch back through disco, street funk, radio DJs, Bo Diddley, the be bop singers, Cab Calloway, Pigeat Markham, the tap dancers and comics, the Last Poets, Gil Scott Heron...prison and army songs, toasts, signifying and the dozens, all the way to the griots of Nigeria and the Gambia (19).

Toop is not alone in his certainty and willingness to express it. Other scholars are very clear in drawing a connection that has obvious correlations. In Droppin Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture, Eric Perkins lucidly addresses the question of this connection in his essay “The Rap Attack.” He asserts:

Afrika Bambatta, one of hip-hop’s founders, alludes to several important roots of rap music. Without doubt the African elements are a part of rap’s foundation...It is clear that rappers, like their

ancestors, draw on the call and response form so common in ritual chanting to the gods, ancestors, or both; and the accumulated traditions of storytelling are an essential element in rap music's overall structure. Taking an improvisational cue from their ancestors, rappers invent and reinvent their own vocabulary, adjusting it as the moment may require for recording, stage concerts, or the routines of daily life. When this verbal sorcery is fused with a beat, the resulting product becomes, in the words of old-school rapper Doug E. Fresh, "very African" (2).

In addition, so many have made the link between the monumental work of the Last Poets, as well as other spoken word poets, and the West African griot, while in the same breath attaching this lineage to the roots of hip-hop. Jegede distinctly explains these relationships:

The African griot's impressive knowledge, of history combined with the ability to extemporize on current events were strong elements in the work of pioneering orators like The Last Poets of New York. Their narrative poetry bore direct ancestry to the hereditary poet-musician, and their social satire and political comment emerged at a time when the Civil Rights Movement was at its height. The Last Poets functioned as initiators stirring public awareness and they were a symbol of the thriving culture of inner cities. At the street corner, with a small drum and the spoken word, they caught the heartbeat of the people and were heralded as the 'Godfather's of Rap' (21).

Perkins echoes this sentiment in his discussion about the origins of Hip Hop. According to these scholars the links are not as much of a stretch as Hale and many others might lead one to believe. Perkins relates:

The message oriented poetry of the Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron laid the groundwork for political rappers. The Last Poets set lyrics to the beat of the conga drum...to create a distinctive rap performance style that would have an almost infectious appeal for the maters of the old school and their successors...What makes The Last Poets' style so important to the emergence of rap music is its orality. The poetry's effectiveness comes through only when it is spoken, just like rap (4).

Taking this analysis into account makes it difficult to refute claims of no apparent co-relation between griots and contemporary hip-hop artists. In fact, the similarities are deeply rooted in relation to the reaction of the oppressor to an art form that could potentially unify masses of youth of African descent in America. The Last Poets and a-kin artists were most prominent during the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements. They experienced the U.S. government's malicious efforts to dismantle the movement for Black solidarity and self-determination. A body of information exists that suggests that hip-hop is a victim of the same attack due to its power; power it undoubtedly derives from its ancient origins in the griot tradition.

In general, hip-hop culture has had a great deal of influence domestically and internationally on the world's youth. It has affected fashion and language trends in addition to youth habit and behavior.

Pekins writes:

Rap music has been the subject of lawsuits and arguments before the Supreme Court, the target of hellfire-and-brimstone sermons by preachers, and even political ammunition for presidents and presidential candidates. Rap has transformed American fashion with its sneakers, boots, loose fitting clothes, and "whacked" colors and designs (1).

In his critically acclaimed Hip-Hop America, Nelson George speaks to the international effects. He writes, "Because hip-hop has so many elements—music, clothing, dance, attitude—its essential mutability makes it adaptable worldwide (203)." George goes on to say, "From Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, to

Dakar in Senegal, to Holland, to Cuba's Havana, to every place satellites beam music videos and CD's are sold (or bootlegged or counterfeited), hip hop has made an impression (206)." Early in its history, hip-hop culture was used as a powerful tool of unification. Its birthplace, the South Bronx, was a tumultuous environment that fostered a great deal of conflict between Black and Brown people. In the Vibe History of Hip-Hop, John F. Szwed gives more incite into what characterized the South Bronx in the mid to late 1970's. He writes: The South Bronx was tuff turf, characterized by burned out buildings, brutal street gangs, and the scourge of drugs and poverty (15)." Nelson George echoes this sentiment in claiming that, "In the mid 70's ...no place in America was held up more consistently as a symbol of pitiful urban priorities than the Bronx, particularly its southernmost section (10)." In the midst of this seemingly 'incorrigible chaos' another manifestation of the griot tradition was born and in many ways facilitated pockets of unity throughout this impoverished community: "As a leader of the city's biggest and baddest street gang, the Black Spade, [Afrika Bambaataa, one of hip-hop's founders] commanded the respect of his peers with intelligence, a sharp tongue and a bold vision of what his Black and Hispanic brothers and sisters could accomplish if they worked toward a common cause (Szwed, 15). In Black Noise, an in depth analysis of rap music and Black culture in contemporary america, Tricia Rose adds dimension to the cause of hip-hop creation, while alluding to its power to politicize and mobilize youth:

Hip-Hop culture emerged as a source for youth of alternative identity formation and social status in a community whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished along with large sectors of its built environment...Identity in hip-hop is deeply

rooted in the specific, the local experience, and one's attachment to and status in a local group or alternative family. These crews are new kinds of families forged with intercultural bonds that, like the social of gangs, provide insulation and support in a complex and unyielding environment and may serve as the basis for new social movements (34).

As the culture evolved, many artists adopted the banner of political commentary and socially consciousness. In fact, in many nations around the world hip-hop's power has been used as a means to political ends. George also includes this in his discussion:

The legacy of rap's socially conscious period when Public Enemy used the music to raise political issues is still visible around the world. In Italy, a place where extremes of political thought mesh with a passionate nature, there are many groups that have gravitated toward the culture and its ability to articulate anger...In France, the culture's political aspect has been a vehicle of protest for music and filmmakers (205).

Ironically, this same fervor to use hip-hop in this fashion and the Afrikan centered understanding of its potential political, social, psychological and spiritual impact seems to be lost among artists in the united states, at least on the surface. Diallo asserts that western [hip hop] musicians have grown dangerously unaware of their power due to an increased focus to make a hit record. He writes:

When you are playing music, you need to be conscious of how you are affecting people. I have met many musicians in North America who want only to make a hit record, regardless of the value of the music on deeper levels. They are not aware of the subtle effects of music on human well being, but musicians should be aware of their role. They can build or destroy (97).

Though many hip-hop artists are unaware of their true capacity, the intoxicating power of the music has not gone unnoticed. Much like the

banning of the drum and other musical and oral traditions during the centuries of chattel slavery, the potential energy of hip-hop culture had to be neutralized to preserve the status quo.

Several artists intended to use the art to facilitate changes in their ailing communities. Artists like Public Enemy, X-Clan, KRS-ONE and many others were using their understanding of their gift and its legacy to mobilize the minds of Black youth across the country. Their message was not only political, but it was formulated to carry an uplifting and empowering value system. Del Jones explores the purpose, power, and source of Black music in general and engages an interesting perspective on the threat in the power of Hip Hop music and culture. Serving as the mouthpiece of African youth in America, hip-hop was initially dismissed in mainstream media as a short-lived trend. However, as it developed a sweeping influence, the maintainers of the status quo found themselves in a dilemma. While they did not want the 'nyama' of the contemporary griot to pose a formidable political threat, they deemed the art form potentially lucrative. The solution came in the form of colonization and control. Jones explains that the music had to be exploited for profit and controlled for political stability. He writes, " This insulated their system (white supremacy) from the natural attack of our music as we responded to an environment that holds our dreams and aspirations hostage (44)." He goes on to state, "...[They] destroy/control/define our music for us, they isolate the songs/dance poems that threaten their control and destroy them. How? By making the creation of such work unprofitable, because they control the other mediums of communication



(44).” Furthermore, any perspectives of using the art form for the collective wellbeing had to be destroyed and replaced with a very strict code of individualism. This is the hallmark of “American Dream” ideology. Diallo is very frank in expressing how this dynamic is created:

The star system I see in Western popular music goes very much against the standards of conduct for the village musician with which I was raised. The star does not give time to the community but to himself or herself. The star usually seeks to amaze people, not to care for them; to be admired and praised by the anonymous throngs, not to honor distinct individuals whose lives depend on one another in community. It is forgotten that the reason for playing is to bring wellbeing to people. This is different from driving fans into ecstasies of overexcitement. Music should not be a means to build a personal cult. That is idolatry. My village teaches that music is a calling greater than the individual. I can give my life to it if I love it. In serving this music, I can share with other people and contribute to their joy and health (196).

In turn, this individualist ethic is supported by the chaotic conditions many Afrikan descendants in America find themselves in. It is not complex to understand that a person’s depravity may lead that individual to survive by any means necessary, legitimate or otherwise. As the American music industry is considered a legitimate workforce, executives have been known to prey on young Black artists who just want a way out of a life of constant struggle and hardship. Jones relates how this is detrimental to the collective: “ And as they use the carrot on the stick technique on poor rural and inner-city kids, [these Black youth] unconsciously churn out all the musical products they use against [Black people’s] struggle to create healthy families, progressive communities...and true freedom (45).” Jones

also discusses why many contemporary Black artists are oblivious to the cultural significance of Afrikan music:

Most Black artists dream of million sellers, fast cars, and quicker women, and the development of their work has nothing to do with the struggle or cultural maintenance. Many only want to try and find out what's happening and plug into it for profit. Consequently, the development of our musical culture is stagnated by profit motive (44).

Conversely, Diallo juxtaposes this contemporary mentality with the wisdom of the ancient practitioners in Mali's Minianka society:

In Minianka society, the musicians are expected to live by standards of morality and self-restraint. Music is powerful. By their example, the musicians will influence the youth for better or worse. As the youth are the society's future, it is very important that their role models are good ones. The fundamental principle of Minianka musical training is devotion to music in the service of the cosmos, the environment, and the community (95).

The abhorrent dichotomy in ideology of people from a relatively similar lineage brings this discussion to a critical point.

The perennial question that many in the art and media arenas are constantly attempting to answer is, "Does art affect reality or does reality affect art?" Those who have given this question serious analysis tend to believe that a symbiotic relationship exists here. In the case of Afrikan oral traditions, art, specifically music, is a means to maintain and affirm value systems that positively sustain a culture. The reflexive relationship between art and reality has relevance here. Since the dawn of organized Afrikan civilization, music and the spoken word have been an imperative ingredient in binding Afrikan people to their cultural traditions. The often-inexplicable power that is generated through the playing of music is a very genuine part these cultural realities. As

aforementioned, these traditions were outlawed or co-opted by the dominant white supremacist ideology due to fear of the inevitable unification and resistance of enslaved Afrikans around their potent art forms. They were replaced with meticulous strategies to divide and conquer. This action found its way into every aspect of Afrikan life in america. This of course includes all of the many art forms that Afrikan descendants in america have produced. There are various bodies of information that suggest the intentional co-opting of black music from jazz to rock and roll in an effort to undermine voices of critical resistance. Hip-Hop shares the same fate and is arguably having the most adverse effect on Afrikan descendants in america because of its potency and relationship to the reality creating power (nyama) of the West Afrikan Griot. This is not to say that the reason for the existing plight of Afrikans in america rests solely on the shoulders of hip-hop culture and the artists who propagate it, but rather by design, a very negative culture of self-deterioration and self-hatred has been imposed on Black people and hip-hop is functioning the way it was intended by maintaining the culture that its people embrace. Afrikans in america have adopted the culture of their oppressor, a culture which includes the likes of materialism, individualism, misogyny, self-enmity and destructive divisiveness. This is a value system that is in complete contradiction to Afrikan centered thought. As hip-hop culture continues to embrace it, the worse the condition becomes for people of Afrikan descent, especially impressionable generations of youth. According to Juwanza Kunjufu in Solutions for Black america, one of three Black males is involved in the penal institution, twenty percent of Black adults and 50% of Black children

live below the poverty line, 40% of Black males ages 16-65 are unemployed, Black males comprise 43% of HIV cases and Black women comprise 64% of HIV cases. These statistics are never-ending and accurately depict the conditions in which descendants of enslaved Afrikans currently find themselves as result of the slave experience. Hip-hop is currently functioning to reinforce these devastating trends as result of the depolitisization and co-opting of the music for capital gain. It imperative that Afrikans in America they reclaim the traditions of their ancestors and implement them in a way that will restore cultural authority and integrity. Drawing on the ancient power of the griot, intent of healing and restoration, and the international media resources of today's societies give hip-hop the potential to no only change the conditions for people of Afrikan descent, but to change the world for generations to come.

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