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Author(s): George Lipsitz

Source: *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2, Orange Empires (May, 1999), pp. 213-231

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3641985>

Accessed: 25/01/2009 19:16

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World Cities and World Beat: Low-Wage Labor and Transnational Culture

GEORGE LIPSITZ

The author is a member of the ethnic studies department at the University of California, San Diego.

Los Angeles and Miami have experienced parallel periods of growth as centers of metropolitan, regional, and national economic activity. Both cities have exploited their oceanfront locations and mild climates to attract tourists, migrants, and federal spending for infrastructure development and improvement. Yet the imperatives of industrial-era urbanization that once shaped Miami and Los Angeles no longer determine their cultural configurations or directions of economic development. With the rise of satellite, fiber optic, and computer chip technologies, the attendant globalization of management, marketing, and investment, and the migration of refugees and immigrants fleeing austerity conditions in the Southern Hemisphere to pursue low-wage jobs in the previously industrialized countries, cities like Los Angeles and Miami have become global rather than national or regional centers. Every aspect of urban life—from the costs of child care to the price of drugs on the streets, from the identities of clerks in convenience stores to the quantity of capital available for investment—reflects the increasing integration of global cities into international networks.

Immigrant capital and immigrant labor have played vital roles in transforming Miami and Los Angeles into global cities. Cuban American investors and entrepreneurs positioned Miami to fill a leadership role in the economies of the Caribbean and South America through the formation of banks, import-

export companies, transportation, and service companies.¹ At the same time, low-wage labor by Cuban American men and especially Cuban American women generates high profits for investors and low prices for consumers in the city's construction and apparel industries.² Every month some 200 cargo ships and 5,000 cargo planes transport commercial goods through Miami. The city's airport and seaport account for 70 percent of the trade conducted between the United States and Latin America. Trade-related businesses employ 98,000 workers and net more than \$13 billion annually in Miami. The city boasts more foreign-owned banks than any other U.S. city except New York.³ Similarly, the emergence of Los Angeles as the busiest customs district in the nation has depended in no small measure on the presence in the city of people of Asian and Latino origin with the language skills, personal connections, and cultural sensitivity conducive to conducting trade in Asia and Latin America.⁴ At the low-wage end of the economic spectrum, exploitation of immigrant labor has benefited agribusiness, construction, tourist, and service industries. For example, the transformation of drywall work in home construction from a unionized high-wage job into a low-wage job performed mostly by immigrants forced down wages for that trade from eight cents per square foot in 1980 to four cents per square foot by the 1990s.⁵ This decline in wages imposed severe hardships on immigrant drywall workers in Los Angeles, but it lowered the costs of construction and increased profits for developers, contractors, and realtors.

Because of immigration to cities like Miami and Los Angeles, the United States is now the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world. If present population trends continue in

1. Alex Stepick III and Guillermo Grenier, "Cubans in Miami," in Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughes, eds., *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate* (New York, 1993), 81.

2. *Ibid.*, 83.

3. Diane Lindquist, "Moving in on Miami's Trade," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, June 15, 1998, A1, A14.

4. Stuart A. Gabriel, "Remaking the Los Angeles Economy: Cyclical Fluctuations and Structural Evolution," in Michael J. Dear, H. Eric Schockman, and Greg Hise, eds., *Rethinking Los Angeles* (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1996), 28.

5. Julie Farrem, "Southland Drywall Hangers Hold Out in Hope of Nailing Down a Union," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1992, B8; Michael Flagg, "Unions Get a Wake-Up Call as Drywallers Achieve an Unlikely Victory," *ibid.*, D5.

Argentina and Colombia, the United States will have the third-largest population of Spanish speakers within the next decade. Forty percent of all persons of Puerto Rican ancestry now live on the North American mainland. More than 300,000 people from the Dominican Republic now dwell in New York City, while anywhere from 300,000 to 500,000 Salvadorans reside in Los Angeles.⁶ The number of Caribbean-born residents of New York City exceeds the combined populations of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. New York contains what would be the second-largest Jamaican, Haitian, and Guyanese cities in the world. More people from the Caribbean island of Nevis live in New York City than live on Nevis itself. Likewise, Los Angeles contains the second-largest urban concentrations of Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans in the world, as well as one of the greatest concentrations of Iranians outside of Iran, Koreans outside of Korea, and Armenians outside of Armenia. The Samoan population of Los Angeles is larger than the population of American Samoa.⁷ Nearly 50 percent of the residents of Miami and Dade County are Latino, and nearly 20 percent are black. As early as 1980 foreign-born individuals accounted for 20 percent of Miami's black population, including 70,000 Haitians, 8,000 Jamaicans, 4,000 Bahamians, and 17,000 immigrants from other Caribbean, South American, and African countries.⁸ Under these circumstances, "local" life and culture in Miami and Los Angeles have decidedly international dimensions.

Miami maintains traces of its past as a national tourist destination and regional economic center, but it has also become an important crossroads for the entire hemisphere. The city is marked in distinctive and lasting ways by its Cuban, Haitian,

6. Patricia R. Pessar, *A Visa for a Dream: Dominicans in the United States* (Boston, 1995), 22. Norma Chinchilla, Nora Hamilton, and James Loucky, "Central Americans in Los Angeles: An Immigrant Community in Transition," in Moore and Pinderhughes, eds., *In the Barrios*, 53.

7. Peter Manual, *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae* (Philadelphia, 1995), 241; Winston James, "Migration, Racism, Identity: The Caribbean Experience in Britain," *New Left Review*, No. 193 (1992), 36–37.

8. Lindquist, "Moving in on Miami's Trade," A1, A14; Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick III, "Blacks in Miami," in Guillermo J. Grenier and Alex Stepick III, eds., *Miami Now! Immigration, Ethnicity, and Social Change* (Gainesville, Fla., 1992), 49; Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick III, *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (Berkeley, 1993), 176–202.

Puerto Rican, Jamaican, and Nicaraguan populations, by its commercial links with Central and South America, and by the transformations these connections enact on the meaning of race, class, citizenship, and cultural franchise in the metropolis.⁹ The physical contours of Los Angeles remain visibly marked by decades of development and growth in the industrial era, most notably through the presence of dangerous toxic hazards and pollutants in residential neighborhoods. Traces of the industrial past also permeate Los Angeles culture through the enduring presence of recreational practices that originated in the technologies central to industrial production, like fiberglass for surf boards and hydraulic lifts for low rider automobiles—technologies that emerged in the auto and aerospace industries during the late industrial era. Yet Los Angeles today is also a prime port of entry and an ultimate destination for an astounding proportion of new immigrants, ranging from highly educated skilled workers from Korea to displaced peasants from remote areas in Guatemala. Links to Latin America and the Pacific Rim have transformed the physical spaces of Los Angeles—from the downtown office buildings owned by Asian investors to the street-level vending carts pushed by Central American immigrants in the Pico-Union section.¹⁰

Globalization has changed social identities in Los Angeles as well; the influx of 600,000 Central Americans changes what it means to be Chicano for the nearly 3,000,000 people of Mexican origin in the city, while the migration of nearly 200,000 Koreans dramatically reconfigures the contours of the area's Asian American population. Indeed, demographic changes emanating from immigration change the meaning of *all* racial identities in Los Angeles by changing cultural networks, transforming the color of low-wage jobs, promoting new forms of entrepreneurial activity, and increasing competition for scarce resources.

9. By “cultural franchise” I mean a sense of visibility in the larger culture and a sense of ownership and control over expressive forms that speak to immediate and local realities, histories, and aspirations.

10. Japanese investors control 30 percent of downtown office buildings in Los Angeles. The Pico-Union section has been a point of entry for many immigrant groups, including Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Filipinos, and other Asian, South American, and Central American groups. See Chinchilla, Hamilton, and Loucky, “Central Americans in Los Angeles,” 53, 56.

While globalization affects nearly every aspect of urban life, the grassroots realities of global cities rarely register in public pronouncements by politicians or in the public-relations oriented journalism of commercially supported electronic and print media. Political competition among groups for scarce resources, as well as organized campaigns against immigrants and against bilingualism, may offer temporary visibility to globalization as a problem, but they occlude the important issue of how people make meaning for themselves in the context of dramatic social change, and they discourage understanding of the world that is emerging all around us. These attacks divert attention from the realities of low-wage labor, the hardships faced by workers (and the benefits that others derive from their exploitation), the shake-up in social identities engendered by migration, economic restructuring, and new communications media, and the creative adaptations and unlikely affiliations (and antagonisms) that emerge under current conditions.

Some of these new realities of global cities find representation through commercial culture, especially popular music. It is often the case that realities not yet possible in political life appear first within popular culture. Consequently, the world that is emerging all around us can be understood in part through analysis of the ways in which popular music in Miami and Los Angeles registers the changes in black and Latino identities enacted by massive immigration, as well as the ways in which these changes represent disturbances in gender roles and sexuality provoked by the new social relations in global cities.¹¹

Latinos and African Americans in Miami understandably enough view each other as competitors for political power and wealth. Nevertheless, the potential for coalitions appears often in cultural products, and the worlds of the two groups merge in different ways in popular music. Puerto Rican rapper Lisa M won a following among African Americans and in diverse im-

11. Much discussion of popular music remains wedded to considerations of taste and evaluation, as if, by talking about a particular kind of music, authors must be recommending its purchase. I want to emphasize here that I am reading popular music diagnostically, as a symptom of changed social relations, and that it does not matter if I like or dislike any of the music I discuss. The question is what can we learn about social relations by taking musical expressions seriously.

migrant communities with her song “Jarican Jive.” Her recording mixed English and Spanish lyrics in celebrating the benefits of mixing Jamaican and Puerto Rican music.¹² Similarly, African American rapper Luther Campbell’s production of an interlingual Spanish-English hip hop song by his group, 2 Live Crew, features Debbie Bennett, the group’s Honduran-born publicity director, rapping (obscenely) in Spanish.¹³

Likewise, at a time when political rivalries and economic competition between organized African American and Latino groups in Los Angeles had reached an all-time high, African American hip hop artist Ice-T’s half-Bolivian manager assisted Chicano rapper Kid Frost’s attempts to secure a recording contract. Kid Frost, in turn, joined forces with Ice-T and with “Godfather” (from the Los Angeles Samoan rap group Boo Yaa Tribe) in public appearances where the three rap artists condemned censorship and gang violence while affirming the importance of interethnic unity.¹⁴

African Americans in Miami share many cultural and political affinities with African Americans in other U.S. cities, but waves of migration from Caribbean countries give a unique cultural inflection to the local black culture. The musical components of Luther Campbell’s “Miami Bass” sound and the similarity of his song lyrics to the sexual imagery in Jamaican “dancehall” reggae demonstrate this Caribbean connection in clear and distinct ways.¹⁵ Mexican Americans in Los Angeles share a history of struggle against Anglo domination with their compatriots in New Mexico, Texas, and the upper Midwest, but continuing immigration from Mexico and Central America, combined with extraordinary ethnic and racial diversity in immigrant neighborhoods, has given rise to distinct new cultural identities evident in the popularity of banda music and Latin hip hop.

The emergence of 2 Live Crew in the early 1990s as an

12. For more about Lisa M, see the insightful discussions in Frances R. Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* (Hanover, N.H., 1998), 150, 160, 168–169.

13. Lydia Martin, “New Crew Cut Angers Latin Women’s Groups Who Call It Offensive,” *Miami Herald*, Aug. 3, 1990, p. 4B.

14. Ice-T (as told to Heidi Siegmund), *The Ice Opinion* (New York, 1994), 134.

15. See Andrew Ross, *Real Love: In Pursuit of Cultural Justice* (New York, 1998), 35–69.

economically successful hip hop group makes little sense on purely aesthetic grounds, given the members' limited talents as rappers and mixers. But as a social phenomenon, 2 Live Crew made sense as an expression of diverse currents attendant to the hip hop culture uniquely visible in Miami. The group's success came after it hired Joseph Kolsky as manager in the late 1980s. A former senior executive of Roulette Records in New York, the label featuring one of the first African American/Puerto Rican groups—Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers—Kolsky moved to Florida with the intention of playing golf and listening to big band tunes. Aware of his successful track record with rhythm and blues and disco artists in New York, Luther Campbell of 2 Live Crew coaxed Kolsky out of retirement. Under the guidance of Kolsky, an elderly Jewish American man described by his son as a conservative and prudish person, 2 Live Crew recordings made by Campbell's Luke Records secured gold and platinum status, with sales of 500,000 and 1,000,000 respectively, for songs titled "Me So Horny" and "Pop My Pussy."¹⁶

Campbell and 2 Live Crew describe themselves as a "comedy act" rather than a hip hop group. Yet the stylistic features they incorporate into their music reveal a good understanding of some aspects of hip hop, most especially its affinities for contemporary immigrant music, such as Jamaican "slackness" dancehall music and the Afro-Latin hip hop of the Caribbean and Central America. 2 Live Crew rose to prominence because of the group's sexually explicit lyrics, but the vehicle for delivering these words was a distinctive bass-oriented sound influenced by the Latino presence in Miami.

Campbell grew up in Miami's Liberty City ghetto and saw his first turntable artists and rappers in African Square Park and at local radio station WEDR. He quickly sized up the profit-making potential in commercialized leisure. Even as a teenager, he leased a Pac-Man video game from a distributor and made money by inviting friends to his house to play (with their quarters). He refused to perform for free in the park like the other rappers in his neighborhood but secured paying jobs instead at

16. D. Aileen Dodd, "Joseph Kolsky, 77, Pop Music Record Executive," *Miami Herald*, May 12, 1997, p. 4B.

skating rinks and school dances. Discussions of hip hop as an artistic form that realistically depicts many aspects of ghetto life often neglect its economic significance as one of the very few sites in our society where the knowledge and talents of inner-city youth have value, where they can translate their skills into opportunities for economic upward mobility. For ghetto youths like Campbell, hip hop is about reality *and* a salary.

Many hip hop artists have surpassed Campbell artistically, but few have displayed his ability to succeed financially or to attract lawsuits because of that success. The sheriff of Broward County sued him for performing obscene lyrics. George Lucas sued him for taking the stage name Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars* without permission. The Nashville publishing house Acuff-Rose sued him for an unauthorized parody of Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman." Eventually, Campbell was vindicated in these actions, except the case involving Lucas, who forced him to change his label name to Luke Records instead of Luke Skywalker.¹⁷ Most critics have seen Campbell's repeated contests in the courts as deliberate publicity stunts that play important roles in his astute business strategy. It is also likely, however, that he has been targeted for attack because of his role in voter registration drives and his support for Janet Reno in her campaign for Prosecuting Attorney of Dade County against right-wing attorney Jack Thompson.¹⁸

In addition to Campbell's flair for self-promotion and his run-ins with political opponents, the Caribbean aspects of his music lead to yet another explanation of why he has had so many tangles with the law. Like Shabba Ranks, Buju Banton, Bounty Killer, Beenie Man, and other West Indian dancehall artists—or, for that matter, Jamaican-born Richard Shaw (a.k.a. Bushwick Bill) of the Houston rap group the Geto Boys, also known for their frank lyrics—Campbell's misogynistic "toast-ing" illustrates a more generalized hostility between men and

17. Colin Larkin, ed., *The Guinness Who's Who of Rap, Dance, and Techno* (Middlesex, England, 1994), 22; Sharony Andrews, "'Uncensored Story' Nasty, But History Is Interesting," *Miami Herald*, Feb. 26, 1992, p. 3E; John D. McKinnon, "2 Live Crew Verdict Comes as No Surprise," *Miami Herald*, March 9, 1994, p. 5B.

18. Jack Thompson later brought the obscenity charges against 2 Live Crew to the attention of Republican Party sheriff of Broward County, Nick Navarro, and Republican Governor of Florida, Bob Martinez.

women from aggrieved Caribbean communities at a time of extraordinary economic austerity. The frank discussion of sexuality in this music embarrasses some members of the community, making the music seem irredeemably sexist to some and pornographic to others. But all of these forms of moral evaluation evade the prior question of why these expressions have emerged at this time and what they mean for the people producing and consuming them.

Louis Chude-Sokei charges that dismissals of “slackness” lyrics as either sexist or pornographic miss the point. He notes the ways in which the sexuality of black women stands at the center of dancehall reggae’s world. Chude-Sokei detects a strong strain of female self-affirmation in women’s responses to the lyrics of male dancehall artists on the dance floor, as well as in the lyrics of women artists who take to the microphone themselves. Chude-Sokei explains that women buy more of these recordings than do men and that women control the dance floor in Jamaican dancehalls. Conceding that dancehall lyrics are offensive to Euroamerican feminist sensibilities, Chude-Sokei nonetheless argues that women dancehall fans “find both affirmation and power in the fear that their sexuality creates in the men. It allows them the freedom and security to navigate in and around a world of brutality, violence, and economic privation.”¹⁹

Like Chude-Sokei, Carolyn Cooper argues that sexual topics in dancehall lyrics provide an alternative to the denial of women’s sexuality in most popular music. Music and cultural critic Andrew Ross endorses Cooper’s claims, citing the overt and uninhibited demands for sexual pleasure by women in dancehall music as a positive alternative to gangsta rap’s demonization of women as “ball breakers” and “gold diggers.”²⁰ Cooper also argues that the sex-affirmative songs by women in dancehall music need to be understood as a reaction against the masculinist and patriarchal politics of reggae with its biblically inspired Rastafarianism. The visionary black nationalism of 1970s Jamaican reggae proved tremendously appealing to

19. Louis Chude-Sokei, “Postnationalist Geographies: Rasta, Ragga, and Re-inventing Africa,” in Chris Potash, ed., *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music From Ska to Dub* (New York, 1997), 222.

20. *Ibid.*

political radicals in North America and Europe, many of whom failed to notice that reggae and Rastafarianism privileged male perspectives, advocated the subordination of women, and preached an asceticism that associates the female body with impurity.²¹ Reggae fans around the world have tended to see the rise of dancehall music as a degeneration from the morally and politically superior “conscious” reggae of the Bob Marley years. But these critics living outside the Caribbean have not had to confront the failures of 1970s radicalism, the costs of the economic austerity programs that followed, or the social disintegration and changes in gender roles imposed on Caribbean society over the past two decades.

Like Dominican merengue and bachata, Mexican banda, and West Coast gangsta rap, “slackness” dancehall reggae reveals that one of the ways that men react to a global economy increasingly organized around the low-wage labor of women is through affirmations of masculine privilege and denigrations of female independence. Yen Le Espiritu points out that, in the current global economy, men generally lose social and economic status through migration while women secure advances in their status. Immigrant men of color suffer additional assaults on their dignity because of the racism in U.S. society.²² Similarly, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo’s brilliant research on Mexican immigrants indicates that, although immigrant men maintain more status and enjoy more mobility than immigrant women, immigrant men nonetheless lose power and status because migration undermines their authority within the family.²³ Misogyny is an understandable if counterproductive response to this status anxiety.

In Jamaica over 60 percent of women worked full-time even before the structural adjustment policies advocated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the late 1970s. Efforts by global finance to restructure the Jamaican economy revolved around attracting capital with the lure of low-wage female labor for garment, textile, light assembly, data

21. Ross, *Real Love*, 55.

22. Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men* (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1997), 8.

23. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transition: Mexican Experiences in Immigration* (Berkeley, 1994).

processing, and electronics work.²⁴ Constituting more than 45 percent of their nation's labor force, Jamaican women already in the work force were well positioned to avail themselves of the opportunities for work as domestics, nurses, and child-care workers that opened up in global cities like New York and Miami in the 1980s and 1990s. Women also recognized quickly the ways in which migration from Jamaica to the United States could provide favorable opportunities for social independence through separation or divorce, and for economic upward mobility through the pursuit of professional credentials.²⁵

One manifestation of the misogyny exacerbated by new social relations comes through the symbolic value given to male perspectives in immigrant music, especially bachata, merengue, and dancehall reggae and rap. In addition, the same loss of male self-respect that can lead to incisive critiques of racialized capitalism in popular music can also lead to a vicious homophobia. Slackness dancehall performer Buju Banton connects declining educational opportunities and the rise of drug use in inner-city ghettos to a plot by the rich who "no want see ghetto youth elevate out a the slum" and consequently "give we all type a things [drugs], try turn we down."²⁶ Nonetheless, in 1992, Banton also recorded "Boom Bye Bye," a song inciting anti-gay violence. Similarly, Afro-Panamanian dancehall *reggaespañol* artist Rude Girl (La Atrevida) attacks lesbians in "Lesbiana" because she thinks they "harass woman" and refuse "procreation."

The important scholarship of Jacqui Alexander explains how postcolonial economic and political elites have used heterosexuality, nuclear families, and traditional roles for women as key symbols of national independence and integrity. Originally intended to displace slurs by colonialists that stereotyped Third World men as hypersexualized rapists while portraying Third World women as sexually aggressive "Jezebels," this discourse of sexual respectability has become the last refuge of

24. Ross, *Real Love*, 63.

25. Lynn Bolles, "Kitchens Hit by Priorities: Employed Working Class Jamaican Women Confront the IMF," in June Nash and Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, eds., *Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor* (Albany, N.Y., 1983), 138–160, quoted in Ross, *Real Love*, 220.

26. Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Reggae: The Rough Guide* (London, 1997), 306.

neocolonial scoundrels as they sell out the political and economic autonomy of their nations to global capital. They attempt to portray their own nations as modern, safe, and appealing to outsiders by persecuting homosexuals, suppressing women, extolling the nuclear family, and policing sexuality.²⁷ In this context, as Andrew Ross argues, the homophobia of dancehall reggae plays into the hands of neocolonial cultural elites, while at the same time the sex-affirmative pro-pleasure politics of Lady Saw, Patra, Lady Apache, and Shelly Thunder create cultural and social spaces with distinct counter-hegemonic possibilities.²⁸

Consequently, the “obscene” lyrics of 2 Live Crew need to be seen, at least in part, as a result of their connections in Miami to ragamuffin “slackness” dancehall and to dancehall *reggaespañol*. At Luther Campbell’s obscenity trial, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates correctly noted the long history of misogynist and sexually explicit rhymes within African American oral traditions like playing the “dozens.” Yet part of Campbell’s significance comes as well from his blending of African American and Caribbean traditions. In Hallandale and other Miami suburbs and neighborhoods, West-Indian dancehall music by Bounti Killer, Beenie Man, and Buju Banton provides a focal point for a vibrant immigrant dancehall subculture. Miami has become, in fact, the second-largest dancehall market outside the West Indies, trailing only New York City. Jamaican-born Miami DJ Waggy Tee has drawn huge audiences to his weekly dances at the Cameo Theater where he specializes in hip hop-style mixing and scratching. Dancehall in Miami is not just another immigrant subcultural music but rather an import that blends perfectly with hip hop in a fusion that leaves both musical styles transformed. One of Miami’s leading DJs, Rory of Stone Love, explains, “Hip-hop and dancehall have the same beats. You can mix the records, and they will groove.”²⁹

27. Jacqui Alexander, “Not Just (Any)body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas,” *Feminist Review*, 48 (Autumn 1994), 5–23; Alexander, “Redrafting Morality: The Postcolonial State and the Sexual Offenses Bill of Trinidad and Tobago,” in Chandra Talpede Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington, Ind. 1991), 173–196.

28. Ross, *Real Love*, 66–67.

29. Jordan Levin, “Dancehall DJs in the House,” in Potash, ed., *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution*, 228–230.

Andrew Ross points out that the emergence of dancehall reggae reflected two political changes: first, the demise of the political project announced by the appropriation of reggae by Michael Manley during his first term in office as Jamaica's president, and second, the victory of the IMF and the World Bank over efforts to correct the nation's maldistribution of wealth. The subsequent Edward Seaga and Manley regimes implemented the austerity demanded by the U.S. government and the international financial community with devastating results. These measures increased internal pressures to migrate to the United States, transforming not only Jamaican society but African American life and culture as well. At a time when large numbers of African Americans are now immigrants from the West Indies, any project aimed at racial unity needs to acknowledge and recruit those African Americans of Caribbean origin.³⁰

Chude-Sokei notes that dancehall has re-envisioned the African diaspora, moving beyond the Rastafarian vision in reggae that portrays the African past and future as the center of the diasporic imagination. Dancehall replaces attention to the African past and future with relentless attention to the here and now, to the documentary realities of poverty and racism and the suppression of pleasure and desire confronting Africans around the world.³¹ Chude-Sokei also notes that this vision is one that dancehall shares with hip hop. The two forms share a sexual hedonism that involves both large doses of sexism and profound commitments to sexual pleasure as an emotional and physical antidote to the aching muscles, frayed nerves, and psychic insults of lives oriented around low-wage labor.³² These affinities can be seen in many ways, such as the collaborations between hip hop artists and dancehall stars: Salt-n-Pepa with Patra, KRS-1 with Shabba Ranks, Special Ed's hip hop remix of Beenie Man's "slam," and Bounti Killer's 1996 album *Xperience* with guest appearances by Busta Rhymes, Rae-kwon, Jeru the Damaja, and the Fugees, themselves a fusion of Haitian American and African American music.³³

30. Ross, *Real Love*.

31. Chude-Sokei, "Postnationalist Geographies," 222.

32. For an excellent discussion of gender and sexuality in salsa music, see Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa*, 142–153.

33. Levin, "Dancehall DJs"; Ross, *Real Love*, 49.

The backgrounds of the members of 2 Live Crew reveal the intercultural connections that link mainland North American hip hop to the Caribbean. DJ David Hobbs (Fresh Kid Ice) hails from California, Mark Ross (Brother Marquis) from New York, Chris Wong Won from Trinidad, and Campbell from Miami.³⁴ In his autobiography, copublished in Jamaica by Kingston Publishers, Campbell identifies Jamaican immigrants to New York as the originators of turntable mixing and scratching.³⁵ Campbell's music testifies to Miami's important long-standing relationship with the anglophone Caribbean.³⁶ Miami-based clear channel AM radio stations played a key role in alerting Bob Marley to the possibilities of fusing Jamaican music with North American black music via broadcasts of Southern rhythm and blues and Motown "soul" music in the early 1960s. Jamaican musicians like Marley blended the music they heard broadcast by U.S. radio stations with Jamaican Burrup, Kumina, Pocomania, and Nyabinghi rhythms. At the same time, reggae rhythmic patterns and chord progressions have long formed an important subtext of soul music from Miami.³⁷ Campbell has attributed his trials for obscenity to the local political ramifications of this cultural mixing, especially to fear by whites and Cubans that Campbell's artistic and business success might prefigure political and economic cooperation between U.S.-born blacks and their Caribbean and West Indian cousins.

Just as migration from the hispanophone and anglophone Caribbean has transformed the meaning of ethnic identities in Miami, the movement to Los Angeles of low-wage workers from Sinaloa, Jalisco, and Colima to clean pools, trim trees, prepare food, and provide child care for affluent families in Los Angeles has transformed the meaning of ethnic and racial identities in that city as well. These workers have little protection from employer mistreatment, Immigration and Naturalization Ser-

34. Larkin, ed., *The Guinness Who's Who of Rap, Dance, and Techno*, 162.

35. Andrews, "Uncensored Story."

36. The city also enjoys an important relationship with the francophone Caribbean through the presence of large numbers of Haitian migrants, refugees, and exiles, as well as for the role played by local recording studios in producing the work of Haitian musical groups, especially Boukman Eksperyans.

37. Wendell Logan, "Conversation with Majorie Whyllie," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 10 (1986), 86, 92. Caribbean connections were especially evident in the music made for Harry Stone's labels by K. C. and the Sunshine Band, Betty Wright, and L'il Beaver (among others).

vice harassment, or even vigilante violence. They find few politicians willing to speak out for their interests but many eager to seek advancement by demonizing hard-working and productive immigrants as parasites and interlopers. But while these workers lack power as citizens and as workers, they do have market power as consumers, as a target audience for advertisers. It is in that realm that new forms of Mexican American identity first became visible to the broader society in the early 1990s.

Largely because of an influx of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, the Los Angeles Spanish-language daily newspaper, *La Opinión*, expanded its circulation by 155 percent between 1981 and 1991. Advertising revenue at the newspaper increased by 600 percent during the same ten-year period. In 1986 only six radio stations in Los Angeles broadcast Spanish-language programs, but by 1997 seventeen of the region's eighty-two stations broadcast Spanish programming exclusively.³⁸ People of Mexican origin in Los Angeles have experienced great difficulty turning their demographic power into political power, but they have succeeded in turning the strength of their numbers into market visibility—especially through Latin hip hop and banda music, genres that represent for Los Angeles the same degree of interethnic dialogue and sense of sexual crisis that dancehall and Campbell's hip hop registered in Miami.

Deindustrialization, capital flight, and economic restructuring devastated black and Latino neighborhoods in Los Angeles during the 1980s. By the time of the 1992 insurrection, almost 20 percent of the city's young people between the ages of sixteen and nineteen did not have jobs and were not in school.³⁹ Vicious police initiatives like "Operation Hammer," os-

38. I thank David Gutierrez for directing me toward this information. See also Alex Avila, "Trading Punches: Spanish Language Television Pounds the Competition in Fight for Hispanic Advertising Dollars," *Hispanic* (Jan./Feb. 1997), 39–42, 44. Dona Petrozello, "Radio Targets Hispanic Niches," *Broadcasting and Cable*, No. 13 (Nov. 1995), 76; "Audience Shares Swell for Spanish Formats," *ibid.*, No. 22 (Jan. 1996), 122; Federico Subveri-Velez, "Mass Communication and Hispanics" in Felix Padilla, ed., *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Sociology* (Houston, Tex., 1994), 304–358; Sussen Tara, "Hispanic Radio Heats Up Airwaves," *Advertising Age*, 24 (Jan. 1994), S8; Mari Zate, "Radio Reaches New Heights," *Hispanic Business*, 16 (1994), 54.

39. Maxine Waters, "Testimony Before Senate Banking Committee," in Don Hazen, ed., *Inside the L.A. Riots* (New York, 1992), 26.

tensibly aimed at “gang” members, led to the arrest and creation of criminal records for more than 50,000 minority youths. The shift from manufacturing to service jobs, rampant employer violations of minimum wage and other labor laws, and migration motivated by even more desperate conditions in Mexico and Central America left young Latinos as the poorest of the poor in the 1990s.⁴⁰ At the same time, African American outmigration and Latino immigration, coupled with widespread discrimination in housing, left Latinos and blacks increasingly aligned as neighbors in inner-city areas stripped of opportunities and resources. As once nearly all-black South Central Los Angeles became 50 percent Latino, African American-based hip hop music became the preferred form of expression for many inner-city Latinos.

An early promotional video for Chicano rap artist Kid Frost featured a group of very dark-skinned musicians in mariachi outfits as well as an African American interlocutor who originally mis-hears “*Ya Estuvo*” (“That’s It for You”) as “That’s Stupid” but who gets corrected (and converted) to Spanish by Frost. Afro Cuban rapper Mellow Man Ace presented deft interlingual rhymes such as “I said, ‘Hey, *ya me voy*’ ’cause you ain’t treating me like I’m some sucker toy,” while in another song Kid Frost claimed, “I’m a *chingon ese*, like Al Capone *ese*.” African American rapper Anthony Smith took the stage name “Tone Loc” from the nickname given to him by Spanish-speaking friends who referred to him as “Antonio Loco.”⁴¹

At a time when competition for scarce resources and the racial tensions fomented within the state prison system increasingly pit aggrieved racialized minorities against one another, Latin hip hop groups Aztlan Underground, DarkRoom family, Funky Aztecs, Cali Life Style, Proper Dos, Lighter Shade of Brown, and Delinquent Habits reference Chicano history in English and in Spanish, but they also acknowledge longstanding interactions among blacks and Latinos as well as other minority populations. The three members of Cypress Hill, a “Chicano” group from South Gate, include B Real (son of a

40. Marc Cooper, “L.A.’s State of Siege,” in Hazen, ed., *Inside the L.A. Riots*, 15.

41. Larkin, *The Guinness Who’s Who of Rap, Dance, and Techno*, 157.

Mexican American father and an Afro Cuban mother), Sen Dog (a Cuban), and Muggs (an Italian American). Cypress Hill protégés Funkdoobiest consist of a Mexican, a Native American, and a Puerto Rican who refer to themselves as a coalition of Aztec, Sioux, and Arawak origin.

Utopian desires for interracial reconciliation are not uncommon within popular culture, but the performers of Latin hip hop reflect the actual experiences of differentially racialized populations, not just abstract desires for transformation and transcendence. Yet if Latin hip hop helped build unity across racial lines, it often did so by expressing a shared masculine contempt for women. From the bikini-clad models “decorating” Kid Frost’s vision of Chicano nationalism in “La Raza” to Mellow Man Ace’s put-down of his girl friend as a “skeezer” and a liar in “Mentirosa,” Los Angeles Latin hip hop expressed the same uneasy relations between the genders seen in Miami dancehall and hip hop productions.

If Latin hip hop has become the key venue in Los Angeles for expressing the things that different groups in the city have in common, banda music has come to represent the specific experiences and aspirations of recent immigrants from Mexico. In 1992 Spanish-language radio station KLAX-FM (La Equis) became the most popular radio station in Los Angeles—the world’s most lucrative and competitive local radio market—by changing its format to banda music, a form aimed primarily at new immigrants from Mexico. This horn-heavy dance music from the west coast of Mexico, and the acrobatic *quebradita* dance craze associated with it, seemed like an unlikely candidate for commercial success in the Los Angeles market, but its emergence as an emblem of identity among new immigrants has given it an unexpected influence and prestige.

One key to banda’s popularity derives from its connection to issues of immigrant identity. Banda artists and audiences flaunted their rural Mexican roots by wearing *vaquero* (cowboy) styles: stetson hats (called *Tejanos*), fringe jackets, leather boots, and tight jeans. Song titles referenced ranch life and rodeos, while dancers characteristically carried *cuartos* (small horse-whips). Males most often wore button fly jeans, fringed leather vests, felt or straw cowboy hats, and shiny boots. Women tended to wear tight-fitting jeans or western skirts, belts with big buck-

les, black stretch tops, and cowboy boots. Banda's dance rhythms, characteristic sounds, and the styles of its fans all signaled a distinctly rural and Mexican identity, one that made no move to assimilate into U.S. culture but also did not exist in the same form in any location in Mexico. The banda craze was a product of migration, an expression of immigrant consciousness, and a strategic and symbolic source of unity in the face of outside attacks.

Like dancehall music, banda music often met with disapproval from respected community leaders who saw it as a dangerous expression of exuberant sexuality among low-wage workers. The close dancing encouraged by the *quebradita* and the tight outfits favored by banda dancers displayed desires for pleasure more openly than many traditional Mexican Americans deemed acceptable. As migration changed the power realities between Mexican men and women at home and at the workplace, a resurgent hyper-masculinity came to the fore within banda music, nowhere more evident than in the name of the genre's first superstar group, Banda Machos.

Sexism and homophobia are not the sole content of dancehall reggae, Miami hip hop, Latin hip hop, or banda. Each genre now seems to have moved beyond the sexism that it once represented. Slackness artists have moved past homophobia (in part because protests and boycotts limited their profit-making potential in North America and Europe) and turned to more spiritual and politically conscious themes. Luther Campbell has turned his efforts away from music altogether, toward a peculiar combination of philanthropy and pornography—he sponsors the annual children's Easter egg hunt in Liberty City while raising capital for a "black" alternative to *Penthouse* and *Playboy*. Latin hip hop no longer displays much of the cultural nationalist and masculinist bravado of Kid Frost's big hit "La Raza," and banda has crested as a musical form and a social force, becoming one genre within a broader constellation on Spanish-language radio stations, dances, weddings, *Quinceñeras*, and other social occasions. Yet dancehall reggae in English or Spanish, hip hop, and banda remain important sites for entrepreneurial activities and employment. They continue to arbitrate the contradictions low-wage workers face in their class, racial, gender, and sexual identities.

Music can be a sensitive register of changes in social relations that remain obscured when examined through other lenses. Popular music in Miami and Los Angeles at the present moment offers useful insights into the nature of globalization, its implications for racial and national identities, and the inescapable importance of gender and sexuality as the sites where some of the most important changes of our era are being experienced.