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## **GANGSTA RAP: A TOOL FOR THE ADVENT OF RACIAL UNITY IN THE U.S.A.**

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### **Résumé**

Les premières notes de musique entendues dans la communauté noire en Amérique ne portaient pas en elles les marques d'un bonheur affirmé mais plutôt les douleurs de la servitude et de l'arrachement brutal au continent Africain. Cette musique a ensuite évolué pour devenir plus politique avec en point d'orgue le gangsta rap, l'une de ses composantes majeures depuis plus de quatre décennies. La présente étude démontre, au moyen de la théorie des Cultural studies qui permet d'explicitier le lien entre culture et pouvoir, que le gangsta rap est en train de créer un socle culturel commun auquel s'identifie la jeunesse de toutes les composantes raciales du pays. Elle établit que le rapprochement interracial qui est ainsi amorcé par cette musique donne aujourd'hui lieu à une plus grande acceptation des Africains Américains comme partenaires sociaux et participe à la création de l'union raciale que les mouvements des droits civiques ont de tout temps appelé de leurs vœux.

**Mot clés :** *Blancs, Gangsta rap, jeunesse, Noirs*

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### **Abstract**

The first notes of music heard in the black community in America did not carry with them the marks of an affirmed happiness but rather the pains of servitude and brutal uprooting from the African continent. This music then evolved to become more political, culminating in gangsta rap, one of its major components for more than four decades. This study demonstrates, by means of the theory of Cultural studies which makes it possible to explain the link between culture and power, that gangsta rap is in the process of creating a common cultural base the youth of all the racial components of the country identifies with. It establishes that the interracial rapprochement that is thus initiated by this music today gives rise to a greater acceptance of African Americans as social partners and participates in the creation of the racial union civil rights movements have always called for..

**Keywords :** *Blacks, gangsta rap, Whites, youth.*

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### **Introduction:**

On May 15, 2021 came out an article entitled *Gangsta Rap and the Betrayal to the community* by Christopher McClinton which

specifically focused on the dehumanization and denigration of women presented as whores, baby-mamas, bitches and many more devaluing epithets in the gangsta rap

industry. Written as a proceeding against this hip-hop movement that is accused of not bringing any constructive image onto the African American community as a whole, the article does not mention any positive contribution of gangsta rap to it. Even worst, it equates this music's messages with the attitudes displayed by the white masters during the slavery era when black women were considered at best as mere sexual objects, and as "sexual brutes and savages" (McClinton), at worst. For the author of the article, Gangsta rappers are celebrating abominable practices black women were subjected to during these long centuries of bondage while exposing the American youth to the violent rhetoric of the African American thug.

The present article is not coming as a rebuttal to the assertions of McClinton or any other scholar whose overarching efforts to pinpoint the blemishes of gangsta rap can easily be understood. No human venture is perfect, let alone gangsta rap whose very name naturally raises eyebrows for any common law-abiding individual. Still, seeing this music only through the prism of absolute negativity is not a fair assessment of what this popular art form represents in the American, and even world, cultural and social landscape. This ruthless attack on gangsta rap raises a fundamental question that the present contribution addresses: why has gangsta rap so rapidly gone mainstream

and is thus creating a new cultural identity bonding the youth and young adults of all races in the United States? This article is built on the premise that, beyond the violence of its lyrics and music videos, gangsta rap has done more and in a much shorter time for the racial integration of African Americans in the American society than the long-fought battles of the abolitionist and civil rights movements. It demonstrates that gangsta rap has outperformed these past noble movements in their endeavor to bring the United States of America closer to its motto *E Pluribus Unum* that can be translated as the bringing together of all the races for the advent of a true united American nation.

To do so, this contribution is articulated around four parts. The first defines gangsta rap and explains how it came to be and then explains what the cultural studies theory on which analyses are based is. The second discusses the social issues pending in the aftermath of both the emancipation proclamation and the civil rights movements while the third demonstrates the penetration of gangsta rap in mainstream American households. As for the fourth part, it evidences in which way gangsta rap is bonding all the races in the United States of America.

- 1. A music born in and centered around violence and at the origin of a distinctive culture**

It is common to hear that violence begets violence. This is particularly true for gangsta rap as one word characterizes it: violence. This music is indeed centered around violence but it is also safe to say that it is a music born in a very violent social context. Derived from the word *gangster* which is defined by *dictionary.com* as “a member of a gang of criminals, especially a racketeer in an organized crime syndicate,” the definition of “gangsta” itself is restricted to the social reality lived by many Americans owing to the activities of youth gangs that plague many urban areas of the country. *Dictionary.com* defines the noun “gangsta” as “a member of an urban street gang” and “gangsta” as an adjective as “of or characteristics of urban street gangs, their members, or gangsta rap.” The connection between the word “gangsta” and gang activities is widely accepted as this term is part of the vocabulary of the members of these delinquent entities. However, “the genre term ‘gangsta rap’ (or ‘gangster rap’) was coined in 1989, when ‘Gangsta Gangsta’ by NWA featured in *Billboard*’s newly launched Hot Rap Singles chart. Its first broadest appearance was in the *Los Angeles Times*, when Ice Cube, playing on the song’s title, used the term ‘gangsta rap’ in an interview” (Quinn, 2005: 10). This glorification of the thug life was not an epiphenomenon. It simply translated the toughness the American youth had to

develop in the midst of the difficult predicament they were experiencing after the 1960s.

In actuality, Gangsta rap is the offspring of a long tradition of resilience of the black populations expressed through music. Its recognizable sound involving dense basslines and heavy drumming are vestiges of the painful past of their ancestors. Scholars have for example documented the centrality of music, and drums in particular, in slave’s attempts to regain their freedom. Sullivan (2001: 21) indicates that “when brought to America, drums were used as they had been in Africa: for communicating. Using drums to spread messages in a rhythmic language undeciphered by Whites, slaves could [...] orchestrate revolts on land and on slave ships as well.” Upon noticing the power of drums in the coordination of slave attacks, both slave traders and slave owners proscribed it and even took strong measures to suppress any form of musical expression within the Blacks. This “contributed to the slave’s cultural disorientation by weakening ties to the music that had filled the African existence. In order to replenish the void left by the ban on drums, slaves developed ways to imitate drumming’s complex polyrhythms by contriving new means of creating rhythm” (Sullivan, 2001: 22). The preeminence of drums in hip hop in general and gangsta rap in particular is therefore not surprising.

This intense craving for music expressed a profound need for these enslaved Africans to find ways to survive in these new and brutal living conditions. Subjected to some of the most inhumane treatments in the history of mankind, they “frequently used music to counter dehumanization –to boost morale and toughen themselves psychologically” (Sullivan, 2001: 22). But they did more than simply equipping themselves psychologically to bear the whole array of mistreatments they were experiencing during this tough period of their presence in the United States. Both their music and songs now reflected the fighting position some had adopted. This was first communicated through songs with double entendre with the intent to mislead the Whites who heard them as they called for dual interpretations.

Gangsta rap, however, departed totally from these subtleties and denounced headlong and in the crudest way the hardship lived by the black populations in urban America. It actually

represents the volatile musical response to a series of transgressions against the African-American community. Rap, also called hip-hop, emerged at a time when the voices of African-American leaders –political, popular, musical, and otherwise

–were distinctly lacking and violations against the African-American community passed largely uncontested. The conservative, often covertly racist, policies of the government administrations during the '70s and '80s caused crisis in the inner city: thousands 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 nation’s scapegoat” (Sullivan, 2001:35).

As mentioned above, there was an evident scheme set up by some administrations in power to hold African Americans in poverty as “incremental economic and social gains made in the 1960s and the 1970s were destroyed with a vengeance in the Reagan and Bush years. Many observers of black politics saw the handwriting on the wall when Reagan came into power” (Lusane, 2004: 353). So did the young artists in the American ghettos. They denounced their fate and expressed their anger towards Washington, the police that ceaselessly harassed them and the judicial system that

did not offer them fair trials. Forced to survive in such a deleterious environment, most African Americans, and particularly those living in urban areas or incarcerated in correction facilities, adopted gangsta rap as a rallying art whose dress code, vernacular, dance, gestures, attitude and many more characteristics mixed street attire and attitude with prison codes.

These features are indicative of a culture as culture itself is defined “as both the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they ‘handle’ and respond to the conditions of existence; and as the lived traditions and practices through which those ‘undertakings’ are expressed and in which they are embodied” (Hall, 1980: 63). In the past, however, and specifically before the 1960s, “culture was associated with art, literature, and classical music. To have culture was to possess a certain taste for particular kinds of artistic endeavor” (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 1255). This definition evolved, especially with the work of anthropologists, to encompass the “forms of life and social expression” (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 1255) of a given community. Culture was also understood by “thinkers like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E.P. Thompson [as] a means of resistance to capitalism” (Rivkin and Ryan,

2004: 1255). This idea of resistance entails the presence of a form of domination that cultural studies as a theory is interested in. In fact,

Cultural Studies can [...] be approached from two quite incommensurable perspectives.

One sees the media, television, film, and the like as instruments of economic, ethnic, and

gender domination. Owned by large corporations and largely run by men, the media and

the entertainment industry in general cannot help but assist the reproduction of the social

system by allowing only certain kinds of imagery and ideas to gain access to mass

audiences. Generated by those at the top of the social hierarchy, the media inevitable

further attitudes and perceptions that assure its continuation. The other perspective sees

culture from the bottom up and pays more attention to the way such forms as music,

from African American spirituals to the blues to rock and roll, express energies and

attitudes fundamentally at odds with the attitudes and assumptions (the deferment of

gratification in order better to be able to work, for example) of the capitalist social order.

Culture comes from below, and while it can be harnessed in profitable and ultimately

socially conservative ways, it also represents the

permanent possibility of eruption, of dissonance, and of an alternative imagination of reality (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 1255).

Both perspectives fit analyses in the present study as gangsta rap, through the culture it has created around itself and the language it has clothed itself with, have not only been developed as a tool for resisting the dominant white culture's codes and stereotypes but is now exerting domination over an important segment of the American population, i.e., the youth and the young adults. Marginalized in the 1980s, gangsta rappers are now "takin' over" (Snoop Dogg et al.) as exemplified by a song going by the same title and performed by Snoop Dogg, DMX, Eminem, Dr Dre, and Ice Cube and that featured in the box office movie *Fast & Furious 9*. Indeed, from this culture, a strong and profitable industry has emerged. Industry champions, among whom many African American entrepreneurs such as Snoop Dogg, Dr Dre, Jay-Z and P. Diddy were born. They understood right from the start the potential the burgeoning hip hop culture represented. They engulfed in it and started providing this youth with specific clothing lines, venues for expressing their creativity, drinks, and even associated their names with some business ventures that all proved very lucrative and made them multimillionaires. The wealth hundreds of these rap moguls and their teams enjoy today

has not only given them financial power. It has also offered them an important exposure in the world media and beyond. For decades now, their voice is heard and serves as a model for millions of Americans, regardless of their races.

## **2. Pending racial and social issues**

Any reference to races in the United States opens up wounds racial minorities have been suffering for centuries. Having started with the Native Americans who were alternatively dispossessed of their lands, exterminated in part, deported in poor reservations and kept away from any political life on the land of their ancestors, the dehumanization of Africans forcibly brought to that North American territory known as the United States since 1776 pushed activists to reclaim the equal treatment of all races promised in and proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America. It reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (National Archives). Yet, the black populations in the country were deprived of all their rights and were rather treated as commodities.

The sufferings they underwent were so brutal that they sparked many revolts all through the first thirteen initial colonies. The

same emancipation struggles continued on multiple plantations even after the colonies declared independence in 1776. Consisting of the poisoning of some slave-owners and disparate attacks on some plantations at first, the abolitionist movement became more structured and gained momentum over the years. It finally received its unexpected greatest support in the form of the Secession War also known as the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865. January 1, 1863, especially, marked the culmination of this fight for the liberation of all the black populations from servitude. It was indeed a turning point in the history of the United States and the world as President Abraham Lincoln issued on that day the Proclamation of Independence that put an official end to slavery in the United States. But even after this decision that shifted the paradigm of the populations of African descent in the country, inequality between the races endured. The Jim Crow laws passed in the southern states came as a reminder of the bleak past the negro populations had just gone out. It is true that they were no longer forced to work on white slave-owners' plantations, but their general condition had not fundamentally changed. They were still excluded from the white society that did not consider them as equal.

Harassed by different white supremacist groups amongst whom is the notorious the Ku Klux Klan, profiled and

brutalised by the police, lynched in different parts of the country, rejected from some public and private venues, denied justice when wronged or falsely accused, sentenced to disproportionately higher prison terms or sent to the death row where whites in similar situations received minor jail sentences, subjected to innumerable other unjust treatments, African Americans took the streets, advocated either for violence or nonviolence, embarked on some legal actions against segregated states and undertook many more actions at all levels to call for social justice and equality. Known as the Civil Rights movement, these actions yielded important social and political gains. But they did not change the nature of the relationship between the white majority and the black populations. Race remained the key problem to address. Historian Howard Zinn (2010: 23) exemplifies this situation as follows: "There is not a country in world history in which racism has been more important, for so long a time, as the United States. And the problem of 'the color line,' as W.E.B. Du Bois put it, is still with us. So it is more than a purely historical question: How does it start? –and an even more urgent question: How might it end? Or, to put it differently: Is it possible for whites and blacks to live together without hatred?" The culture of violence towards African Americans did not dwindle even in the post-

civil rights movement time. It rather escalated.

Interestingly, music was present every step of the way. It grew along with the presence of the black populations in the new world. On the plantations, the enslaved blacks used to sing songs to resist the hardship of their daily lives. But these field hollers were not copied by the salve-owners who despised them. Whites in general regarded this form of music, and the other ones that were created during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as plain savage. Vanelli (2018: 58) expresses this view as follows: “The mundane songs of African American people were described as ‘a rude chant. The whole effect of this music, if music it can be called, is as barbarous as if rendered in African forests at some heathen festival’.” The other forms of music that followed, such as Ragtime and the Blues, did make their way to a much bigger audience nationwide. But, like their predecessors, they did not really bring positive changes in the interracial interactions. Neither did jazz, bebop, disco, funk and all their variants. They were appreciated for what they were, that is, as vibrant musical expressions, but they did not create a national cultural bond important parts of the population of the U.S. identified with.

### **3. Gangsta rap in mainstream American households**

Unlike the other forms of music African Americans have initiated in the U.S., gangsta rap is partaking in the bonding of the different racial groups in the country. As such, it is a game changer in the American social landscape. The power it exercises owes first to its longevity as one of the most appreciated types of music in the United States and in the world. Compared to the plethora of other genres which can be grouped under the terminologies *political rap*, *spiritual rap*, *soft rap*, and all its international variants, “gangsta rap music [is indeed] the most popular selling subgenre of rap music” (Oware, 2011: 22). Its hegemony is not contested because it speaks to a large portion of the African American populations who easily relate to it. Surprisingly, white households make up its biggest base. In fact, as Caldwell (2008: 14) evidenced while quoting Riley, “white, suburban middle-class consumers have a strong affiliation with the gangsta rap style: ‘It is no secret that this audience of predominately white, suburban consumers exists, and that indeed the explosion in the 1990s of gangsta rap would have been impossible without it.’”

Indeed, gangsta rap would not have the stature it has today in the U.S. had the white populations not shown interest in it. But how did that come to be? One possible reason lies in the power of culture, once it has been established in a given community. It is actually the culture built around the

music itself that constitutes the backbone of gangsta rap's success among youth audiences. The reason to that is incumbent upon the centrality of music in the life of youngsters. A study by Dave Miranda and Michael Claes (2004: 113) underscores the attachment of the youth to music as it "portrays society and brings satisfaction to some of [their] social and emotional needs." Once these young populations have identified a music that speaks to their hearts, it becomes the cement that sticks them together. Dave and Michael further indicate that "this social phenomenon is encompassed in what is commonly referred to as musical subcultures that provide adolescents with an alternative cultural identity, values, and convictions" (2004: 113).

It is no secret that some of the values and convictions adolescents hold around the world do not necessarily match those of the society as they are generally seen as deviant for the most part. In that respect, the marginality gangsta rap offers them through the promotion of hyper masculinity, misogyny, vulgarity, violence, toughness, homophobia, and many more ruthless attitudes displayed in lyrics and music videos resonates with them. But it should be noted that, contrary to general belief, this music does not only revolve around negative images of the Black youth, or any other American youth by the same token. Oware,

in his article *Brotherly Love: Homosexuality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music*, for example, looked at gangsta rap differently and found positive themes the critics of this music do not generally bring to the fore. He discovered that "these topics included rappers defining their male friends as family members (friends and family), rappers utilizing their personal achievements for the benefit of their male friends (success by association), and finally lamenting or mourning the incarceration or death of a companion (loss of friends)" (Oware, 2011: 27). Coolness, courage, resilience, gratitude, respect, loyalty, self-confidence, hope, and many other qualities to cope with any kind of hardship are also celebrated in a lot of songs. In other words, "gangsta rap [...] reflects and projects what scholar Robin D.G. Kelly calls "the lessons of lived experiences" (Lusane, 2004: 357) adolescents in the U.S. learn from in their maturation process in a country they know is crippled by endemic violence. Thus, though this youth connects with songs like *Dear Mama* by 2 Pac, *Mirror* by Lil' Wayne, *It Was a Good Day* by Ice cube because of the marginal life they celebrate, they also get exposed to such positive messages as expressing gratitude to parents' for their love and care in the first, conducting personal introspection in the second, and wishing for the advent of a peaceful living environment in the last.

Two other major elements justifying the warm welcome gangsta rap is receiving in mainstream America are the Super Bowl LVI halftime show on February 13, 2022 and white gangsta rap aficionados making use of the word *nigger* for identifying themselves. Ranking among the most viewed shows in the United States of America, the Super Bowl half time show has always marked a form of recognition for the artists who are granted the privilege to perform. This is exactly what happened for gangsta rap in the year 2022 This year has indeed seen the consecration of gangsta rap as a music and cultural movement with the brilliant performance of some of its iconic stars that are Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre, 50 Cent, and Eminem, to name a few, in a scenery that replicated the design of a house in the “hood,” the birthplace of this music. During the show, the vision of the mostly white audience singing along the lyrics of these rappers and the deafening cheers it produced each time a song was performed is a stark testimony of the acceptance gangsta rap is benefitting in all the country. As for the use of the controversial word *nigger* by white gangsta rap consumers in their intra-racial interactions, it is the ultimate sign of the penetration of this music within the white majority. Its usage as a badge of honor among white gangsta rap aficionados expresses nothing else than their indefectible attachment to this music and its codes. It is

simply the expression of their belonging to the gangsta rap culture.

#### 4. **Towards the creation of a more united U.S.A.**

Undeniably, there are changes taking place in the American society and gangsta rap is playing an important role in their advent. Though racism has not been blotted out from the public sphere, the country is making important strides towards the integration of minorities at all levels. Putting of course all these changes to the credit of the hip hop movement alone would be demagogic. But it is safe to say that it is greatly contributing to the changes of mentalities for a greater acceptance of Blacks. The election of president Barack Hussein Obama, the first African American president the country has had to date, for example, owes nothing to chance. Among the multitude of reasons that have played in favor of his victory is the penetration of African American music, namely gangsta rap, in white Americans’ homes. In short, African Americans are becoming more and more visible and this exposure today is not followed by negative comments as it used to be a few decades back. Bakari Kitwana (2004: 341) has noticed these positive changes as follows:

As the major cultural movement of our time, hip-hop (its music, fashion, attitude, style, and language) is undoubtedly one of the core

influences for young African Americans

born between 1965 and 1984. To fully appreciate the extent to which it is true, think back

for a moment about the period between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, before rap became a mainstream phenomenon. Before MTV. Before BET's Rap City. Before the Fresh Prince of Bel Air. Before *House Party* I or II. It is difficult now to imagine Black youth as a nearly invisible entity in American popular culture. But in those days, that was the case. When young Blacks were visible, it was mostly during the six o'clock evening news reports of crime in urban America.

In contrast, today it is impossible not to see young Blacks in the twenty-first century's

public square—the public space of television, film, and the Internet. Our images now

extend far beyond crime reports. For most of our contemporaries, it's difficult to recall

when this was not the case. Because of rap, the voices, images, style, attitude, and language of young Blacks have become central in American culture, transcending geographic, social, and economic boundaries” (Kitwana, 2004: 341).

Black hip hop artists, and mostly rap singers, are aware of the changes they are helping to bring about in the country. More than ever, they know what they represent in the society and have understood that the success they enjoy benefits their community and the

country at large. Identified as personalities whose influence can help in the marketing of some goods and services, these artists receive numerous offers from world class companies and movie makers and thus get even more media exposure that in turn permits non-black populations to see them under a much positive light.

Today, most media outlets cannot do without gangsta rappers if they want to be profitable. They have the obligation to feed their audiences with what they ask for. And what they ask for, for the most part, is gangsta rap. Indeed, just like in the U.S., “to adolescents in Quebec, American rap represents the commercial rap genre from the United States, which can be regularly seen on television or heard on the radio” (Miranda and Claes, 2004: 114). With such a success, it is thus clear that American rappers have taken over. They are indeed wielding an immense power as they are constantly heard in the traditional media in addition to being present and actively followed on the social media where they have communities of fans of tens of millions of people. As a result, gangsta rap has turned into a very lucrative business generating billions of dollars every year. And accusing it for being “dispossessed of its original cultural meaning,” like Miranda and Claes (2004: 114) contended, is rather a compliment for this music that is in reality displaying a feature cultural studies

highlight. Indeed, the capacity to make necessary changes to face new challenges and remain the dominant culture, as this theory states, is intrinsically linked to cultures that want to perpetuate themselves.

Gangsta rap is there to stay. Its effects are also expected to grow in the coming years, if it continues to keep the same pace. Its initiators and many of the entrepreneurs who control it have made the choice to thoroughly think this issue over so as to elaborate the best methods to preserve and deepen its influence over the country and beyond. That is why “in June 2001, Rush Communication CEO Russell Simmons convened a hip-hop summit in New York city. With the theme “Taking Back Responsibility,” the summit focused its agenda on ways to strengthen rap music’s growing influence” (Kitwana, 2004: 341). This marked a new beginning in the history of arts in the country as it was the first time such a meeting was specifically dedicated to strategizing a musical movement to not only maintain its current control over its regular audience but also find ways to extend its grip onto a much wider part of the society. The quality of the guests at that event was another marker of the inescapable character of the hip hop movement gangsta rap is a pillar of. Indeed, “the 300 participants included major rap artists and industry executives as well as politicians, religious and community leaders, activists, and

scholars. Few forces other than rap music, now one of the most powerful forces in American popular culture, could bring together such a diverse gathering of today’s African American leaders” (Kitwana, 2004: 341).

In the face of this growing power, some today do not hesitate to ask rap artists to take a much more overt and central role in the fight against some of the social problems African Americans still face in the country. Others even want rap artists to engage in politics, and preferably on the side of the Democratic party that has traditionally received the suffrage of the African American population or, create a third strong independent one. For Bakari Kitwana (2004: 350) “all the components for a mass political movement in our lifetime are in place and functioning.” Still, no one really knows what the future holds. What is sure, however, is that gangsta rap, through the cultural dominance it is exerting on the American society, is accomplishing feats unheard of in the country. As Lusane (2004: 361) put it, “in the end, Hip Hop is neither the cultural beast that will destroy black America nor the political panacea that will save it, but is a part of the ongoing African-American struggle constantly reaching for higher and higher modes of liberation.”

#### **Conclusion:**

Abolitionists participated in putting an end to the enslavement of hundreds of

thousands of Blacks in the United States but did not change the white dominant society's attitude towards their former slaves. Blacks were free but not accepted in the American society at large as being equal to the whites. They were even kept apart in segregated areas where state officials did not provide the basic commodities for a decent living. Civil rights activists shed their blood for social justice and the end of segregation laws across the country that made geographic separation of the races legal and they succeeded for the second. But this hard-won victory did not bring about an affective or emotional connection between African Americans and the other communities. It rather exacerbated an endemic racism whose apex was reached with the so-called war on drugs during the Reagan and Bush administrations. In front of the decomposing racial situation this unjust policy and many more had created in the country and with the voices of many black civil rights activists rendered almost inaudible through a series of legal but also unorthodox actions, the rise of the hip hop movement and gangsta rap in particular filled the void and went beyond the expectations of their creators. In actuality, gangsta rappers and the major players of the hip hop industry have been bridging the gap that has for so long existed between the African American community and the white majority.

Today, many white Americans who have been nurtured by this music do not hesitate to identify themselves as *niggers*, in a very positive way. This fact alone tells a lot about the progress that has been made over time regarding the racial exclusion many in this dominant race had psychologically developed towards African Americans and their way of life. Through their adoption of both the gangsta rap's, and by the same token the African American urban youth's, culture and language, these non-black populations and their black counterparts are creating a new society. Knowing that culture is a shared set of values, habits, beliefs and patterns a group of people fights to preserve as it defines them, the interconnection gangsta rap is helping create between the different races in the country is a positive sign in the direction of the advent of much more racially-tolerant Americans in the years to come.

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