

**“THIS CAME FROM THE HEART, THE GUT, THE SOUL:”
PUERTO RICAN AND FILIPINO HYBRIDITY IN HIP HOP**

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“This Came From The Heart, The Gut, The Soul:”¹
Puerto Rican and Filipino Hybridity in Hip Hop

A scholarly discourse of the last two decades on the emergence of Hip Hop is addressing its exclusive influence defining the contours of blackness on a global scale. With its multicultural origins coming from New York’s African American, Latino, and Caribbean immigrant youth of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Hip Hop gave life to one of the world’s major contemporary cultural movements. Initially considered an exclusive form of black musical expression, Hip Hop’s cultural resistance aesthetic is a transnational, intercultural, anti-imperialist mode of blackness that has been recognized to be influenced by other racialized groups, which have further developed the movement on a global scale. In its global context, Hip Hop has generated scholarly discourse that points to either cultural globalization of “American blackness” or, as Paul Gilroy explains, global hybridity of “blackness.” Two of the racialized groups that are analyzed in this context will be the Puerto Rican and Filipino communities in the United States and how both use this “blackness”/Hip Hop aesthetic as a means of extension of their cultural, literary and performative identities demonstrated as a form of racial and ethnic hybridization.

These marginalized communities, before finding in Hip Hop a new voice, each shared a unique yet related colonial past, which led them to establish linkages in the United States, an ironic backstory that ties them with Hip Hop’s commercialization and globalization. This research proposes a framework for studying the cultural aesthetic of the genre alongside the

¹ This lyric comes from an unreleased track written by Hip Hop artist NAS titled “One Mic (Remix)” (2001), which embodies the cultural aesthetic of Hip Hop.

performative orality and poetics that have defined both cultures' presence in American society. This literary orality and poetics I refer to with Puerto Ricans and Filipinos parallels the cultural significance that the Nuyorican's Poets Café and Pilipino/Filipino Culture Nights have had for each community as spaces of contestation and expression through the performative acts of slam poetry. What the cultural blackness aesthetic of Hip Hop and slam poetry have in common is that they both posit the impact that classifications of race and ethnicity have as involuntary concepts to identify national identities within the United States. Through this type of analysis, American processes of race construction and citizenship will be addressed within both communities' discourses of political and cultural identity. This will be executed utilizing definitions of postcolonial theories of hybridity and critical cultural theories as posited by Juan Flores, Raquel Rivera, Oliver Wang, Dylan Rodriguez, among other critical sources of Puerto Rican, Filipino and African American studies. Tackling Puerto Rican and Filipino racial and ethnic construction through Hip Hop reconceives the dominant blackness discourse as an umbrella term that represents forces of domination and resistance to political and economic projects, which otherwise remain overlooked in essentialized American multicultural discourses.

To situate Puerto Ricans and Filipinos in the United States we must briefly mention their historical intersections in the early 20th century. This initiates right after the Spanish-American war of 1898, an event that ended in the acquisition of the archipelagos of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, along with other territories that were under Spanish rule through the Treaty of Paris. Scholars have explored how the United States exploited these archipelagos' peoples for cheap labor and agriculture while maintaining them in an ambiguous territorial status, a part of but not related directly to the United States as a purportedly homogenous entity.² Through *American*

² See E. San Juan Jr. *From Exile To Diaspora: Versions of The Filipino Experience in the United States* (1998), Jorge Duany *Blurred Borders* (2011), *Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs To Know* (2017).

exceptionalist discourses,³ both Puerto Rican and Filipino people were fed a romanticized idea of welfare and opportunity by transplanting to the mainland. The conceptualization of the American Dream, via the trope of the western capitalist mogul celebrated in the U.S. during the twentieth century, contributes to a discourse that aims to indoctrinate both these communities. Yet little is discussed of the alternative narratives that involve the presence of Puerto Rican and Filipino communities in the U.S. that subverted and created their own concepts of identity against racist, essentialized and alienated members of White American bourgeoisie, while invisibly conciliating to racial and ethnic constructs.

This alternate discourse is seen through the gaze of each community's diasporic discourse of and how they, in an almost parallel manner, mobilized alongside African Americans to construct their own "identities." They weren't void of identification, it just wasn't one fit for *American exceptionalist* socio-political/economic discourses. A point of confluence towards self-determination of Puerto Rican and Filipino communities came with their prolonged residence in the United States. Although evidence exists that both communities began residing in the U.S. before, their shared history intersects through the Jones Act of 1917, with this Organic Act/decree passed by Congress in 1917, Puerto Ricans in the archipelago and other related U.S. territories outside the mainland gained citizenship by law not by right. In the case of the Filipinos, this organic Act served no purpose as they were considered "nationals" for they provided one of the cheapest labor forces in the U.S. in its ever-expanding West at the time, also gaining citizenship through military service.

³ Phrase used by Faye Caronan in *Legitimizing Empire: Filipino American and U.S. Puerto Rican Cultural Critique* (2015) as a term to describe American socio-political aspirations to paralyze aspirations of identity and participation in mainstream global discourses of self-determination.

This civic phenomenon that Filipinos experienced early in the 20th century, argues cultural theorist Lisa Lowe in her book *Immigrant Acts*, fits Asian American culture as “an alternative form that produces cultural expressions materially and aesthetically at odds with the resolution of the citizen of the nation” due to the damaging history of citizenship for Asian immigrants, who were regarded incapable of assimilating and becoming American (6). Just as Puerto Ricans, according to their colonial status and second-class U.S. citizenship, are incapable of being regarded as fully American, a space of relation is shared with Filipinos’ conflicted colonial pasts. Despite both sharing a colonial history with the U.S., Filipinos and Puerto Ricans were subject to different forms of incorporation to the imperial power. Both were Spanish colonies acquired as a result of the Spanish American War in 1898 but sharing different political realities along the twentieth century. From 1898 to 1934 Filipinos in the U.S. were considered neither alien nor residents, yet occupied space as laborers within the U.S. empire. In contrast, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens with the 1917 Jones Act, which provided limited to no voting rights unless residing in the U.S. mainland. This brief glimpse at how both communities simultaneously have been included and ostracized from the United States, leads to two different forms of inclusion in U.S. socio-cultural imagination. Understanding this cultural and historical distinction between these communities frames their contact with Hip Hop at different phases of the cultural movement.⁴ The genealogy of both communities’ ties runs deeper than the Hip Hop movement, providing intersections with the social movements that the Nuyorican Poets Café and Pilipino Culture Nights (PNC) represent for each.

⁴ As well as their distinctions in their emergence on the literary scene where the Nuyorican movement appears as a marked cultural determination set in New York and Filipino narratives as a socio-economic movement centered around the experience of Asian American labor forces of the time. See Dorothy Fujita Rony *American Workers Colonial Power*: (2002) and Dylan Rodriguez’s work.

Their respective critiques of U.S. imperialism seem to always be muted by dominant narratives of U.S. exceptionalism, for which American policymakers and mass media culture strategically deploy the Philippines and Puerto Rico as supporting narrative discourses for their global foreign policy politics. This narrative exalts a superficial multiculturalism celebrated in the form of costumes, cuisine and ethnic performances with no contextualization of the differences within the histories of unequal global power, i.e. their labor exploitation.

This produces a space of overdetermined racial expression established by ethnic geography.⁵ Because of this, the juxtaposition experienced by Filipino/Filipino American and Puerto Rican cultures foregrounds with Hip Hop as a medium to critique U.S. imperialism and global power, delegitimizing their American past through the blackness aestheticism and poetic performance that Hip Hop represents both in the performative and literary spheres of the cultural movement. Fueled by anti-imperialism, their transnational declamation deconstructs the constituency of their identities, a phenomenon that can be identified as a form of hybridization.⁶

Such a phenomenon parallels the emergence of the Nuyorican Poets Café and the birth of the genre of slam poetry, where the constituent element of merging the written word with the spoken opened a new means of expressive consciousness. This parallelism will be analyzed through the artistic production that the Nuyorican Poets Café produced in the 1990s from poets and performances such as, Puerto Rican Willie Perdomo's "Nigger-Reecan Blues" and Chinese-

⁵ Such a formation is prejudiced by a meritocracy that maintains these racialized groups linked to experiences of social inequality and cultural failing. See Faye Caronan's opening chapters in *Legitimizing Empire* (2015).

⁶ The term hybrid here refers to the interstices, the network of relationships, the places and instances that, while merging their essences and experiences, generate new productions and reproductions of themselves. See Post-colonial Theorists Gilroy, Bhaba, Spivak, Canclini.

Filipino Beau Sia's "Hip Hop." This will be traced later with the emergence of Puerto Rican Hip Hop artists: Big Pun, Fat Joe, Tony Touch and Filipino turntablists:⁷ Spintronix, DJ Qbert and Mix Master Mike, who emerged on the Hip Hop stage globally around the same time. How both of these performative modes emerged in the last decade of the 20th century attests to the hybridity that Hip Hop's blackness aesthetic has represented since its inception and opens a conversation to view Hip Hop not just as a musical genre but an ideological movement. This form serves as an intercultural medium that replicates or merges the past with the present and puts them in a conversation for the future, a form that goes against the constraints of the dominant narrative behind U.S. *multicultural exceptionalism*.⁸

The history and literature of Hip Hop, varied as it may be, is a clear example of hybridity in both popular and scholarly accounts. Themes such as racial legitimacy, urban proximity, linguistic dexterity, economic ascendance, among others that are rearticulated and recapitulated, have led it to become unequivocal and self-evident of this cultural phenomenon. Yet according to the lore of standard Hip Hop records, the South Bronx constitutes as the birthplace of Hip

⁷ Not to be confused with what a DJ does, which is play a set of songs and mix them together in a live performance. Turntablists (turntablism) uses scratching and manipulation of sounds and samples heavily to create a short composition that is as much an original creation as the sounds and beats that the composition is based on.

⁸ This dominant exceptionalist narrative that the U.S. prescribes to the "free world" can be understood as being expressed through popular culture. This form of the popular for the social imaginary of a nation or nation-state is pervaded and ideologically manipulated with the concept of "the/a people." Canclini established this defining popular culture as an ideology that exists as a space of contestation discrediting any notion of consensus, a space of hybrid cultures. See Canclini (1992).

Hop, where the constituent elements of the genre were established: the Djing, MCing, writing, and B-boying first appeared in unison in the decade of the 1970s.⁹ Part of this lore is the notion that Hip Hop is an African American phenomenon, an expressive form at its roots based on the traditions and cultural practices of African Americans. This tenet is what authenticates Hip Hop as exhibiting signifiers of blackness, adopting a distinct cultural style initially associated with black masculinity, which theorist Raquel Rivera sees as a key moment in the mid-1980s.

The commodification of rap and subsequent introduction into mainstream outputs not only fused both genres (Hip Hop and rap) it also intensified its association with blackness, MCing and DJing. Another contributing factor about the roots and origins of these two elements in Rivera's view is Rhyming and Djing, which were:

from the beginning more ethnic-racially identified with African Americans and closed to perceived outsiders by virtue of their reliance on dexterity in the English language. Thus, easily traceable to African American oral tradition... Hip Hop's musical dimension seems to have been premised on Afro-diasporic urbanity, where, although the participation of young people of Caribbean ancestry was pivotal, this music was often narrowly identified solely with African Americans (Rivera 2000 59).

⁹These elements constitute the merging of the musical, physical and written word aspect that create the genre. Whereas Djing is the musical production component as aforementioned (on page 6), MCing is the orality aspect of the performance, where written word or improvisation techniques are expressed, and B-boying is the dance portion or physical manifestation of the performance of unison identified by complex acts of acrobatic agility, strength and coordination along the lines of the improvisation of the MC/DJ.

She asserts that its black authenticity is directly linked to African American dialects of English, an already hybrid, multi-faceted English that is often smeared by white bourgeoisie dominant culture beforehand. This consequently certifies an already hybrid centric conception of Hip Hop, where its closest relatable identity to that of its white American counterpart is in intercultural black antecedents of communication. This in turn brings into relevance the importance to identify the eclectic array of formative influences that the genre exceeds beyond this African American culture, complicating its claim of African American exclusivity.

Post-colonial theorist Paul Gilroy takes issue with this African Americanization of Hip Hop conceptualizing it as a medium of hybridity. He argues in *The Black Atlantic* that by conceptualizing Hip Hop this way it effectively blurs or even erases its origins in the black diaspora and the formative role these cultural practices have in its emergence. His aim is to eliminate African American exceptionalism as its *chronotype* and instead construct an alternate understanding, as well as with other black cultural productions that are not rooted in a nationalistic exceptionality, but rather one predicated on the syncretism of black cultural formations. He also sees Hip Hop as an important medium, a signifier of racial authenticity, that can potentially serve as a vehicle of greater significance among its practitioners, consumers, and fans in a Transatlantic global scale.¹⁰

¹⁰This precisely touches upon the formative role Puerto Ricans played with Hip Hop alongside the emergence of the Nuyorican movement of the late 1960s and 70s and their origins in New York. Gilroy's African Americanization also expresses Filipinos' practice, consumption and fandom since before they were popularly known in the late 80s and early 90s. See Joe Bataan's body of work, as well as Mark Redondo Villegas *Empire of the Funk* (2014) and Oliver Wang's *Legions of Boom* (2015).

The African Americanization of Hip Hop that Gilroy takes issue with can be seen in the charged socio-political rap poetics that characterized late 1980s and early 1990s African American Hip Hop productions. Groups such as New York-based Public Enemy and the Wu-Tang Clan presented this African Americanization as a *chronotypical* element that questioned their status not only in Hip Hop but in American socio-cultural discourses. Public Enemy took the reins as the most militant of the pair, due to their front man Chuck D's hardcore and precise lyrics, which narrated the harsh truths of black urban culture. A lyrical example of this can be seen in the song titled "Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos 12" off of their 1987 album, *It Takes a Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back*:

I got a letter from the government the other day. I opened and read it. It said they were suckers / They wanted me for their army or whatever / Picture me giving a damn; I said, 'never' / Here is a land that never gave a damn about a brother like me and myself, because they never did. (Def Jam 1987)

This small sample that Chuck D narrates voices the precariousness of the African American condition historically in the U.S., where they are being recruited by the government as soldiers of consent whose importance in the *exceptionalist narrative* is dispensable and problematic at best. This as many other lyrical examples from their first two productions helped Public Enemy be seen as the voice of Black youth, the greater worldwide Black community, rebellious Caucasian youth, and the oppressed worldwide. This allotted them a status as the militant, underground and popular appeal that was yet to be matched by any other group in Hip Hop during the late eighties

and early nineties. They utilized African Americanization¹¹ as a means of historical socio-cultural consciousness aimed principally at the African American community. Yet in its commoditized circulation, it globally touched other communities and woke a sense of consciousness through militant, anti-imperialist, transnational and deconstructive poetics.

The same can be said about the Wu-Tang Clan in being a major influential group due to their unique approach towards their rapping and production stylistics. This supergroup, composed of ten MCs,¹² showcase their unique poetic qualities by being able to combine a pop culture sensibility with an almost militaristic commitment to the aesthetic discipline. While criticism on the Wu-Tang is surprisingly scarce, African-American writer Greg Tate compares the group to the best of African-American modernist and post-modernist art, particularly by Jean Michel Basquiat (65). Wu-Tang Clan is imperative to the progress of Hip Hop scholarship, especially considering the prolific output of its ten members. Tate also observes that Wu-Tang brings together many disparate rap styles, combining the best of what the form has to offer:

The recordings of the Wu were as funky and dramatic as West Coast gangsta rap, as literate and avant-garde as Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul, and possessive of enough commodity-value to propel Method Man and Ol' Dirty Bastard into duets and videos with neo-soul divas Mary J Blige and Mariah Carey. (67)

¹¹ At this point this works as a synonym for the blackness aesthetics I mentioned earlier.

¹² To this day this is one of the most critically acclaimed Hip Hop acts to date.

In that sense, Wu-Tang represents the apex of achievement in rap poetics and could be considered the epitome of the poetic school.¹³ For instance, The RZA's verse from the track "4th Chamber 7" which appears on the album *Liquid Swords* (1995) starring Wu-Tang member GZA, pushes representation to extremes, and thus is well-suited to illustrate a contrastive approach from that of Public Enemy's militant poetics:

Aiyo, camouflage chameleon, ninjas scaling your building/ No time to grab the
gun, they already got your wife and children/ A hit was sent from the President to
raid your residence/ Because you had secret evidence and documents On how
they raped the continents and lynched the prominent/ Dominant Islamic, Asiatic
black Hebrew/ The year 2002 the battle's filled with the Wu.

(Geffen Records 1995)

This lyric fragment presents itself as a poem that pillages the image of the alienation and paranoia of the housing projects, complete with a miniature Kung-Fu plot line, crass espionage, biblical imagery, post-apocalyptic fiction, Afrofuturism, and science fiction. The starkness of this imagery is supported by the impressionistic use of sound through rhyme, as in the first two lines: "Camouflage chameleon ninjas scaling your building—/no time to grab the gun—they already got your wife and children." The first three words are of special interest because they begin the poem with alliteration and assonance while at the same time creating a vivid image, exactly what is meant by the reduplicated icon. "Chameleon" builds off "camouflage" in that

¹³This group can serve as an important bridge to link Hip Hop lyrics and classical poetry in same levels of literary and linguistic criticism.

chameleons camouflage themselves by blending into the environment, and this image relates to the ninjas. This mythical rhyme scheme then blends with a very conscientious hybrid, anti-imperialist aesthetic when dissecting the lyrics –“Because you had secret evidence and documents on how they raped continents and lynched the prominent”– linking a conscious colonial past with an exploitive, hyper-capitalist imperialist present as a unison non-linear redefinition of status-quo globally. Then follows an Afrofuturistic conceptualization of theological and ideological futures with the lyrics “Dominant Islamic, Asiatic black Hebrew, The year 2002...” that also expresses the intellectual influence the Black Panthers Orientalism represented for them.¹⁴ This mythical allure into rap poetics, where popular culture signs and icons are redefined into concepts that represent the urban space collective as a place of contestation and redefinition, cater to what the Hip Hop aesthetic was intended to be: A means by which the racial and ethnic boundaries of a black aesthetic were blurred but not erased.

The Wu’s arrival held three important changes for hip-hop. This supergroup lyrically, kick-started the "reality" phenomenon¹⁵ and stylistically, was the most complete concept since Public Enemy. A union of look, language and intent fused in ancient martial arts ideas: discipline, brotherhood, technique located in the Staten Island present, the Clan appear as faceless assassins in live performances, a sublime logo everywhere that became engrained in youths’ minds forever. Most importantly, their production as a collective was like nothing ever

¹⁴ The Black Panthers were known to be highly influenced by Kung-Fu movies, Middle Eastern theology (Islam), ideology and martial arts learning.

¹⁵ Rap's boastful, arrogant behavior deconstructed by relativism and millennial anxiety that placed no limits on the rapper other than the life he leads, dragged through streets of doubt, fear and claustrophobia.

heard. Their hybrid sense of molding, blending and re-producing epistemes of common culture and commodified cultural productions led to the global circulation of Hip Hop as a medium absent of racial or ethnic background, although adhering to African American constructs of popular *exceptionalist narratives* (in the African American vein), which could be interpreted in myriad ways.

Puerto Rican Diaspora theorists Juan Flores and Raquel Rivera have aimed to use this hybridity to further compound the genealogy of Hip Hop through the known involvement and formative role Puerto Rican (Nuyorican) youth had in its inception since the 1960s. Both scholars argue that the African American phenomenon is problematic or erroneous at best. This is due to the historical fact that black youth, as well as Puerto Rican youth, were from the very beginning co-founders of the genre and aesthetic. This can be evidenced through the long history and coexistence of Puerto Ricans with African Americans in the mainland, specifically Chicago and New York, which can be read in Puerto Rican Diaspora literature in the works of The Nuyorican Poets Café of the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

Writer, critic and performer Urayoán Noel precisely covers these linkages in his book *In Visible Movement: Nuyorican Poetry from the Sixties to Slam*, offering a literary history of Nuyorican poetics from the cultural ferment of the Nuyorican movement during and after the Civil Rights Era to contemporary poets in slam, Hip Hop and lyricism. He explores how the poets of this movement negotiated their hybridity in terms of invisibility and abjection, which have often characterized the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York. He presents Nuyorican Poetry

as a compilation of unfocused modes that interrogates representational and documentary forms. He examines foundational figures of the Nuyorican Poets Café (Pedro Pietri and Victor Hernández Cruz) with contemporary poets along the lines of Willie Perdomo and Beau Sia's generation to show how both coming from different decades employ an aesthetic defined by satire, irresolution, paradox, masks, absurdity and surrealism. In doing so Noel places Nuyorican poetry along the "blurred" lens of a transnational, intercultural aesthetic that stems from a tradition grounded in the performance of identity both in print and on stage. This type of focus that Noel presents in his book exemplifies the same aesthetical elements that describe Hip Hop's African Americanization as a hybrid ideology that redefines the contours of racial and ethnic identities.¹⁶

Although Noel makes a compelling argument and comparison of the poetic aesthetic of Nuyorican poetry, Flores and Rivera suggest that the narrowness of identification in Hip Hop compromised Puerto Ricans' entitlement to it, snubbing and to an extent negating Puerto Rican youth's contribution to the aesthetic. Therefore, the Puerto Rican presence¹⁷ has either been related to the blackness of it or a betrayal to Puerto Ricanness/Boricua heritage acceding to the complications of binaries, being Puerto Rican or black, with no middle ground of acceptance. This perpetuates a construct for youth to create their own identity and culture in a way that can't be accommodated, whether by loss or appropriation, so just silenced out. Hence, both Flores and Rivera comprise a new narrative of hybridity in the sense of the origins of the genre, establishing

¹⁶ See Noel (2014).

¹⁷ This refers both to the literary diaspora and Hip Hop.

yet another linkage in the long history between African American and Puerto Rican socio-cultural exchange in the U.S. and subsequently expanding the boundaries of blackness for the inclusion of Puerto Ricans as part of the African diaspora of the Americas.

An example of this is seen in the highly influential impact that both the establishment of the Nuyorican Poets Café and Puerto Rican Rappers Big Pun, Fat Joe, and producer Tony Touch had for the Latinx, most importantly Boricua, aesthetic of Hip Hop in the mid to late nineties. Their emergence galvanized the Latinx and other non-black communities' clear credibility and respect towards a hybrid identification. This happened due to the huge commercial success that Big Pun's image had in mainstream Hip Hop alongside the newly re-opened Nuyorican Poets Café, which Bob Holman managed. Their parallel ascension into popular culture is not surprising, given that the decade of the 80s saw gentrified urban spaces in New York, commodified Hip Hop as a solely black expressionist movement and the rise of crack addiction and the AIDS epidemic. Their emergence in the nineties came as a rebirth of the communal urbanity that the five boroughs of New York represent. With Bob Holman introducing slam poetry and reopening the Nuyorican Poets Café in 1989, he transformed the emblematic collective into an environment that attracted a wave of revered writers and artists raised under the influence of Hip Hop.¹⁸ With this new wave of artistic exchange came one of the prominent Nuyorican poets of the decade, Willie Perdomo, whose poetry merged both spoken word and Hip Hop vernacular with poetical delivery. His poetic compilation *Where a Nickel Costs a Dime*

¹⁸ Artists the likes of Paul Beatty, Tracie Morris, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Erykah Badu and MF DOOM all came to the Café to figure their artistic voices.

(1996) embodied this style of speaking the truths about racism, ethnic confusion, el Barrio, bilingualism, love and death, themes that were decadent in the latter part of the 80s. His emblematic poetic voice became a cult favorite for audiences of the Café, a thematic style that can be seen paralleled with Big Pun's lyricism.

Big Pun's emergence on the Hip Hop scene came in the aftermath of the deaths of the Notorious B.I.G. (1997) and Tupac Shakur (1996).¹⁹ Due to these circumstances, it is of no surprise that Big Pun's emergence in the genre took over the marketplace of the cultural movement. Even though in the early '90s, acts like Cypress Hill and Fat Joe found success, Hip Hop was still unsuccessfully introducing a Latinx MC with the skills and charisma of a bonafide superstar. With the arrival of Big Pun, the Hip Hop world was taken by storm with his debut album, *Capital Punishment* (1998), making him one of the most influential rap artists of all-time. Born Christopher Rios, and hailing from the Bronx, NY, Big Pun grew up around and saw the emergence of the genre heavily influencing his poetics and lyricism in his raps. His first big break came thanks to his affiliations with Fat Joe whose album titled *Jealous Ones Envy* (1995), featured Pun and his Full-A-Clips collective, who would later be inducted into Fat Joe's Terror Squad crew. This feature started giving his name some notoriety, which was then solidified by the lyrical hybridity that would later captivate the Hip Hop world with *Capital Punishment*.

¹⁹Two rappers that dominated the popular discourse of Hip Hop lyricism were B.I.G, who voiced a raw, drug-charged violent lyricism based on the ghetto centrality of New York, and 2Pac, with a more poetic, emotional, violent account of the ghetto centric West Coast life in California.

Released on April 28, 1998, *Capital Punishment* would enter the Hip Hop market as one of the most anticipated rap albums of the decade. Proof of this is due to its Top 5 debut on the Billboard 200, a position it maintained for two consecutive weeks, something no Latin rapper had achieved before him. Songs like "I'm Not A Player 16" and its platinum-certified remix solo release were the selling points to urge fans into buying the album. Rap fanatics quickly realized that this album put forth one of the strongest performances in rap history throughout the album's star-studded 24-tracks. Pun's lyricism would be put in a class of its own, something never done before by a Latin rapper, due to his dexterity in the English language, an element that represented authenticity, as mentioned by Raquel Rivera. This can be seen after listening to "Dream Shatterer" and "You Ain't A Killer,¹⁰" both considered among his most significant songs to date. On "Dream Shatterer,⁷" Pun fueled by reckless disregard, served up a myriad of couplets that hit hard and with impact:

I'm the first Latin rapper to baffle your skull/ Master the flow, niggaz be swearin'
 I'm blacker than coal/ Like Nat King, I be rapping and tounge's packing/ The
 ones, magnums, cannons and gatling guns/ It's Big Pun! The one and only son of
 Tony...Montana/ You ain't promised mañana in the rotten manzana

(Loud Records 1998)

While "You Ain't A Killer" mixed style with substance, as he comes across as a smooth lyrical master addressing with the hook of the song his arrival as peacemaker between East and West Coast Hip Hop:

You ain't a killer, you still learnin' how to walk/ From New York to Cali all the real niggaz carry chalk/ Mark you for death, won't even talk that East and West crap/ From Watts to Lefrak, it ain't where you're from it's where's you're at (1998).

Both lyrics exemplify an acculturated hybrid, anti-imperialist blackness. Wherein “Dream Shatterer” he commands his dexterity by claiming he’s the “first Latin Rapper to baffle your skull” followed by authenticating that by it he’s “blacker than coal/Like Nat King”²⁰ and capping it off with a kinship to Tony Montana, a fictional Cuban immigrant protagonist that represents counter cultured concepts of the American Dream. This order in which he details his lyricism is of no coincidence, for he is performing his blackness as a bridge that links anti-imperialist, hybrid critiques of American notions of *Latinidad*, which can be interpreted by his lyric “From Watts to Lefrak, it ain’t where you from it’s where ya at,” emphasizing that identity is not a fixed concept but one of blurred fluidity.

Such exposition of a blackness aesthetic can be exemplified as well in Willie Perdomo’s “Nigger-Reecan Blues.”²¹ Both in its performance and reading, Perdomo exemplifies similar notions of blackness that Pun details in his lyricism, the main difference being that Perdomo’s narrative tone is more conversational than Puns affirmations. Perdomo’s relativism to blackness can be seen in a similar tone to Pun’s in the verses:

²⁰ One of the most famous American jazz pianists and vocalists in early Jazz history.

²¹ Poem from *Where a Nickel Costs a Dime* which ironically was published two years before Pun’s *Capital Punishment* in 1996.

“—Naaahhh, nah, nah... You ain't no Porty-Reecan

--I keep tellin y'all: That boy is a Black man with an accent.

If you look real close you will see that your sprits are standing right next to our songs. Yo soy Boricua! Yo Soy Africano! I ain't lyin'. Pero mi pelo is kinky y curly y mi skin no es negro pero it can pass..." (19)

Here he dialogues and narrates his Puerto Ricaness along the lines of his racial characteristics and self-consciously expresses a hybrid sense of *Pan-Latinidad*, centered around aesthetic notions of blackness more than anything else. He ends his poem with an intense declamation towards a centric Afro-latinidad that describes his identity:

I'm a spic! I'm a nigger! / Spic! Spic! Just like a nigger.

Neglected, rejected, opressed, dispossesed

From banana boats to tenements/ Street gangs to regiments

Spic, Spic, spic. I ain't nooooo different than a nigger! (20-21)

Expressing similar racial sentiments to those of Pun, Perdomo performs a cultural hybridity that became a professed aesthetic style in both slam and Hip Hop poetics of the '90s. Perdomo traces a black historicity in "banana boats to tenements/ street gangs to regiments," equating colonialism with the plight that *American exceptionalism* has entrapped both Latinx (Puerto Rican) and African American communities in urban spaces of New York, blurring the differences that make one ethnicity superior to another and establishing a communal gathering

centered in fluid identity relations. This blurring of contrast is seen in Puns' collaborations in his album.

While Pun was more than capable of dominating a track on his own accord with *Capital Punishment*, he strayed away from the approach of mainstream African American predecessors like NAS, The Notorious B.I.G., and JAY-Z, all of whom had minimal to no features on their respective debut albums. Instead, to solidify his authenticity, he enlisted the *crème de la crème* of the rap world to take part in his masterpiece. This decision came to be based on competition and collaboration. Pun tested his lyrical genius against some of the most talented rhymer in all of Rap at that time, starting with The Roots Hip Hop band MC Black Thought on "Super Lyrical,³" a track that is a meeting of two different minds, two MCs that still cause rap aficionados to quarrel to this day. On "Caribbean Connection,¹¹" the track list indicates that Wyclef Jean is the featured performer, and although the former Fugee member appears on the hook, it is Rapper/MC Canibus' unlisted guest appearance that is the true draw, as both slam each other lyrically over an instrumental courtesy of Wyclef. A Busta Rhymes feature infused his energy in "Parental Discretion 24" serving as an additional highlight, but the Holy Grail in terms of lyrical Hip Hop talent linking up with Pun comes via the track titled "Tres Leches,²¹" produced by the Wu's RZA, which features appearances from Mobb Deep's Prodigy and Wu-Tang Clan's Inspectah Deck, both of whom were at the height of their lyrical careers at the time of its recording:

Yo, Big Punisher's ready/ Prodigy, Deck and me, QB ("Shaolin") and Bronx
trilogy/ Lyrically hazardous for your wealth, swing on your world's piece... I do it
to live niggaz and Pulitzer Prize winners (1998).

With these lines he proved his dexterity and talent with the best of best that the genre would offer lyrically at that time, especially with the line where he says, "I do it for live niggaz and Pulitzer Prize winners," proving that regardless of their status, he could out write or rap someone on the level of a Pulitzer laureate, anticipating today's literary recognition of the genre through Kendrick Lamar. If that wasn't enough of a statement he went on and set the bar extremely high when he represented the Puerto Rican/Latinxs alongside Fat Joe with the track "Twinz (Deep Cover) 17."

On "Twinz" Fat Joe and Pun positioned themselves as the East Coast version of Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg, creating one of the most revered covers of a classic rap song that was "Deep Cover" by Dre and Snoop (1992).²² Fat Joe lyrically passes the torch to Pun and recognizes him as the unifier between the African Americanization of the genre and Puerto Ricans when he wrote the lyrics:

I support Pun in anything he does, anything he loves/ My brother from another
mother, sent from the above/ A thug nigga just like me, one of the best – might

²² This affinity and genealogy with African American culture can also be seen in Perdomo's book title *Where a Nickel Cost a Dime*, an epigraph quoting Langston Hughes and, in the poems, titled "Song for Langston" (31) and "Prophet Born in Harlem," which he dedicates to James Baldwin.

be/ Even better, leavin' niggas kneelin' on they right knee/ Spike Lee couldn't paint a better picture. (1998)

Their unity in the genre couldn't be stronger if it wasn't for him, to the degree that he could be equated to the socio-cultural impact and message of a Spike Lee film. Fat Joe paved the way and opened doors for him to bridge the gap between an exclusive authenticated blackness the genre represented since the eighties and beaming towards the future of the culture. In other words, "Twinz" established the intrinsic heritage Puerto Ricans had with the culture since its inception to a popular culture status. It also announced the arrival of Latinxs to dominant Hip Hop culture. Unfortunately, Pun's career was cut short with his death in 2002, leaving *Captial Punishment* as the first Hip Hop album by a Latinx to reach certified Platinum status and leaving a legacy as the greatest Puerto Rican Hip Hop artist to date. His work alongside Fat Joe and Tony Touch is a clear example that the nineties broke away with the exclusive *African-American exceptionalist* blackness that Hip Hop represented in its origins. As DJ Pee Wee Dance from the Rocksteady Crew said in Tony Touch's *Hip Hop 45* Cassette tape:

Yo, over this funky track you're hearing right now, check the lyrics. Understand hip hop culture is a Black and Latino manifestation of an oppressed creativity. But understand also that rap is a white manifestation of a desire to package and sell that expression. (Side B, 1995)

This Puerto Rican discourse has paralleled Hip Hop's emergence as a global phenomenon in the past 20-25 years. From the late eighties and early nineties, a new type of discourse had evolved

from this blackness viewing the genre no longer as only an African American expressive form from the United States. Thanks to factors like television and the emergence of the internet and social networks, global youth, specifically global minorities, have in some form or manner adapted the aesthetic to their local circumstances to voice their local socio-political conflicts. This unpacking of blackness that Latinxs in the 90s did between slam poetry and Hip Hop is expressed in the Filipino communities in the U.S. as well.

Filipino contact with Hip Hop comes from a diasporic setting, just as Puerto Ricans, but with a twist. To consider Filipino historical and cultural understandings of Hip-hop is to question the identity politics of their development as a community in the U.S. and Hip Hop in general. Since Filipinos and Filipino Americans didn't have direct consensual contact with New York²³ as did the Puerto Rican community with African Americans, they didn't experience the process of hybridization until the late eighties and early nineties. Therefore, the Filipino presence in Hip Hop contextually speaking is "absent of cultural, ethnic, geographical, or historical continuity with the origins of Hip Hop" (Maxwell 264), meaning that the Filipino community cannot rely on the same set of discourses as Puerto Ricans do, even though they share a piece of similar historical baggage with U.S. exceptionalism.²⁴ Nevertheless, through the process of cultural hybridization, as exemplified with Boricua artists Big Pun, Fat Joe and Tony Touch, they can frame their engagement with it and establish a cultural legitimacy given their alienated role in the foundational discourse of Hip Hop. An example of this hybridity is seen in the way they use the

²³ Though they clearly did have some. See Mark Redondo Villegas *Empire of the Funk* (2014).

²⁴ This is still related to Faye Caronan's definition.

essential elements of Hip Hop, the Djing in this case, and how through it they appreciate and create their own blend of Hip Hop, subverting their alienation through the role of performance.

Sociologist Oliver Wang in *Legions of Boom: Filipino-American Mobile DJ Crews in the San Francisco Bay Area* traces the roots of this first contact Filipino Americans had with Hip Hop and how through turntablism they established a voice in Northern California that pioneered the Filipino Hip Hop aesthetic that defines them today. Wang said in an interview with *LA Weekly* when referring to pioneers like Spintronix, DJ Qbert, Mix Master Mike, the Beat Junkies, among others, what they meant for the Filipino youth in California:

These were the most visible guys out there. Their names were on the flyers, people talked about them in high schools. If you were Filipino and wanted some shine, DJing became the way to do it. It propelled the next generation to get involved, and that contributed to scratching becoming huge... If you create the right conditions and incentives, young people can do amazing things. That's the story of hip-hop and lots of incredible cultural scenes. Even though this is a very particular story in terms of geography, culture and ethnic specificity, it transcends that. It's about the power of creativity and inspiration — how a community can support a phenomenon. (Weiss 2017)

Wang's research and testimonies serve as evidence that Filipino Americans, through the performative aspect of Hip Hop, found a space of hybridization in Djing, a signifier and utopic space for collective inclusion within their communities and later with the Hip Hop world.

Even though DJ culture for Filipino Americans often gets the bulk of attention when examining the history of Filipino Americans and Hip Hop culture, it is not the first time that Hip Hop culture has been utilized for their identity expression. For example, Joe Bataan's contribution to music and to Hip Hop often gets overlooked. Bataan directly showed how the music and culture synchronously worked with his own identity, as exemplified by his album titled *Afro-Filipino* (1975). A Filipino American artist, from New York City, Bataan was the first Asian American to record a Hip Hop song. Regarding his hit song "Rap-O, Clap-O," he "claimed that the song was recorded prior to the release of both the Fatback Band's 'King Tim II (Personality Jock)'—recognized as the first rap record—and the Sugarhill Gang's 'Rapper's Delight,' the first breakout rap hit" (Wang, 200). His claim to these two precedents demonstrates a longer presence for Filipino Americans in Hip Hop culture. Yet due to factors such as demographics and shared geographic spaces with other ethnic communities' population-wise, they never became a part of the cultural aesthetic nor did they receive recognition by their own communities, since they were so scattered or small. Therefore, although there is scattered recollection and documentation of their presence in Hip Hop, it didn't become part of their discourse or identity politics as did DJing.²⁵

Some clear influencers that shaped Filipino American culture and Hip Hop aesthetic were mobile DJ crews and acts like Spintronix, DJ Qbert and Mix Master Mike, all three coming from

²⁵ This topical concern towards the legitimacy of Filipino involvement in the initial years of Hip Hop can be taken against the backdrop of American political notions of Filipinos at the time where they were barely exercising their citizenship and commuting back and forth from the Philippines to the U.S. mainland. Something that goes along the lines of studying Filipino American literature of its early years that E. San Juan Jr. discusses, where they were identified more as a labor force than a cultural community given their lack of civil citizenship.

or coming in contact with the Californian Bay Area, places where the highest concentrations of Filipinos are found in the mainland. As Stephen Bischoff claims in his dissertation *Expressions of Resistance: Intersections of Filipino American Identity, Hip Hop Culture, and Social Justice*:

Many areas that have high percentages of Filipino Americans have also been highly populated with Black people. Proximity and interaction between both communities supported many similarities that are more notably associated with black communities in the U.S. Some aspects of the shared culture include rhythm and blues music, gang culture, and also car culture. (70)

This corroborates that these DJs were directly influenced by the African Americanization of Hip Hop in the West Coast and therefore were immersed in it as a communal coexistence.

In the case of the Spintronix, one of the biggest early DJ crews coming out of Daly City, California, they were one of the earliest iterations of what the mobile DJ scene turned out to be. Directly influenced by a backdrop of generational nightclub discotheque culture surrounded by the overt influence of Funk and Disco, this crew of young DJs in the mid to late '80s, according to ex-member Anthony Carrion first performing with the following context and result: "Usually at school, kind of stayed low key until we started doing school dances, then they did know who I was and what we did" (Wang 2015, 59). They began establishing notoriety in a school setting primarily, just like Pilipino Culture Nights (PCN)²⁶ gained notoriety in a primary educational setting. This institutionalization of both cultural and musical performance explicates a rather

²⁶ This is known as a celebration of Filipino cultural heritage and tradition with American culture.

narrow conceptualization of Filipino American identity. Filipino/Filipino American theorist Dylan Rodriguez portrays in his book *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition* an example of this narrowness by narrating the events of a PCN at Barrows Hall, University of California-Berkeley, where the Filipino students were being policed by spectators during their celebration of their heritage. What Rodriguez sums up from this manifestation is:

The PCN rehearsal at Barrows Hall was a performance of cultural reification and political identity. The labors of ignorance and performances of Orientalist desire therein confronted, to the blithe reconstructions of a Philippine indigeneity entirely at odds with the context and content of cultural appropriations---were foundational, not accidental or incidental, to this geography of Filipino Americanism. (21)

Expression of an entrapped notion of “American” identity traced along the lines of an ambiguous exoticism towards an Asian orientalist self-determination were limited and not exempt from White institutionalized notions of Asian American identity.

Yet, it's this local institutionalized notoriety that moved from school to school that laid the groundwork of identification and status for Filipino Americans in DJing. As Wang states, crews such as Spintronix established a telling line: “Between the thin edge of a twelve-inch single and the wide sweep of federal policies lay any number of forces, structures, and networks that composed the social milieu the mobile DJ scene eventually emerged from... its social

precondition” (2015, 31). Although the Spintronix, just as Bataan, were part of a pioneering movement in a Hip Hop self-determination for their culture, their influence is overseen given that they didn’t produce records of their own.²⁷ Their legitimacy through intellectual property was questionable, leading to the mobile scene dying out quickly. Yet this death in turn produced individual DJ acts such as DJ Qbert and Mix Master Mike, two DJ’s that gained their legitimacy through Scratching, encountering mainstream DJ culture through DJ competitions internationally. Just like Pun and Fat Joe, they prove their legitimacy alongside other African American DJ acts and other ethnicities around the world.

In the case of these two (Qbert & Mix Master Mike), they became the highest expression of the DJ mobile scene by winning the Disco Mix Club (DMC) World Championship, better known as the DJ Olympics, four years in a row (1991-94). DJ Qbert won individually in his first year of participation (1991) and under the collective aliases Rocksteady DJs (1992) & Dreamteam (1993-94), both him and Mix Master Mike became the kings of the DJ world in the first half of the 1990s. In an interview with Roderick N. Labrador, found in Mark Redondo Villegas’ book *Empire of Funk Hip Hop and Representation in Filipina/o America*, Qbert definitively answers why there are so many Filipino/a DJs in Hip Hop:

I always thought it was our tribal roots. And that stems from the original man.

You know actually, the first people here were black people [Bay Area]. And in

Filipino/a history we have Negritos and they’re rooted, and they have a lot of

²⁷ In this case, I refer to the Spintronix, given that Bataan’s body of work has been as of recent years given notoriety by the Filipino American community.

earth spirits... It has all these ancient roots, from tribal drums and all that is what Hip Hop is. We feel the beat, we're rooted. This is what Hip Hop is, what we're feeling. (Villegas 9)

Emphasizing their native origins as tribal people “rooted” in the spirituality of nature, Qbert’s mystical response talks about a very important fact that is overlooked regarding Filipinos: their relation to blackness. Invoking “Negritos” in Filipino history, they represent the most ancient civilization in the Philippines, going back more than 40,000 years in time.²⁸ In a way, Qbert’s answer is nothing short of a hybridization of Philippine culture and blackness itself, one that translocated interculturally in the Diaspora and found a new spirit in Hip Hop. This speculative answer can be scrutinized in further study of Philippine ethnic and racial archipelagic development. Nonetheless, the spirituality and performance aspect can’t be denied.

Mix Master Mike’s and DJ Qbert’s victories and recognition at a worldwide level did not only represent a moment of legitimacy for Filipino DJs, but it also solidified Filipino American culture as something aside from common notions of Asian American race and ethnicity, going beyond the overdetermined notions of being Chinese, Japanese or Korean, these last three being stereotyped identifiers, in common U.S. mass media outlets. This is a thematic concern that Nuyorican Poets Café Chinese-Filipino slam poet Beau Sia addresses in his poem “Hip Hop.”²⁹

²⁸ The original inhabitants of the Philippines, akin to the Taínos from Puerto Rico.

²⁹ A poem performed in HBO’s Def Poetry Jam (2003), as well as in the Nuyorican Poets Café, since Sia was part of the Nuyorican Poetry Slam Team (1996).

Sia in his performance embodies the hybrid notions of the Hip Hop aesthetic by not making any musical reference towards the artistry but to the socio-cultural impact it implies by deconstructing Asian American stereotypes and resolving them through acceptance and rhetorical sarcasm:

How come no one told me chinky eyes was a compliment?!/ is there a word for the eyes of Puerto Ricans? / Did white racists in the 1800s invent that word, too?... All minorities have stopped allowing the hegemony to pit us against one another. / Every race issue has been resolved... And don't ever argue when someone else tries to tell you about YOUR experience! / Cause if you don't know, NOW ya know." (2005)

His poignant performance of a racial and ethnic identity in being Asian American is an interrogation of a self-conscious recognition of the past, present and future of the Asian American condition, one that breaks away from the centrality of Asian geographic locale and instead aimed towards a redefinition of the contours of their heritage. This renegotiation that Beau Sia intends to express represents a rupture with overdetermined notions of identity. He establishes a personal hybrid space of relation, as seen when he says, "And don't ever argue when someone else tries to tell you about YOUR experience!" He foments a process of self-consciousness and awareness which accurately describes Hip Hop's hybridity and why he

dedicates his sense of identity to it by titling his performance by naming the genre.³⁰ By problematizing racial and ethnic identities in this hybrid space that Hip Hop aesthetics provides, Filipinos found in Hip Hop a space of expression and identity similar to that of Puerto Ricans.

There are significant socio-cultural/socio-political markers that define both the Filipino and Puerto Rican communities in the U.S. in terms of their involvement with popular culture. This phenomenon can be described as a narrative of critical involvement in *U.S. exceptionalist multiculturalism*, a dangerous overdetermination of cultural and racial legitimacy dictated by a socio-economic gaze into the urban spaces of the major U.S. metropolis. Popular notions of performative aesthetics are the meeting point for these communities, Hip Hops blackness aesthetic is at the forefront but raises questions about cultural and national identifications in the Diaspora. It also foregrounds the real impact and meaning of the African Americanization of today's pop culture worldwide and how global communities have found in Hip Hop aesthetic a performative role to express hybrid notions of identification. Hip Hop's transnational, anti-imperialistic and intercultural practices expose the involuntary limitations of race to represent nationalities and how identities aren't limited to representing communities that are discriminated if they don't fit into preconceived common political agendas. These two U.S. racialized groups are clear examples of such neoliberal practices of self-determination that erroneously

³⁰ See also Anthony Christian Ocampo's book *The Latinos of Asia: How Filipino Americans Break the Rules of Race* (2016), where he puts into question the real relation Filipinos/Filipino Americans have with Asian culture and the real linkages they have with Latinx culture rather than its Asian counterpart.

misrecognize them and should serve to see urban art and literature differently. In this sense, the urban spaces are the characters and these different individual communities are the settings where critical discussion can further analyze the development of parallels between Filipino and Puerto Rican Hip Hop hybridity in relation to their critical engagement in U.S. politics and imperialism.

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Annotated Bibliography

Bischoff, Stephen Alan. "Expressions of Resistance: Intersections of Filipino American Identity, Hip Hop Culture, and Social Justice." *Washington State University, April, 2012.*

This is a dissertation whose author explores the boundaries and origins of Filipino American identity in the United States and how through their development as a community have utilized hip hop culture as a means of connection and resistance. This whole research has served as a core reference to what I wanted to develop ultimately as my research paper by the intersections he develops with Hip Hop. Most importantly this dissertation comes from a personal account of the author and his relation to his own Filipino multiracial identity paralleled with Filipino American cultural formations. This reference also introduced me to the body of work of music journalist and sociologist Oliver Wang which I use heavily in my paper.

Canclini, Nestor Garcia. *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias Para Entrar y Salir De La Modernidad.* Sudamericana, 1992.

This is a book that theorizes on hybridization ideologies in Latin America from the early nineties. Nestor Garcia Canclini's theorization of hybridity and most notably the way he defines Populism in our modern times is a key source for the development of my argument on hybrid representations of cultural identities in the diaspora. Mainly focused on the modern transitory periods of countries like Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, he defines the inception of Latin culture in the traditional, modern, popular and Mass Media scale of development alongside the evolution and commercialization of modern technologies. His theorization of hybridity meshed perfectly with my idea of the popular notions of culture relating to Puerto Rican and Filipino cultures in the United States. He's also used heavily by Juan Flores to establish an idea of a cultural continuum in the performative aspect of Puerto Rican culture as well. Canclini also served as a Latin theorist to give my paper the ethnical critical diversity I was looking for.

Cooper, Duncan, and Märta Thisner. "Yung Lean's Second Chance." *The FADER*, 16 June 2016, www.thefader.com/2016/06/16/yung-lean-warlord-interview.

This is an internet article of the music magazine the Fader written in 2016. The article interviews one of the newest globally renowned northern European Hip Hop artists in recent years and accounts his relation to Hip Hop. It traces the intersections that the genre and cultural aesthetic has developed over the past decade in its hyper-commercialization and how to Swedish artist Yung Lean, literally saved and destroyed his life at the same time. Yung Lean's definition for what the genre and cultural aesthetic means to him works as a perfect neutral and recent example of how hybrid notions of identity in the global market are ebbing new means for other cultures around the world to find a voice. What is particular from all other examples that I could've used is, that Lean makes the specific distinction that he isn't invading nor rejecting the African Americanization of its notoriety and popular circulation, instead, he acknowledges it what it is and what it stands for. In all, a great outsourced international example that explores further reaches from my research.

Enemy, Public. Booklet. *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, Def Jam, 28 June 1988.

This is an album by the historic Hip Hop ensemble Public Enemy. Out of all their albums, I chose this one for my research given the political, ideological and social consciousness that this whole work represented for the "culture". Being their second studio album (1988), what made this album a great source example of the merging of Hip Hop and Rap in the late eighties is front man's and MC Chuck D's dexterity in the language and historicity of African American culture. The particular track that clicked with my aim to use them in my paper was "Black Steel in The Hour of Chaos" given that most of the album deals with fast rhythms and melodies that cause high tension along with militant poetics, this one dealt in a slower pace. It did in this manner given the scenario of imprisonment, given that the song tells the story of an illuminated conscious objector (Chuck D) escaping from prison. A prison of ideological, political and economic entrapment, that precisely worked perfectly with what I wanted to project about the rap group and Hip Hop in general during that period in the late eighties and early nineties.

Flores, Juan. *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

This is a book written by the now deceased Dr. Juan Martin Flores, professor of Social and Cultural Analysis in Latino Studies at New York University. This book has served as the primary source for my research paper since its very inception, given that it gave me the necessary historicity, evolution, and development of Puerto Rican cultural continuums in the diaspora as well as in the island. His approach towards the inception of the Hip Hop genre and the intrinsic role Puerto Ricans had in its inception up until the present day set the topical concern of my research. His method of utilizing Canclini's theory of hybridity led me to go in depth towards what cultural hybridization meant for Puerto Rican culture through the performative acts of music. How this then related directly to the historical importance that the diaspora represents for Puerto Rican culture and how they relate themselves with popular culture since the early sixties onwards makes it an important primary source for my paper.

Genius/GZA, et al. Booklet. *Liquid Swords*, Geffen Records. November 7, 1995.

This is a mid-nineties Hip Hop album that was recorded in collaboration with Wu-Tang productions and Geffen Records. The relevance of this album from any other that I searched for from the Wu-Tang Clan, is that it is an album that has few if not scarce scholarly and critical analysis. I didn't want to choose the most renowned *Enter the Wu-Tang:36 chambers* to show that the group as a whole has great lyrical and poetic talent outside of its more commonly known works. The case with *Liquid Swords* is that it represented a strong base for what their brand as a collective group was, in a solo setting, centered around tracks that are mainly written and composed by the GZA and the RZA of the ensemble. This album kept the narrative going for what the Clan was all about, mixing pop culture references from movies, shows, science, ancient Asian wisdom, and popular Asian American culture. Going into a metaphysical landscape that gave the genre mythical poetic agency that broke away from the exclusive militant poetics that it represented at the time in the early nineties breaking away from its African American cultural exclusivity. The song I chose was the "4th Chamber" given that it exemplifies perfectly the aforementioned poetic agency and cultural hybridity that transitioned the genre from the eighties to the new era that was the mid-nineties at that time.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

This is a history book written by Postcolonial theorist Paul Gilroy in 1995, that shed new light on a distinct black Atlantic culture. A culture that incorporated elements from African, American, British, and Caribbean cultures in unison, where they all are unique but related to one another by their colonial past and distinguished by their political, economic and social self-determination. The terms that really intrigued me in utilizing from his hybridization theory for this research are *Chronotype* and *African Americanization*. Two terms that perfectly blur the lines between black authenticity globally and specific cultural determinations of identity for black culture worldwide. His approach towards the impact that Hip Hop has given in its global circulation is an integral reference point that I use to analyze the intersections with Puerto Rican and Filipino cultures and their relations to “Blackness” through the African Americanization of Hip Hop.

Landale, N. S., and R. S. Oropesa. “White, Black, or Puerto Rican? Racial Self-Identification among Mainland and Island Puerto Ricans.” *Social Forces*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2002, pp. 231–254., doi:10.1353/sof.2002.0052.

This a journal article published in the academic journal *Social Forces* from the University of North Carolina Press, a renowned journal of sociological research associated with the Southern Sociological Society. This sociological study uses data from a survey of Puerto Rican mothers in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, studying the race relations between each. They responded to an open-ended race question that served as the variable and hypothesized that mainland and island Puerto Ricans most often designate their "race" as Puerto Rican, but the responses of women who do not self-identify as Puerto Rican diverged between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The end result of the findings found that mainland Puerto Ricans rejected American notions of race than do their island counterparts. The reason I chose this study as consulting work, is that apart from the general Census, this study touched upon the ideological difference and subversion mainland Puerto Ricans have toward race and ethnicity.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996. 6

This is a book published in 1996 that theorizes the cultural politics of Asian Americans in general. Dr. Lisa Lowe in this book generally questions and historicizes the cultural formation of the Asian American subject in the United States and how certain socio-economic as well as socio-political circumstances have led to Asian American culture to redefine its contours and boundaries. Her theorization of Asian American identity I directly reference in my research when referring to the cultural formation of the Filipino American subject as a secondary citizen in U.S. societal standards and economy. Her research and testimonies serve as a great diverse theoretical and critical compliment towards my ethnical diversity on my paper.

Maxwell, Ian, and Tony Mitchell. "Sydney Stylee: Hip-Hop Down under Comin' Up." *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, Wesleyan University Press, 2001, 264.

This is a book compilation of essays compiled and edited by Australian educator, writer, and producer Tony Mitchell in 2001. The thirteen essays in this book explore local hip hop and rap cultures in Asia, Australia, Canada, and Europe examining how this music is not a simple emulation of African-American music, but a way for each culture to define itself. The subjects covered include Islamic rap in Europe, German-language rappers who grapple with the issue of immigration, and a Chinese singer who uses the music to ask some difficult political questions. This source serves as another neutral component to my research that justifies the African Americanization of Hip Hop and it's black antecedents to be influential forms of emulation towards world cultures. This book reiterates the same argument that I present precisely with Puerto Ricans and Filipinos in Urban Metropolis spaces.

Noel Urayoán. *In Visible Movement: Nuyorican Poetry from the Sixties to Slam*. Univ. of Iowa Press, 2014.

This is a critical study written by Puerto Rican author, critic, performer, translator and artist Urayoán Noel which investigates the poetics of the Puerto Rican Diaspora writers. It is considered the first book-length study specifically devoted to Nuyorican poetry therefore, it has an original style in its historical and formal breadth. Noel's analysis ranges from the foundational poets of the 1960s and 1970s of the Nuyorican movement, to a variety of contemporary poets around the Nuyorican Poets Cafe "slam" scene of the 1990s and early 2000s. He establishes the poetry's links to vernacular and Afro-Puerto Rican performance cultures, extending from the island's oral poets to the New York sounds and rhythms of Latin boogaloo, salsa, and Hip Hop. These links that he organizes served to be instrumental in the linkages I establish in my paper between slam poetry and Hip Hop from the late 80s and 90s since he covers that very period accurately. Noel covers various canonical Nuyorican poems by poets such as Pedro Pietri, Victor Hernández Cruz, Miguel Algarín, Miguel Piñero, Sandra María Esteves, and Tato Laviera and provides a historical continuity from them with overlooked poets such as: Lorraine Sutton, Frank Lima and Edwin Torres that are typically read outside of the canonical tradition of the movement. Yet, I focused on the younger generation of Nuyorican poets that he covers, for example Willie Perdomo's poetry, which has limited critical consideration. This whole study gave me the necessary critical and comparative approaches I needed to match Hip Hop poetic lyricism with the literary genre of slam poetry in addition to fitting it to a canonized category that is Nuyorican poetry.

Omoto, Keiichi. "The Negritos: Genetic Origins and Microevolution." In *Out of Asia: Peopling the Americas and the Pacific*, edited by Robert Kirk and Eموke Szathmary, 123-131. Canberra: Journal of Pacific History. 1985.

This is a scientific journal article published in 1985 that proves to be relevant to this day when referring to the origins and history of *The Negritos* Asian native peoples. This article confirms the genealogy of the earliest native Philippine people, dating it back to 40,000 years ago when the Philippines archipelago was part of the Sundaland, or mainland Southeast Asia. The evidence this scientific article presents is that, although the Negritos weren't directly related to Africans, they displayed the same physical characteristics as them given the evolving geographical region that the Philippines turned to over time, proving they weren't directly related to Australian aborigines. The relevance of the scientific article to my research is that it justifies the misconception that blackness has with the African subject directly. Where these native people when discovered by Spanish missionaries in the early 16th century were given the diminutive name in relation to their alienation to whiteness or civility as was determined earlier on with the Africans by the European colonizers. A more than interesting fragment of information included in my discussion related to blackness and Filipinos.

Pate, Alexs. *In the Heart of the Beat: the Poetry of Rap*. Scarecrow Press, 2010.

This is a book dedicated to the poetics that Rap brings to Hip Hop. Alexs Pate, a novelist, playwright and writing professor brings forth with his creative writing background a detailed analysis of the creative process behind the composing of Raps in Hip Hop tracks, alongside its generational evolution. He goes to great lengths to demonstrate how rap should be read and analyzed the same way great poetry has been approached. Pate examines each aspect of poetry/rap: language, imagery, texture, meaning, structure, form, rhythm, and flow demonstrating how to assess rap lyrics by using each criterion. His specific approach helped me construct a formalistic analysis of Hip Hop lyrics as poems of Urban literature and art but not limited to the non-lyrical aspects such as, beat-making, scratching and sampling as constituent elements of critical academic approach.

Perdomo, Willie. *Where a Nickel Costs a Dime*. W.W. Norton, 1996. 20-21

This is a poetry book written by Nuyorican poet and children's book author Willie Perdomo. This whole book captures the Hip Hop rhythms and aesthetic that is the Nuyorican Poets Café that I so much compare in my research. Perdomo's poems along the entirety of it establishes intersections with major African American poets and writers from the likes of Langston Hughes, Amiri Baraka, Ntozage Shange and James Baldwin. His style of merging both Nuyorican and African American literary styles in his slam poetry serves as a perfect example of the hybridity of blackness that Hip Hop shares with the poetic genre in addition to making an intersection between the urban and academic spaces. Throughout the book he depicts scenes, settings, and innerworkings of his Spanish Harlem borough. The poem that spoke to me the most for my research was his "Nigger-Reecan Blues" poem because, it speaks on so many levels about the ambiguities of racial and ethnic identity in New York as well as the United States and Puerto Rico. Perdomo's poem and performance reciting it, is the main work that I use to compare with Big Punisher's lyricism along my research.

Punisher, Big. Booklet. *Capital Punishment*, Loud Records. April 28, 1998.

This is the most renowned album by the most famous Puerto Rican Hip Hop artist to date Big Punisher aka Big Pun (Christopher Rios). This album first released in 1998 marked the definitive arrival of the Puerto Rican representation in the genre and culture. Due to its global circulation and collaborative fame, it's the first Latin Hip Hop album to reach RIAA certified Platinum album status in the history of the genre. This album also featured one of the most historical ensembles of the greatest lyricists of the time alongside Big Pun, a bold achievement given that it was Pun's first studio album. The whole album is an important reference to exemplify the thesis of my research relating the performative aspect and representations in Hip Hop to give a popular notion of self-determination and identity in an otherwise racially stratified society that is American culture.

Rivera, Raquel Z. *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

This is a book written by Puerto Rican Diaspora theorist Raquel Rivera, where she studies the origins of Hip Hop and how Nuyoricans were instrumental in the emergence of the genre. Her approach to towards Hip Hop goes along the lines of a translocal, multi-ethnic and multi-racial cultural phenomenon, that is always in a process of shifting and development. She does this by referencing and quoting underground Nuyorican artists that explain the shifts and divisions popular culture mediums do on Latino Hip Hop artists. She exposes the division between Latinxs and African Americans, that due to their commonplace knowledgeable dexterity and relation to the English language became the face of the genre, while the Latin counterpart, who was considered to be non-speakers mainly were ostracized in mass mediums of commercialization and commodification. This piece of her research precisely justifies my argument on socio-political agendas and popular notions of cultural identity as markers that define Puerto Rican and Filipino participation in political-economic projects in American society.

Rodriguez, Dylan E. *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

This is a book written by Critical ethnic theorist Dylan Rodriguez that studies the traumatic past the Filipino community has endured in America. It's a very well-rounded sophisticated study of the Filipino condition that objectifies it as a subject of history. He frequently utilizes the phrase "Filipino American communion," to question the redemptive and romantic notions of Filipino migration and settlement in the United States as false tenets of the American Dream. He puts this in relation to larger histories of race, colonial conquest, and white supremacy as the prescriptive factors of racial identification in the United States. He also points toward the evolution of systemic racism masking itself under the umbrella that is liberal multiculturalism. This source proved to be one of the most accurate historiographic accounts that enabled me to understand in a deeper sense the history of the Filipino condition and towards what it leads to.

Rosario, Daisy, and Marlon Bishop. "A Latino History of Hip-Hop, Part II." *LatinoUSA*, NPR, 8 June 2015, [itunes.com/LatinoUSA](https://www.itunes.com/LatinoUSA).

This is a podcast recorded by NPR's *LatinoUSA* program hosted by Daisy Rosario and Marlon Bishop. This particular episode, Rosario and Bishop trace the Latinx influence and history of Hip Hop through interviews and testimonials by some of the biggest artists in its history as well as scholarly authorities. The discussion that they underwent went along the lines of what Juan Flores and Raquel Rivera had already written about years before about Hip Hop and the Puerto Rican/Latinx condition in the genre. What was of interest from this podcast, was Rosario's interview to Fat Joe and how he saw the genre vis a vis the current political narrative of the time in the nineties for Latinxs. Additionally, the podcast touches upon the singular influence that Big Pun was for the Latinx community in general and how he changed the culture and opened doors for the Latin Hip Hop artists to come.

Simmons, Russell and Yasiin Bey, directors. *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry Season 3*. HBO Video, 2005.

This is a DVD compilation of episodes from HBO's series *Def Poetry* executive produced and directed by Def Jam CEO Russell Simmons and Hip Hop artist and poet Yasin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def). This show, which had an airtime from 2002-2007 showcased the best exponents of slam poetry of its time on cable television. Mostly picking up their talent from street poets that frequented the Nuyorican Poets Café, located in Manhattan's Lower Eastside, they ebbed in a new generational medium for urban literature and Hip Hop culture extending their performances to New York's Broadway theaters. Poets that I used from this third season were: Beau Sia, a Chinese-Filipino slam poet and Nuyorican poet Willie Perdomo. Both of these artists performances served as great audiovisual examples to compare and contrast the poetic devices and orality that I so much discuss in my research. Whereas, in the case of Beau Sia I use his poem titled "Hip Hop" as a reference for my comparison of the Filipino American condition and Hip Hop, which worked perfectly for what I aimed to expose about Hip Hop's aesthetics.

Tate, Greg. "In Praise of Shadow Boxers: An Exploration of 'Crisis of Originality and Authority In African-American Pictorial Culture Versus the Wu-Tang Clan'." *Glendora Review: African Quarterly on the Arts*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 63–69. African e-Journals Project, <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/html/itemdetail.cfm?recordID=2273>. Accessed 6 Mar. 2019.

This is an academic scanned e-journal article published originally for the *Glendora Review: African Quarterly on the Arts* where the Wu-Tang Clan is analyzed in comparison to African American visual arts. Greg Tate makes an overview analysis of American Blackness and modernity in the visual arts with Hip Hop aesthetics and mysticism. He specifically makes his case with the influence that the emergence of the Wu-Tang Clan in the last decade of the 20th century gave American black art a "fearsome and new mask. A ninja mask to be precise..." where urbanity, literacy and high art merged together to create a new form of orientalist black aesthetic unseen before. How he particularly tackles and expresses praise for the group's artistic mysticism was instrumental to my research, especially when considering the cultural impact the Wu had on the young black youth and the rest of the world at the time.

Villegas, Mark R., et al. *Empire of Funk: Hip Hop and Representation in Filipina/o America*. Cognella Academic Publishing, 2014.

This is a book compilation of interviews, poems, testimonies, essays and photographs that explores the amalgam of ways Filipino American hip hop aesthetic has developed over the years. Utilizing principally testimonials from well known Filipino DJ's, producers and MCs Mark Redondo Villegas compiles and edits a timeline narrative of the real emergence and impact that Hip Hop has had alongside the cultural development of the Filipino community in the United States. This whole book served as a key consultation of both artistic and social historicity of Filipino American culture, given that there are few scholarly sources that accurately deploy this community's contact with the genre and cultural movement. An interview that I particularly extracted and cited in my paper was that of Dj Qbert, the most renowned Filipino Dj in the world. From this particular interview is where I extracted the Negrito native spirit that Philippine culture has carried on with it in the Diaspora. His commentary and testimonial on how Hip Hop gave him a sense of self-identity is at the root of my research on Filipino American cultural formation.

Wang, Oliver. "Rapping and Repping Asian: Race, Authenticity, and the Asian American Mc." In *In That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, edited by Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal. New York: Routledge, 2012.

This is an essay written by music journalist and sociologist Oliver Wang on the origins of Asian American Hip Hop and the racial authenticity represented by it. He discusses the emergence of the Asian aesthetic, dating from the late 1970s and through the early 2000s, making emphasis on the ways in which these artists negotiate the challenge of racial authenticity for being non-Black nor White participants. This paper served as an important source of history and overall understanding of the direction I wanted to make with my paper in the sense of coherence and continuity. It also introduced me to an alternative discourse of authenticity with his discussion of Joe Bataan being the first Asian Hip Hop artist that composed the first actual Hip Hop song in history. Although it's a speculative claim that needs further unpacking and research, it puts into question the popular notion that Asian Americans are known for their Djing skills and not their own intellectual productions of Hip Hop aesthetic as the starting points for their representation in the genre.

Weiss, Jeff. "How Filipino-American DJs Came to Dominate West Coast Turntablism." *L.A. Weekly*, 11 July 2017
www.laweekly.com/music/how-filipino-american-djs-came-to-dominate-west-coast-turntablism-5616157.

This is an electronic newspaper article written by journalist Jeff Weiss on *LA Weekly*, an independent newspaper of the city of Los Angeles, California. Weiss in this article interviews Oliver Wang on the history and scholarship of Filipino Djing and the turntablism movement that such defines the community's involvement with Hip Hop. This article introduced me to researching the impact turntablism had on the young Filipino youth in and out of the mainland. It also introduced me to Oliver Wang's body of work and book *Legions of Boom: Filipino-American Mobile DJ Crews in the San Francisco Bay Area*, which served as a great reference to identify acts like the Spintronix, Mix Master Mike and Dj Qbert as the artists I chose to analyze the Filipino Hip Hop aesthetic on my paper.