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## Political Hip-Hop

Music is not only one of the forms of art, but also one of the sources of cultural power. As well as any other forms of art, it helps to convey messages and to raise general awareness. Political hip-hop or political rap has developed in 1980s as one of the genres of hip-hop music. The first widely known political hip-hop group was Public Enemy that based their lyrics on the famous political speeches of The Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron. Other known political hip-hop artists are Tupac Shakur, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Eminem, Black Star, and others. The new wave in rap music raised many social issues in lyrics, such as governmental policies, American culture, and sociopolitical events trying to communicate their message to the government and society.

Political hip-hop is notable for openly speaking about and challenging the dominant issue in society to raise the awareness and consensus. The most common topics of the political hip-hop are violence, crime, economy, and the description of everyday lives and struggles of ordinary people (Forman). For example, one of the most famous political hip-hop songs is The Message by Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five. This song was released in 1982, and conveys the



message about the painful and full of struggles life in Bronx during 1980s. Many believe that this song changed the hip-hop industry. It is famous for its chorus catchphrase, “It’s like a jungle sometimes/ It makes me wonder how I keep from going under” (“The Message by Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five”). Many notable hip-hop musicians referred to this song and used it as an inspiration for their creative work. This song is also notable for its sound, which was somewhat different from the typical 80’s music by being more reverberated with usage of the relaxed tempo for the parts where lyric was about grave social issues. This track is considered to be very influential, because it was one of the first tracks that openly talked about streets violence, described poverty that people lived in, and brought to the public attention how dead-end lives of the Bronx youth was at that time.

The impact of the genre of political hip-hop is crucial, because it does not aggressively impose its ideology on the listener, but rather cunningly informs the public about its opinion on various problems. However, the majority of musicians that create and perform political hip-hop are usually not very famous, but rather underground. However, over the time, more and more mainstream artists include elements of political hip-hop in their songs. The main difference between the political and other genres of hip-hop is the lyrics. One of the most famous political hip-hop songs is Fight the Power released in 1989, by Public Enemy. This song is famous for conveying the message of the black pride, “Now that you've realized the prides arrived/We got to pump the stuff to make us tough/From the heart/It's a start” (“Fight The Power by Public Enemy”). The track itself consists of many samples including the speech of civil rights activist Thomas Todd, pieces of lyrics of The Dramatics and James Brown, and many

others. Thus, this song is revolutionary not only in the terms of lyrics, but also in the terms of music. These means were used in order to attract bigger audience and to convey the message within the song to more people.

Hip-hop nowadays is a usual thing for the American culture. However, at the beginning, it was quite different from the one that exists now. What is more, the hip-hop scene would be entirely different without the existence of political hip-hop as a genre. Political hip-hop helps to convey many important messages concerning the everyday lives of the African-American people. What is more, it is known for spreading the awareness amongst various social groups raising issues of violence, economy, self-identification and freedom.

# Works Cited

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