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Misogyny and the Money

By Leah Stevenson

Major: Journalism

Leah Stevenson

Booth Library's Influence

Booth Library is more than a library in my eyes; besides the peaceful atmosphere, I am overwhelmed by the shelves of books, the old Roman style architecture and the colorful resources that contribute to my inspiration to be creative. As I walked by the main desk, I saw fliers for the Student Research and Creativity Award and immediately removed myself from my surroundings in order to read the contents. As I went online for more information, I saw I was given the choice to submit any type of work, and without much thought, I instantly decided to submit an artwork. Unsure of what subject to present, I spent a couple of day's to think of my piece but still couldn't produce an idea. So Every time I entered the library I'd scan the shelves for ideas. As I walk by, books titled Entrepreneur or Business seem to catch my eye until one day I saw the word Hip-Hop and decided to check it out and some other books about Music and Rap mainly because music is one of my many talents and interest. After reading through the book for a few days I gradually began to conclude what my artwork should be about; *Women's Portrayal in Hip-hop* which soon transformed into a five page paper for my African American Studies class. Every time I enter the Library, many times I don't have an initial reason for going there, but can't help leaving without a book in my hand! Many times I discover something new like a new study spot or just to explore what Booth has displayed for the month. What I love most is that everything I need is available and ready in Booth's collection. Once I have an idea, I can promptly log onto Booth's Online

Catalog and research items on Hip-hop, Media's portrayal of Women or checking out art books on how to draw human figures. My inspiration is Booth's diverse collection from literature, art, music and history which is everything I need!

Relationship to Interest/Education

My submitted work contributes to both my general interest in Music, Art, and Education. I love music and after deciding that Hip-hop should be my subject, I couldn't turn back. Recently I won the So U think u Can Rap Contest at 7th Street Underground and that gave me more reasons why my interest would relate well to my artwork. I believe the negative image that is displayed in Hip-hop is something that I am highly against. Being an artist myself (MC and Visual Artist) this contest allowed me to research/checkout books that provided me with better insights on the Hip-hop culture, women in general, and inspiration from books on famous Painters. In class, it was a coincidence that I had to write a paper about African American Culture, with Hip-Hop music being one of the options. I was eager to present this paper in order to share my opinions with the teacher, and now Booth Library. I will include my five page paper titled Hip-hop: Misogyny and the Money which shows my perspective on Women and Men in Hip-hop which definitely contributes to the subject of my piece.

Annotated Bibliography

Iglitzin, Lynne. *Women in the World: A Comparative Study*. Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1976

The Chapter titled Patriarchal Heritage helped me to further understand the role women play as beings in general. This book introduced a word I never thought about, sex-role stereotyping; the role individuals play in society based on gender. I wrote this word onto my canvas, applying this knowledge to women in Hip hop because it extends beyond just the work world. The music degrades women, calling them B's and H's until the pervasiveness carries into their self-identity and self definition, playing sex-typed or nurturing roles. The book also mentioned that women are sex discriminated and lessen to equal rights so they aim to make money in order to obtain equal same domination as men. The problem is, some women tend to take the route to exploit their bodies until they reach that goal. Women who seek validation become victims of these lyrics until society and the younger generations to come become influence by this negative image.

Finkelstein, Joanne. *The Art of Self Invention: Image and Identity in Popular Visual Culture*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007.

I used this book to help me decide the style of the artwork; this book highlighted the importance of visual imagery in Mass Media today and how it is starting to be accepted as real. So I took on a collage/abstract approach in order to represent the art of self-invention. This book mentioned that women especially are portrayed as characters and objectified in mass media. Society for some reason enjoys the exploitation of sex,

drugs, and power which helped me understand also why Music, especially Hip-hop has created this culture in order to attract listeners and viewers and it is working. So I made sure to include bold word-choices, objectification, and symbolism in order to represent the abuse in Hip-hops music and women. This knowledge helped me decide the best way to communicate my artwork to other.

Black, Arthur. *How to Draw the Human Figure*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950.

I simply used this book as an example for drawing the human figure. The focus point of my painting is the body of a woman. To make sure the figure proportions were right and highlighted corrected, this book contributed a lot.

Currin, John. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. London: Serpentine Gallery, 1990.

John Currin is known for his unique design in painting naked women. I thought this was interesting because it gave me ideas on how to present my subject. How should she pose? What should her facial expression be? Currin's paintings were a form of inspiration. I noticed most of his paintings included an individual woman centered directly in the middle of the canvas with variety of lost stares, sick gestures, and even queer smiles on their face. I used that in my painting by centering the woman with a motionless face.

Leah Stevenson

Instructor: Dr. Rosemary Onyango

African American Research Paper: Genre of Hip-Hop

Hip-hop Music: Misogyny and the Money

In the late 90's hip-hop started as a form of encouragement and empowerment for black people who struggled when growing up. Hip Hop gave black people a voice, where their opinions and challenges could be heard throughout the world. Today the genre of Hip-hop music has developed into a negative image that degrades women and negatively influences the younger black community. Think about some of the hip-hop music at the top of the charts; the songs that disrespect woman, and contains far too much explicit content that it has society desensitized. The pervasiveness of today's hip-hop has soaked into society's head that it's ok for hip-hop music to be portrayed this way while the executive producers behind the hip-hop industry are making billions by exploiting music they know people have become accustomed to. But the question is; why do artist/men in hip-hop feel they need to disrespect women and rap about inappropriate material in order to have power in the hip-hop industry?

In hip-hop, women are called degrading names and portrayed as sex objects by hip-hop artist with money on the mind. From the magnetizing television screen to the songs coming out of your stereo, believe it or not, woman are disrespected so much in hip-hop until it makes the artist rich. For example, Lil' Wayne's albums debuted # 2 and sold more than 200,000 copies which is great but sad that women have to be disrespected in order to go platinum. In the article "How Hip-hop holds Blacks Back", John H. McWhorter states,

The angry, oppositional stance that “The Message” reintroduced into black popular culture transformed rap from a fad into a multi-billion-dollar industry that sold more than 80 million records in the U.S. in 2002—nearly 13 percent of all recordings sold. To rap producers like Russell Simmons, earlier black pop was just sissy music. He despised the “soft, unaggressive music (and non-threatening images)” of artists like Michael Jackson or Luther Vandross. “So the first chance I got,” he says, “I did exactly the opposite.”

This new approach to gain record sales ultimately proves that hip-hop music exploits black culture and degrades the minds of women and the youth without considering the negative impact in order to reach the top of the charts. In one Hip-hop song “*Workin’ Em*” he calls women “B’s” and “H’s” and says how much power he has because he gets more women than the other guy. How ironic that women are attracted to those that think less of them. The hip-hop artist Soulja Boy degrades women so much that he became # 1 artist in America when he first came out. It’s just that easy. The filmmaker of a hip-hop documentary Bryon Hurt says, “They’re not boys being boys, they’re boys figuring out early that girls are here to be sexually objectified as playthings.” I agree but I also think they disrespect women, not only because they want to make money, but because they’re afraid of what people would think of them. If they don’t put on this “hard” image, they will be called soft, and soft is an unacceptable quality in the homophobic history of hip-hop. When you watch today’s hip-hop videos, all you see is men putting on this macho act with gold chains, over-glamorized women, and explicit lyrics. Bryon Hurt also says a man has two things on his mind when he walks into studio: Himself (who he really is) and the thug (who he projects himself to be). I agree with this too because hip-hop

artist want to fit in and follow the playbook that society created which stereotypically says that you have to act a certain way in order to be accepted in hip-hop.

In hip-hop women are treated negatively not only on radio airwaves, but in music videos too that effect a generation of people. One example is the infamous Nelly's "Tip Drill" video. In this video, women are showed shaking their bodies just to pleasure the men. At the end of this video, without hesitation, Nelly swipes a credit card through a black woman's derriere. What I don't understand is why do the most degrading songs get worldwide airplay and mainstream attention where it is available to be seen by kids? "Black girls are not seeing positive images of who they are and what they can be," said Carolyn West, associate professor of psychology and the study of prevention of violence at the University of Washington. "Looking at the sexual imagery really impacts on the functioning of teenage girls." It's a shame that hip-hop has come to this and that industries air what they know will sale and what people will watch no matter how harmful it could be for the minds of not only black people but other races as well. It's true that you don't have to watch it, but it's also true that whatever images are shown in public affects others. The image created by these kinds of lyrics is an image of women that "tends to be objectified, degrading, very stripper-like. And it's not that this is wrong, but it becomes wrong when there's no other quality or image that we have to choose from," said Michaela Angela Davis, the fashion and beauty editor of Essence. If Nelly or other famous hip-hop artist who are seen as icons treat women negatively on nationwide television, young men who are watching this are going to test these practices on another woman. If the woman allows it, then boys and young men have this mental note saying, "*hey I guess we can treat women this way too because he's doing it, and no ones stopping me.*" In private or exposed to the public, women are being disrespected whether you notice it or not.

In hip-hop, men feminize other men by calling them words that are used to devalue women. For example, in the hip-hop song "*Play the Game*", by The Game, he names a small list of other hip-hop artist he dislikes and calls them all "B's". In the hip-hop song "*It aint called fo*" by Soulja Boy, he says men run their mouths and act like "B's". Byron Hurts documentary, he discusses the greatest insult that one man could give to another in American culture is to degrade his manhood and, as Michael Dyson says, "to assume that he's less than a man and to assign him the very derogatory terms that one usually associates with women." I think that if a man wants to really make another man feel bad, he calls him a name that devalues a woman which shows he doesn't have any higher respect for a woman than he does for a man. What makes it worse is that after so many years of the B word being used in a variety of occasions, women too have picked up this word as if they found a dollar on the sidewalk by calling each other "B's". Hip-hop is unquestionably a brand, which people become attached to and apply to their everyday lives. So if Hip-hop takes a new approach on the content it provides to its listener, maybe a much cleaner, respectable message can get across or is it too late?

You might ask, well why do women allow themselves to be disrespected. Society has come up with this idea that a woman must look a certain way to get attention and men must say and do things in order to maintain power. Women are at fault because they buy into this idea which will make them a target to be disrespected and receive unwanted attention. Men are at fault because they don't put an end to disrespecting women because they feel that they have to follow the playbook that society has made in order to have control in the Hip-hop world. And the last thing a man wants is for someone to question his masculinity.

In the hip-hop industry, men feel that the negative image of degrading women and exploiting provocative material is essential in order to gain money and attention from viewers. As

we know, majorities or artist follow this rule, but rules are meant to be broken and that's what this society needs: Men to break the rule that you have to disrespect women and rap about unnecessary things in order to have that power. Women, not to buy into society's idea of what they define a "real" woman should do and look like, because if "real" means that you have to be disrespected by artist/men then *I* must be the most "fake" girl in world.

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Beyond Beats and Rhymes. Pbs.org