

The Importance of Rappers Doing Good For Society

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Rappers need to do good in society for many reasons. Celebrities with a following whether it be a couple thousand or a couple million can influence their audience or introduce them to a certain subject. Rappers are no different as they are also celebrities and have garnered a large following collectively over the years. They are able to speak up for those with a similar background that may not be heard otherwise, the ability to unify their audience, and the ability to influence as role models and directly help people, charities, and organizations. In the age of social media, outlets like Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, and Snapchat have only amplified their voice and image to the people.

Rappers need to do good in society because they have a platform that not only allows them to interact with their audience, but that also gets them seen and heard by the rest of the world as well. Celebrities have always impacted different areas in society from fashion to politics. Rappers have a history of doing this over the years as they have used their voice more specifically towards combating struggles in their communities whether it be through music or a direct statement from them. For example, in the video for "Alright" by Kendrick Lamar (2015), Kendrick Lamar takes us through a struggling community in California pointing out drug use, violence, theft, life, and death. The music video demonstrates these struggles and the song itself is an anthem of hope for people of color with lyrics like "Wouldn't you know/ We been hurt, been down before, / When our pride was low/ Lookin' at the world like, "Where do we go, ?"/And we hate po-po/ Wanna kill us dead in the street for sure,/ I'm at the preacher's door/ My knees gettin' weak and my gun might blow/ But we gon' be alright." Lyrics that allude to the everlasting tension between minorities and police due to police brutality and systemic racism. Lamar's video and lyrics help people around the world see what he sees and what he has experienced directly from him as an alternative to what the media portrays. As of March 2021, the video has gathered 140 million views on youtube and has countless blogs deciphering it and spreading awareness on the matter. For example, Joseph (2017) "These lyrics acknowledge years of collective struggle and our perseverance through those struggles. Kendrick understands the killing of Black men by the police to be another hurdle in the Black experience that can be overcome through spiritual strength to survive (the

preacher's door). At the preacher's door, we confess our struggles and expel the blues from our lives that harm our bodies (My knees gettin' weak). The internal oppressions that our bodies absorb from the traumatic experiences of our lives (my gun might blow) give us the strength to say that "we gon' be alright." However, Kendrick is not the only rapper to speak up on social issues. According to Zaru and Brown (2020) "Decades before "Black Lives Matter" became a global hashtag touted by celebrities and leading politicians, hip-hop artists were profiled, targeted, and vilified for broadcasting those same systemic injustices that plagued Black America -- a reality that for decades was shut out of mainstream media.". "Broadcasting" that still occurs to this day from artists such as Kendrick Lamar, J Cole, and Nas to name a few.

Furthermore, rappers can unify their diverse audiences. Modern rappers especially have been able to build a very diverse following as social media now connects the world at the click of a button. Such artists include Drake with around 77 million followers (Instagram), Nicki Minaj with 131 million followers (Instagram), Travis Scott with 37 million followers (Instagram), and many more others that have a mass number of followers from various backgrounds and countries around the world. One artist that through music continues to further unify his widely diverse audience is rapper Lil Baby. The Atlanta rapper dropped an album titled "My Turn" on February the 28th in 2020 and according to Espinoza (2020) "Over the past nine months, the critically acclaimed rapper has garnered over 4 billion streams, topped multiple Billboard charts, locked down big-name collaborations, and received a number of honors...". A successful album that led to Lil Baby becoming the first artist to reach 2x platinum in 2020. At the height of his hype, the artist made sure to not shy away from social issues such as the protests that took place against police brutality. He went to march in his hometown of Atlanta along with other protestors and a day after coming back from the march he was said to have been inspired to make a song which ended up being his single named "The Bigger Picture". The song was released on June 12th, 2020, and later received a music video that has collected 119 million views on YouTube as of March 2021. The music video for "The bigger picture" by Lil Baby (2020) takes the viewer through a protest held in Atlanta. In the video, you can see signs saying "Say their names" and "Black Lives Matter" along with other messages

in regards to the police brutality and black lives matter movement showing people of different backgrounds coming together in protest for this movement. The song starts with news reports of protests over the death of George Floyd caused by a case of police brutality. He then starts to rap with lines like "I find it crazy the police'll shoot you and know that you dead/ But still tell you to freeze/ Fucked up, I seen what I seen/ I guess that mean hold him down if he say he can't breathe" about George Floyd and the hook reading: It's bigger than black and white/ It's a problem with the whole way of life/ It can't change overnight/ But we gotta start somewhere/ Might as well gon' 'head start here/ We done had a hell of a year/ I'ma make it count while I'm here/ God is the only man I fear. He explains how this is now "bigger than black and white" and even though there may be some tension and negative history in race relations we should all come together to solve this problem regardless of race. This is knowing that it might be a slow process which is why it is necessary to start now rather than later. This message is conveyed from Lil Baby to his audience of various backgrounds and the rest of the world in hopes of bringing more light to the matter and ultimately resolving this social issue that has oppressed African Americans and minorities in general for so long.

Lastly, rappers need to do good in society as they are role models for society, but especially towards the impressionable youth. It is important for them to do more than just music and to go out into the community and help the people, charities, and organizations in need and lead by example. For example, when rapper Drake released a hit single titled "Gods Plan" Drake (2018) which debut at number 1 on the billboard hot 100 and stayed there for 11 weeks. He went on to release a music video for the song on YouTube which gained 1.2 billion views as of March 2021. The music video begins with a slide showing the budget for the video which was \$996,631.90, however, there is a slide following that states "We gave it all away" and another quickly following saying "Dont tell the label...". You can see what he means in the video as he goes on to do a series of generous acts such as paying for everyone's groceries at a grocery store, giving away a \$50,000 scholarship to a university of Miami student, giving money to a mother and her son, giving away money to a family of 5, going to a youth center in Florida and giving out ice cream, gives away a \$20,000 check to the City of Miami Fire Department, gives a \$50,000 check to

the Lotus House Women's Shelter, takes some girls out on a shopping spree, gives away a car to a family and another to a young man, and a couple more donations. The video was centered in Miami and the struggles that African Americans and other minorities go through in these areas. It is described by Kornhaber (2018) as "The monologue offers a taste of Miami personality, but it also hints at a message about money, race, and dignity. From there, the video casts its sanctifying gaze on a wide range of folks, mostly of color, including both men and women, children, and the elderly. Evans pays special attention to emotion: the shock and the weeping as Drake plays Santa, yes, but also the joys of dance, sing-alongs, and shopping." Drake could have easily used that music video budget money given to him from his label and used it to make an extravagant music video. However, this is how Drake leads by example and uses the hype around his video and that budget money to help make people's lives better by hitting several demographics and many issues people go through in society. He is influencing people to go out and help other people out and to get involved in their communities as there is strength in numbers.

In conclusion, it is important for rappers to do good in society as they may have a large following which gives them a voice to speak up for those that can not. Through that large and diverse following, they can influence unity between people of different backgrounds. Having a large audience results in them also becoming role models to many and especially among their younger and more impressionable fans. The influence and impact they have on the world are not to be overlooked, but to be used for the greater good.

## References

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