

# DANGEROUS CROSSROADS

*Popular Music, Postmodernism  
and the Poetics of Place*



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**Diasporic Noise: History, Hip Hop, and  
the Post-colonial Politics of Sound**



AFRICA BAMBAATAA

In 1989, a nineteen-year-old African-American woman from Irvington, New Jersey performing under the name Queen Latifah starred in a music video promoting her rap song "Ladies First." At a time when politicians, journalists, and even most male rappers presented few positive images of Black women, Queen Latifah drew upon the diasporic history of Black people around the world to fashion an affirmative representation of women of African descent. Assisted by Monie Love, an Afro-Caribbean rapper from London, as well as Ms. Melody and a chorus of other Black female rappers from the U.S.A., Latifah appeared in a video that interspersed still photos of Angela Davis, Sojourner Truth, and Madame C.J. Walker with newsreel films of women prominent in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Uniting Black people across generations and continents, the young rap artist from New Jersey situated claims about her prowess with rap rhythms and rhymes within a broader story of diasporic struggle.

In telling its story about the achievements, ability, and desirability of Black women, "Ladies First" inverted and subverted existing representations with wide circulation in mass media and popular culture. During a decade when politicians and journalists in the U.S.A. regularly depicted Black women as unwed mothers and "welfare queens," Latifah's video presented them as "queens of civilization" and "mothers" who "give birth" to political struggle. At a time when "gangsta rap" glamorized the aggression and violence of street criminals, "Ladies First" celebrated the militancy of collective struggles for social change. In an era when some Black nationalists belittled the gains made by Black women as detrimental to the community as a whole and urged them to accept subordinate places behind Black men, Latifah hailed the historic accomplishments of African-American women and emphasized the need for equal dedication and commitment from Black men and Black women in their common struggle against racism. Most important, in an American culture increasingly dismissive of African-American appeals for justice, dignity, and opportunity as "minority" concerns, Latifah's deployment of images from the African diaspora demonstrated that the "minority" populations of the U.S.A. are part of the global majority who have been victimized and oppressed by Euro-American racism and imperialism.

Queen Latifah's effort to map out discursive and political space through the trope of the African diaspora builds on historical practices within hip hop culture as well as within the broader history of Afro-America. The first visible manifestations of what we have come to call hip hop culture (rap music, break dancing, graffiti, B Boy and wild style fashions) appeared in the early 1970s when a member of a New York street gang (The Black Spades) calling himself Afrika Bambaataa organized "The Zulu Nation."

Confronted by the ways in which displacement by urban renewal, economic recession, and the fiscal crisis of the state combined to create desperate circumstances for inner-city youths, Bambaataa tried to channel the anger and enthusiasm of young people in the South Bronx away from gang fighting and into music, dance, and graffiti. He attracted African-American, Puerto Rican, Afro-Caribbean, and Euro-American youths into his "nation." He staged dances featuring his estimable talents as a "mixer" and sound system operator capable of providing a non-stop flow of danceable beats from an enormous range of musical styles. In 1982, he recorded "Planet Rock" under the name Afrika Bambaataa and Soulsonic Force, and sold more than a million copies on twelve-inch vinyl of his song "Planet Rock."

Part of a generation of inner-city youths who found themselves unwanted as students by schools facing drastic budget cuts, unwanted as citizens or users of city services by municipalities imposing austerity regimens mandated by private financial institutions, and even unwanted as consumers by merchants increasingly reliant on surveillance and police power to keep urban "have-nots" away from affluent buyers of luxury items, Bambaataa and his Zulu nation used their knowledge as consumers of popular music to become skilled producers of it. They used the conduits of popular culture to bring the expressive forms of their isolated and largely abandoned neighborhoods to an international audience. Hemmed in by urban renewal, crime, and police surveillance, and silenced by neglect from the culture industry, the school system, and city government, they found a way to declare themselves part of a wider world through music. "You can go do anything with rap music," Bambaataa has argued, "you can go from the past to the future to what's happening now."<sup>1</sup>

Bambaataa named his "Zulu Nation" after the 1964 British film *Zulu* directed by Cy Endfield and starring Michael Caine. The motion picture clearly intended to depict the Zulus as predatory savages opposed to the "civilizing mission" of the British empire. But as an American Black whose mother and aunts had migrated to New York from Barbados, Bambaataa saw it another way. In his eyes, the Zulus were heroic warriors resisting oppression. He used their example to inspire his efforts to respond to racism and class oppression in the U.S.A. "Planet Rock" reached a world audience through the same mechanisms of commercial culture that brought *Zulu* from Britain to the Bronx twenty years earlier, but instead of celebrating Western imperialism, the song hailed the utopian potential of Black music to transform the entire world into "a land of master jam."<sup>2</sup>

In lyrics written and rapped by MC Globe, "Planet Rock" celebrated the ability of music to take listeners to the past and to the future, but it also urged them to enjoy the

present, to “chase your dreams” and “live it up,” because “our world is free.” The song located listeners and dancers “on this Mother Earth which is our rock,” and combined new styles of rapping with a wide variety of Bambaataa’s samples, including the theme music from the film *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, sounds from the German techno band Kraftwerk, and cuts from the British band Babe Ruth over a Roland TR 808 drum synthesizer. Bambaataa and his nation inserted themselves into international commercial culture through “Planet Rock,” which one perceptive reviewer described as “an unlikely fusion of bleeping, fizzing, techno-rock, Zulu surrealism, and deep-fried funk.”<sup>3</sup>

Afrika Bambaataa’s “Planet Rock” and Queen Latifah’s “Ladies First” testify to the vitality of what Paul Gilroy calls “diasporic intimacy” in the Black Atlantic world. Their efforts are only a small part of an international dialogue built on the imagination and ingenuity of slum dwellers from around the globe suffering from the effects of the international austerity economy imposed on urban areas by transnational corporations and their concentrated control over capital. In recent recordings, Jamaican toaster Macka B raps an English-language history of Senegal over the singing of Baaba Maal, who speaks the Pulaar language of his native land. Cameroon expatriate Manu Dibango has recorded jazz albums with British rapper MC Mello and Parisian rapper MC Solaar. Solaar appeared on the recent hip hop–jazz fusion recording by Guru of the U.S. rap group Gang Starr, while local rap artists in South Korea, Japan, Germany, France, and New Zealand have found significant popularity imitating the African-American styles mastered by Afrika Bambaataa and Queen Latifah.<sup>4</sup>

The significance of these seemingly ephemeral works of popular culture goes far beyond their role as commodities. The diasporic conversation within hip hop, Afrobeat, jazz and many other Black musical forms provides a powerful illustration of the potential for contemporary commercialized leisure to carry images, ideas, and icons of enormous political importance between cultures. Whatever role they serve in the profit-making calculations of the music industry, these expressions also serve as exemplars of post-colonial culture with direct relevance to the rise of new social movements emerging in response to the imperatives of global capital and its attendant austerity and oppression.

In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson challenges us to imagine a political form suited to “the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping on a social as well as a spatial scale.”<sup>5</sup> That form already exists in hip hop culture as well as in many other forms of global cultural practice. The existence of the African diaspora functions throughout the world as a crucial force for opening up

cultural, social, and political space for struggles over identity, autonomy, and power. When properly contextualized as a part of post-colonial culture and of the rise of new social movements, the musical productions of the African diaspora provide one answer to Jameson's challenge with a cultural politics already underway.

### POST-COLONIAL CULTURE

During the great global struggle against colonialism in the years following World War II, national self-determination and anti-colonialist internationalism engaged the attention of intellectuals throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. From Che Guevara's *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolution* to Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood*, from Chairman Mao's *Yenan Program* to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, nation building occupied center stage as the crucial element in anti-colonial emancipation. Although often somber and self-critical, anti-colonial expressions nonetheless contained an irrepressible optimism about the inevitability of liberation and about the potential achievements of post-colonial nationalism.

Forty years later, a literature of disillusionment and despair calls attention to conditions of austerity and oppression operative everywhere in the Third World. This "post-colonial" literature seems to confirm in the sphere of culture the failure of nationalist anti-colonial movements around the globe to translate national independence into something more than neo-colonial economic, cultural, and even political dependency. Defenders of colonialism point to the pervasive poverty and political problems of post-colonial countries as proof that independence came too soon. Anti-colonialists generally charge that colonialism itself continues to be the problem, that colonial practices did little to prepare people and institutions for independence. Yet both of these arguments hinge on outdated premises with little relevance for the present.

In this debate, anti-colonialists and neo-colonialists both presume that the nation state still holds the key to self-determination, that the "quality" of government officials determines the well-being of the nation. But a combination of political, technological, and cultural changes since the 1970s has undermined the authority of the nation state while making multinational corporations, communications networks, and financial structures more powerful than ever before. In an age when capital, communications, and populations travel across the globe at an accelerated pace, the ability of any one nation state to determine its people's life chances has become greatly constrained.



Capitalist transnational corporations have gained great advantages by separating management from production with the aid of computer-generated automation, containerization in shipping, and the new technologies ushered in through fiber optics, computer chips, and satellites. Strategies to extract concessions from capitalists through taxation and regulation fail because of the extraordinary mobility of capital that makes it easy to play one country or region against another. At the same time, the need for capital compels formerly colonized nations to accept the compulsory austerity measures required by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as the price of securing loans. In rare cases when these forces fail to bring about desired results, the former imperial powers have shown little reluctance to bring direct or indirect military pressures to bear against nation states deviating from the dictates of this comprehensive world system.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the failures of newly independent regimes that pervade post-colonial literature stem as much from fundamentally new conditions in world politics, economics, and culture as they do from the legacy of colonialism or the shortcomings of the struggles against it. Without denying the very important critiques of corruption and political oppression that appear in post-colonial culture, it is also important to understand that post-colonial expressions address emerging problems in the present as well as the failures of the past. The post-colonial era is one of displacement and migration, of multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism, of split subjects and divided loyalties. Post-colonial culture exposes the impossibility of *any* national identity incorporating into a unified totality the diverse and diffuse elements that make up a nation. While valuable for its insights into the failures of particular anti-colonial liberation movements, post-colonial art also exposes the inadequacy of national "imagined communities" to monitor, regulate, and remedy the explosive contradictions of global structures of economic, political, and cultural power. Indeed, the popularity of post-colonial writing and film in advanced industrial nations as well as in formerly colonized states stems from its relevance to conditions in metropolitan nations as well to those in the Third World.<sup>7</sup>

The crisis signaled by the emergence of post-colonial literature, art, and music is the crisis confronting movements for progressive social change all around the world. For more than a century, aggrieved populations have pinned their hopes on seizing control of the nation state, or at least on using its mechanisms to extract concessions from capital. But these traditional strategies for social change have been confounded by the emergence of "fast capital" and the equally rapid mobility of ideas, images, and people across national boundaries.

Yet new forms of domination also give rise to new forms of resistance. Rather than viewing post-colonial culture as a product of the *absence* of faith in yesterday's struggles for self-determination, it might be better to view it as product of the *presence* of new sensibilities uniquely suited for contesting the multinational nature of capital. The disillusionment and despair with politics in post-colonial writing may prove extraordinarily relevant beyond the former colonies; it may in fact be a strategically important stance for people around the globe in an age when centralized economic power has rendered many of the traditional functions of the nation state obsolete. As sociologists Harvey Molotch and John Logan argue, "when the state becomes unable to serve as a vehicle for trapping capital (and perhaps redistributing it), it places more than its legitimacy at risk; it loses some of its very meaning."<sup>8</sup> Of course, the state still serves as a source of repression, and still serves as an important instrument for people interested in using politics to address the rampant austerity and injustice of our time. But the state can no longer serve as the sole site of contestation for movements that find they have to be cultural as well as political, global as well as local, transnational as well as national.

One reason for the popularity of post-colonial art among readers in post-imperial countries comes from a shared disillusionment with the nation state and its failed promises. Similarly, stories of exile and return often employ the historical displacement of formerly colonized populations to express a more general sense of cultural displacement engendered everywhere by mass communications, population migrations, and the destructive effects of "fast capital" on traditional communities. Of course consumers of post-colonial cultural artifacts have many different motivations. A search for novelty, boredom with familiar paradigms, and traditional European and American practices of fascination with (but not respect for) the "exotic" also account for the recent "emergence" of post-colonial art in Western consciousness. But while it would be a mistake to ever underestimate the venal intentions and effects of Euro-American appropriations of the cultures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, it would also be a major error to overlook the strategic importance of post-colonial perspectives for theorizing the present moment in world history.

The strategies of signification and grammars of opposition developed among post-colonial peoples speak powerfully to the paradoxically fragmented and interconnected world created by new structures of commerce culture and technology. The populations best prepared for cultural conflict and political contestation in a globalized world economy may well be the diasporic communities of displaced Africans, Asians, and

Latin Americans created by the machinations of world capitalism over the centuries. These populations, long accustomed to code switching, syncretism, and hybridity may prove far more important for what they *possess* in cultural terms than for what they appear to *lack* in the political lexicon of the nation state.

For example, throughout the Black Atlantic world, one function of “Black nationalism” has always been to elide national categories – to turn national minorities into global majorities by affirming solidarity with “people of color” all around the globe. But Black populations have been open to other kinds of internationalism as well. In his excellent book on Black communists in Alabama in the 1930s, Robin D.G. Kelley shows how envisioning themselves as part of an international communist movement emboldened workers who might otherwise have been intimidated by the forbidding equation of power in their own country. They liked to hear that Stalin was on their side, certainly not because of Stalin’s actual record on national self-determination or on racism, but because Stalin’s existence made the world bigger than Alabama, and it seemed to render the racism in that state relative, provisional, and contingent.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, as Robert A. Hill demonstrates, the emergence of Rastafarianism as an important force within Jamaican politics depended upon antecedents in the “Holy Piby” or “Black Man’s Bible” that connected it to the experiences and perspectives of Jamaican migrant workers in diverse sites, from Perth Amboy, New Jersey to Cape Town, South Africa to Colón, Panama. Everywhere, diasporic Africans have used international frames to remedy national frustrations.<sup>10</sup> Their strategies have proved crucial to the success of anti-racist movements on many continents, but they now also hold significance as a model of transnational mobilization for other aggrieved populations.

The present moment in world history is marked by the failure of two grand narratives – the liberal faith in progress, modernization, and the bureaucratic state, and the conservative faith in free trade, de-regulation, and the “free market.” The global struggles for democratic change and national independence that reached their apex in the 1960s seriously discredited social theories associated with social democracy and liberal capitalism. There was a rapid unraveling of the post-war “consensus” in industrialized nations that posited a universal stake in the advance of technology, Keynesian economics, and bureaucratic rationality. From “modernization” theory in sociology to “modernism” in the arts, ways of explaining the world that had seemed incontrovertible in the 1950s suddenly seemed totally inadequate for explaining the revolutionary ruptures, clashes, and conflicts of the 1960s. But the inadequacy of existing liberal social theory, coupled with the inability among aggrieved groups to

propose or implement credible radical alternatives, created an opportunity for conservatives and plutocrats.

De-industrialization and economic restructuring in capitalist countries in the 1970s and 1980s caused the re-emergence of theories lauding the free market (which themselves had been discredited since the Great Depression) as a frame for interpreting world politics and culture. Neo-conservative policies in all industrialized countries encouraged and subsidized the creation of a world economy under the control of multinational corporations and institutions. The dismantling of social welfare structures in the metropolis and the externalization of class tensions onto unprotected workers and consumers at the periphery served to unite capital while fragmenting its potential opponents. The ideology of free market economics appears to have triumphed all around the world, but rather than prosperity and freedom for all, it has produced extravagant wealth for the few and mostly austerity, corruption, and instability for the many.

Yet the relentlessness of capital in seeking new areas for investment has also led to unexpected emergences and convergences in the field of culture. The reach and scope of commercial mass media unite populations that had previously been divided. The spread of commodities into new areas often creates new economies of prestige and undermines traditional hierarchies. The accelerated flow of commerce, commodities, and people across national boundaries creates new social and political realities that enable some people in colonized countries to create new opportunities and alliances. Moreover, the very obsolescence of previous theories of social organization serves as an impetus for creating new ways of looking at the world.

The contemporary crisis of social theory comes largely from the inability of either the nation state or the free market to address adequately the grim realities of the emerging global economy and culture. Post-colonial culture has emerged in the context of this stalemate between two discredited theories. Important on its own terms as art, it also holds significance because of its potential to become one of the sites where social theory becomes reconstituted on a global scale. Post-colonial cultural expressions are based in the experiences of people and communities, rather than on the master narratives of the nation state. They foreground questions of cultural and social identity, rather than direct struggles for political power. They are pragmatic, immediate, and non-ideological, seeking to change life but putting forth no single blueprint for the future. In short, post-colonial culture contains all of the aspects identified by social theorists as characteristic of the "new social movements."

## THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Theorists Manuel Castells and Alain Touraine stress that new social movements are often locally based and territorially defined. Hip hop and other forms of diasporic African music participate in constructing these local identities, but they bring to them a global consciousness.<sup>11</sup> They play out local rivalries (for example between New York and Los Angeles rappers) and speak powerfully to local politics (in the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and North America), but they also situate themselves within international concerns. They have inverted prestige hierarchies around the world, and established new centers of cultural power from Kingston, Jamaica to Compton, California. But hip hop and reggae have also played roles in political movements opposed to apartheid in South Africa, in struggles for educational and curricular reform, and in battles against police brutality around the globe.

Certain Afro-centric theorists might claim that the extraordinary capacity of African musical systems to “capture” the cultures of their colonizers proves the existence of a trans-cultural trans-historical essential culture within the bodies of Africans. But more accurate is Paul Gilroy’s analysis that “the African diaspora’s consciousness of itself has been defined in and against constricting national boundaries,” – forcing a transnational consciousness. Gilroy notes Ralph Ellison’s argument in *Shadow and Act* that the amalgamated cultures formed by the fusion of African identities with European, American, and Asian circumstances mean that “it is not culture which binds the people who are of partially African origin now scattered throughout the world but an identity of passions.”<sup>12</sup> The ability to find that identity of passions and turn it into a diasporic conversation informing political struggles in similar but not identical circumstances has enabled peoples of African descent to survive over the centuries; it may now also hold the key to survival for the rest of the world as well.

Like the influence of Central American magic realism on novels by African-American women, like the importance of novels questioning categories of identity by Asian-American and Native American women for feminists from many ethnicities, or like the growing recognition by indigenous populations of congruent realities in diverse national contexts, the music of the African diaspora testifies to the capacity of post-colonial culture to illumine families of resemblance illustrating how diverse populations have had similar although not identical experiences. By virtue of a shared skepticism about the nation state, an identification with the lived experiences of ordinary people, and an imaginative, supple, and strategic reworking of identities and cultures, post-colonial culture holds great significance as a potential site for creating

coalitions to pose alternatives to the discredited maxims of conservative free-market capitalism or liberal social democracy.

The terrain of culture has emerged as a privileged site for transnational communication, organization, and mobilization at a time when the parochialism of trade unions and political parties leaves those institutions locked into national identities that seem to render them powerless to confront the inequities and injustices of the new global economy. Jamaican reggae singer Bob Marley's music of the 1970s played an important role in the formation of a "Black Power" movement in Australia, influenced liberation movements in Southern Africa, and formed a focal point of unity between diasporic Blacks and working-class whites in Britain.<sup>13</sup> More recently, Thomas Mapfuzmo's music deployed traditional cultural forms to fuse a new political unity during and after the chimurenga war in Zimbabwe, while Boukman Eksperyans has created music capable of connecting opponents of Haiti's dictatorial governments to popular traditions of slave rebellion and voodoo religion. Popular music has also played an important role in movements against police brutality in the United Kingdom and the United States, and in campaigns building pan-ethnic anti-racist alliances in France and Germany.<sup>14</sup>

Among diasporic communities especially, traditional aesthetic, philosophical, moral, and political principles serve as resources in struggles against centralized systems of power. For these populations there have never been any "old social movements," because questions of identity and community always superseded the potential for making claims on the state through ideological coalitions. Their distance from state power and their experiences with cultural exclusion forced upon diasporic communities political practices rooted in the realities of what we have now come to call the "new social movements."<sup>15</sup>

Oppositional practices among diasporic populations emerge from painful experiences of labor migration, cultural imperialism, and political subordination. Yet they are distinguished by an ability to work within these systems. In contemporary culture, artists from aggrieved communities often subvert or invert the very instruments of domination necessary for the creation of the new global economy – its consumer goods, technologies, and images. Post-colonial literature, Third Cinema, and hip hop music all protest against conditions created by the oligopolies who distribute them as commodities for profit. They express painful recognition of cultural displacements, displacements that their very existence accelerates. Yet it is exactly their desire to work *through* rather than *outside* of existing structures that defines their utility as a model for contemporary global politics.

One might conclude that this reliance of post-colonial culture on existing economic and cultural forms can at best lead only to subordinate rather than autonomous reforms. That possibility certainly exists. But the desire to work through existing contradictions rather than stand outside them represents not so much a preference for melioristic reform over revolutionary change, but rather a recognition of the impossibility of standing outside totalitarian systems of domination. Attempts to create liberated zones, cooperatives, "socialism within one country," and counter-cultural communes have all failed because of the hegemonic power of capitalists within the world economic system. Although still useful as a means of raising consciousness, these strategies have been largely superseded by forms of struggle that engage in what Gramsci called the war of position (an effort to build a counter-hegemonic alliance) rather than what he termed the war of maneuver (the effort to seize state power).

Throughout the twentieth century, Leninist vanguard parties and artistic avant-gardes alike have attempted to position themselves outside dominant systems. They sought "free spaces" and "liberated zones" as prerequisites for the kinds of ideological mobilization that they felt would be necessary for radical change. But the Leninist parties always replicated the very structures of hierarchy and exploitation that they presumed to challenge (even after they seized state power), and attempts by artistic avant-gardes to confound the logic of the art market only produced newer and more lucrative objects for collection and exchange.

The cultural politics of post-colonialism flow from experiences resonant with the histories of Leninist parties and artistic avant-gardes, from struggles for independence and autonomy which also proved illusory even when they seemed to have won their goals. Rather than stand outside of society, the new social movements and their cultural corollaries immerse themselves in the contradictions of social life, seeking an immanent rather than a transcendent critique.

Thus, although they seem "new" to theorists of the new social movements, the techniques of immanent critique have a long history among aggrieved populations. People can take action only in the venues that are open to them; oppressed people rarely escape the surveillance and control of domination. Consequently they frequently have to "turn the guns around," to seize the instruments of domination used to oppress them and try to put them to other uses. For example, slave owners in the nineteenth-century South brought the Christian bible to their slaves to teach that true rewards come only in heaven; the slaves inverted their message by embracing Old Testament stories about Moses, Daniel, and Samson who secured deliverance in this world.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, imperialistic oil companies brought forty-five-gallon oil drums to

Trinidad in the 1940s and left them discarded and dented; but Black workers discovered that the dents made it possible to turn the barrels into complete melodic and harmonic instruments. By combining rhythmic drumming and systemized pitch into the same instrument, they created a vehicle perfectly suited for expressing their situatedness in both European and African musical traditions.<sup>17</sup> Rastafarians and reggae musicians in Jamaica in the 1960s and 1970s seized the Judeo-Christian bible, English language, and commercial popular music only to reveal them as fabricated artifacts reflective of social hierarchies by “flinging them back rude” through inversions and subversions that de-naturalized religion, language, and music.<sup>18</sup>

The global popularity of hip hop culture – rap music, graffiti, break dancing, B Boy fashion etc. – has been perhaps the most important recent manifestation of post-colonial culture on a global scale. The “diasporic intimacy” linking cultural production and reception among people of African descent in the Caribbean, the United States, Europe, and Africa has resulted in a cultural formation with extraordinary political implications. Although hip hop circulates as a commodity marketed by highly centralized monopolies from metropolitan countries, it also serves as a conduit for ideas and images articulating subaltern sensitivities. At a time when African people have less power and fewer resources than at almost any previous time in history, African culture has emerged as the single most important subtext within world popular culture. The popularity of hip hop reflects more than cultural compensation for political and economic domination, more than an outlet for energies and emotions repressed by social power relations. Hip hop expresses a form of politics perfectly suited to the post-colonial era. It brings a community into being through performance, and it maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair created by the austerity economy of post-industrial capitalism.<sup>19</sup>

### HIP HOP AND THE POLITICS OF SOUND

Hip hop culture brings to a world audience the core values of music from most sub-Saharan African cultures.<sup>20</sup> It blends music and life into an integrated totality, uniting performers, dancers, and listeners in a collaborative endeavor. As ethnomusicologist John Miller Chernoff observes, “the model of community articulated in an African musical event is one that is not held together by ideas, by cognitive symbols or by emotional conformity. The community is established through the interaction of



individual rhythms and the people who embody them."<sup>21</sup> African music is participatory, collective, and collaborative. Rhythms are layered on top of one another as a dialogue – hearing one enables the others to make sense. The incorporation of these African elements into hip hop raises challenges to Western notions of musical (and social) order. As the great jazz drummer Max Roach explains,

The thing that frightened people about hip hop was that they heard rhythm – rhythm for rhythm's sake. Hip hop lives in the world of sound – not the world of music – and that's why it's so revolutionary. What we as black people have always done is show that the world of sound is bigger than white people think. There are many areas that fall outside the narrow Western definition of music and hip hop is one of them.<sup>22</sup>

While clearly grounded in the philosophies and techniques of African music, the radical nature of hip hop comes less from its origins than from its uses. The flexibility of African musical forms encourages innovation and adaptation – a blending of old and new forms into dynamic forward-looking totalities. In her important scholarship on rap music, Tricia Rose has argued against reducing hip hop to its origins in African music or African-American oral traditions, but instead calls for an understanding of hip hop as "secondary orality," the deployment of oral traditions in an age of electronic reproduction.<sup>23</sup> As a cultural discourse and political activity, it thus speaks to both residual and emergent realities.

Digital sampling in rap music turns consumers into producers, tapping consumer memories of parts of old songs and redeploying them in the present. It employs advanced technology to reconstruct the human voice, and features robot-like movements and mechanical vocals that simulate machines.<sup>24</sup> Sampling foregrounds the fabricated artifice of machine technologies, calling attention to them through repetition, scratching, and mixing. But at the same time, these tactics humanize the machine by asking it to do the unexpected, and they allow for human imitations of machine sounds – as in the vocals by Doug E. Fresh, "the original human beat box."<sup>25</sup> Hip hop calls into question Western notions of cultural production as property through its evocation, quotation, and outright theft of socially shared musical memories. Yet it also illumines the emancipatory possibilities of new technologies and the readiness of marginalized and oppressed populations to employ them for humane ends – for shedding restricting social identities and embracing new possibilities of a life without hierarchy and exploitation.

Kobena Mercer and others have warned us against the folly of thinking that some cultural forms are innately radical – that the right combination of notes or colors or

words can be socially or politically radical by themselves. Culture functions as a social force to the degree that it gets instantiated in social life and connected to the political aspirations and activities of groups.<sup>26</sup> It is here that hip hop holds its greatest significance and its greatest challenge to interpreters.

For example, in the mid-1980s, the New York graffiti artist, style leader, and hip hop entrepreneur Fab Five Freddy learned an important lesson about the politics of sound from Max Roach, the great jazz drummer from the bebop era.<sup>27</sup> Separated by decades and musical styles (Fab Five Freddy's father was once Max Roach's manager), the two men shared a common admiration for the energy and artistry of rap music. But one day Roach baffled his young friend by describing LL Cool J's music as "militant." Freddy later recalled, "I thought it was funny he should say that because I thought LL was an ego rapper, and political rap seemed out of fashion." But Roach persisted, claiming that:

The rhythm was very militant to me because it was like marching, the sound of an army on the move. We lost Malcolm, we lost King and they thought they had blotted out everybody. But all of a sudden this new art form arises and the militancy is there in the music.

Once Roach had directed his attention away from the lyrics and toward the rhythm, Fab Five Freddy understood the drummer's point. "LL Cool J doesn't seem to like political music," he later explained in describing the incident, "but the politics was in the drums."<sup>28</sup>

The "politics in the drums" that Max Roach disclosed to Fab Five Freddy pervade hip hop. They express the restlessness and energy described by Frantz Fanon in his now classic anti-colonial text, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Speaking about times when desires for radical change permeate popular culture even though no political movement has yet arrived to challenge the established order, Fanon argues:

Well before the political fighting phase of the national movement, an attentive spectator can thus feel and see the manifestation of a new vigor and feel the approaching conflict. He [sic] will note unusual forms of expression and themes which are fresh and imbued with a power which is no longer that of an invocation but rather of the assembling of the people, a summoning together for a precise purpose. Everything works together to awaken the native's sensibility and to make unreal and unacceptable the contemplative attitude or the acceptance of defeat.<sup>29</sup>

Hip hop's energy originates in many sources, but a crucial component of its power comes from its ability to respond to the realities of the African diaspora. Most

commentators in the U.S.A. have portrayed diasporic consciousness as essentially a one-way process of preserving African elements in America or maintaining Afro-Caribbean traditions in New York. To be sure, African and Caribbean elements appear prominently in U.S. hip hop, and many of the originators of hip hop in New York during the 1970s had Caribbean backgrounds. (Grandmaster Flash's parents and Afrika Bambaataa's mother and two aunts came to New York from Barbados; Kool DJ Herc aka Clive Campbell was born in Jamaica.)<sup>30</sup> But these claims place a value on origins that distorts the nature of Black Atlantic culture. The flow of information and ideas among diasporic people has not been solely from Africa outward to Europe and the Americas, but rather has been a reciprocal self-renewing dialogue in communities characterized by upheaval and change. The story of the African diaspora is more than an aftershock of the slave trade, it is an ongoing dynamic creation. The radicalism of diasporic African culture comes not only from the contrast between African and Euro-American values, but also from the utility of exploiting diasporic connections as a way of expanding choices everywhere – in Africa as well as in Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Just as American and European Blacks have drawn on African traditions to contest Euro-American power relations, Africans have drawn upon cultures of opposition and strategies of signification developed by diasporic Africans as a form of struggle on the African continent.

For example, Fela Kuti, the founder of Nigeria's radical Afro-beat music subculture, learned part of his political radicalism in Los Angeles. His mother had been an activist, a friend of Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah, and a founder of the Nigerian Women's Union and a leader in the successful struggle to gain the right to vote for women in her country.<sup>31</sup> For ten months in 1969–1970, Fela played music in Los Angeles at the Citadel de Haiti night club on Sunset Boulevard (owned by Black actor Bernie Hamilton, later featured in the television program "Starsky and Hutch"), but his main focus was on learning about Black nationalism. Sandra Smith (now Sandra Isidore), a woman active in the Black Panther Party, gave Fela a copy of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* which introduced him to ideas about Pan-Africanism that had been censored in Nigeria.<sup>32</sup> "Sandra gave me the education I wanted to know," he recalled years later. "I swear man! She's the one who spoke to me about . . . Africa! For the first time I heard things I'd never heard before about Africa! Sandra was my adviser."<sup>33</sup>

Fela told friends he learned more about Africa in Los Angeles than he had in Lagos, and insisted that "The whole atmosphere of Black Revolution changed me, my consciousness, my thinking, my perception of things. I was educated."<sup>34</sup> Sandra Smith

recalls that she introduced him to poems by Nikki Giovanni and the spoken-word art of The Last Poets, as well as to writings by Angela Davis, Jesse Jackson, Stokely Carmichael, and Martin Luther King. In addition, she introduced him to music by Nina Simone and Miles Davis, and connected him with a circle of friends that included singer Esther Phillips, actors Melvin van Peebles and Jim Brown, and the comedian Stu Gilliam.<sup>35</sup> "For the first time, I saw the essence of blackism," he later told an interviewer. "I was exposed to awareness. It started me thinking. I saw how everything worked there. I realized that I had no country. I decided to come back and try to make my country African."<sup>36</sup>

Experiences in the U.S.A. made Fela Kuti more radical politically, but they also changed his music by informing it with a diasporic consciousness. As he explained, "Most Africans do not really know about life. They think everything from overseas is greater, but they do not know also that everything from overseas could have gone from here to overseas and come back to us. America gave me that line of thought."<sup>37</sup> Kuti has subsequently collaborated with Black American musicians including trumpeter Lester Bowie and vibraphonist Roy Ayers. Bowie went to Nigeria and lived with Fela during a particularly difficult time in his life, and admired both the music and politics that the Nigerian produced. "Fela's stubborn about the right things," Bowie explained to an interviewer. "He wants freedom, he wants to get away from oppression. The inequality of wealth in his country is unbelievable, and he's trying to address that. So did Martin Luther King, Jr., so did Malcolm X and so did the founding fathers of America."<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Roy Ayers credits Fela for deepening his understanding of Africa during their collaborations. Kuti and Ayers toured Africa and recorded together in 1979. Ayers had been a frequent visitor to Africa, but even in the U.S.A. his deep interest in Afro-Cuban jazz gave his music a diasporic flavor. The recordings made by Fela Kuti and Roy Ayers showed traces of the Afro-Cuban influences on North American jazz as well as of Cuban "rhumba" bands on African, especially Congolese, music.<sup>39</sup> In turn, Ayers's 1970s jazz-funk albums (especially his Black nationalist *Red, Black, and Green* from 1973) have been a prime source of samples in recent years for hip hop DJs and producers. "I've had about eight hit records on re-releases – rappers who have sampled my music," Ayers told an interviewer recently. "I was very happy because they give you a percentage, but more than that, I was honored that they dig my music. I went from swing to bebop to Latin, disco, funk, and fusion, so I respect all styles of music."<sup>40</sup>

Sojourns in North America and collaborations with African-American artists have been important to other African musicians as well. Aster Aweke sang for exiled

Ethiopians in Washington, D.C. during the 1980s, creating a fusion music that turned Ethiopian wind and string parts into horn riffs and vocals in a style clearly influenced by Aretha Franklin and Anita Baker.<sup>41</sup> When Ali Farka Toure of Mali first heard records by Mississippi blues guitarist and singer John Lee Hooker he told a friend, "Listen, this is music that has been taken from here."<sup>42</sup> Toure eventually met Hooker and played music with him in Paris during the 1970s.<sup>43</sup> Expressing a preference for music by Hooker, Albert King, Otis Redding, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, Jimmy Smith, and Ray Charles, Toure explains, "If you listen to them for sixteen hours, you can no longer locate the stars, the sky and the clouds!"<sup>44</sup>

Abdullah Ibrahim left South Africa to tour Europe in 1962 and met Duke Ellington in Zurich. Ellington liked his music and arranged a recording contract for Ibrahim and his trio. When asked by an interviewer if he was surprised to be helped in that way by an American Black, Ibrahim replied that he did not really think of Ellington as an American or as a citizen of any country, but more as "the wise old man in the village – the extended village."<sup>45</sup> James Brown's tour of Zaire in 1969 had a major impact on African music, especially in helping promote the "Congo soul" sound of Trio Madjeski.<sup>46</sup> In the 1970s, songs by U.S. rhythm and blues artists including Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes and the Staples Singers became anthems for township youths in South Africa because the songs enabled them to voice "cries for justice, recognition, and social action" denied them in the rest of their lives.<sup>47</sup>

Diasporic dialogue has also extended far beyond binary exchanges between Africa and North America. For example, Alpha Blondy from Côte d'Ivoire in Africa learned French reading the bible and mastered English from his school lessons and from playing American rock'n'roll in high school.<sup>48</sup> He went to Columbia University in New York in 1976 to study world trade. There he discovered a Jamaican-American reggae band, Monkaya, which he joined, singing his native Mandinka lyrics to the reggae beat. Blondy has become one of the best-selling reggae artists in the world, having recorded reggae songs in English, French, Dioula, and Mandingo. Explaining his interest in what most would consider West Indian music, Blondy argues: "In Africa, the new generation, my generation, is a mixture of Western and African culture. Reggae has succeeded in a musical unification, it's a good therapy to bring people together."<sup>49</sup> As part of this "therapy," Blondy's band includes musicians from Africa and the Caribbean, and he has performed songs in Arabic during concerts in Israel and songs in Hebrew during concerts in Arab countries. He played a concert in 1986 dedicated to encouraging good relations between Mali and Burkina-Faso, and drew 10,000 fans at

the Moroccan International Festival of Youth and Music in Marrakech that same year to hear him play reggae.<sup>50</sup>

Reggae itself originated in Afro-Jamaican religious Burru music, especially its bass, funde, and repeater drums, but the form also drew upon African-American soul music, on records smuggled back to the island by Jamaican migrant workers employed to cut sugar cane in the southern U.S.A. (including Coxsone Dodd, founder of Kingston's Studio One), as well as on broadcasts by U.S. radio stations including WINZ in Miami.<sup>51</sup> Africans like Alpha Blondy, who were familiar with American soul music, took to reggae in part because it contained elements of music they were already familiar with from America as well as from Africa.

On the other hand, when Jamaican singer Jimmy Cliff first heard the yelle music of Baaba Maal from Senegal, it struck him as structurally connected to the rhythms of reggae. Rap music's popularity in Korea stems in part from the close cultural connections built between the U.S.A. and that country since the mass exodus following the Kwangju uprising of the early 1980s, but also from the similarities between rap and traditional Korean sasui lyrics which are recited to the accompaniment of drums.<sup>52</sup>

Manu Dibango, a singer-composer-arranger-reed-piano player from Cameroon, moved to Paris in the 1960s where he started making records, including a tribute to the U.S. rhythm and blues saxophone player King Curtis. In 1972 Dibango's "Soul Makossa" became an international hit. He moved to New York in the early 1970s where he played the Apollo Theatre in Harlem along with the Temptations and Barry White, and he also collaborated there with Afro-Caribbean musicians including Johnny Pacheco and the Fania All-Stars.<sup>53</sup> By the mid-1980s Dibango brought Antillean musicians into his band and expanded his repertoire to include the zouk music of the Francophone West Indies.<sup>54</sup>

Of course Caribbean music had long been familiar in Africa. The British government stationed West Indian regiments in West Africa as early as the 1830s, and their syncopated brass band and gumbey musics gained immediate popularity. The adaba variety of Nigerian highlife bears traces of calypso, while that nation's juju music uses the Brazilian samba drum.<sup>55</sup>

Hip hop employs the legacy of similar instances of diasporic dialogue. Jazzie B of the British group Soul II Soul remembers the lessons he learned in his youth from African American artists. "People like Curtis Mayfield were a very strong part of my life," he remembers. "His songs weren't just songs to me. They were knowledge. I used to carry my records right along with my school books." But at the same time, Jazzie B also credits the "African" community in Britain for having a formative influence on his music.

"I don't just remember the music at the Africa Centre [dances], I also remember the people. It was like a religion, all those people sweating and dancing and partying together. It was very inspiring. That's what I tried to put on our album – that same sense of unity and spirit."<sup>56</sup>

The dynamism of diasporic interchanges in music confirms Peter Linebaugh's wry observation that long-playing records have surpassed sea-going vessels as the most important conduits of Pan-African communication.<sup>57</sup> But it is important to understand that diasporic dialogue in music builds on an infrastructure with a long history. For example, in the 1930s, Paul Robeson galvanized the black population of Britain (and other countries) with theatrical performances that complemented his role as a spokesperson for causes like the defense of the Scottsboro boys.<sup>58</sup> His films *King Solomon's Mines* (1937) and *Sanders of the River* (1934, featuring Jomo Kenyatta) brought certain aspects of African culture to world audiences accustomed to only the most caricatured views of the continent. Many Africans encountered Pan-Africanism the way Fela Kuti did, through the writings of diasporic Africans including Malcolm X, Aimé Césaire, Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, and W.E.B. DuBois.<sup>59</sup> As a foreign student, Kwame Nkrumah learned some lessons in politics attending Adam Clayton Powell's activist church in New York City, while Ghanaian activists used the U.S. abolitionist hymn "John Brown's Body" to protest Nkrumah's imprisonment during the struggle for independence.<sup>60</sup> These political connections had deep cultural roots; Manu Dibango remembers how important it was for him to hear Louis Armstrong on the radio when he was growing up in Cameroon. "Here was a black voice singing tunes that reminded me of those that I had learned at the temple. I immediately felt at one with the warmth of that voice and with what it was singing."<sup>61</sup>

More recently, post-colonial writers in Africa have expressed their indebtedness to African-American writers. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o asserts:

There's a very vibrant connection between Afro-American traditions in literature and those from many parts of the third world. I know that African literature as a whole has borrowed quite heavily from the Afro-American literary tradition, and I hope vice-versa. Writers like Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Amiri Baraka, and Alice Walker are quite popular in Africa.<sup>62</sup>

Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta adds: "To me, the greatest writers who come from ethnic minorities writing in English come from America. I think the deep, the real deep

thinkers now writing in the English language are the black women, such as Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker, etc."<sup>63</sup>

The dialogue of the African diaspora informs the politics and culture of countries across the globe. It draws upon ancient traditions and modern technologies, on situated knowledge and a nomadic sensibility. Generated from communities often criminally short of resources and institutions, it commands prestige from multinational corporations and other bastions of privilege. It flows through the circuits of the post-industrial austerity economy, and yet still manages to bring to light inequities and injustices.

From Queen Latifah's "Ladies First" with its images of Africa and the Americas to Thomas Mapfumo's "Hupenyu Wanyu" which appropriates the African-American "Bo Diddley" beat for radical politics in Zimbabwe, diasporic intimacy secures space for oppositional expressions obliterated by much of mass media and electoral politics. In a world coming ever closer together through the machinations of global capital, it displays a situated but not static identity. Rooted in egalitarian and democratic visions of the world, diasporic intimacy nonetheless embraces contradiction, change, and growth. It serves notice of the willingness and ability of millions of people to play a meaningful role in the world that is being constructed around us.

In culture and in politics, diasporic expressions constantly come back to what Frantz Fanon called "the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge."<sup>64</sup> A sense of urgency about the future permeates the practices of popular music. Salif Keita of Mali locates his interest in making popular music as more than a matter of style. In his own performances he blends traditional Malian music with things he learned listening to Western artists ranging from Pink Floyd to Stevie Wonder, from James Brown to Kenny Rogers. Defending his eclecticism, Keita explains, "At home, we are traditionalists. It's an attitude I disapprove of. It's we who make the history, and if we refer only to what has passed, there will be no history. I belong to a century that has little in common with the time of my ancestors. I want society to move."<sup>65</sup>

Manu Dibango sums up the problem with characteristic eloquence (although with unfortunately sexist pronouns) in a statement that might serve as the motto of the post-colonial project. He asserts:

People who are curious search for sounds; they seek out harmony and melody because they are curious. Your curiosity can be limited by your environment, or you can expand it to take in things from outside; a bigger curiosity for a bigger world. The extent of your curiosity should not be determined by the village, or the town, or a city in another continent. The musician moves in these circles, but he moves to break out of his limits.<sup>66</sup>



## NOTES

1. Mark Dery, "Rap," *Keyboard* (November) 1988, 34.
2. David Toop, *Rap Attack 2: African Rap to Global Hip Hop* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1991), 19, 39, 37, 56–60; Lawrence Stanley, ed., *Rap: The Lyrics* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 8; Joel Whitburn, *Top R&B Singles, 1942–1988* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, 1988), 33.
3. Mark Dery, "Rap," 46.
4. Larry Birnbaum, "Baaba Maal Sings Blues from the Real Heartland," *Pulse* (September) 1993, 39; Jay Cocks, "Rap Around the Globe," *Time* October 19, 1992, 70; Michael Jarrett, "Guru," *Pulse* (September) 1993, 39.
5. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 47.
6. For an eloquent summary of the role played by transnational corporations see Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation State," *Critical Inquiry* (Summer) 1993. See also Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
7. Which, of course, is not to say that messages intended for one purpose in Asia, Africa, and Latin America would not be received with a very different meaning by readers in Europe or North America.
8. Harvey Molotch and John Logan, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 254.
9. Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
10. Robert A. Hill, "Dread History: Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari Religions in Jamaica," *Epoche: Journal of the History of Religions at UCLA* (1981), 32–4; George Lipsitz, "How Does It Feel When You've Got no Food? The Past as Present in Popular Music" in Richard Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990), 195–215; Paul Gilroy, "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack," *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 156.
11. Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grass Roots* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983); Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See Paul Gilroy, "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack," esp. ch.6.
12. Paul Gilroy, "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack," 158, 159.
13. See Marcus Breen, "Desert Dreams, Media, and Interventions in Reality: Australian Aboriginal Music," in Reebee Garofalo, ed., *Rockin' the Boat* (Boston, MA: South End, 1992), 149–70.
14. See for example references to the Newham 7 in Winston James, "Migration, Racism, and Identity: The Caribbean Experience in Britain," *New Left Review* no.193 (May–June) 1992, 46; Nora Rathzel, "Germany: One Race, One Nation?" *Race and Class* vol.32 no.3 (1990). The role of the musical group Boukman Eksperyans and of a wide variety of visual artists in finding new meanings for voodoo as part of the Aristide coalition in Haiti provides one of the best examples of these movements. Willie Apollon, "Voodoo and Visual Art," presentation at the University of California, San Diego, April 9, 1993.

15. For "new social movement" activity within old social movements see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe* and Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987). 35
16. Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture, Black Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); George Lipsitz, "The Struggle for Hegemony," *Journal of American History* vol.75 no.1 (June) 1988, 146-50. 33  
34
17. Tom Chatburn, "Trinidad All Stars: The Steel Pan Movement in Britain," in Paul Oliver, ed., *Black Music in Britain: Essays on the Afro-Asian Contribution to Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 120-1. 35
18. Dick Hebdige, "Reggae, Rastas, and Rudies" in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds, *Resistance Through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post War Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 138-9; Robert A. Hill, "Dread History: Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari Religions in Jamaica," *Epoche: Journal of the History of Religions at UCLA* (1981), 32-4; George Lipsitz, "'How Does it Feel When You've Got No Food?' The Past as Present in Popular Music," 195-214. 36  
37  
38
19. For discussion of hip hop and the "new social movements" see Paul Gilroy, "*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*," 223-50. 39
20. It is important not to assume one unified African system of thought, politics, or culture. But especially in comparison to Western music, certain social and stylistic features from West Africa provide a vivid contrast. 40  
41
21. John Miller Chernoff, "The Rhythmic Medium in African Music," *New Literary History* vol.22 no.4 (Autumn) 1991, 1095. See also J.H. Kwabena Nketia, *The Music of Africa* (New York: Norton, 1974), 21-50. 42  
43
22. Frank Owen, "Hip Hop Bebop," *Spin* vol.4 (October) 1988, 61. 42
23. Tricia Rose, "Orality and Technology: Rap Music and Afro-American Cultural Resistance," *Popular Music and Society* vol.14 no.4 (Winter) 1988, 35-44. See also her *Black Noise* (Hanover: Wesleyan/University Press of New England), 1994. 43  
44
24. High-tech and science-fiction themes played an important role in 1970s African-American music as a way of imagining a space outside of Euro-American racism, especially in the work of George Clinton and Funkadelic. 44  
45
25. Paul Gilroy, "*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*," 214. 45
26. I thank Mercer for bringing this to the attention of the Minority Discourse Group at the University of California Humanities Research Institute many times during the Fall of 1992. 46  
47
27. Fab Five Freddy (Braithwaite) had long known Roach because his father was an attorney who served at one time as Roach's manager. David Toop, *Rap Attack 2*, 140. 48
28. Frank Owen, "Hip Hop Bebop," 73. 49
29. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 243. 50
30. David Toop, *Rap Attack 2*, 18, 19; Robert Farris Thompson, "Hip Hop 101," *On Campus*, 98. 51
31. Rob Tannenbaum, "Fela Anikulapao Kuti," *Musician* no.79 (May) 1985, 30. 52

32. Born in Arkansas, Sandra Smith met Fela at an NAACP-sponsored performance featuring Fela's band and her own dance troupe that performed what they believed were African dances: Carlos Moore, *Fela, Fela: This Bitch of a Life* (London: Allison & Busby, 1982), 83, 91-2.
33. Carlos Moore, *Fela, Fela*, 85.
34. Tom Cheney, "Sorrow, Tears, and Blood: Q&A with Fela Anikulapo Kuti." *Los Angeles Reader* vol.8 no.41 (August 1, 1986), 1; Labinjog, "Fela Anikulapo Kuti." *Journal of Black Studies* (September) 1982, 126.
35. Carlos Moore, *Fela, Fela*, 95, 100.
36. John Darnton, "Afro-Beat: New Music with a Message," *New York Times*, July 7, 1986, 46.
37. Mabinuori Kayode Idowu, *Fela: Why Blackman Carry Shit* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Opinion Media Limited, 1985), 37.
38. Rob Tannenbaum, "Fela Anikulapao Kuti," 30.
39. Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye! A Celebration of African Music* (New York: Da Capo, 1992), 32, 35; Kuti & Ayers, *Music of Many Colours*, Celluloid CD 6125, 1980, 1986.
40. Larry Birnbaum, "BeBop Meets Hip-Hop: Jazz for the Hip-Hop Nation." *Downbeat* vol.60 no.2 (February 1993), 35-6.
41. Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, 55; Ashenafi Kebede, "Aster Aweke." *Ethnomusicology* vol.35 no.1 (Winter), 1991, 157-9.
42. Ali Farka Toure, *African Blues*, liner notes, Shanachie Records 65002. From an interview with Ian Anderson in *Folk Roots*.
43. Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, 67.
44. Ali Farka Toure, *African Blues*, liner notes.
45. Karen Bennett, "An Audience with Dollar Brand," *Musician* (March) 1990, 41.
46. Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, 127.
47. David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Music and Theatre* (London: Longman, 1985), 195.
48. Don Snowden, "Alpha Blondy's Multicultural Universe." *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1988, calendar section, 76.
49. Jon Pareles, "African-Style Reggae Crosses the Atlantic," *New York Times*, March 22, 1988, C 13.
50. Stephen Davis, "Alpha Blondy." *The Reggae and African Beat* vol.7 no.1 (1987), 33.
51. Wendell Logan, "Conversation with Marjorie Whylye." *Black Perspective in Music* vol.10 no.1. (n.d.) 86, 88, 89, 92; Dick Hebdige, "Reggae, Rastas, and Rudies," in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson eds, *Resistance Through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 143; Sebastian Clarke, *Jah Music: The Evolution of the Popular Jamaican Song* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 57-8. Coxson Dodds, founder of Studio One, got his start as a sound system operator with records he brought back to Jamaica from the U.S.A.
52. Byung Hoo Suh, "An Unexpected Rap Eruption Rocks a Traditional Music Market." *Billboard* vol.104 no.34 (August 22, 1992), S6.

53. Donald Clarke, ed., *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (London: Penguin, 1989), 339–40; Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, 116.
54. Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, 108.
55. John Collins, "Some Anti-Hegemonic Aspects of African Popular Music," in Reebee Garofalo, ed., *Rockin' the Boat*, 188, 189.
56. Robert Hilburn, "Tracing the Caribbean Roots of the New British Pop Invasion," *Los Angeles Times*, calendar section, September 24, 1989, 84. Paul Gilroy's observations about the importance of the U.S.A. and the Caribbean to Black Britain are relevant here. See Paul Gilroy, "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack," 154.
57. Quoted in Paul Gilroy, "Cultural Studies and Ethnic Absolutism," in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 191.
58. Chris Stapleton, "African Connections: London's Hidden Music Scene," in Paul Oliver, ed., *Black Music in Britain*, 92.
59. John Collins, "Some Anti-Hegemonic Aspects of African Popular Music," in Reebee Garofalo, ed., *Rockin' the Boat*, 189.
60. John Collins, "Some Anti-Hegemonic Aspects of African Popular Music," 191.
61. "Interview with Manu Dibango," *Unesco Courier* (March 1991), 4.
62. Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock, eds, *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), 41.
63. Feroza Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock, eds, *Interviews with Writers of the Post-Colonial World*, 93.
64. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 225.
65. Banning Eyre, "Routes: The Parallel Paths of Baaba Maal and Salif Keita," *Option* no.53 (November–December, 1993), 48. Quoted in Neil Lazarus, "Unsystematic Fingers at the Conditions of the Times: 'Afropop' and the Paradoxes of Imperialism," in Jonathan White, ed., *Recasting the World: Writing After Colonialism* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 140.
66. Manu Dibango, "Music in Motion," in Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, 7.