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CHAPTER
THIRTEEN

Pancho McFarland

'Here is Something You Can't Understand...' Chicano Rap and the Critique of Globalization

"Truth sparks revolution and is therefore labeled violent"

(PSYCHO REALM, "LOST CITIES," 1997)

It seems to me that the single most important trend facing Chicanas and Chicanos today is globalization and, more specifically, economic restructuring in the United States that since the 1970s has caused job dislocation, deindustrialization, lowered wages, increased unemployment, increased poverty, etc. As a result Chicana and Chicano standards of living, like that of most groups, has declined. Moreover, government disinvestments in cities, preferring instead to finance suburban growth, has caused the social ills that we all associate with the inner city. Combine this with few prospects for jobs in the future and few educational opportunities and you have a volatile mix. To all of this we should add the militarization of the city, racist policing practices and "get-tough-on-crime" legislation.

In the midst of this globalized nightmare is our working-class inner-city Chicana/o youth. They have been some of the most acutely affected of all peoples. Now, of course, I am not the first to point this out. Many Chicana and Chicano and non-Chicano scholars and others have analyzed the affects of globalization on our communities. Most have relied on traditional socio-economic data. Few have investigated the analyses provided by young Chicanas/os themselves. In this essay I turn to the poetics of young Brown urban America for such an analysis. More specifically, I read the lyrics of some relatively well-known Chicano rappers.

CHICANA/O YOUTH NARRATIVES OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION

Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Prakash (1998) in their pathbreaking work, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, focus our attention on the fact that while most people in the world toil under the yoke of globalization they have not given up hope and are resisting the dehumanizing affects of neoliberalism and struggling to advance alternatives to it. Stories from numerous places throughout the world suggest an emergent "grassroots postmodernism" through which the world's marginalized resist the logic, structures and behaviors associated with globalization and the "new world order" and construct alternative institutions based on the cultural logic of their local traditions and customs. Esteva and Prakash contend that we must listen to these voices and engage in dialogue with them if we hope to stem the tidal wave of globalization and survive the coming globalization decades. In agreeing with them I assert that the voices of Chicana/o youth present a particular, localized critique of globalization through the narration of their experiences in urban "America." Chicano rappers have taken the lead in presenting this critique to the rest of us through recorded stories (both "real" and "imagined") of inner-city life that if read carefully can contribute to our understanding of the affects of globalization, especially as concerns questions of violence, xenophobia and economic powerlessness.

As a result of the rappers synthesis and representation of the primary concerns of many Chicana/o and Latina/o youth, I want to suggest that these young Chicanos serve as an organic intellectual class for the young, Brown, urban, disenfranchised.[1] Chicano rappers represent the cares, concerns, desires, hopes, dreams, and problems of young inner-city Chicanas/os through their poetics rapped over the aggressive, transgressive rhythms conceived in the smoke-filled rooms[2] of recording studios and private dwellings of the musicians. The following is a discussion of a sample of this Chicana/o poetics.

'HERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND/ HOW I COULD JUST KILL A MAN[3]' :URBAN VIOLENCE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF GLOBALIZATION

Much of "America" consumes the world of gangbangin' Brown youth through media images and the endless refrain of the criminal justice system's discourse that we need more cops and prisons, more military technology and logic, to contain the threat posed by gangs. News stories, yellow television journalism and the gang genre in film render the horrors of inner-city living that has the propagandistic effect of creating an enemy, an Other, out of our youth of color. State and Federal legislative bodies increasingly pass draconian legislation which disregards the human and civil rights of urban youth with the approval of middle-class "America" who lock themselves behind walled communities with neighborhood patrols and purchase the latest surveillance and deterrence equipment to protect themselves from the new "Brown Scourge." [4]

Of course, left out of this hyper-real depiction of the gang threat is the fact that most youth of color, including most inner-city Chicanas/os, are not members of gangs and do not partake in its violent sub-culture and an analysis of globalization, economic restructuring and increased violence directed at young people of color. But, propaganda is never intended to present the facts. The role of propaganda is to establish

the legitimacy of those in power and their acts of violence (physical, economic, symbolic or other); to illustrate the righteousness and benevolence of "our side" and the evil of the enemy[5]. So, it is left to the organic intellectuals, the urban poets, of the barrios to include an analysis of globalization and illegitimate violence on the part of the state in our imaginary of urban warfare.

> They keep order by making street corners gang borders/Beating down King and setting the theme for riot starters/Cop quarters can't maintain the disorder/So they call the National Guard to come strike harder/Rolling deep headed for Florence and Normandy where all you see/Buildings on fire chaos on Roman streets/Hope is cheap sold by the local thief relief from the common grief/Served on a platter shatter your smallest dreams/ Pig chiefs are referees on gladiator fields/We're too busy dodging the sword truth stays unrevealed/Sealed all filled in the federal cabinets/ Classified order through chaos for world inhabitants/.../We go to the streets at night/And fight in the sick-ass side show of mine/We play the government role/And straight up fuckin' smoke the rival [6]

The three Chicano members of Psycho Realm (Jacken, Duke and B-Real) spit these words with vengeance on their second release, *A War Story* (2000). These Los Angeles youth who claim the barrios of Pico-Union and the Rampart District as their 'hoods have since their arrival onto the hip-hop scene in 1997 with their self-titled debut, The Psycho Realm, focused their poetics on the violent environments found in the concrete jungles of Los Angeles. They pull no punches in making testaments to violence in the barrios and locating the cause of that violence in illegitimate state policies.

This song, "Order Through Chaos," analyzes the multi-ethnic Los Angeles Rebellion that followed the 1991 verdict in the case of the police beating of Rodney King. The members of Psycho Realm locate

the violence associated with the uprising as well as that of everyday violence in many L.A. barrios in the state strategies of containment of poor people of color. In stating "they keep order by making street corners gang borders" the authors offer a first-hand critique of the police practice of exacerbating neighborhood tensions.[7] They go on to state "we play the government role and straight up fuckin' smoke the rival." Psycho Realm presents a vivid critique of how the powerful use the divide-and-conquer strategy to undermine potential revolt by focusing people's angst on one another. The divide-and-conquer strategy has the added benefit of causing people to be "too busy dodging the sword" to see the "truth", thus, maintaining elites claim to legitimate rule. Psycho Realm suggests that in busying themselves with fighting each other, many barrio residents remain uninformed of the true nature of their oppression at the hands of the state and the transnational bourgeoisie. In another song from the same album they rap even more strongly that

> We're killing family tragically/The enemy dividing those fighting against it/Weakening our infantry/We caught on to your big plan/Separate us into street gangs/Infiltrate the sets[8] put some battles in effect/To distract from your dirty outfit, yeah[9]

Finally, they assert that the propagandistic function of the media furthers intra-ethnic violence and masks damaging state policies. From "Order Through Chaos" they rap:

> Chaos serves as smoke repeated hoax to screen/ We lose control confused in the midst of staged scenes/Media invented unrelented reports presented/ Often enough to make us think our world's tormented/ Sentenced by momentous news of feuds we side and choose/Use weapons and step in the trap we lose…/All because the broadcast flashed ghetto stars/How much television you watch you tube whores?…/Through TV set nonsense/We sit and fit as the face of violence[10]

In "Order Through Chaos" the Psycho Realm reveal another common theme in Chicano rappers' analysis of urban violence; animosity toward and conflict with "the pig." Many barrio residents have had negative interactions with law enforcement agents including unwarranted stops, searches and seizures, harassment, "planting" of evidence, physical abuse and, even, murder. Increasingly we hear reports of police officers stopping and harassing Latinas/os for infractions such as "driving while brown" and talking with friends. Repressive legislation and police policies have been used to deal with the young "Brown Scourge" including the proliferation of gang databases and a 1997 court order that placed a curfew on "members" of the 18th Street Gang in Los Angeles and made it illegal for more than two identified "gangmembers" to congregate together even though some of the supposed "gangmembers" were family members who lived in the same house. Such measures have promoted further animosity between Chicana/o youth and police officers. No one theme, save for perhaps songs dedicated to marijuana use, has been discussed in Chicano rap as much as young Chicanas/os animosity toward "the pig."

> This pig harassed the whole neighborhood/Well this pig worked at the station/This pig he killed my homeboy/So the fuckin' pig went on vacation/ This pig he is the chief/Got a brother pig, Captain O'Malley/He's got a son that's a pig too/He's collectin' pay-offs from a dark alley…/An' it's about breakin' off sausage/Do ya feel sorry for the poor little swine?/ Niggas wanna do him in the ass/Just ta pay his ass back/So they're standing in line/That fuckin' pig/Look what he got himself into/Now they're gonna make some pigs feet outta the little punk/Anybody like pork chops?/How 'bout a ham sandwich?

The song "Pigs" is off of the 1991 album, Cypress Hill, by pioneering multi-ethnic rap group, Cypress Hill. Cypress Hill's members include a Cuban, Sen Dog, a Chicano-Afro-Cuban, B-Real, and an Italian, DJ Muggs. While some might argue that their multi-ethnic makeup would

disqualify them as Chicano rappers, I believe it appropriate to discuss Cypress Hill as organic intellectuals for the young, Brown urban class and their lyrical analysis as rooted in a young, Chicana/o urban reality. The lyrics are penned mostly by B-Real, a Chicano from Los Angeles, with Sen Dog, a Cuban raised in Chicana/o Los Angeles, providing additional writing. They have consciously decided to rap about what they see and experience on Cypress Avenue (the street where Sen Dog lived) located in a Chicana/o barrio in the town of Southgate.

"Pigs" reflects two common themes associated with young Chicana/o barrio dwellers' understanding of the police: 1) police harassment of Chicana/o barrios and 2) police violence directed at Chicana/o youth. Further, this song plays out a violent fantasy of some Chicana/o youth who wish to retaliate against their oppressors. For many barrio youth their most immediate oppressor and symbol for all oppressors is the "pig." In this song Cypress Hill tells of a police officer who gets convicted of drug trafficking (another common theme in lore about the role of police in barrios) and gets sent to prison where he will not have his "gang" (other police officers) to protect him nor will he have the protection of the state. Cypress Hill raps "'Cos once he gets to the Pen/They won't provide the little pig with a bullet-proof vest/To protect him from some mad nigga/Who he shot in the chest and placed under arrest." The fantasy continues as they discuss paying the "pig" back for crimes he has committed against barrio and ghetto youth. They liken their revenge to the cutting up of a pig into pig's feet, pork chops, sausage and ham. As well, they mention what is perceived in some violent subcultures to be the ultimate act of vengeance, rape, when they say "Niggas wanna do him in the ass."[11]

This song introduces the next theme associated with the relationship between Chicana/o barrio youth and police officers: the criminality of cops. First, they suggest that cops are murderers and then go on to discuss their role as drug traffickers; "He's collectin' payoffs from a dark alley…/This pig works for the mafia/Makin' some money off crack." In another song from their album, "IV" (1998), they discuss the dark

world of the police officer. "Looking Through the Eye of a Pig" presents the ravings of a fictional cop who in his twenty years on the force has become "worse than some of these motherfuckers I put away." Cypress Hill talk about what they believe is the tendency for many cops to use cocaine for the purposes of getting "wired" enough to meet barrio streets with a battle mentality: "Bad dreams all up in my head/No lie/Sometimes I got to take a sniff so I could get by." They also accuse cops of alcohol, as well as drug, abuse rapping in this song from the point of view of their fictional cop: "Fuck I need a drink and I'm almost off/At the precinct it's like an AA meeting all gone wrong." Moreover, Cypress Hill understands the cops' criminality and drug use/abuse to be sanctioned by the state and see cops as a tight-knit group, or "gang," that protects one another either from external enemies such as "criminals" and "gang members" or from the law. Following barrio wisdom about the police, Cypress Hill raps in this song: "I'm in the biggest gang you ever saw/Above the law/Looking through the eyes of a pig/I see it all…/I.A. got an eye on my close friend, Guy/For takin' supply from evidence/A bust on a buy/That doesn't concern me/We never rat on each other/We went through the academy/Just like frat brothers." "I.A." refers to police Internal Affairs office whose mandate is to investigate the criminal activities of police officers and the "supply" they mention is drugs stolen from police evidence rooms.

The song ends with the police officer pulling over a truck because it has been modified, customized, in the lowrider style popular to Chicana/o youth. Again, this formerly illegal practice of "illegal searches and seizures" has become increasingly common in ghettos and barrios. As it turns out the victim of "driving while Brown" is Cypress Hill rapper, B-Real, who gets "framed" by the criminal cop. They end the song rapping:

> What's this a dark green truck/Tinted windows/Dually modified/Probably a drug dealer/ "Pull over to the curb/Take your key out of the ignition/ Raise your hands out the windows/Get 'em in a high position/Don't move or I'll blast your

> fuckin' head off/Don't give me that bullshit/I've heard about your raps/All you're talkin' about is slangin' and shooting off your straps/Okay Mr. B-Real get the fuck out of the truck/I love it how all you fuckin' rappers think you're so tough/Get your ass out/I don't need no probable cause/You got a big sack of coke/So take a pause"

This ending illustrates a common problem for Chicana/o youth who participate in a subculture characterized by their style: baggy jeans, baseball hats, wearing hair short or shaved, lowrider cars and trucks, tattoos, and hip-hop music. The song suggests that the vehicle occupants are innocent and are pulled over and framed simply because they are barrio youth. Cypress Hill connects drug use by police officers with police brutality and harassment of Chicana/o youth. In the song, "Earthquake Weather" (2000), Psycho Realm takes a step further in their analysis of the connection between police cocaine abuse and their violence as they rap, "Split second in time life becomes short/Courtesy of LAPD psycho/Inhaling white coke straight snort."

'MOVING THE REVOLUTION THROUGH USING/ALL KINDS OF MUSICAL FORMS OF CONFUSION'[12]: UNIFYING THE SOCIAL MAJORITIES

Rap artists and enthusiasts have consciously banded together as a community with a unique culture and worldview. They call themselves members of the Hip-hop Nation. This nation is multi-ethnic and multi-racial as are the roots of hip-hop.[13] Chicano rappers have been concerned with making multi-racial and international connections with like-minded people resisting the same forces of globalization. Chicano rappers, Cypress Hill, Funky Aztecs and others, have operationalized Laura Pulido's notion of the "people of color" identity.[14] Pulido notes that within the environmental justice movement in the Southwest Chicanas/os, Blacks and American Indians are developing a movement based on a common identity as people of color. While many grassroots

movements that use identity as a catalyst for social change are exclusive and limit the possibilities for a broad-based multi-ethnic movement, the environmental justice movement has been successful in creating an inclusive identity, "people of color," that has the power to unite people of various ethnic and/or racial groups for the purpose of challenging environmental racism at the regional or national level. However, Pulido points out, and Chicana/o rappers practice, that the "people of color" identity does not preclude the use of one's own particular racial, ethnic or other identity; one need not lose oneself in order to become part of a multi-racial alliance. Further, we can extend the idea of a "people of color" identity to include all of the 2/3 majority and like-minded whites. Chicano rappers have enacted a broad-based multi-racial identity through expanding their audience beyond Chicanas/os and Blacks and, especially, by reaching out to Mexicans and Mexican immigrants in the United States.

Members of Cypress Hill exemplify the unifying project of hip-hop as they have reached out to all who might have a sense of carnalismo with them. Soon after Cypress Hill released their debut album in 1991 they joined the alternative rock tour, Lollapalooza, and began to reach "hippies, stoners and Gen X alternarockers"[15] with their discourse of marijuana smoking and critiques of gang and state-sponsored violence. Moreover, Cypress Hill has been active in critiquing Chicana/o nationalism that overemphasizes Chicana/o solidarity at the expense of a broader working-class and youth solidarity.[16] In a 1994 interview the members of Cypress Hill began a public debate with Chicano rapper (Kid) Frost over this issue. They claim that Frost errors when he focuses too much on "la raza" screaming "Brown Pride" while ignoring other youth who might benefit from hip-hop solidarity.[17]

On the flip side, others, including editors of the hip-hop magazine, The Source, accused Cypress Hill of "selling-out" as a result of their touring with alternative rock bands and marketing their music to white kids. B-Real responded to this critique stating

> You can't stop people from buying your shit. If it's good and it's what you feel, that ain't sellin' out, man. You gotta figure that's introducing your shit to new people, it's making rap bigger. So what if white people like it or not, big fucking deal. If they can relate to it, it's a part of their lives. They always make this cop out that rap is for us, solely for us. Music is for everybody, no matter what color…It ain't about black or white, not for me.[18]

This does not mean that Cypress Hill does not emphasize their Latina/o roots in their music or that they ignore Latina/o youth. On the contrary, they celebrate their Latina/o culture and language (see the song, "Latin Lingo," from their Cypress Hill album) and address issues pertinent to urban Latinas/os. In 1999 they reached out further to the Latina/o audience, especially those "South of the Border", releasing an album of their most important and well-received songs totally in Spanish. The album titled, Los Grandes Exitos en Español, features the Mexican rap group, Control Machete, whose hardcore sound owes much to the trailblazing of Cypress Hill.

Other Chicano rappers who have focused their attention on Mexicans and Mexican immigrants in the United States include the Funky Aztecs. Their two albums, Chicano Blues and Day of the Dead, discuss the everyday violence in California barrios and pay homage to "partying" and marijuana use but also implore Mexicans (both U.S. citizens and non-citizens) to critique the United States government and white supremacy ("Amerikkkan" and "Prop 187") and to organize themselves to take action ("Organize" and "Nation of Funk").

> A Message to the Coconut/No matter how much you switch/Here is what they think about you/Cactus frying, long distance running, soccer playing, shank having, tortilla flipping, refried bean eating, border crossing, fruit picking, piñata breaking, lowrider driving, dope dealing, Tres Flores

> wearing, green card having, illiterate gangmember, go the fuck back to Mexico (Funky Aztecs, 1995, "Prop 187" from *Day of the Dead*. Raging Bull Records).

The narrator urges people of Mexican descent who try to "act white" and invest in the white, middle-class "American Dream" to recognize that "Amerika" and white "Amerikans" do not want them; that no matter how much you attempt to assimilate and become good, upstanding, middle-class Americans, if you are of Mexican descent, you are stigmatized and discriminated against.

Further, they link the narratives of Chicana/o experiences discussed throughout their album to the fate and experiences of Mexicans. The song continues with the menacing refrain, "Secure the Border," repeated over news reports reproducing the new nativism that led to the passage of Proposition 187 in California. Proposition 187 passed in 1994, if upheld, would essentially undermine a fundamental aspect of the founding of the United States, birthright citizenship, by denying citizenship to U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants and denying undocumented immigrants and their children access to public services such as health clinics and public schools.[19] The authors in the excellent edited volume, Immigrants Out!, write that during hard economic times people search for a scapegoat. The initial years of globalization have created uncertain and difficult economic times for most U.S. citizens. Propaganda from think tanks, universities, public officials and the media has placed much of the blame on members of powerless groups such as undocumented immigrants, welfare mothers and gangbangers. This propaganda has led to the dismantling of public assistance programs, legislation increasing prison sentences, prison development, numbers of police officers, and use of military technology by inner-city police forces and the Border Patrol.[20] The Funky Aztecs, aware of the damage caused by the xenophobia and racism directed at people of Mexican descent, reproduce recordings of newscasters, white citizens and others claiming that immigrants are a drain on resources and that we tax paying citizens should not have "to pay to educate

those children and their healthcare." The FA's predict the outcome of Proposition 187 and increased racism by repeating "Proposition 187" followed by a gunshot. They end the song discussing news from Mexico including the two major political assassinations in 1994 and the uprising in Chiapas. We could read this ending any number of ways; as a critique of further propaganda aimed at Mexicans; recognition of the link between globalization, Mexican political instability and Mexican immigration to the United States; a call to arms for Mexican (American) peoples and a threat to U.S. elites. I believe that the Funky Aztecs probably intend to suggest all of these and more.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, the hip-hop community has always been multi-racial and continues to forge a multi-racial alliance in building their "Hip-Hop Nation." This act of multi-racial community formation resists globalizing forces that undermine multi-racial solidarity through fostering xenophobia and racism. Increasingly, rappers are looking internationally for sources of carnalismo to increase the ranks of their cultural movement. Chicano rappers have naturally looked Southward to Mexico to create bridges over the Border in attempts to transnationalize the hip hop community. As William Robinson suggests countering transnational capitalism (globalization) requires building "a transnational class consciousness and a concomitant global political protagonism and strategies that link the local to the national and the national to the global."[21] Chicana/o rappers have done this through linking globalization, political instability in the U.S. and Mexico, racial stereotypes, nativism, and violence and repressive legislation aimed at people of Mexican descent, and reaching out to broader Latina/o and non-Latina/o audiences.[22]

However, we should be aware that within the Hip-hop Nation women are marginalized and often represented in rap lyrics in extremely negative ways. First, female rappers have had a very difficult time breaking into the "game" and when they do get a record deal their lyrical content, image and success are heavily monitoried, mediated and controlled by record executives. In a 1997 interview pioneering female rappers Salt-n-Pepa, MC Lyte, Mia X and others discussed the trials and

tribulations of women trying to break into the rap game.[23] Mia X commenting on how male rappers have made it difficult for females stated "I've never had a problem with a sister that I've met that's rhyming, but I've had problems with men, always men, writing this and saying that about our lyrics." Asked about having to compromise themselves "in entering the male-dominated hip-hop industry" the female MCs agreed that record labels try to control your image, appearance, lyrics and music.[24]

As well, images of women in rap lyrics and videos often present them as mere sex objects. For evidence of this problem in rap, one need only tune into Black Entertainment Television (BET) on any weekday afternoon to see images of scantily clad Black women dancing as "video `hos." Rarely are women depicted as protagonists in rap videos. Rather, they exist in the videos as titillation and to further aggrandize the male rappers who demonstrate their prowess through their association with these unrealistically beautiful women. As rap has become more corporatized (that is, gone from ghetto streets to Wall Street) and an increasingly important part of the global entertainment industry, these images of women have become increasingly devoid of substance and unidimensional. Once again, globalization has taken deeply entrenched notions of race and sex and turned them into a profit. The music industry has taken the battle of the sexes within minority communities combined it with old Anglo-European notions of the "Jezebel" or "Latin spitfire"[25] updated it with a dance beat and packaged it for international consumption.[26]

This analysis of rap does not intend to let the young Black and Brown MCs off of the hook for presenting tales of conquering women and explicit discussions of women as mere whores. Certainly, the young men must analyze their own sexism if they are to be truly revolutionary in their rhetoric and behaviors. However, I believe that there are openings in rap for such self-reflection. Many young men have rethought their understanding of women and posed challenges to other male rappers in their lyrics.[27] Another important opening for challenging the phallocentrism of rap and the sexist images in its lyrics comes from a

new wave of female MCs who have projected positive, multifaceted images of women in their videos and songs. Female rappers have taken the discursive and everyday resistance of women of color to the patriarchy and critiqued their brothers in the Hip-hop Nation and the misogyny of Western society that they often emulate.[28]

As with many male-dominated liberation movements such as the Black Power Movement or the Chicana/o Movement,[29] men within the Hip-hop Nation have marginalized women. They exhibit in their lyrics and behaviors a use and abuse of the male privilege afforded them in a sexist society. Such a stance seems hardly revolutionary to women who lose privilege and are harmed as a result of Black and Brown men accepting from greater U.S. society an uncritical, sexist definition of masculinity. So, it is hoped that while the Hip-hop Nation continues to define itself in the face of globalization and the co-optation of its culture by corporate America, its ideology and gender analysis will evolve beyond its current "parroting" of the sexist norm in U.S. society.

LA ORDEN DEL NUEVO MUNDO, NO, NUNCA![30]: CHICANO RAP'S 'GREAT REFUSAL'

Chicano rap narratives vividly illustrate the consequences of urban decay resulting from globalization. Their stories of violence, murder, drug use and trafficking, police repression and poverty contribute to a theorization of globalization from barrio streets. Their narration of urban dystopia puts brown faces on statistics concerning urban neglect, decreased job opportunities and hopelessness in Chicana/o U.S.A. Their "armed-with-words" response to the war waged by the transnational bourgeoisie and their conscious rejection of the middle-class lifestyle reflects a Great Refusal[31] shouted by many throughout the 2/3 world.[32]

In the place of globalization and the violence attending it Chicana/o rappers and other members of the Hip-hop Nation are building a multi-

racial community based on love for one another and free expression. This utopic model is, of course, not always followed by practitioners and enthusiasts of hip hop. Rappers have often illustrated racism and vehement hatred toward other members of the Hip-hop Nation resulting in a few isolated acts of violence. Further, the pervasive sexism and homophobia in rap turns the utopic Hip-hop Nation upside-down for women and gays and lesbians. Nevertheless, Chicano rappers[33] (who have mostly stayed away from sexist and homophobic images in their music) have begun to illustrate ways in which to unify "people of color" and other marginalized people through "love for the `hood."[34]

Footnotes

1 In theorizing the concept of "organic intellectual" in contrast to the "traditional intellectual" Gramsci (1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York:International Publishers, p. 6) writes that "[e]very social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields." Excepting the vanguardist role that Gramsci reserves for the organic intellectual, this concept can be useful for understanding the role that rappers play in their community. That is, Chicano rappers serve the function of solidifying a self-understanding for Chicana/o youth in urban "America." I use the term "solidifying self-understanding" as opposed to the Gramscian-like construction of "giving an awareness to" because I contend that the intellectual material from which rappers or any other organic intellectual develops her/his knowledge of the world results from an embeddedness in her/his community and interactions and an interdependency with her/his community's customs and traditions (its epistemology, ontology and social structures). While rappers may present new understandings that serve a pedagogical function for their constituency, their cultural production owes a great deal to the community wisdom in which the rappers were socialized. Moreover, Gramsci's concept is apt given that the aforementioned discussion of Chicana/o youth's role in the international economy allows us to conceive of urban Chicana/o youth as a class with a specific, unique, and "essential function in the world of economic production."

2 The use of marijuana in rap and hip-hop culture is well-known and celebrated on songs too numerous to mention here. A cursory look at the lyrical content of the rappers discussed in this essay reveals several "cuts" devoted to the pleasures and politics of marijuana consumption. It is beyond the scope of this essay to detail the use of marijuana and the uses to which it is put in the hip-hop community. Suffice it to say that we can not underestimate the importance of marijuana to the evolution of this form of cultural production.

[3] These well-known lyrics come from the group Cypress Hill. The song title is "How I Could Just Kill a Man" from their debut album, *Cypress Hill* (1991).

[4] Davis, op.cit.

[5] Pease, S.E. 1992. *PSYWAR:Psychological Warfare in Korea*, 1950-1953. Harrisburg, PA:Stackpole Books.

[6] These lyrics were downloaded from the world wide web at the following address: http://www.angelfire.com/mi2/cypress2/prii21.htm. The web has been an important site for the development of hip-hop culture during the 1990s. Besides reprinting the lyrics for thousands of rap songs, rap enthusiasts can discuss issues around their favorite artists (including the politics of their lyrics), read or write biographies of artists, and read about contemporary issues pertinent to the existence and survival of hip-hop culture including legislation, recent public debate on music, and insights into the recording industry.

[7] The fine documentary, *The Fire This Time* (Holland, R., 1995. Rhino Home Video) offers a similar critique of state practices which contribute to inner-city fratricide through exacerbating gang difference, allowing for and encouraging weapons distribution, and the government's role in the crack cocaine trade. See also Scott, P.D. and J. Marshall, 1998, *Cocaine Politics:Drugs, Armies and the CIA in Central America*. Berkeley:University of California Press. Along the lines of *The Fire This Time*, *Cocaine Politics* and Mario Van Peebles' critique of the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) abuses against the Black Panther Party (BPP) in the movie, *Panther* (1995; see also Churchill and Van der Wall, 1988. *Agents of Repression:The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. Boston:South End Press), Psycho Realm offers the following in "Conspiracy Theories": "The masterplan don't include us so they shoot us/Supply weapons, coke, crack and buddha/Keep track of who took the bait through computers/Enslave and regulate the 'hoods through the *juras*/We're all victims as the plot thickens/Better recognize the big plan the clock's ticking." "Buddha" is hip-hop slang for marijuana. The reference to computer surveillance alludes to the practice of authoritarian states to continuously monitor its citizens, especially rebels and "criminals." In the *barrios* of the United States this takes the form of gang databases and a sophisticated national FBI data center. "Jura" is Chicana/o slang for the police.

[8] "Sets" is another term for gang.

[9] These lyrics come from the song, "Enemy of the State" (2000).

[10] This analysis of the propagandistic function of the media which causes people to believe that "the face of violence" is a young and Brown one is illustrated in the following lines from the Chicano rappers, Funky Aztecs, on their song "Nation of Funk" (*Day of the Dead*, 1995): "Ever since you saw American Me/ You're scared of me."

[11] I must note here that this form of domination stems from a deep homophobia and sexism in Chicana/o and Black American culture. The reason that this is seen as the ultimate act of vengeance is because the person committing the rape turns the raped into either "his bitch" or a "fag." In our sexist, homophobic society it becomes the ultimate expression of heterosexual male superiority through symbolically creating an inferior woman or homosexual out of the victim.

[12] These lyrics come from the Psycho Realm's song, "Moving through Streets" (2000).

[13] See Hebdige, D., 1987. Cut 'n *Mix:Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*. New York: Methuen.

[14] Pulido, L. 1996. "Development of the "People of Color" Identity in the Environmental Justice Movement of the Southwestern United States." *Socialist Review*. 26:3-4:145-180.

[15] Trakin, R. n.d. "In the Temple with Cypress Hill." Cover Story. Web magazine.

[16] Their practices and critiques echo an important discussion in Chicana/o studies about the continued reliance on outdated cultural nationalist models that cause researchers to study Chicana/o history and contemporary experiences in a vacuum as if Chicanas/os have not had contact with any other marginalized and/or working class peoples. This type of Chicanocentrism has distorted history and has been detrimental to the formation of interethnic alliances between Chicanas/os and other social groups that constitute the social majorities. Furthermore, Chicana/o parochialism limits even our ability to fully understand Chicana/o experiences because without an analysis of globalization and the location of Chicanas/os in the new world order vis a vis groups throughout the world we are unable to accurately assess the ideologies, structures, and policies that negatively impact Chicanas/os. See Darder, A. and R.D. Torres. 1998. "Latinos and Society:Culture, Politics, and Class." In Darder, A. and R.D. Torres (eds.). *The Latino Studies Reader:Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford:Blackwell Publishers., pp. 3-26.

[17] This interview appears in Cross, B. 1994. *It's Not About a Salary:Rap, Race and Resistance in Los Angeles*. Berkeley:University of California Press. Frost (formerly Kid Frost) has been described as the "Godfather of Latin Hip Hop" by Brown Pride Online (www.brownpride.com). Frost had the first Chicano rap hit with "*La Raza*" (1989, Hispanic Causing Panic).

[18] Dumisani Ndlovu. N.d., "Back with a Boom:Cypress Hill." Cypress Hill homepage.

[19] For a detailed account of Proposition 187 and the causes, affects and consequences of the "new nativism" see the various chapters in Perea, J.F. (ed.). 1997, op.cit.

[20] Dunn, op.cit., Davis, op.cit.

[21] Robinson, 1996, op.cit., p. 27.

[22] An important critique of hip-hop as a revolutionary social movement argues that the methods and much of the ideology of these young people are steeped in patriarchy and patriarchal notions of masculinity and sexuality. Often the violence discussed in rap songs celebrates armed defense (and offense) as a solution to problems attending globalization. Many women and peace advocates would challenge this masculinist solution. It is important to note, however, that most of violence discussed in rap is a critique of intra-racial violence and state violence and that rappers are involved in a grassroots "stop the violence" campaign. Finally, the promotion of consumerism and the fact that rap music is part of global music industry are certainly not revolutionary and, in fact, maybe exactly what the fight against globalization is all about. Further, one must question the degree to which corporate control mediates the politics of rap music. Again, the hip hop community is challenging the global circuits of cultural diffusion and commodity exchange through grassroots entrepreneurship and "underground" promotion and organization of the hip hop nation.

[23] Few Latinas have been successful as rap artists. The current most notable Latina MC is Hurricane G., a *Puertoriqueña* from New York.

[24] McGregor, T. 1997. "Mothers of the Culture." *The Source*. 97 (Oct.): 115-122.

[25] Patricia Hill Collins in her excellent article, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images" (in Black Feminist Thought. Boston:Unwin Hyman, 1990, p. 67) theorizes that "portraying African-American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women's oppression." For a discussion of Latina images in film see Fregoso, R.L. 1993. *The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture*. Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press; Noreiga, C. (ed.). 1992. *Chicanos and Film:Essays on Chicano Representation and Resistance*. New York:Garland; Wool, A.L. 1980. "Bandits and Lovers: Hispanic Images in American Film." In Miller, R.M. (ed.). *The Kaleidoscope Lens: How Hollywood Views Ethnic Groups*. J.S. Ozer. Pp. 54-72.

[26] In December, 1999 as I watched BET's "100 Greatest Videos of the Millenium" I noticed that while women were marginalized and sometimes presented as sex objects in the rap videos and lyrics of my childhood they were not commodified in the same way as they are in today's corporate rap industry. The few women presented in early rap videos were women just like any other we might find in our neighborhoods. The central problem in early rap was the lack of female representation. Today, nearly ever rap video requires women with unrealistically large breasts strutting or, more often, dancing, seductively for the pleasure of the male rappers and the adolescents watching on the television screen. While I have found no direct causal evidence between the increasing corporatization of rap and the increasingly pornographic images found in rap videos, I suspect, at least, an indirect relationship between the two.

[27] For such an interesting transformation see the later recordings of Tupac Shakur (Makaveli, Killuminati:The Seven Day Theory and songs such as "Keep Your Head Up," "Dear Mama" and "Baby, Don't Cry") and Goodie Mob ("Beautiful Skin").

[28] An analysis of the themes of female rappers is beyond the scope of this essay. However, many of the female rappers mentioned earlier and new rappers such as Lauryn Hill, Solé, Rah Digga, and Eve have taken on themes of domestic violence, rape, and sexual and economic powerlessness. Others have, of course, capitulated to corporate greed and teenage desire for sexual images through presenting themselves and other women as sex objects.

[29] See works by Chicana feminists who discuss the battle of the sexes during the Chicana/o Movement. Anzaldúa, G. (ed.). 1990. *Making Face, Making Soul:Haciendo Caras*. San Francisco:Aunt Lute; Broyles-González, Y. 1994. *El Teatro Campesino:Theater in the Chicano Movement*. Austin:University of Texas Press; García, A.M. (ed.). 1997. *Chicana Feminist Thought:The Basic Historical Writings*. New York:Routledge.

[30] These lyrics come from the Psycho Realm song, "Premonitions" (1997, Ruffhouse Records).

[31] Marcuse, H. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man:Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston:Beacon Press. Marcuse suggests that an important aspect of a revolutionary social movement is the rejection of capitalist society and its logic. He notes that art (including rap?) in its most "advanced" and political form serves as an important catalyst for this form of social protest.

[32] Esteva, G. and M. Prakash, op.cit.; McFarland, L., op.cit.

[33] I have concentrated on a few relatively well-known Chicano rappers from California. For a list and discussion of dozens of Chicano rappers see the "Brown Pride Online" homepage at www.brownpride.com.

[34] This quote comes from Chicano rapper Frost's song, "Nothing but Love for the Neighborhood," on the compact disc, *Smile Now, Die Later* (1995, Ruthless Records).