

## Brownman's CPT 2015 Global perspective

### Gameplan

-- read below

In 1913 Randolph S. Bourne essentially said (and I'm paraphrasing so you guys don't get beat up by the language) – radical youth seem to want all or nothing. They either want to engage in something that will bring revolution and transformation all in one blow – or doing nothing. This is wrong, feels Randolph Bourne – because there are other ways to seek expression and work to harmonize besides an all-or-nothing singular act of change.

Author Cornell West, who wrote Democracy Matters believes – as I do – that hip-hop has been voice for the criticism of governing powers since it's beginnings.

In 1997 Public Enemy rapper Chuck D said : “We're media hijackers dedicated to the preservation of the Black mind. Everytime we checked on the news for ourselves, they were locking us up. The interpretation and story-telling coming from Rap was a lot clearer. Rap is the Black CNN”. He felt hip-hop was better at informing black people about the state of Black America -- than the news.

But that was then... and hip-hop enjoyed only a relatively brief period as a mouthpiece for Black America to discuss topics of social oppression and perception (82 to the new millennium). I cite 82 cuz that's when Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5 dropped "The Message" - which is one of the earliest manifestations of Hip-Hop the articulated the pain, struggle and trials of living in the Bronx during the Ronald Reagan era. The chorus was "Its like jungle sometimes, it makes me wonder how I keep from going under" Let's look at those lyrics :

My brothers doin' bad, stole my mothers TV  
Says, she watches to much, is just not healthy  
"All my children" in the daytime, "Dallas" at night  
Can't even see the game or the Sugar Ray fight

The bill collectors, they ring my phone  
And scare my wife when I'm not home  
Got a bum education, double-digit inflation  
Can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station

Don't push me, 'cause I'm close to the edge  
I'm trying not to lose my head

But then -- in the new millennium, the focus of hiphop started changing.

In 2003 KRS-One said "The state of hip-hop is that it's being negatively exploited by the reoccurring industries of America who manipulate it's public image to sell the fantasy of being a thug, getting chicks and having money to predominantly young white rap fans that are impressed by such behaviors. On the one hand it is hip-hop's rebellious image that attracts young people. However, the real lives of those that live around thugs, pimps and drug dealers – are far from being just fantasies of defiance that you can turn off and on when you want to feel sexy or macho! The real lives of those that are affected by injustice, lawlessness, and corruption created hip-hop as a way out of oppression".

Cornel West in his book "Democracy Matters" states "hedonistic values and narcissistic identities produce emotionally stunted young people unable to grow up and unwilling to be responsible democratic citizens. The market driven media lead many young people to think that life is basically about material toys and social stats. Democratic ideas of making the world more just, or striving to be a decent and compassionate person are easily overlooked."

Essentially he's saying the self-indulgent values the media (like tv and radio) show down our throats create young people unwilling or unable to take responsibility for their own lives and contribute to the society they live in -- because they've become emotionally stunted. Media bombardment not only robs young people of their right to struggle for maturity – by glamorizing individual possession at the expense of community-based individuality. Cornel also feeling it leaves youth ill equipped to deal with the spiritual malnutrition that awaits them after their endless pursuit of pleasure. Drug use, excessive sexualization, an addiction to social media and endless online distractions are often the end result.

BUT -- some youth do persevere and prevail – those who are dissatisfied with material toys and illusions of security. They hunger for something more, thirst for something deeper. They want caring attention, wise guidance and compassionate counsel. They want ways to channel their longings into mature efforts to contribute in a meaningful way.

Conscious Hip-hop was born from rage against excesses and amorality and was created by talented black youth in the hoods of America's chocolate cities. It has been a transformative force in the entertainment industry and cultures around the world. The fundamental irony of hip-hop is that it has become viewed as a nihilistic, macho, violent bling phenomenon – when in fact its originating impulses were a fierce disgust with the hypocrisies of adult culture - disgust with the selfish, capitalist callousness and xenophobia of a culture of adults.

The first stage of hip-hop came from the margins of society, truth telling about black suffering and resistance in America. And it was powerful. The lyrics and rhythms of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Kool Herc, Rakim, Afrikaa Bambaataa and above all Krs-One, Chuck D and Guru (from Boogie Down Productions, Public Enemy and Gangstarr respectively) would change the world.

Like the forms of black music in the past, hip-hop seized the imaginations of young people across the globe. Prophetic hip-hop has told painful truths about Black America's internal struggles speaking up on issues such as how decrepit schools are, how inadequate health care, the state of unemployment, the proliferation of drug markets in urban centers. These issues have wounded many souls and hip hop, in the golden era, became a way to talk about it -- LOUDLY.

So let's take a look at hip-hop history and it's genesis... and then we'll take a look at hip-hop culture and

-- jump to **Brown's hip-hop history document** -- tell the stories of **Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa & Grandmaster Flash, stop at 1976**

## HIP-HOP HISTORY

(Notes from Brownman Ali's hiphop lecture 2014)

How many know the boroughs of New York?

How many of them?

Name them...

Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx, Staten Island

Where was hiphop born? In one of these 5 boroughs... guess.

Historians have traced the roots of hip-hop to it's birth in the South Bronx, and I'm here today to tell you it's story.

### 1974

On Aug 11, 1973 Cindy Campbell was to have a birthday party and she asked her little brother if he would play some records at her party. They lived at 1520 Cedrick Ave in the South Bronx in the projects. The projects had a big community centre that the tenants could use, and they planned to hold the birthday party there and Cindy wanted her brother Clive to deejay the party. Clive Campbell was known in the streets and on the b-ball courts, due to his size and stature as **Kool Herc**.

Before we go on - let's stop and define something.

A **DJ** - or disc-jockey - was then someone who put on a record, introduced it, let the song play, then said a few words after it was over. This is what DJs did on the radio. They were both the disc jockey and their own master of ceremonies -- or MC. But Cindy's brother came from the Jamaican tradition where there was a **deejay** -- and they did something different -- he would play **SELECTIONS** of a song... and often not even the full song -- often **JUST** the breaks -- the section in a James Brown tune where the band cut out and all that was left were the drums. He would drop the needle right at the beginning of the of the break and play

ONLY that part of the song... once the break ended, he'd then lift the needle back up and go back to the beginning and do it again. While the needle was in the air, he would get on the mic should things out to get the party reved up... his famous saying was "rockin with the rockers, jammin with the jammers Kool Herc herc herc herc..." and BAM he's start that section of the record again. This would go on for HOURS with kids dancing to these breaks.

That party on Aug 11 was so successful that the building manager asked him to play every week at the community centre. But the centre only held about 100 people and the party quickly got so big it was in the streets. Now Herc was of Jamaican decent... and on the island of Jamaica they know sound systems, and they know BIG sound systems. So what they did was assemble, in the park next to this community centre in the South Bronx, giant speakers each run by their own amps... and a number of turntables. In those days usually 3. And when they wanted to jump from a break in one song, to a break in a different song, they would have to turn the amp on deck 1 down, and turn the amp on deck 2 up. And this would go on all night, until sun up. These parties would become legendary, and because it was in a park - 100's would come out in force.

Those who were dancing called themselves B-boys and B-girls (cuz they were dancing to breaks), and Herc who were dropping needles on specific parts of records called himself a DJ to differentiate that gig from what a DeeJay did. As the parties grew his time on the microphone grew, shouting the names of his friends out, and generally getting the crowd amped up. Herc was not only the first DJ, he was the first MC... and MC'ing back then wasn't rhyiming, it was just yelling at the crowd.

So:

Deejay - introduces a record, plays the record & talks about it

DJ - manipulates how the record is presented to the public.

Back then - the DJ was also the MC.

It's important to note that Herc was also a dancer - a B-boy and was a graffiti artist.

So he was a DJ, MC, B-boy and Graffiti artist.

This important and we'll come back to why soon.

So let's jump forward a year to

## **1974**

Kevin Donovan was gang leader in the South Bronx, which like most of NY was overrun with gangs (1981 movie - Fort Apache, The Bronx - deals with some of this). They called him Freight Train. So UNICEF comes to the Bronx with an essay writing contest, whose winner would get sent to Africa. This crazy gang leader sign up. He writes a giant essay on Africa -- and wins! So they send him

to Africa. There he meets a Zulu chief. The Zulu chief tells him that this thing that you call "gangs" in New York, we call "tribes". Africa was colonized by Europe because of Tribal warfare. The lesson -- you will all lose everything if you keep fighting each other. So Freight Train came back to America with a new consciousness and started calling himself Afrika Bambaataa.

He - a former gang leader - went around to all the gangs and convinced them to stop the fighting. That we were all one people -- a Zulu nation. And in 1974 - the gangs put aside their issues and started studying "knowledge of self". This is what Afrika Bambaataa did.

So let's go back to Kool Herc.

In 1973 he was dropping needles on records, getting crowds to dance to breakbeats while yelling fun madness on the mic. His name became known across America and he would become the poster child for this new (then unnamed artform). Now remember -- Herc was a DJ, a B-boy, a graf artist and an MC -- which is where hiphop gets it's 4 core elements.

Afrika Bambaataa would then pick them up and say these 4 elements are going to be backed up with 4 characteristics of the human condition - peace, unity, love & joy (ie - having fun). In 1981 Bambaataa did a record with James Brown documenting this on a tune called "Unity" where the chorus was "Peace, Unity, Love & Havin Fun". It was Bambaataa who first defined these as the core principles of hiphop - peace, unity, love & joy.

73 - Kool Herc introduces hiphop to the world

74 - Afrika Bambaataa comes back from Africa, deads the gangs and says hiphop is a culture... it's about peace, love, unity and joy. And got a population to agree!

**1974:** After seeing DJ Kool Herc perform at block parties, Grandmaster Caz, Grandmaster Flash, and Afrika Bambaataa start playing at parties all over the Bronx neighborhoods. Around this time, DJ/MC/Crowd Pleaser Lovebug Starski starts referring to this culture as "**hip-hop.**"

**1975:**

- Herc is hired as a DJ at the Hevalo Club.
- He later gets Coke La Rock to utter crowd-pleasing rhymes at parties (e.g."DJ Riz is in the house and he'll turn it out without a doubt"). Coke La Rock and Clark Kent form the first emcee team known as Kool Herc & The Herculoids.
- DJ Grand Wizard Theodore accidentally invents 'the scratch.' While trying to hold a spinning record in place in order to listen to his mom, who was

yelling at him, Grand Wizard accidentally caused the record to produce the “shigi-shigi” sound that is now known as the scratch. Scratch is the crux of modern deejaying.

**Late 1975:** Certified electrician Joseph Sadler - part-time DJ - was walking home one day in the South Bronx thinking about ways to improve on DJ Herc's methods. At that point in time DJs were all doing what Herc started -- dropping the needle on breaks of records... finding that hot spot, dropping the needle... pulling the record back - drop the needle... and everyone was trying to improve on that. This dude wanted to know how to get the music to continuously play without having to always pull the record and drop the needle. While he's walking, - he kicks a mic toggle switch. It's a switch - with 2 settings... on off. He picked it up and for the rest of his walk home thought about this. On off / on off. So what this certified electrician did was wire this thing up to his turntables so that when it was toggled to the left, the left table would get sound, but the right one would not... and when the toggle was flipped to the right, the right table would get sound, and the left one would not. This part-time electrician and DJ just invented the cross-fader... his DJ name was Grandmaster Flash. Flash would go onto innovate much more in hiphop, including perfecting what Dj Grand Wizard invented -- "scratching", changing the use of the record from not just source material, passively spinning, but now using it as an instrument. He was also the 1<sup>st</sup> DJ to "beat juggle" -- using duplicate copies of the same record, he could play the break on one record while searching for the same fragment of music on the other (using his headphones). When the break finished on one turntable, he used his mixer to switch quickly to the other turntable, where the same beat was queued up and ready to play. Using the backspin technique (also referred to as beat juggling), the same short phrase of music could be [looped](#) indefinitely.

**-- continue with this summary :**

So these 3 stories -- of Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash - signify the development of - a specific kind of music, which included a specific kind of rhythm and 'singing'. As soon as the music spread over the city of New York (and later North America and the majority of the Western World) different aspects of social life also became involved -->

As I mentioned before -- special form of dancing evolved that was guided by the breakbeats: breakdancing, and was used as a way of having non-violent battles.

A special form of hip-hop influenced painting style of art emerged called Graffiti.

And very specific fashion trends were being set by those involved in the culture.

So let's take a look at that culture:

# Hip Hop Culture

Hip - "to know" - consciousness

Hop - "movement"

Hip hop is a collective way of thinking and being.

A collective consciousness.

It's core elements are defined by

**Breaking (physical) / MCing (oral) / Grafitti (visual) / DJ (aural)**

(now expanded by KRS-One to include:

**Beatboxing / Fashion / Language / Knowledge / Entrepreneurialism**

Consciousness

Culture

Product

As a rapper, once you start to understand your own consciousness -- you then can write from it. Writing from consciousness is true hiphop -- most hiphop on the radio today is written from the product stage.

There is continuity in opposites -- how X goes with Y.

Understanding that, leads to understanding hiphop.

## Stages to success in hiphop

Know what your people are thinking (consciousness)

Express it through one of these outlets (culture - 9 elements)

Use those outlets to produce creations (products)

My whole generation was labelled X (Generation X)... we were written off...

nothing came from the government, so in NY we had to find other ways for our minds to survive.

The problem with much of the hiphop today is that it's plagued with lack of consciousness... lack of genuineness...

No culture

No talent

No principles

No virtue

No loyalty (loyalty is to the product)

## Acknowledgement in hiphop

In the South Bronx when hiphop was being birthed, all they had was each other's acknowledgement. The objective opinion from a subjective proxy -- your man. 2 Broke dudes -- 1 kicks a rhyhm... the other digs it and tells him that. Now 2 men benefit, 2 men are enriched. One has a dope rhyme, the other knows a dope rhymer. In the poorest parts of NY - THAT was currency! If your man told you, you were good, that's all you need. The "co-sign" had value. It's how community

is formed, and something that's vitally important in the poorest parts of any urban center.

This acknowledgement was always tied in to a fundamental desire to tell the truths of the world as they saw it in the 80s and 90s. And that truth telling of black suffering and resistance in America was powerful in the 80s and 90s rappers was stark and eye-opening. The next phase of evolution in hip-hop featured lyrical genius and gangster sentiments being intertwined -- Tupac, Ice-T, Ice Cube, Biggie Smalls, Snoop Dog -- their artistic honesty revealed subversive energy and street prowess.

The entertainment industry then began to mainstream the music -- pushing it out to white suburban kids that seemed very interested in more violence ridden, misogynist versions of this art form -- rather than the more critical output of the earlier periods. It's estimated that 72% of those who buy hip-hop are rebellious youth in the vanilla suburbs.

Black Star -- the progressive duo of Mos Def and Talib Kweli -- whose beat we were analyzing the other day -- stated "a lot of rich players are making wack music. I remember when the worst thing you could be was a sell out. Then the sell-outs started running things".

**Lauren Hill states in her song "Loved Ones" :**

"it's funny how money change a situation  
Miscommunication lead to complication  
My emancipation don't fit your equation  
I was on the humble - you on every station"

**DA Smart says in "Where Ya At?"**

"What you trying to pull eating us like cannibals  
Whatever happened to that forty acres and that animal  
Now you trying to use integration just to fool us  
Like Malcolm said we been hoodwinked and bamboozled."

Powerful poetry and insightful social critique right? And created by youths who felt disregarded, demeaned and demonized by the entire system -- from criminal-justice system to the school system to the over-populated prison systems -- many felt used, abused and let down. BUT in the face of all that isn't it remarkable that such vital perspective and fiercely moving messages were all birthed?

And to me - that's the real backstory of hip-hop -- to hear the stories of others... stories you won't hear on CNN... and stories that may inspire you to rise up and incite change.

**So the last thing I want to do is to take a look at some lyrics as case studies in how this culture is using itself as a voice for protest and revolution :**

**2x Grammy winning hip-hop group from Atlanta, Georgia OUTKAST (whose rappers are Andre 3000 and Big Boi) on the track "True Dat" in 1994**

If you understand and feel the basic principles and  
Fundamental truths contained within this muzik, you probably are  
If you think it's all about girlies and cadillacs  
Or maybe you just don't understand  
An OutKast is someone who is not considered to be part of the normal world  
He's looked at differently  
He's not accepted because of his clothes, his hair  
His occupation, his beliefs or his skin color  
Now look at yourself, are you an OutKast? I know I am  
As a matter of fact, fuck being anythang else  
It's only so much time left in this crazy world  
Wake up niggaz and realize what's goin on around you  
Poisonin' of the food and water  
Tamperin' of cigarettes  
Disease engineering control over your life  
Take back your existence or die like a punk

But let me back up a bit and talk about 3 of the most profound voices in conscious hip-hop. Hip-hop history now recognizes that 3 most influential conscious, thoughtful, provocative, revolutionary hip hoppers in the Golden Era of hip-hop (mid-80s to mid-90s) are :

Chuck D from Public Enemy  
KRS-One from Boogie Down Productions  
Guru from Gangstarr

In 1988 Public Enemy set out to create a record with strong social commentary. That record was called "It Takes a Nation of Millions to hold us back".

**Chuck D - Black Steel in the hour of Chaos (from It Takes, 1998)**

I got a letter from the government the other day  
I opened and read it, it said they were suckers  
They wanted me for their army or whatever  
Picture me giving a damn -- I said never  
Here is a land that never gave a damn  
About a brother like me and myself  
Because they never did

I wasn't with it but just that very minute it occurred to me:  
The suckers had authority  
Cold sweating as I dwell in my cell  
How long has it been?  
They got me sitting in the state pen  
I gotta get out, but that thought was thought before  
I contemplated a plan on the cell floor  
I'm not a fugitive on the run  
But a brother like me begun to be another one  
Public enemy serving time - they drew the line y'all  
To criticize me some crime; never the less  
They could not understand that I'm a Black man  
And I could never be a veteran  
On the strength, the situation's unreal  
I got a raw deal, so I'm looking for the steel

**Here's Chuck criticizing the media in "Don't believe the hype"**

But since I gave you all a little something that I knew you lacked  
They still consider me a new jack  
All the critics you can hang 'em, I'll hold the rope  
But they hope to the Pope, and pray it ain't dope  
The follower of Farrakhan  
Don't tell me that you understand until you hear the man  
The book of the new school rap game  
Writers treat me like Coltrane, insane  
Yes to them, but to me I'm a different kind  
We're brothers of the same mind, unblind  
Caught in the middle and not surrendering  
I don't rhyme for the sake of riddling  
Some claim that I'm a smuggler  
Some say I never heard of ya, a rap burglar  
False media, we don't need it do we?  
(It's fake that's what it be to ya, dig me?)

Chorus : "Don't believe the hype, don't don't don't believe the hype"

**In the 90's NYPD police brutality was at an all time high. It was serious how bad corruption in the police was, and they were acting like thugs. Big name comedians like Chris Rock would try and make light of it by putting it into their routines:**

--> Play Rock clip

**But it gets worse the NYPD started hiring black police officers and using them to target black men. The idea being use a black man to deal with a**

**black man. In 1994 legendary rapper KRS-One responded with a track called "Black Cop" on his Return Of The Boom Bap recording.**

--> Play recording

--> Read lyrics

Here in America you have drug spot  
They get the black cop, to watch the drug spot  
The black drug dealer just avoid black cop  
They're killin each other on a East Coast block  
Killin each other on a West Coast block  
White police, don't give a care about dat  
Dem want us killin each other over crack  
Anyway you put it it's a black on BLACK  
Black cop black cop black cop  
Black cop black cop black cop  
Thirty years, there were no black cops  
You couldn't even run, drive round the block  
Recently police trained black cop  
To stand on the corner, and take gunshot  
This type of warfare isn't new or a shock  
It's black on black crime again nonSTOP  
Black cop!! Black cop black cop  
Black cop black cop black cop

**And here on the track "Outta Here", KRS breaks down how he feels about the downward decline of hip-hop stating "all I see are these rap groups fallin' down"... he lists some hip-hop history in this verse, closing with an acknowledgement of Public Enemy's important work, and then an indictment of modern hip-hop's growing failure to be socially conscious.**

It used to irk me when these critics had opinions  
Scott would say "Just keep rappin', I'll keep spinnin'"  
We had a fucked up contract, but we signed it  
And dropped the hip-hop album Criminal Minded  
We told the critics your opinions are bull  
Same time Eric B and Rakim dropped Paid in Full  
Hip-hop pioneers we didn't ask to be  
But right then hip-hop changed drastically  
People didn't wanna hear the old rap sound  
We started samplin' beats by James Brown  
In the middle of doin' My Philosophy  
Scott was killed and that shit got to me  
But knowin' the laws of life and death  
I knew his breath, was one with my breath  
I had nothin' left and it was scary  
So I dropped By All Means Necessary

Another hip-hop group that was a friend of me  
Was a revolution crew called Public Enemy  
It Takes A Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back  
These two albums set off consciousness in rap  
But all along, I'm still lookin' around  
And all I can see are these rap groups fallin' down

**Another group that made big statements about the industry and the government and the systems that govern us was GANGSTARR -- which was the team of DJ Premier and Guru. On the track "mass appeal" he goes after all those young kids who would do anything for fame and fortune, compromising their artistic integrity for mainstream success.**

No way, you'll never make it  
Come with the weak shit, I'll break it  
Step into my zone, mad rhymes will stifle ya  
Lines like rifles go blast when I kick some ass  
A lot of rappers be like one-time wonders  
Couldn't say a fly rhyme if there was one right under  
Their noses, I hate those motherfucking posers  
But I'm so real, to them it's scary  
And with my unique skills, nah, you can't compare me  
And no, we don't make wack tracks  
And all the suckers get pushed back when I'm kicking real facts  
I represent, set up shit like a tent, boy  
You're paranoid cause you're a son like Elroy  
And you'd be happy as hell to get a record deal  
Maybe your soul you'd sell to have mass appeal

**Guru died of cancer in 2010 but before he died he released a track called "Universal Struggle", addressing some of the hardships of life we all endure. I had the great honor of playing trumpet on this recording, and you'll hear him shout out Toronto on the track.**

--> Play tune

So let me tie it all together --> I started this whole thing by saying that in 1913 Randolph S. Bourne said racial youth seem to want all or nothing. He said "they either want to engage in something that will bring revolution and transformation all in one blow – or doing nothing." But the great lesson of hip-hop has been that this powerful artform can and has been used as a way to openly criticize systems we feel victimized by -- be it government, or our relationships, or the oppression we feel from the Universal Struggles we all endure as we live life on the Great Turtle. So I encourage all of you to find ways to voice your own injustices and inequalities ... and maybe raise your own revolution.