

The Voice of the Anti-Imperialist Movement from

Under Lock & Key



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Hip Hop: Living Culture or Commodity?

by a United Struggle from Within Study Group
September 2009

Hip hop can be a very powerful weapon to help expand young people's political and social consciousness. But just as with any weapon, if you don't know how to use it, if you don't know where to point it or what you're using it for, you can end up shooting yourself in the foot or killing your sisters and brothers."
-- Assata Shakur

There are four main elements that make up what hip hop culture really is: Break dancing, DJing, MCing and Graffiti art. Each element plays a major role in hip hop. This beautiful culture originated in the Bronx, NY from the oppressed lumpen. The music from this culture was diligently expressed through MCing (rapping) about oppression and the conditions the oppressed people were going through in this capitalist decadent society. It was not about money, cars, jewelry and negativity but as the years went by and white capitalist businessmen saw a fortune in this culture that they could exploit the voices that created hip hop were greatly silenced.

The common refrain of many submissions we got for this issue of *Under Lock & Key* was that "Hip Hop is Dead." But the reality is much more complex, and we are not ready to dismiss hip hop. The objectification and commodification of culture often signifies the end of its existence as a culture, as Fanon argued. However, in

the height of imperialism, where the capitalists have learned to fashion their products to niche markets, all cultures will be commodified, and yet the oppressed still need a culture to call their own.

The reason why MIM(Prisons) is focusing on hip hop in this issue on culture, is that hip hop came from the oppressed nations in the U.S. Today, "hip hop" is pretty much considered synonymous with oppressed nation youth culture even as that culture continues to evolve in many different ways. This is true in the United States, but also true to an extent in many parts of the world today.

We put our hope in the oppressed nations because of their objective interests in progressive change. That interest comes through in hip hop culture, as much as the white corporate media and its white consumer audience do to discourage that. The mainstream acts like all you need is a certain type of a beat in a commercial and it's hip hop. Or dress your employees a certain way and it's hip hop.

In their day, the Black Panther Party criticized Black bourgeois elements who fetishized

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Brutality Leads to Death

by a Texas prisoner
August 2009

I would like to reach-out to my fellow prisoners, by this true and law breaking story. This happened in the wee hours in the morning.

I lived just on the opposite side and above and several doors down from a man who you might call a mentally challenged prisoner. He was heavily medicated since first coming to this wing. Over periods of time, he would have his outbursts, beating, banging on the walls, door, etc. Even at times rubbing feces on and around inside his cell. At times not eating meals.

Late last night this prisoner was brought to a stand up cage made out of fence. It's a 3x3 cage, 7 feet tall. He was brought to this cage because he took abundant amounts of pills. So then a nurse came to speak with him and he was given a cup of charcoal to drink. It coats the stomach and intestines. Several hours later he was moved to a cell unknown exactly to us, but he died.

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Pulse of the People Sounds Like Revolution

by Wiawimawo
September 2009

*dead prez
Hosted by DJ Green Lantern
Turn Off The Radio Vol. 3: Pulse of the People
Released June 2009*

Almost everyone who wrote in complaining about the state of hip hop cited dead prez as the exception. Taking off where 2pac left off with Thug Life, dead prez has popularized a more consistent and developed code under their slogan of Revolutionary But Gangsta. The RBG mentality comes out on this tape in their refrain, "All the G's I know is part of the revolution." While not quite gaining the popularity of 2pac, the generation of rappers just coming up is full of youth who developed their consciousness listening to dead prez albums. We think that's a good thing for the future of hip hop culture.

MIM has thoroughly reviewed dpz's earlier work, and this mixtape follows in that tradition;

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Prisoners: You will remain on our mailing list for a free subscription as long as you write in once every 6 months. Each time you write, please tell us what you have received from us since you last wrote so that we can better track our mail.

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...Pulse

strong revolutionary music. The sound of Pulse is a little different than the past, with more of a rock & roll element in a lot of the samples used. This brings us to one of the other elements of hip hop: DJing. The fact that DJ Green Lantern hosted this mixtape added to the anticipation for many.

The MC talks, so it is easy to analyze the content of what they say. Graffiti, while not as popular as rapping, is similarly easy to assess for content. But dancing and making beats are more abstract arts. Some argue that music with no lyrics, dancing and even many visual arts have no political content.

As MIM wrote in *MIM Theory 13*:

Mao explained that all classes in all class societies have both artistic and political criteria by which they judge art - and all classes put the political criteria first. This the bourgeoisie will never admit, but it is constantly shutting out, censoring and destroying proletarian art no matter how high the artistic merit or quality.(1)

Green Lantern is interesting as a DJ who put out this latest dpz mixtape as well as Immortal Technique's highly recommended record *The Third World*. Before that he put out the Bin Laden single with Tech and earlier this year released a track on the Oscar Grant shooting and riots. All of these works combined demonstrate that yes, a DJ's work is political. As an artistically superior DJ and producer, who worked with such popular MC's as Eminem (see our review of Em in this issue), Jay-Z and Nas, Green Lantern adds the artistic quality to the political line, to create a superior revolutionary culture. Without DJ's like Green Lantern the "conscious" music never gains mass appeal.

The DJ has quietly become more and more prominent both alongside and independent from MC's. Green Lantern is a good example of this with his work on video games, which now have their own soundtracks, and his own radio show. While this reviewer isn't familiar with all of these works to speak on Green Lantern's career as a whole, he clearly doesn't work exclusively on revolutionary projects. While Nas's *Nigger Tape* was a confusing mix of reverence for both the Black Panthers and Barack Obama, Green also worked on a mixtape that was expressly dedicated to getting Obama elected.

On that note, we can say that dead prez is the vanguard here, pushing Green Lantern to do more revolutionary projects. To their credit, dpz has always got the principal contradiction correct, and never wavered. This tape is no exception with lyrics like:

*"That's why ain't nothin' patriotic in me
For their system my heart is empty"*

and

*"I don't represent the red white and blue
I cut the head off the devil and I throw it
at you."*

The latter line is from Afrika Hot!, which is both the dance hit on this release and also



Socialist Party, who Stic Man and M-1 used to work with, go so far as to build an African Socialist International, with leadership based in the united States, we think that contradicts the lessons we have learned from previous attempts at communist internationals. Despite their relative oppression, New Afrikans are a separate nation, with a much more privileged class position than the many nations of Africa and should not be guiding struggle on the continent.

For the most part we were ambivalent towards dead prez's dealing with gender and sex in the past, but gave them a much higher rating than the average hip hop artist. In the final track on *Pulse*, My Dirty Valentine, they get into their fantasies and desires that eroticize power and rape. While MIM(Prisons) opposes sexual liberalism, we also do not try to police people's bedrooms in our efforts to overthrow the patriarchy. But by rapping about these things, dead prez is telling their listeners what is sexy, and art does influence real life.

Overall, dead prez not only provides the critique, but they also provide a method for finding solutions, the dialectical materialist approach to the world. As they mature politically, these themes seem to have become more prominent in their music. The back to back songs Refuse To Lose and Life Goes On are good examples of their inspirational and educational approach, rather than just beating their listeners in the head with rhetoric.

*"Many days didn't know what to do/
but we survive/ Every struggle is a test/ a lesson/
You just gotta figure out how to overcome
and catch the blessing/ They want us to turn
to dope and lose all hope/ spirit broke and
confused/ But I refuse to lose/ Through fear/
through pain/ through loss/ I can't stop/ won't
stop/ 'til we make it to the tip top/ This is hip
hop"*

*"If you ain't happy make a change then/
If what you're doing ain't working/ it might
be time to change plans/ You're looking at a
changed man/ from where I used to be/ It's
no fear/ I ain't going nowhere/ so get used to
me."*

*"You can make a choice now how you
wanna live/ You can be negative/ You can be
positive/ But either one is up to you/ It's your
prerogative/ It's not what happens to us/ It's
how we handle what happens/ The ups and
downs in life give us understanding and bal-
ance."*

And remember, Turn off the Radio! Turn off that Bullshit!

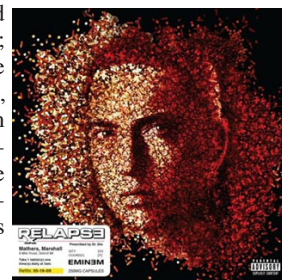
Notes: (1) *Chinese Art in Revolution. MIM Theory 13: Culture in Revolution. 1997. p.30.*

Eminem = Emeny

by PTT
September 2009

Eminem
Hosted by Dr. Dre
Relapse
Released May 2009

Relapse is Eminem's 6th studio album, released May 15, 2009, with the sequel *Relapse 2* expected to drop November of this year. It sold over 600,000 copies in the first week of its release.(1) As the title implies, the content of the album is devoted to the many facets of Eminem's struggle with drug addiction. To any fan of Eminem, or anyone who's heard his older stuff, it should come as no surprise that the main objective of *Relapse* seems to be to perpetuate misogyny, primarily thorough rape fantasies. Although there are two whole entire songs depicting violence against wimmin ('Same Song & Dance' and 'Stay Wide Awake'), that isn't enough to keep Eminem from making references to rape and unwarranted physical contact throughout the entire album. Physical violence isn't just directed toward wimmin; there's violence against gays, graphic depiction of child molestation, and the rare allusion of violence against his peers.



The chorus to 'We Made You' is overly conceited, but with the lyric "Who could really blame you? We're the ones who made you" he is blaming the consumers for his audacity. That is partially true: if amerikans weren't so into individualism and misogyny, then they probably wouldn't be so into Em's shit. But even more true is the role that the corporate record companies have played in pushing it on the people, which you can read about in the title article to this issue of ULK.

There is also a consistent focus on the individual's problems throughout the album, instead of problems of the group. In fact, the only thing Eminem seems to have a group perspective on is that all wimmin are bitches. In the track 'My Mom' he relates all of his drug problems to his mother's addictions, as if she was one womyn separate from society. However, all of us are affected by the culture and society we live in, and drug addiction is one way the people in a fucked up society can adjust to living this way. It's likely that Mathers' mother was the strongest direct influence on him, but she is just a reflection of her culture and society, making that the real problem. In amerikan society it is especially important for us to combat individualism, because oftentimes, ideologically, it is the largest obstacle standing between the oppressed and increased public opinion for their liberation.

In real life, Mathers has been using the 12 step program for his recovery, which he mocks

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in the skits on *Relapse*. Twelve step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, may work to keep individual people from using. But on a group scale its goal is to adjust people to function without drugs in a messed up society, instead of addressing the problems of society, which can only be thoroughly dealt with through revolution. Of course, we don't think living under imperialism is easy, and people usually do need support outside of themselves to recover from addiction, and to be useful to the revolution. But we would prefer a 12 step program that's not focused on god and a "higher power" and instead focused on liberating oneself through liberation of the proletariat.

With all this talk about dealing with our problems, *Relapse* doesn't offer many solutions, even for the individual. 'Deja Vu' is a submission to addiction ("I wanna get away from this place, I do. But I can't, and I won't.") which is followed by the rap ballad and single, 'Beautiful.' 'Beautiful' is about fighting depression, and with a chorus like "Don't let em say you ain't beautiful/ They can all get fucked just stay true to you" it's the most, and only semi-encouraging song on the album. This can serve revolutionaries who are feeling alienated by their political views here in the belly of the beast, where the majority of amerikans are bought off by imperialism and aren't materially interested in revolutionary politics.

Dr. Dre keeps our heads bobbing, but beyond that, *Relapse*, and Eminem's career in general, is just another example of how imperialism and capitalism prioritize the mental health of the people last. It also is another tired example of how capitalism encourages the recording industry to push fucked up politics into hip hop culture, and this reviewer expects more of the same from *Relapse 2*.

Notes:

(1) http://www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/content_display/industry/e3i331f30f79c3e3c746847c8d7166631d3

In September 2007, the Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons or MIM(Prisons) was formed as an independent Maoist cell. That year, the Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) took some security hits and changed its organizing strategy as a result. One of the significant changes relates to cell-based organizing as opposed to having a centralized party. MIM(Prisons) upholds the MIM cardinal questions and uses the overall political line put forth in MIM Notes, MIM Theory and on the former website. We distribute MIM Theory and serve an archive of the old MIM web site, which we also use as a regular source for prison-based educational work. The MIM legacy in fighting the criminal injustice system is strong and we carry that legacy forward in our own work.

The Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) is the collection of existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties in the English-speaking imperialist countries and their English-speaking internal semi-colonies, as well as the existing or emerging Maoist Internationalist parties in Belgium, France and Quebec and the existing or

...Relapse

The Hate U Gave Lil' Infants Fucks Everyone

by Wiawimawo
August 2009

T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E.
Sanyika Shakur
Grove Press, 2008.

This novel by former Eight Tray Gangsta Crip, current New Afrikan Revolutionary and captive of California's Security Housing Units promotes peace, unity and discipline among the lumpen of the oppressed nations. As such, we rate this book positively as a cultural work. The story weaves the THUG LIFE code promoted by Tupac and Mutulu Shakur throughout. In this reviewer's limited exposure to the collection of fiction branded as "street lit" and marketed mostly to younger New Afrikans, we see this as a superior example. A thorough analysis of this genre might parallel our discussion of hip hop music in a lot of ways.

The bulk of the story is gangster, but lessons and gems are peppered throughout. In the context of the ongoing conflict between the gangs of Los Angeles, the author introduces principles of dialectical development, though he doesn't develop them very extensively. Cultural references to revolutionary music and movies are also dropped in the story in a way that may promote further investigation by readers who are attracted to the overall gangster story. A comrade and obvious admirer of Tupac Shakur, Sanyika seems to take a similar approach in his writing that Pac took in his music.

In one of the tensest moments of the book, Shakur paints a picture of a disciplined unit of gangsters awaiting a raid, "These bangers had

emerging Spanish-speaking Maoist Internationalist parties of Aztlán, Puerto Rico and other territories of the U.S. Empire.

MIM(Prisons) upholds the revolutionary communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and is an internationalist organization that works from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat.

What is MIM(Prisons)?

MIM(Prisons) struggles to end the oppression of all groups over other groups; classes, genders, nations. Our current battles in the United States are legal ones. We encourage prisoners to join these battles while explicitly discouraging them from engaging in any violence or illegal acts. MIM(Prisons) and its publications explicitly oppose the use of armed struggle at this time in the imperialist countries (including the United States). We do recognize that his-

grown fed up with police tactics of intimidation, false arrests, no-knock raids, and summary executions that always seemed to accompany their public 'protect and serve' image. They had made a pact to stand and fight when confronted without an escape route."

Following another police raid, this time of the main character Lapeace's apartment, we briefly meet Mrs. Delaney, founder of the Black Scouts Youth Brigade, who gives us a lesson in security: "what I do ain't no secret, it's just nobody's business but my own."

Later, Sekou, Lapeace's road dog, promotes scientific thinking and attacks identity politics, "I could care less *who* speaks the truth, I want to hear it." This is in reference to the Tupac character named Askari Shakur. Interestingly, characters in the book regularly listen to Tupac songs, while this character, Askari Shakur, is used as a stand in for Tupac in the Las Vegas beef that ends in his fatal shooting.

Throughout the book there is a theme of Lapeace searching for a family legacy of revolutionary resistance that he knows little about. Meeting Askari Shakur really encourages this desire for him, but the relationship is cut short by Askari's assassination. This story line is typical of New Afrikans as a whole who are very ignorant of the struggles lived by their parents just a generation before. In ULK 9, a comrade told a story very similar to Lapeace's. His mother was in the Black Panthers, resulting in their home being raided regularly as a child. But until her death, he thought she was just a criminal gangster.

The THUG LIFE code is a step. Gangsters living by the code aren't gonna get us free. Really, gangsters aren't gonna get us free, period. Not until they start transforming into something other than gangsters. Many lumpen organizations have a parallel analysis of the development of their members that start in the criminal

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tory has demonstrated that armed struggle is a necessary step to bring the oppressed to power to determine their own destinies. Revolution will become a reality within the United States as the military becomes overextended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony.

Fighting the injustice system is just one part of the anti-imperialist struggle, and it is important that organizers on the outside and prisoners not lose sight of the connections to this larger battle. For this reason, in addition to news about prisons and prison struggles, we will also publish more general news articles from both organizers and prisoners, as well as some general theoretical writings from prisoners. We welcome support and collaboration from those who are focused only on the prison struggle, but we also challenge them to see the bigger picture of imperialism and the importance of carrying out their work as a part of a larger anti-imperialist strategy.

For more information on Maoism, write to us for a copy of "What Is MIM?"

...continued from page 3 ...T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E.

mentality and transition to a more conscious one, in some cases the ultimate stage being promoted is of a revolutionary nationalist nature. To different degrees they promote trading in lumpen individualism for identifying with one's people, or the people. The problem with these programs is that they are usually presented in a way that is limited by individualism itself. As if each member must go thru these stages. If everyone's development is the same then we never advance. How we advance as a group is that each generation takes the lessons of the previous generations and builds on them, not making the same mistakes.

By erasing revolutionary history of the oppressed, the government has done much to set back progress. As the lumpen stand in a state of ignorance and criminality, they can only progress as a group through revolutionary nationalism and proletarian internationalism. The progression from nihilistic gang-banging to a code of conduct like THUG LIFE is just one small step, one that has not yet been taken up by the group.

One of the main roles of culture is to create idealized images that represent something that the people can relate to and emulate. Lapeace seems to be a character that merges the author's past with his present in a way that idealizes the best of the gangster culture. Recognizing the stage we are in is part of a materialist approach to change and to culture. Lapeace is a positive image at this stage of the struggle. And a code of conduct like THUG LIFE is an important stepping stone to where we ultimately need to get.

show. In the *Star Trek* future, nearly everyone from Earth is white, which not only opposes political science, but genetics and evolution as well. The filmmakers suppose that present america and europe will conquer all non-white nations and either destroy them, or keep them marginalized in the fields of military and imperialist science, thus having no role to play in a movie about intergalactic exploration.

The Federation societies shown in *Star Trek* (2009) aren't very different from amerikan society today. Alcohol abuse is common, wimmin are regularly sexually harassed and assaulted, expensive material objects are idealized, and individualism is widespread. Humans join the military because they have nothing better to do, want persynal glory, and/or to "kick some Romulan ass." All these factors demonstrate Earth as a capitalist country, another misprediction.

The glorification of the individual is so common in this future society, in fact, that Spock, then captain of the Enterprise, abandons the ship as it is being sucked into a black hole. He does this to rescue his parents from the imploding planet of Vulcan. In the eyes of many amerikans this may seem heroic and forgivable, to put the whole crew at risk of imminent death to protect his culture. Of course, thank Hollywood, Enterprise manages to make it out safely, with Spock on board, but it is a completely irresponsible move. Another example of individualism is shown when a minor crew member is having such a grand time skydiving through the Vulcan atmosphere, ready to kill some Romulans, that he intentionally activates his parachute too late, for fun, and dies. In reality we need to combat our own persynal desires for fame, glory, and subjective "fun" in order to create and preserve a strong movement, and, when the time comes, armed struggle.

The film also supports individualism, as well as ideas of genetic supremacism, through the character of Jim Kirk, who is a naturally good captain taking after his father. He is able to come into the academy from a life of drunken recklessness and surpass his fellow students in Star Fleet. His success justifies judging people's qualifications based on their parents. The Enterprise does function as a team with many roles to play, which is superior to Rambo style heroism. Kirk is able to keep the goal of the Federation in focus, making him a good leader. Like the lumpen, his lack of investment in other things allows him to focus on one greater goal once he is able put it ahead of his self-indulgent lifestyle. While a good leader must be willing to challenge the status quo as Kirk does, the movie romanticizes this as a magical skill that he was born with, not one that requires hard

Space... The Next Frontier

by PTT
August 2009

[Warning: Contains Spoilers]



Star Trek (2009) begins with a battle in outer space, where the last remaining Romulans have traveled back in time to attack the United Federation of Planets, in hopes that by emotionally scarring Spock in his younger years, they will feel better that their planet, Romulas, is going to be destroyed by their dying sun. The Romulans blame Spock as an individual for this disaster, presumably because he was (or will be) the scientist in charge of protecting Romulas. Both old Spock from the future, and young Spock in the present, are forced to witness the destruction of his home planet, Vulcan, as revenge. It isn't clear what Spock's actual role will be in the destruction of Romulas, and for the sake of this review, we will just look at the information portrayed in this film, not the *Star Trek* television shows or other movies.

The writers of *Star Trek* would like to portray Earth in the year 2233 as its own single, united nation of Humans. This is just america's beloved Hollywood attempting to teach us how "peaceful" the planet could be if we all just submitted to the white nation and let them run the

Hip Hop in the Scopes of the State

by Wiawimawo
September 2009

Show them as scurrilous and depraved... Have members arrested on marijuana charges. Investigate personal conflicts or animosities between them. Send articles to the newspapers showing their depravity. Use narcotics and free sex to entrap... Obtain specimens of their handwriting. Provoke target groups into rivalries that may result in death. - FBI COINTELPRO tactics documented to be used against political musicians(1)

I hold that it is bad as far as we are concerned if a person, a political party, an army or a school is not attacked by the enemy, for in that case it would definitely mean that we have sunk to the level of the enemy. It is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. - Mao Zedong. To Be Attacked by the Enemy Is Not a Bad Thing but a Good Thing (May 26, 1939)

One indication of the revolutionary potential of hip hop is the bourgeois state's reaction to it. Just this summer, police arrested Paradise Gray of X-clan and the Zulu Nation, which played a big role in shaping hip hop in its earlier years. Gray was arrested while he was filming a demonstration against gentrification. (2) Paralleling some of Tupac's efforts discussed below, Gray is currently working with 1Hood to promote peace among the oppressed nation youth in Pittsburgh, PA. There's nothing the government fears more than for the oppressed to stop killing themselves and each other.

While the popular culture likes to see Reality Rap, now known as Gangsta Rap, as the beginning of the ultimate corruption of hip hop, the truth is that pioneers Ice-T, NWA and Tupac were unabashedly opposed to the state and received a lot of heat for it. Their shows were canceled, their records delayed, their songs were censored and they faced constant surveillance and regular harassment.

While the forms of art that originated in hip hop culture have been greatly co-opted through the corporate media to serve the state itself, the potential threat of a culture that keeps strong roots in the oppressed nations remains. John Potash put out a detailed documentation of the history of the state's use of COINTELPRO against musicians, connecting it to operations against revolutionaries who preceded and often inspired them. He describes how the NYPD formed the first rap unit with COINTELPRO training, and then went on to train other metropolitan cops around the country. His book centers around the life and murder of Tupac Shakur.

Tupac Shakur's step-father was former Black Liberation Army soldier and revolutionary physician, turned prisoner of war, Mutulu Shakur. He was one of a number of influential elders in Tupac's life as he grew up that were part of the

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...Star Trek

work and experience, particularly in partnership with others, to develop.

The Vulcans are a logical and emotionless "race," which is intended to highlight the passion and senselessness of "human nature." This is incorrect western psychological theory, but it also provides for some good advice from Spock's father, if we humyns should take it as our own. "Logic offers us [Vulcans] a serenity humans seldom experience: the control of feelings so that they do not control you... You are fully capable of deciding your own destiny, the question is, which path will you choose? This is something only you can decide." The lesson here is to avoid escapism, and take control of our future.

But what cultural impact does *Star Trek* (2009) have? All good art has an impact that is more than just logical, so the question is, what is the outcome of that impact? Good art elicits a response by epitomizing a truth faced by the audience. Hollywood-style art, in contrast, attempts to impose emotional responses through generic intensity. This style of film is based strongly in eliciting emotional responses from the audience, and although there are still plenty of cliff hanging scenes (literally) and tragic moments between loved ones, the action scenes are often overdone in a way that can conflict with this goal. In the end of the movie, old Spock confirms to young Spock the importance of following your gut rather than logic, while his father admits to "loving" his mother for the first time. This triumph of emotionalism opens up the audience for a justification of subjectivism in making their decisions.

To focus back on the Romulans, achieving persynal revenge for the future loss of their home is a poor strategy that doesn't serve anyone. A real solution would have been for the Romulans to have gone back in time and advance technology to save their planet in the future. The Romulans revenge strategy is very different from the oppressed people in our world attack-

ing the oppressor for their own survival, even when their strategies are not successful. The oppressed lash out because they have been pushed to a point where they have no other options. This may be an emotional reaction or a strategic strike. The Romulans, in contrast, are letting their emotions drive them to act in ways that are contrary to their expressed goals, when they have an unusual opportunity to do otherwise.

It is also worth noting that the Romulans are portrayed as anti-social in appearance in ways that parallel certain lumpen groups in the United States. *Star Trek* can appeal to liberal multiculturalism with their Black, Asian, Arab and even a green-skinned humyn-like character all being included in Star Fleet. This is similar to seeing a Black president as being a sign of progress today, while using Islam, drugs and gang-banging as excuses to attack the oppressed nations. That's why we talk about the problem of white nationalism, which allows for exceptions, and not racism.

In reality, there is no way that humyn society could have survived another 225 years without eliminating the contradictions inherent in imperialism that threaten our lives on a daily basis. Thus, if this were a film from a proletarian perspective, the universe would have been portrayed as cooperative. What might make such a movie interesting is speculating how such a society might be run after eliminating the militarism and gender dynamics of today. In a proletarian version the Romulans would have seized on their opportunity to use their new found scientific advantage to save their people rather than resorting to revenge. Even old Spock, who had lived through this disaster already, could have been engaged in this project. He actually did bring technology from the future to the present, but it was just to benefit the Federation. While the Federation has the potential to serve as an example of greater international (and interspecies) cooperation in the future, like most Hollywood sci-fi, it serves as a stand in for the United States or the United Nations, justifying imperialist militarism against the oppressed who are vilified as irrationally vengeful monsters. ★

Save Hip Hop

by a Florida Prisoner
June 2009

I just finished reading the latest *Under Lock & Key* (ULK8) and, comparatively speaking, the articles and overall issues seem much more focused than the days when ULK was only a subsection of MIM Notes. As to the topic of ULK8 [prison labor and economics], I find myself agreeing with the line drawn by the ministry. In addition, though I can never stress enough that the progress to be made among the prison population, especially among the prison population (whether in regards to labor, health services, or any other abuse of inalienable rights) lies in the political unity and education of the existent Lumpen-Proletariat Organizations within the prison system itself.

As a 32 year old, young Hispanic male, having been raised in the inner city and having spent nearly half my life in the system, hip hop has been a reflection of my (and mine's) existence for as long as I can remember. It has been blasted by everyone, from the working moms and pops to the bourgeois conglomerates; from the so-called community leaders to the bona fide revolutionaries of old. It was an expression of struggle and strength, and a message of perseverance and preparation. It was a passing fad that was eventually manacled, manipulated, and monopolized by the evil designs of capitalists who not only see the promise of a dollar, but the perpetuation of our demise.

There is too much to be said of hip hop (its history, present state, and future) than can justly be compiled into one issue of ULK alone. For far too long it has, in my opinion, been neglected by the revolutionary community as a whole. As Frantz Fanon said in regard to the Lumpen, the same applies to the culture of hip hop and rap - the revolution neglected, the reactionaries didn't, and so where hip hop should (and could!) be serving as a spearhead of revolutionary spirit, it has been fashioned into one of the greatest bulwarks against revolutionary progress.

Hip hop is an art, it is music, and just as any art it is most relevant to the mind. It is a culture, and as such it is even more directly relevant to the minds of those who embrace it, not just as a form of entertainment, but as a painting of their own reality - the reality of the ghettos and slums the world over. Hip hop is international, and in most Third World countries it can still be experienced in its most free and pure form. And hip hop is a weapon, a weapon of the people, that has been turned against us.

From the days of "Get free or die trying" to today's mantra of "Get rich or die trying," it is apparent how deep the federal government has affected the core of our production. The government's counter intelligence program (COIN-TELPRO), under any other name, is still very much involved in countering the produce of intelligence harvested by the oppressed. The East Coast - West Coast drama that brought the

On Prisons & Prisoners

MIM(Prisons) seeks to build public opinion against Amerika's criminal injustice system, and to eventually replace the bourgeois injustice system with proletarian justice. The bourgeois injustice system imprisons and executes a disproportionately large and growing number of oppressed people while letting the biggest mass murderers -- the imperialists and their lackeys -- roam free. Imperialism is not opposed to murder or theft, it only insists that these crimes be committed in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

All U.S. citizens are criminals--accomplices and accessories to the crimes of U.S. oppression globally until the day U.S. imperialism is overcome. All U.S. citizens should start from the point of view that they are reforming criminals.

MIM(Prisons) does not advocate that all prisoners go free today; we have a more effective program for fighting crime as was demonstrated in China prior to the restoration of capitalism there in 1976. We say that all prisoners are political prisoners because under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, all imprisonment is substantively political. It is our responsibility to exert revolutionary leadership and conduct political agitation and organization among prisoners -- whose material conditions make them an overwhelmingly revolutionary group. Some prisoners should and will work on self-criticism under a future dictatorship of the proletariat in those cases in which prisoners really did do something wrong by proletarian standards.

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...Death in TX
You must keep in mind that we live on a super-seg prison in TX. One of the most high secured. This is a 24 hour lock-down unit. How did this challenged prisoner get or accumulate these pills that were so detrimental to him? The nurse's pass out AM and PM meds. They are supposed to watch each prisoner swallow their meds. They fail doing this, only because they think it's a burden of time on their hands.

Why weren't his vitals taken every 15 minutes to watch for elevating blood pressure? Instead, they stuck him back in a cell and allowed him to slip away into total darkness. Why wasn't he taken to a hospital?

His stay to the guards was only a joke, and in fact a way for them to retaliate and finally get their revenge. They blame him for his mistakes.

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...In the Scope
Black Power movement. In his meetings with Tupac he says that he pushed Tupac to question and define this Thug Life thing, which they eventually did together in a 26 point code that was accepted by Bloods and Crips (and later others) at the 1992 peace summit in Los Angeles. (3) This led to a major counterintelligence operation targeting those involved, including Mutulu who has been caged in a federal control unit ever since.

Sanyika Shakur, a former Crip leader, was one who was inspired to support these efforts. He was also targeted for isolation in the California prison system where he currently sits (such peacemakers are the so-called "worst of the worst" that fill these torture cells). As he pointed out, the government had reason to be concerned about these efforts to unite Black and Latino youth as the street organizations in South Central were recruiting more young people each year than the four armed forces of the united States combined. (4)

John Potash's detailed research into 2pac and other musicians and Black leaders, show clear connections between government black operations and the repression of those who mobilized oppressed people. The primary role that Tupac played in the "East vs. West" feud in the hip hop scene was ironic after his work to unite warring sets in Los Angeles. But Potash paints a picture of state-led manipulation that led Tupac to play into their plans.

Potash traces the use of sex and drugs to manipulate both activists and musicians as described in the FBI document quoted above. The sexual assault charges brought against Tupac were one example of this. (5) Death Row Records, who he paints as an FBI front, kept 2pac swimming in alcohol and weed, like the FBI did to his mother when he was a kid using a drug dealer who got close to her. Death Row even turned Dr. Dre, who once rapped "yo I don't smoke weed or sess cause it's known to give a brother brain damage", into a giant weed ad with his debut solo album, "The Chronic."

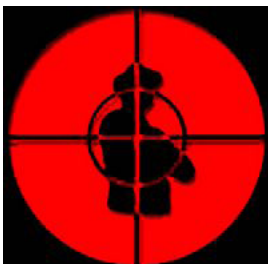
But really, they are pointing their bloody fingers the wrong way. They knew he was a challenged prisoner. So why allow him to accumulate pills to a detrimental level? Where did these pills come from? Only the inside could let this happen.

When the free world investigator showed up to check his cell, he ignored our calls for help. As we screamed desperately for his help about the murder, he shrugged his shoulders and took a few pictures and was gone in a few moments.

Someone is always dying, being an overdose or suicide. How are these things ongoing? They allow us no rights! Here there are days some prisoners don't get food. My mail is on a constant watch. I will speak out about these criminals.

In the decade that followed, regular marijuana use increased significantly among Black and Latino youth, with greater disabling addiction problems, perhaps do to increased potency of the drug. (6) Today, weed and alcohol are constantly praised by rappers.

In his last days, Pac was sober, reading Mao and talking about uniting Blacks across the country. He was soon killed and no one was charged with the murder even though he was being closely watched by multiple state agencies at the time, just as Biggie was at the time of his death.



A big lesson to take from "The FBI War on Tupac Shakur and Black Leaders" is that the government has a strategy for neutralizing potential leaders that they use over and over. To counter this, activists need to be aware of the strategies and develop strategies to counter them. As an individual Tupac was easily manipulated, but even a disciplined party like the Black Panthers was manipulated into a similar East vs. West coast division that could have been avoided. In both cases, the FBI took advantage of internal contradictions among the people involved. So, while studying FBI tactics is a useful way to defend ourselves, more importantly we must put politics in command to make a movement that is difficult to knock off course.

notes: (1) Potash, John. *The FBI War on Tupac Shakur and Black Leaders*. Progressive Left Press, Baltimore. 1997. p.56. (available from AK Press)

(2) <http://hiphopandpolitics.wordpress.com/2009/07/17/first-wise-intelligent-now-hip-hop-pioneer-paradise-of-x-clan-get-arrested-on-trumped-up-charges/>

(3) Potash. p. 63.

(4) Shakur, Sanyika. *Monster*. Grove Press, New York. 1993.

(5) see *Communist Opinion on the Kobe Bryant Case for more on the ridiculousness of such lynching campaigns*

(6) *Prevalence of Marijuana Use Disorders in the United States*. The Journal of the American Medical Association. Vol. 291 No. 17, May 5, 2004.

Rapper\$ Delight

by Cain
August 2009

Our komrades in MIM(Prisons) ask "what role does hip hop have to play today?" As a revolutionary culture, that is.

Since rappers are hard core capitalists it's a waste of time for me to even contemplate this question. As revolutionaries we must not waste time or energy on things we know aren't going to change. Let's keep it one hundred on a revolutionary level. Hip hop has digressed not progressed.

It has come a long way. It's gone from "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy and Cop Killer by Ice T (who ironically enough now plays a pig in one of today's many cop shows) to "You're a Jerk" by the new boyz (the present #1 video on 106th and Park - B.E.T.) and "Throw it in the Bag" by Fabulous featuring The Dream (a shoplifting song).

So you see komrades, what hip hop has to do concerning the revolution and what they're doing and continue to do and will always do is on the opposite side of the revolutionary train of thought. I don't knock hip hop's hustle. It is what it is. I enjoy hip hop as entertainment while disregarding most of their lyrics lest I be tempted to shoplift (humor).

On the real, though, prior to the presidential elections B.E.T. (Black Entertainment Television), the hio hop channel, pushed hard for the election of Obama. Almost 24/7. Rappers threw rallies, wore shirts and pins promoting the vote for Obama. What do you think would've happened if this much attention would've been given to Sean Bell when he was murdered by three pigs of the NYPD? What would've happened if every single rapper who was still in the rap game at this time made entire CDs rapping about police brutality? Would it have raised a revolutionary consciousness within our urban youth? What if every CD put out at this time was dedicated to the memory of Sean Bell? What if every CD has the face of Sean Bell on its cover instead of a video girl in a thong bent over a Benz? Yea, that's all we're going to get: what if.

Instead this is the reality check. Michael Vick formerly of the Atlanta Falcons gets sent to prison for fighting some dogs, they're about to send Plexico Burrell, formerly of the New York Giants to prison for shooting himself accidentally, and the three pigs who riddled Sean Bell with bullets get sent home to their families. Meanwhile Sean Bell's children have no father. Sean Bell was unarmed.

It's a "bloody" shame too, because the fact is, music in general has always bridged together cultural differences.

Is hip hop a vehicle for change? It can be, but it won't be. It will continue to pursue the all mighty dollar. What does the revolutionary cul-

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...Delight

ture or revolutionary culture (without the "the") look like? In the hip hop culture I don't see it. But if I was a hip hop rapper this would be some of my CD titles:

Sean Bell, Blood in my Eye, Police Brutality, Assassins with Badges, Modern Day Gestapo, When will they Murder Me?, Attica 71, It's now or never.

But since I can't rap a lick that ain't gonna happen either. So all we can do is what we can do. If you know how to rap then put it down and bring revolution to the rap game because what's already there is simply a Rapper\$ Delight.

MIM(Prisons) replies: While we certainly agree with the points made on the injustice of the Sean Bell murder, we point out that many people still rap about Sean Bell years later. And a whole CD was put out for Oscar Grant, with many others putting out singles in respect to him. Most of them were very critical of the police and their connection to the state including Obama. These don't get as much play as the other crap out there, even crap by the same artists who put out these revolutionary songs.

It costs millions of dollars to make a song "popular." Therefore, if you look at the list of songs that get the most rotation, they're all owned by two corporations: Universal and Sony (occasionally Capitol gets one in). If you aren't sponsored by one of these companies you cannot afford the payola. That is part of the game. So even the big artists who do some songs for the people have to write most of their songs for the money, or else they choose to not be a "big artist." Therefore most of what the people listen to is still crap.

If you check out some of the artists that aren't on BET, in XXL or on for-profit radio stations then there is no doubt that a revolutionary undercurrent to hip hop is still present. What will never happen is hip hop becoming revolutionary for profit. But hip hop is already playing a revolutionary role at the fringes.

... continued from page 5

...Save Hip Hop

murders of Biggie and Pac (not to mention the nameless bodies laid down in-between) did not occur by chance (see 'Hip Hop in the Scope of the State' on page 4). The rise of the South and overall materialism and exploitation permeated throughout today's industry did not occur because it was the "natural" course of hip hop. These things manifested because before hip hop was ever projected to the masses through the mainstream, it was mass inflected through its very own blood stream.

Nas - hip hop's street disciple - said Hip-Hop is dead. The ALKN says that the rising of the dead is the spiritual awakening of those who have been sleeping in the graveyard of ignorance. Therefore hip hop can be resurrected and it must be. As the fans continue to bob their heads in a trance and the artists continue to be used, as the record labels continue to sell out the vibe, the revolution and hip hop must re-unite, or die trying!

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...Commodity?

pieces of African culture with no context as "pork chop nationalists." There was no connection to a real people with an existing lifestyle. The Panthers were greatly influenced by Frantz Fanon, who wrote in an essay entitled "Racism and Culture":

"Exoticism... allows no cultural confrontation. There is on the one hand a culture in which qualities of dynamism, of growth, of depth can be recognized. As against this, we find characteristics, curiosities, things, never a structure."

Hip hop developed as a living, dynamic culture of a people; oppressed people in north american ghettos. As we'll touch on below it is still a living evolving culture that has been both adopted and adapted by people around the world. But before going global, hip hop culture was commodified by white record owners for white consumers. They sold this exotic culture to white youth looking for rebellion and excitement. Decades before, thousands of white youth gave money and support to the Panthers to express their desires to challenge the dominant culture and status quo. With hip hop, corporate america could sell a much more sanitized and safer version of Black rebellion to whites. And while there were benefits in terms of the building of public opinion around the struggles of the oppressed, this was soon drowned out in what became a new form of coining - reinforcing racist ideologies.

Commodification of Hip Hop

Hip hop culture began in the late 1970s, but it wasn't until the middle to late 1980s that the cultural life and expression of hip hop grew to influence youth throughout america and the world.

During the late 1980s and early 90s, the culture continued to thrive. In this era, Black and Latino youth further developed their voices through hip hop to express their anger, fears, ideas, art and frustrations within the dominant white-oppressor culture, with its police brutality and poverty.

Hip hop culture isn't just about the music, it's about a lifestyle - from the clothes we wear, style of hair, taggin' rail cars and walls with radical art and graffiti, unity and more. It's a culture of resistance.

As Immortal Technique wrote in his article, "Gangsta Rap is Hip Hop" a few years back, what was called Reality Rap in the early years of hip hop was a reflection of the conditions that the MC's saw around them. These images were influenced by machismo and other viewpoints that were part of the survival techniques of those coming up in that environment. As survival also required recognizing that the system does not work for us, this Reality Rap was a reflection of the mass revolutionary spirit that had fueled the Black and Brown power movements of the previous generation.

The first response from white america was predictably negative, but the amount of attention given to hip hop quickly escalated as fears rose. There was a reason why the George HW Bush and Bill Clinton administrations spent so much time disparaging artists like 2pac and Ice-T. Someone was telling Dan Quayle and Tipper Gore to carry out their censorship campaigns.

(see Hip Hop in the Scopes of the State on p. 4)

To counter their critics, rappers said they were merely reporting the truth. It is true that the rapper has usually served as a block reporter, but there are two problems that have skewed this reporting. The first is bourgeois views of "objective" reporting, that pretend that what is reported and how it is reported could be somehow outside of class struggle. This view allows the oppressed to report on conditions thru rap without taking an approach that serves our struggle. The attitude is "this is just how it is", which leads to acceptance and reinforcement of the status quo.

This becomes an even bigger problem with the pressures from an industry, which tries to protect its bourgeois interests. This brings us to the second problem: the block reporters who make it are the ones reporting in a way that sells to white youth and please white corporations.

Coming from the depressed ghettos of the 1980s, flooded with crack cocaine by the CIA, there was no question of whether or not to become a professional rapper if the opportunity presented itself. As Tupac rapped in his song Don't Stop, "If I wasn't spittin' it'd be prison or death/This rap game all we've got left." Yes, a lot of us found a way to eat, but the result was a lack of potency in the music and a watered-down culture where cars and ice are the motivating factor. It is a culture that is teaching our youth that it's all about them (as individuals). That it's cool to be a dope fiend (sippin' syrup, etc.) and to be victims of HIV/AIDS (it's ok to have multiple sex partners, without ever mentioning protection). Is there any wonder why the highest rates of HIV/AIDS are among Blacks and Latinos between the ages of 13-24?

White-owned corporations saw a profit to be made and stepped in to co-opt the movement. They became owners of record labels and put up money so these impoverished and oppressed people could sell their soul and music for crumbs while these CEO's got millions upon millions of dollars.

With the help of the rappers, the record labels promoted a one-sided image of oppressed youth, an image that has been pushed on the oppressed for hundreds of years - one of uncontrollable libidos, violence, substance abuse and general barbarism. They did this through lyrics about smoking crack, robbing and shooting other Blacks and Latinos in oppressed communities, misogynist raps and raps with no substance. We started to stray away from the four elements and this type of hip hop started to negatively influence the youth and poison their minds. While culture reflects life, it also influences it. And arguably, the corporatized thug image contributed to the thousands of deaths that plagued southcentral Los Angeles and other american ghettos in the 1990s.

Hip Hop is Dead Until it Takes up Revolutionary Politics

So with this contradiction in the culture of the oppressed came total destruction of the originality and with this concrete analysis there must be change. Like comrade Lenin once said, "concrete analysis of concrete conditions is the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism." We must regain the true culture of hip hop, which is based in the real struggles

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of the people and helps to teach, empower and unite the masses. This culture can be used to ignite the lumpen proletariat to support the revolutionary cause, like Mao once said, "Revolutionary culture is a powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people."

Culture is an essential element of the history of a people, and it's social development. Culture in general, and hip hop culture in particular, plunges its roots into the base of the material reality of the environment in which we live in the hoods and barrios and it reflects the organic nature of society, which is more or less influenced by the dominant white society and culture of our oppressed communities. Currently the revolutionary side of hip hop is not the dominant aspect of the contradiction with the corporate/oppressor side. Amilcar Cabral once had this to say about culture:

"Study of the history of liberation struggles shows that they generally have been preceded by an upsurge of cultural manifestations, which progressively harden into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the dominated people by an act of denial of the culture of the oppressor... it is generally within the cultural factor that we find the germ of challenge which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement."

We saw this germ in Reality Rap two decades ago. If hip hop is to transform into a true vehicle for social change, we must demand that our artists keep it a hundred and give us more analysis in their music. Stop promoting the use of addictive narcotics, that they become more active in our communities, and give our youth the encouragement to study, unify, and resist oppression. Hip hop needs to reflect the struggle, and push it forward. If they fail to do this, hip hop remains sterile and dead.

Hip Hop as Reflection of Amerikan Culture

During the 1990's, people like Dolores Tucker and Tipper Gore earned the loathing of the booming hip hop culture as they targeted it for censorship and blamed it for the moral depravity of oppressed people. There was a lively debate around whether art reflected life or the other way around. But the answer to those involved was clear: people didn't start rapping about murder, drugs and misogyny because they were trying to corrupt the youth. The youth were corrupted by a system that did not provide them with positive outlets and this was reflected in hip hop, both for good and for bad. Everybody knows censoring rappers isn't going to improve the hood, but improving the hood will change what people are rapping about.

Even after its takeover by white-owned corporations, hip hop continues to be under fire for its misogynistic, materialistic, explicit content and for delivering negative messages to today's youth. What they did is sanitize the rebellious voice of the oppressed, while maintaining the negativity as a form of pseudo-rebellion to reinforce racist stereotypes of what oppressed nation youth are all about. Yet, upon deeper examination, one tends to see that the messages are merely the same ones being transmitted to the society at large by the institutions which govern society.

The parallels between the ideas propagated through the mass media and other sources; and the ones rapped about on the radio by recording artists are not hard to recognize. While this society proposes to thrive on such "rights" as "freedom of speech" and embraces such abstract concepts as individualism, materialism, and using sex to make a profit, it lambasts and condemns artists who are the products of such defunct ideas and who have chosen to endorse and promote them for monetary gain—similar to their capitalist counterparts and employers, only creatively set over catchy beats in rhyme form.

While the hip hop/rap culture is made up primarily of lower-class, urban youth, generally from the New Afrikan community, the question that arises is: Why are these destructive, negative values so unacceptable now? It seems that as soon as these inner-city youth find a way to use this society's own value system to their benefit, and use their experiences and conditions of poverty, drugs, and crime as an avenue to create material wealth, they are demonized for their efforts. "Rap music" is condemned, rather than society as a whole. This theme is a regular refrain for many rappers who tell their critics through rhyme, "I am what you made me."

While rappers are being chastised for glorifying violence and criminality, the chastizers fail to confront the underlying causes of such crime and its solution, instead placing the blame on rap culture. From a young age, youth are taught by society that accumulation of wealth is the desired goal of life, to look out for yourself and obtain as much as you can. At the same time -- through acts of war at home and abroad -- our country reinforces the idea that during the quest for the "almighty dollar" any means may be employed to get more money, including violence, murder, and deceit. When a person not from a privileged upbringing and background employs these same tactics, even for the same objectives, they are labeled "criminals" and are subject to incarceration and, in some cases, death. The laws that govern this country blatantly display the fact that they were made to protect the privi-

leges of the upper-class and oppressor nation at the expense of the lower-class and oppressed nations.

If we want to get to the root of the problem, our attacks shouldn't be aimed at a rap culture that developed from the harsh conditions of this society and which only reflects the same backward ideas and values that have been indoctrinated into the masses since birth. Instead, our attacks should be concentrated at a capitalist system that institutionalizes these degenerate values and ideas, and the ugly conditions it has consequently created in this country. Only when we begin to confront the root causes of crime, poverty, unemployment and racism will we be able to teach and educate our youth, and society as a whole, to new positive and progressive ideas and values, based on people helping and caring about other people in one word: socialism. Anything short of this is a failure to confront the real issues and is simply a step backward.

Hip Hop Lives in Palestine, Senegal, Somalia...

When hip hop blew up in the amerikan market, it was only natural that the capitalists tried to push it globally, as much of the Third World is so brainwashed into worshipping anything that comes from the united States as being superior. In many cases, the Third World has adapted hip hop to their own conditions and needs though. In fact, Third World hip hop has consciously rejected many aspects of hip hop that we are also critical of: the killing, the misogyny, the drugs and promiscuity. Many Third World nations are not comfortable with all that. In Muslim countries in Africa, there are hip hop heads who very much look up to rappers from the u\$, but do not imitate much of the negative lyrical content. (see <http://www.africanunderground.com>) There is a class difference between the Third World masses and the u\$ lumpen, who have become cultural leaders globally because of u\$ imperialism not in spite of or in opposition to it.

While we can be very critical of hip hop for promoting drug use, violence against the oppressed, misogyny and racism, others want to back-handedly criticize it for empowering the oppressed. In contrast, revolutionary artists often embrace while redefining the gangster and the hard images of both mainstream and underground rap music. With the globalization of hip hop and the "I'm more hard" and "I'm more gutter than you" personas that are even pushed by the mainstream, we've seen the appearance of Third World voices with a more internationalist perspective.

New York-based artist Immortal Technique said in his title track about the Third World, "it makes the hood in amerika look like paradise." Meanwhile, Somalian rapper, K'naan, claims to be from the most dangerous place in the world and challenges the studio gangster images of rappers in the u\$ in his song "What's Hardcore?":

*I'ma spit these verses cause I feel annoyed
And I'm not gonna quit till I fill the void
If I rhymed about home and got descriptive
I'd make 50 Cent look like Limp Bizkit
It's true, and don't make me rhyme about you
I'm from where the kids is addicted to glue
Get ready, he got a good grip on the machete*

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*Make rappers say they do it for love like R-Kelly
It's hard
Harder than Harlem and Compton intertwined
Harder than harboring Bin Laden and rewind
To that earlier part when I was kinda like:
We begin our day by the way of the gun
Rocket-propelled grenades blow you away if
you front
We got no police, ambulances, or fire fighters
We start riots by burning car tires
They looting, and everybody start shooting...*

This is the kind of "Reality Rap" that the OG's from Los Angeles used to spit, before "gangsta" became a caricature.

Meanwhile, a thriving Palestinian hip hop scene has popularized the slogan, "Hip Hop's not dead, it lives in Palestine." This is coming from youth who are using hip hop to express their desires for national liberation, combating the slander being used to label their people as terrorists.

The emergence of a global culture is still in its early stages. But if such a thing can exist that is really based in the lives of real people, then it must represent the interests of the world's majority. Maybe a culture that arose from the oppressed in the heart of the empire, and was then popularized by the empire itself, can be turned around by the masses to become just that. We are currently seeing two futures of hip hop play out. One has billions of dollars behind it, the other has billions of people. If we can still call it "hip hop" culture in all its different forms around the world, then we can bet on the oppressed peoples' version winning out. ★

Tap the Potential of Hip Hop as Revolutionary Culture

by an Idaho prisoner
July 2009

I stopped reading ULK #9 to write this topic across a piece of paper, then I continued my ULK, which I might add is very enlightening. Thank you to MIM and all my comrades who make it possible. It's great to see brothers professing unity in the game instead of killing. I'm no active member but I've got my stripes, and I would be in a unique position to be a huge positive force in these young knuckle heads life by showing them exactly what Amerikkka wants the affiliated to be and what we as humyns should be. The street cliques can easily be revamped into a united front against U\$ immorality if we proceed to do such instead of siding with paper and bling which brings me to the subject at hand, hip hop music.

In Idaho the pigs only allow radio, so all day I listen to my cellie thump hip hop. I was raised on MIG and 8 Ball. I'm from Oside SD, CA but I had to look a while back to see if I was being progressive or regressive. In no way is hip hop progressive, with the exception of a very small minority like Dead Prez. It's impossible to extract a positive role in the revolution when your mind is bent on pimpory and slinging packs! What's worse is with your \$ from exploiting comrades, hip hop teaches to purchase the goods of the imperialists. The hip hop industry is grossing billions to ensure we are notoriously hypnotized and killing each other for the most idiotic of ideas.

I'm disgusted that something that could be such a huge asset to the liberation of nations all over the world is the main source of ignorant propaganda for the pigs. I don't need to name songs or artists cuz anyone who can formulate the words coming out of the speakers knows. I understand that the skill it takes to be a popular musician and a lot of these people come from backgrounds that this is one of the few skills they developed besides running and thugging, so if hip hop is to be an asset we all have got to teach these artists that the pictures they are painting are influencing more people to stroll down a path that destroys themselves, others, their communities and ultimately their culture.

I'm sure that will be a major struggle of its own because these high level execs will not forsake their deals to teach us that its wrong to be capitalistic. I doubt the U\$ would even have allowed hip hop to become nationwide if they hadn't noticed and curbed the industry toward mindlessness. Look what happened to Ice T when kop killer came out, he was damn near lynched. People nowadays are obsessed with the latest hip hop trying to emulate it in every form and fashion. But hip hop is not only fantasy, it is counter revolutionary.

Don't think it's just hip hop either, it's 99% of all that the U\$ feeds you from sports to TV to movies, anything to keep you perpetuating the system instead of disillusionment. Reality is hard to deal with when you're lulled by the song that soothes the savage beast. If these mediums could be utilized the message would spread fast tho. Dare to struggle, dare to win. All power to the people!

HEY YOU! CONTRIBUTE TO ULK

There is power in artistic formats that is more gripping than an article. People listen to songs over and over again or put some art work on a wall and look at it for years. We always need new original art for the pages of ULK and for occasional public showings/ fundraisers. Read articles in ULK to get topic ideas, or request MIM(Prisons) guide to anti-imperialist art.

And for our more politically astute writers we need to develop and popularize our theory and analysis. When comrades in MIM(Prisons) write articles we ask ourselves if the article would be printed in other publications and if so, what purpose it is serving in our own. If we aren't pushing the revolutionary line forward than we are not part of the vanguard. If we are saying the same things as the liberals or revisionists than we should just work with them, and pool our resources. Remaining an independent Maoist vanguard means upholding the line among the masses and pushing the line forward in our writing and other practices. Below are the upcoming issue topics with deadlines for submissions of articles and artwork. The earlier you submit, the more time we have to send you feedback.

Issue 11: Migrants & non-citizens in u\$ prisons - In this issue we will expose what's going on with the militarization of the border, and migrants as the largest growing prison population in the u\$. We want to hear from prisoners who are not u\$-citizens and those in states like Arizona and Texas where this boom has been focused.

DEADLINE: ASAP

Issue 12: Health Care - There is a lot of hype about health care reform going on in the bourgeois press lately. This issue will talk about how this reform will exclude prisoners and immigrants. It will also discuss the current state of health care in prisons, relating personal experiences to the bigger picture.

DEADLINE: December 15, 2009

Issue 13: Organizing Strategy & Tactics - As primarily prison-based organizations, MIM(Prisons), USW and many of our allies face particular conditions and target a specific population. Factors that affect our organizing include the fact that most of our comrades are behind bars, living among the oppressor in the belly of the beast, and living in the late stage of imperialism as crisis heightens. What are strategies vs. tactics? Which ones are going to push forward the struggle fastest for liberation, justice and equality? How can we improve ULK as a tool for organizing?

DEADLINE: February 15, 2009

Spanish Editor Needed - We are looking for someone to edit articles that comrades translate from english into spanish, checking for accuracy in translation, grammar, and punctuation. You must have great written english and spanish skills. Please get with us if you are interested.

An Open Letter to My Fellow Prisoners of War

by a Wisconsin prisoner
August 2009

Greetings to my brothers in this universal struggle for freedom against the imperialist power structure that warehouses human beings like livestock in grossly overcrowded penitentiaries, where prisoners are forced to live one on top of the other, like new age slave ships. This predominately affects New Africans and Latinos. Being consciously aware of the fact that the injustice system, the United States BOP and the various state DOCs are being used as one of the most effective and detrimental reactionary weapons against the political, economic, and social growth of both the New African and Latino communities.

I was deeply disappointed to hear of the recent infighting between Blacks and Latinos within the Chino plantation. For years now I've heard of the "great Black/Brown divide" amongst New Africans and Latinos in general (Mexicans specifically). I've never fully understood why. As two groups of oppressed people we have a shared history of revolutionary collaboration, from the brave Che Guevara fighting to liberate the brothers and sisters of Angola and Mozambique all the way back to the great

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...Open Letter

General Toussaint of Haiti who led a revolution to free the island of Hispaniola from its colonial oppressors.

Also as an oppressed people we all suffer from the same by-products of American racism. Both our communities share the same poverty stricken ghettos, we're all subjected to the same sub-par educational system from neglected and grossly underfunded schools. And we're both suffering from years of economic suppression, political disenfranchisement, and complete apathy by the racist/classist oligarchy power structure of America towards the daily plight of our people.

And so with a clearly defined and established common enemy and a shared struggle for improved economic, education and social equality, they're a hindrance to our unity and dangerous to the struggle. And if we are to ever get beyond our current turbulent and intransigent relationship we must not focus on the petty differences but unite and rally around our shared interests and common goals. Until there is unity there can be no victory. So until there is victory, the struggle continues.

MIM(Prisons) adds: We share this comrades sentiments regarding recent events in Chino. For years, leaders in California have been working to develop a Peace Summit in the prison system, but these efforts have been thwarted by the administration while the lumpen continue to attack each other. Once a strong example of an organized front for humyn rights, the California prison system now shows how bad it can really get when the state is able to manipulate the oppressed to do their bidding.

Abuse in West Virginia

by a West Virginia prisoner
July 2009

I recently read an article in your ULK#7 that really caught my attention. It was from a New York prisoner who was assaulted by correctional officers. I too was recently assaulted by correctional officers here at Mount Olive Correctional Complex, the Supermax, located in West Virginia where I'm currently incarcerated. I have filed grievances, my family has contacted the governors office, attorney general's office, even local news stations informing them of what happened, and nothing has been done about it. I was recently informed by another CO that the people who did this to me were considered to be "pretty high up on the food chain" around here. Those people include Associate Warden, The Captain, the Prison Investigator, and another Correctional Officer.

I am in need of a civil rights attorney to represent me, but this is a small town. Everyone knows everyone and nobody wants to get involved. What this prison administration doesn't cover up, the government officials in this area cover up for them. I need your help, let's stop the abuse, I'm not the only victim in this prison, I'm just the one who's speaking out against the violence that's taking place inside these walls.

Abuse in Wimmin's Prison

by a Pennsylvania prisoner
August 2009

This wimmin's prison has a lot of corrupt pigs. I was physically and sexually assaulted here. I was put in restraint chairs, strapped in over my shoulders, around my waist, my wrists and ankles as well. I was made to stay in it 18 hours straight. And a few hours later I was put back in and left in it for another 16 hours. I was starved for 17 days straight here.

There are a lot of other abuses here too. My water was shut off for a week. My physical and mental health has declined significantly. I'm refused hygiene. They refused to let me brush my teeth for 10 days. They stole my property, including my children's and family's photos, they stole my incoming and outgoing mail, they denied me my sentence appeal hearing, stopped me from seeing parole, they refuse to transfer me to a out of state prison, they refuse me visits and calls to my family and I have not seen them in over 3 years. They stole my legal work as well.

This place is worse than Iraq. I think I'd rather be there. I rebel. I get them back every chance I get. I put forth lawsuits on them. I have 8 lawsuits against this prison. This is not rehabilitation what so ever. Tax payers pay for their lawyers while I have no one to represent me. I do it all by myself and that's why a lot of prisoners lawsuits get dismissed and they get away with violating us. We should be afforded attorneys as well.

Texas Prison Officers Label ULK Recipients Gang Members

by a Texas prisoner
July 2009

Here on Hughes Unit the gang officers put us on file as members of a gang called *ULK*. A few weeks ago when I was called to the gang offices I was asked a lot of things about your newsletter. I don't see how they can do this when there is no gang called *ULK* at all. I would like you to let all comrades know about what's going on in Texas and what they do to prisoners who get *Under Lock & Key* on Alfred Hughes Unit. Once they put us on gang file they can read all mail that comes to us from anyone, and they can withhold mail and send it back to people. Please send me help to fight this.

www.prisoncensorship.info

Talk of Early Releases with Economic Crisis

by MIM(Prisons)
August 2009

In ULK8 we focused on the economics of u\$ prisons, touching on the likelihood of current economic trends cutting into the bloated government budgets for prisons. While the topic continues to attract a lot of attention, a report on the recently approved budgets for fiscal year 2010 proves to be a bit of a mixed bag.

Since staffing accounts for 75-80% of "corrections" budgets, staff reductions, pay reductions and closing facilities are the most effective and widespread means of cutting costs. But cutting food, health and programming are also widespread in the new budgets.

Overall, spending is going to go down next year, bucking a quarter-century trend. The report had data from 33 states, and 22 of them are reducing their prison budgets. Since then, the biggest prison state, California, has passed a budget cutting \$1.2 billion from the department of corrections (one of the largest percentage cuts across the country). (2) California is also in the interesting position of facing legal pressure to reduce its prison population. Building Serve the People programs to support comrades after release from prison is a more pressing task than ever.

However, MIM(Prisons) is not convinced that this trend will continue, significantly cutting the amerikan imprisonment craze, as some think. This is based on our analysis of the u\$ prison system being about social control and not about making money. If unemployment goes up, we predict that Amerika will continue to push the strategy of paying one sector of society to imprison and rule over another.

As we have explained in ULK9, there are no profits to be made in operating prisons. Like all military and oppressive forces of the state, these are completely non-productive, parasitic operations. Unlike a capitalist industry that tends to minimize labor costs relative to other capital costs, these parasitic operations are set up to distribute fat paychecks to those most loyal to the imperialist system. Hence spending 80% of the budget on staffing.

To put the numbers in some perspective, the \$52 billion spent in 2008 on state prisons in the united States is equivalent to the the Gross Domestic Product of Afghanistan and Nepal combined, for the same year. (3) That's over 50 million people who must run two whole countries on the same amount of resources provided to the 430,000 amerikans employed in "corrections" to run a population of 2.3 million prisoners. (4)

notes:

(1) Scott-Hayward, Christine S. *The Fiscal Crisis in Corrections: Rethinking Policies and Practices*. July 2009. <http://www.vera.org>

(2) Office of the Governor. 7/28/2009

Corrections and Rehabilitation Budget Detail

(3) CIA World Factbook.

(4) Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Arkansas uses Contraband to Control Prisoners

by a Arkansas prisoner
August 2009

I am writing to let you know that all the articles in the July 2009 issue of ULK I agree with. I am a prisoner housed at Varner Supermax in Arkansas and we have it hard here too. The system here uses some brutality as a means to keep us apart. But mostly they use material things (rings, watches, drugs, cell phones, women, etc) as a means to have us at each others throats.

I mean really if the DOC didn't want any of this to get in their prisons then it wouldn't. But they allow it because they are getting kickbacks and it keeps prisoners at each other and not focusing on the real issues. As long as we are at each other then we can never unite and as long as we don't unite then we can't stand for the greater cause. This allows them to treat us like beasts and do as they please.

Here in VSM we are living in filth. Our cells are so nasty. We aren't being given any brooms or mops. Our cells flood every time we shower in them. We have to take a couple paper towels sprayed and clean our whole cell. But we are too busy down here hatin' and trying to get each other knocked off, all for a dollar, that we ain't trying to bring this to the outside attention.

We just can't give up and lay down. Use your grievance systems, write letters, and do what you have to do to let it be known how we are being done. Pushing paper works.

Under Lock & Key

August 1-09

Cellies educating each other

by a Texas prisoner
August 2009



Greetings to all my brothers and sisters and political prisoners. I want to encourage all comrades to promote educational thinking. My cellmate, who is a Crip, took time out of his schedule to teach me how to count. Yes, count. I dropped out of high school in the 9th grade to only have to come to prison and learn math. I'm 37 and my celly is 28. He encouraged me and pushed me to use my mind. We have had our ups and downs inside this cell which is in a high security unit.

The administration does not care if we kill each other, but instead we build each other. He sees my potential and motivated me to use it. Comrades, do not let youth fool you. They look at us as leaders. But if you only want to prove how ignorant and violent you are or "was", they will continue to promote that too.

Failure is falling down and staying there. Get back up! Know thyself.

Kkkllinton Continues Persecution of New Afrikans

by a New York prisoner
August 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters at MIM,

Despite today's harsh realities, my warmest. I have not received the latest MIM newsletter and I know the reason why: *Clinton*.

Today is the 28th of July and the population here just got off lock-down. The reason is simple, "annual tribalism". In fact I wrote to the brothers and sisters at MIM about our last incident around the same time last year.

This year marks the second gang "nonsense" which these CO'S (corruption overseers) love because they get to reap the real benefits of "sectarianism". While we as a people continue to run around with this "thug of the year bops" and claim a "G'd up status or mentality" these sick pigs enjoy the following: punching you and anyone that looks like you and I in the face, kicking out teeth in which the pig who did the most damage (more than 2 or 3 teeth kicked out in one kick) receives kudos from his co-workers, throwing you and anyone that looks like you and I down the stairs while in "full facility shackles". Not to mention 2 - 3 "justified Murders" a year and I can not forget the overtime hours, plus the compensation pay.

Now comes the fun part (notice my sarcasm because I'm laying it down pretty thick.) There was a 8 man rumble in the yard on the east side, which we on the west side had nothing to do with, yet we still suffered 5 days with no showers, small portions of our already inadequate food, groping by some pigs who had no gloves on, and the list goes on and on. I just know that I'm going to hear some disturbing news about brothers receiving their "annual torture" for something that did not involve them. See while some of the so-called "gangsters" bang on each other the "pigs" bang on us all!

I really hope brothers can work it out because as I see it, for the past 15 years it just keeps getting worse. As a brother I try to talk with the vanguards, O.G's, etc. of these gangs in a way that our brother Fred Hampton, Sr. Did with the rainbow coalition. (May his benevolent soul rest in solidarity) We as a people need to bring about a tangible change! We need solidarity instead of hostility. Towards one another, unification is the grassroot for upward social mobility.... Lets Unite!

PEACE AND SOLIDARITY FROM ONE OF YOUR COMRADES AT THE CLINTON PLANTATION

MIM(Prisons) Adds: In our recent censorship report we mentioned Attica Correctional Facility as being notorious for not allowing mail

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Hunger Strike at Camp Hill

by a Pennsylvania prisoner
August 2009

I just received my first issue of *Under Lock and Key* #9 and I must say that I share the same views as my fellow soldiers. I am currently serving time at Huntingdon in the RHU unit. And I wanted to share some of the struggles that me and my fellow soldiers are being subjected to here at this RHU unit.

Me and some of the soldiers that are here with me just came off a hunger strike. We were being subjected to all kinds of oppression: cold food, small portions, people were finding insects and mouse droppings in the food. So we decided to go on a hunger strike. Out of almost 40 people who are here on a quad only about 15 went through with the movement. It's crazy how we are quick to punch each other in the face or stab each other, but when it comes to standing up to these oppressors we fold and let them do whatever they want. They burn us for our rec, food, showers, etc. We place grievances to no avail.

When we speak up about these oppressions they write us up and give us more DC time. Then, to top everything off the hearing examiner here is one of the officers who was assaulted in the Camp Hill riot. Now how can you place someone like that in power? It's simple because when you go in front of him you are automatically guilty weather you are innocent or not. Even if it's blatantly clear that you are innocent it won't matter.

To all my soldiers, know that if you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything, and we need to stand together.

Unity fighting for humane living conditions

by a Texas prisoner
August 2009

On behalf of my brothers here at the Michael Unit, Latinos, whites and Blacks have put our differences to the side and come together to speak out at the administration about our living condition here in segregation.

There's no air circulation in the cells. Officers have come to verify this problem, yet administration has yet to respond to our situation. During rainy days our cells flood due to cracks in the walls. This has been written up yet no response. There's no shower crew, and the showers are rat, spider and roach infested. Due to these conditions a lot of us have broken out in rashes and have been bit by spiders. The only thing we are being treated with is hydrocortisone 10% cream and anti-fungal cream.

We are now putting together a file for our verification. We get no response. this task is not easy because we are shaken down every 3 days in the day or night.

por un/a prisioner@ de Florida
Mayo 2009

Viva la revolución!
Viva el hombre de nación

Si Ud. escribe en español o si le gustaría traducir artículos en inglés al español, Ud. puede ayudarnos con la publicación de las futuras ediciones de Bajo Cerradura y Llave. Este proyecto ayuda a divulgar el pensamiento marxista-leninista- maoísta entre los pueblos de habla hispana, y sobre todo, las semicolonias internas de EE.UU. Si Ud. es bilingüe de habla inglesa e hispana, avísenos aunque no quiera ayudarnos. Si quiere entregar artículos en español, hágalo (de todas maneras nos ayudaría recibir sus cartas en inglés, si es que Ud. sabe escribir en inglés).

I'd like to know from ULK readers who are active LO how they define revolution and what makes them revolutionaries, what are the actions they've taken to enlighten other LOs that could possibly be continued in other prisons throughout the u.s.