

Kevin Lee

Professor Tinajero

English 1302

2 October 2014

### Rap Music and how it has divided people and brought them together

From the beginning of the culture of rap music, it has been an outlet that attracts people and brings them together. Interestingly enough through the years rap music has continued to bring people together but it has also divided people apart from each other. In this present time it is more common to see rappers of different races; it is also common to see diverse crowds at rap concerts; which all depends on what type of rap music it is and which artist. On the other hand, rap music has divided people in a way. Over the years there have been issues with the police and the African American community; as a result a lot of the issues and anger have been incorporated into rap music.

Rap began bringing people together at block parties in New York City in the 1970's. A group named Sugar Hill Gang truly introduced rap music to the world and made it popular with their song called "Rappers Delight." According to T. Rees Shapiro of The Washington Post, "Rapper's Delight was hip-hop's first recorded single and introduced the emerging art form to the world. The record sold more than 14 million copies." This song appealed to many different people who helped it become popular and sell copies worldwide. Rappers Delight was a song that welcomed people to come together, dance and have a good time; no matter their skin color. In the song "Rappers Delight" rapper Wonder Mike of Sugar Hill Gang writes, "Now, what you hear is not a test, I'm rapping to the beat / And me, the groove, and my friends are gonna try to move your feet / See I am Wonder Mike and I'd like to say "hello" / To

Commented [KL1]: Don't capitalize "rap" or "music"

the black, to the white, the red and the brown, the purple and yellow". As you can see rap music was about getting people to dance no matter what race they were.

With the Sugar Hill Gang appealing to the world and welcoming people of all races to support rap and Hip-Hop music, it has become more common to see rappers of different races. In 2000 a new name came into the rap scene-Eminem. Eminem is a Caucasian Rapper from Detroit, Michigan, who has become one of the most popular and successful rappers in the history of rap music. At the beginning of his career he faced many obstacles becoming a rapper and making a name for himself in a predominately African-American genre of music. However, with the support of African-American fans and artist he has become one of the most popular artists to date. According to the article "The Politics of Race and Rap", Rapper and Producer Dr. Dre famously stated, "I don't care if he's purple, as long as he can rap" (qtd. in Hahn). That comment alone shows how far rap music has come and how it is welcomed to bringing people together no matter of race. Rap has also opened the door for other non-African American rappers, one group in particular is Macklemore & Ryan Lewis a Caucasian duo. Since 2012 Macklemore & Ryan Lewis quickly became one of the most popular rap groups and they achieved much success. They have won 4 Grammy Awards and have had numerous number 1 hits on the billboard charts. According to Billboard.com in the article "Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Drake Lead Hot Rap Songs' 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Rankings", "Now, there's another achievement that the rapper and producer can tuck under their belts: their breakout smash "Thrift Shop," featuring Wanz, is the top song in the 25-year history of the Billboard Hot Rap Songs chart." This is another example of how far the culture of rap music has come and how it has opened the door and allowed people off all races to be accepted and make a career in the genre of music. This gives hope to the world that you can succeed.

Not only has rap opened the doors for rappers of different races to become artist in the genre; it has accepted all races to become fans at rap concerts. When rap first started it was typical to see a predominantly African American crowd, however it has progressively grown to very diverse crowds at

rap concerts. What is quite interesting and controversial about this is that depending on the artist and the type of rap music; it may result in a predominantly Caucasian audience or a predominantly African American audience. As stated in the article “How Do You Like Your Blue-Eyed Boys, Mr. Rap?” on [Newyorktimes.com](http://Newyorktimes.com) the article states, “Macklemore’s breakthrough is merely the mass-market debut of a phenomenon that’s been happening for some time – white rappers performing for predominantly white audiences” (Caramancia). As you can see this is something that has been going on over time, on the other hand if it’s a “gangsta rapper” such as Chief Keef you may not see such a diverse crowd at his concerts.

It is amazing how far rap has come and the success rappers of different races have had in the industry. Nonetheless, as we look at the racial make-up at rap concerts according to the artist we begin to see a divide in race. We see that the race of fans changes from predominantly Caucasian to predominantly African-American. Rap music truly started dividing people against each other and police (white police) following events that involved violence between police and citizens. Los Angeles, California is one example of the division between rap music and police. The L.A. riots of 1992 became a popular time for rappers to make songs about the issues that were going on in their communities. According an article “Los Angeles riots: Gangsta rap foretold them and grew after them”, “The L.A. riots of 1992 arrived with its soundtrack in place. Sanctioned police brutality, a grim job market, gang life, a decimated school system, the toll of crack on poor neighborhoods and racial tensions were all being documented by West Coast rappers” (Hardy and Brown). After the beating of Rodney King in 1991 by four Los Angeles police officers was caught on camera the public began speaking out; which led to rappers speaking out about the issues, and turning those words into lyrics to songs. A group called N.W.A made a passionate song “Fuck Tha Police” about the police brutality. In “Fuck Tha Police” Ice Cube raps:

Fuck the police coming straight from the underground

A young nigga got it bad cause I'm brown  
And not the other color so police think  
They have the authority to kill a minority  
Fuck that shit, cause I aint the one  
For a punk motherfucker with a badge and a gun  
To be beating on, and throwing in jail

As you can see Ice Cube is addressing the fact that he is a brown male he feels that the police think its ok to kill and beat on minorities. Another example is, a group called Dead Prez has a song called "Dem Crazy" where they express how they feel about white police. In "Dem Crazy", Dead Prez writes, "The police is the enemy / Everywhere the white man go he bring misery / All throughout history, look it up / Everything them bald heads touch they fuck it up / Every government he has set up, it be corrupt." Through these lyrics you can see the frustration and division that has come between rap music and police; specifically white police due to the events that have occurred over the years.

In closing the art form that started out as predominantly African-American has grown to become one of the most popular genres of music. Rap music has allowed people of all races to be a part of the culture, and enjoy it, and make careers in the art form. It has brought people together of all races as well as divided people due to issues within society. Rap music has allowed artists to express their feelings, and concerns through their music. Looking forward I believe rap music will continue to thrive, diversify and continue to bring people together of all races. Rap will also continue to allow artist to express their feeling towards issues that go on in society; which may continue to divide people. Whether rap music will bring people together or divide people for-only time will tell.

Works Cited

Dead Prez. "Dem Crazy." Rapgenius.com

Hahn, Jonah. "The Politics of Race in Rap." Harvard Political Review. N.p., 8 June 2014. Web. 07 Oct. 2014.

Hardy, Ernest, and August Brown. "Los Angeles Riots: Gangsta Rap Foretold Them and Grew after Them." Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, 02 May 2012. Web. 06 Oct. 2014.

N.W.A. "Fuck Tha Police." Rapgenius.com

Shapiro, T. Rees. "Sylvia Robinson, Producer of Sugarhill Gang's 'Rapper's Delight,' Dies at 75." Washington Post. The Washington Post, 11 Oct. 2011. Web. 06 Oct. 2014.

Staff, Billboard. "Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Drake Lead Hot Rap Songs' 25th Anniversary Rankings." Billboard. N.p., 6 Mar. 2014. Web. 06 Oct. 2014.

Sugar Hill Gang. "Rappers Delight." Rapgenius.com