

Jazmin Rodriguez

Dr. Robert Tinajero

ENGL 2347.0001

01 December 2022

Rappers and their Unspoken Debt to Society

It is not uncommon for big artists to have large groupies or enthusiasts around the world. Fans from their hometowns also join in the excitement and representation of having a celebrity make it big. From nothing to something, artists like Cardi B, Kanye West, Eminem, and J. Cole, all have worked hard for their success and owe their supportive fans everything for their contributions---or do they? See, rappers do not necessarily have to thank anyone but themselves for getting where they are now. However, fans feel like they are entitled to know more about their favorite rapper because they contribute to their success. Though I do believe that mainstream rappers do have a responsibility to give back to their roots and fans, they are not owned by anyone but their record labels. Rappers do not exactly have a concrete responsibility to give back to fans and their makers, but they should in a way.

To elaborate, when our hometowns are associated with a big rapper, we get excited because we often think about how they, too, were in the same position as us at one point. They were worried about their next paycheck or making sure they weren't late to their 9-5 jobs making minimum wage to pay bills. As fans, we tend to fall curious in regards to what kind of lifestyles these rap artists may live or what goes on in their personal life with other big mainstream artists. That's the part that as fans don't grasp. Rappers do not owe us anything; granted, it does feel good to be acknowledged by them, but we support them and contribute to their fame because we voluntarily do so. Fans have to recognize that the reason we resonate with an artist's music is

because of their message and how we can connect with them and not because we expect something in return from them.

With that being said, what rappers don't see is the irony of their content and their actions. They can compare themselves to Jesus or soldiers or talk about their struggles and how they had nothing, but once they make it big, it's like they forget where they came from, go figure. They can flex their money and say that no one has "drip", and no one is as successful as them in the rap game but can't contribute to charities or community service events. A rap artist is generally someone we can be in connection with through their lyrics, their characteristics, and their ability to unite communities, for instance, during the Black Lives Matter movement (Barnhill). Though, there are rappers who will give back on their own. Rappers T.I., Fetty Wap, and 50 Cent all hosted and contributed to a Thanksgiving giveaway to those in need (Jawson). Just for a little more context, Fetty Wap is incarcerated and yet he still asked his family members to sponsor his giveaway on his behalf. In other words, if artists wanted to help, they would do so.

I do want to clarify that I am not trying to justify the actions of invasive fans who stalk rapper's every movement and infiltrate their personal space. That there is where I can empathize and apprehend why a lot of artists claim they don't owe their fans anything or keep their personal matter private. In the case that a rap artist does post their business and private life to the public, that still does not give fans the idea of entitlement towards that artist. A good case in point would be rap beef. There is no surprise that in the power hungry rap world, there are dominating rappers who will clash heads and challenge one another. With that being said, they also have fans who are willing to stand behind them, who will even go as far as bombarding their rapper's opponent with death threats, degrading comments, and practically harassing them to the point where they have to deactivate their social accounts. Some die-hard fans, like Nicki Minaj's

Barbz army or Eminem's "super stans" just goes to show that rappers are aware of just how admired they are in the public eye (XXLstaff). Unfortunately, fans think they are entitled to insert themselves into the drama as a way to back up a rapper, when in reality, they're setting themselves up to get hurt. For example, the beef between rappers Drake and Joe Budden. There was an instance where Budden makes a comment on how fans need to "stop playing these little internet games" because it is going to get one of them killed (Maranga). A particular situation where Drake fans located Budden and his car, proceeded to ambush and harass him, and in retaliation, he threatens the fans to not show up around his block because "this is not the internet" (Maranga). As terrifying and uneasy this type of encounter could be, what Budden does express a fair argument and it is the idea that fans cannot just come up to an artist and start talking or acting crazy without consequences. There is just more to the rap industry than diss tracks and shady posts on any social platform.

Sure, rappers are entertainers; they make content that share their struggles, their trials and tribulations or anything that we can connect to. We tend to forget that mainstream artists are human, just like us. They feel sadness, anxiety, any kind of human emotion possible. It is hard to grasp the concept of how some fans would put themselves and others at risk for a situation that doesn't pertain to them and later wonder why an artist is not as open about their lives. It's a dangerous world that we live in now because one can interpret so many things with a short message in the rap industry.

In short, I believe that rap artists do not necessarily owe their fans anything but respect and acknowledgement and vice versa. With their high success, it is ideal for them to give back to their communities and inspire the new generations to come to be as equal and humble. We cannot force or harass artists to just give back to society because then it wouldn't be a genuine

act of humility and generosity. Though we cannot control everyone's train of thoughts or actions, it is imperative that artists establish boundaries with fans and be alert of what kind of message they send to fans and just their demographic in general.

Works Cited

- Barnhill, Marvin. "What Does It Take to Be a Rapper?" *Hip Hop*, 29 Oct. 2015, <https://sites.psu.edu/barnhillpassionblog/2015/10/29/what-does-it-take-to-be-a-rapper/>.
- Jawnsen, Kershaw St. "Famous Rappers Give Back for Thanksgiving, Even from Prison." *AllHipHop*, 23 Nov. 2022, <https://allhiphop.com/news/famous-rappers-give-back-for-thanksgiving-even-from-prison/>.
- Maranga, Kwami. "Fans Need to Stop Instigating Conflict between Rap Artists." *Study Breaks*, 7 Oct. 2022, <https://studybreaks.com/culture/music/stop-instigating-conflict-between-rappers/>.
- Xxlstaff. "Here Are the Rappers with the Most Dedicated Fan Bases." *XXL Mag*, 8 May 2020, <https://www.xxlmag.com/rappers-biggest-fan-bases/#:~:text=Here%20Are%20the%20Rappers%20With%20the%20Most%20Dedicated,Scott%20...%208%20J.%20Cole%20...%20More%20items.>