

# **The Storefront Church & Hip Hop Movements: Homiez from the Hood**

by

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## **Abstract**

This article explores the frequently overlooked nexus between the development of the African American storefront church in Northern cities and the rise of the urban hip hop movement. The analysis identifies the common socioeconomic factors and divisions that gave impetus to both movements among inner city Blacks uprooted from Southern communities during the Great Migration north. Special attention is drawn to the functional use of “street experience”, common both to the storefront church as well as Black youth culture. The article concludes with the position that the storefront church served as historical antecedent to the more recent hip hop movement.

## **Introduction**

With the advent of new genres in youth culture over the past three decades, many books and articles have begun to explore the complex linkage between various components of African American religious traditions and diverse elements of the hip hop arts, particularly, rap music. Little effort has been made, however, to investigate the strong kinship between the storefront church movement—a unique development within the broader African American religious heritage—and the subsequent hip hop movement of Northern urban youth. Both are historical progenies of similar socio-economic and cultural forces and, therefore, share attributes whose origins and interplay invite further study and critical dialog. The following is one such effort.

Section One (“*In the Mix*”) is an overview of the chief factors that influenced the emergence of both movements and steered their course in parallel directions. Section Two (“*Disturb the Peace*”) examines their respective use of space as a cultural arena to transverse, convert and generate expressive practices. Section Three (“*U Can’t Touch This*”) highlights the functional similarities in their musical products (Gospel and Rap), and draws attention to the dialectical use of “street experience” as a common distinguishing attribute of persona, projected from the hip hop stage with the same drama and allure as from storefront pulpits.

Conceptually, the analysis will move from examining and comparing general trends in the evolution of each movement to specific and distinguishing attributes. For several reasons, the storefront church will be used as a point of reference for profiling commonalities. As one of the earliest and longest surviving Black institutions within our urban neighborhoods, storefront churches are the socio-historical antecedent to many of the aesthetic practices manifested in the hip hop movement. Second, despite their ubiquitous presence within Black urban communities, the traditional storefront church has never been as popular (or as commercially viable) as the more recent hip hop movement. Nevertheless, its influence on young Black artists (rappers included), though subtle and elusive, is deserving of greater scrutiny and appreciation.

The term “storefront church” simply refers to “any structure used for religious activities that was once used for commercial retailing, such as stores, theatres and other house-types.”<sup>1</sup> Although some purists may argue that “storefront churches do not constitute a substantive category,”<sup>2</sup> the term is unambiguous and commonplace in inner city neighborhoods throughout the country and, generally, in the literature. The phrase “storefront church movement” refers to the emergence and proliferation of these institutions between the early 1900s and the mid-1930s, a phenomenon that coincided with the mass migration of African Americans from the rural South into northern urban areas: “Storefront churches may be seen as revitalization movements: they are deliberate, conscious, organized efforts of migrants to create a more satisfying mode of existence by refurbishing rural religious behavior to an urban environment.”<sup>3</sup> Although proof certain is lacking that migrants established most storefront churches, anecdotal evidence suggests these churches first emerged “in cities wherever a sizable migrant population settled.”<sup>4</sup>

All too often, past studies have characterized any religious group that met in a storefront as some exotic “sect” or “cult”.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the religious adherents who pioneered these storefronts were far more diverse in their faiths, teachings, rituals and religious practices than what a critic might infer from externalities, like location and rented quarters. Quite the contrary, storefront churches represented various faith communities: Christian, quasi-Christian, Islamic, Judaic, African nationalists and a host of other faith systems often misconstrued as “fringe” sects and cults.<sup>6</sup> Summing up the eclectic religious landscape of this migratory period, Gayraud Wilmore stated that: “By the end of the 1930s, the black community was glutted with churches of every variety and description.”<sup>7</sup> In time, a number of these storefront congregations, once disparaged as sectarian cults, became well-recognized, independent religious organizations or incorporated into mainline denominations.<sup>8</sup>

With respect to the term “hip hop”, the rap artist and philosopher, Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone (KRS-One), [a.k.a. Lawrence K. Parker], provides a short, but informative, overview: hip hop refers to “the collective behavior of a distinct group of people” or rather ...

True *Hiphop* is a term that describes the independent collective consciousness of a specific group of inner-city people. Ever growing, it is commonly expressed through such elements as Breakin’ (Breakdancing), Emceein’ (Rap), Graffiti art (aerosol art) Deejayin’, Beatboxin’, Street Fashion, Street Language, Street Knowledge, and Street Entrepreneurialism. . . . Discovered by Kool DJ Herc in the Bronx, New York around 1972, and established as a community of peace, love, unity and having fun by Afrika Bambaataa through Zulu Nation in 1974, Hiphop is an independent and unique community, an empowering behavior, and an international culture.<sup>9</sup> [italics in original]

Interestingly, KRS-One’s very broad description elicits several elements found also in the development of the storefront church movement. Only a few such elements are reviewed below, however, in stating the case for an historical nexus between these two movements.

### **“In the Mix”**

The storefront church movement was a sacred phenomenon spearheaded by mostly middle-aged African Americans during the early 1900s. In contrast, the hip hop movement was a secular phenomenon spearheaded by mostly, if not exclusively, young Blacks and Latinos during the mid-1970s. Despite these notable differences, both movements were spatial extensions of African and African American culture; and many of their common attributes derive from this shared heritage. There were other social and economic factors, however, that were crucial links in the causal chain of cultural developments. This section will address how these influences impacted the development of both movements.

With respect to a capitalist economy, the historical socioeconomic context in which the storefront church and the hip hop movements emerged were cyclically related. The storefront church movement surfaced during the “urban-industrialization phase,” a phase that also forced the mass exodus of African Americans from the rural South into northern cities. In contrast, the hip hop movement began its ascendance during the “deindustrialization phase” or postindustrialization phase”. As different as these socioeconomic developmental stages were, when the internal operations of both had run their course, the majority of poor African American urbanites were relegated to neighborhoods where unemployment, substance abuse, crime, anger and despair soared; decent and affordable housing, educational achievement and optimism plummeted; and living-wage jobs, employment training, recreational centers, and other social services were either scarce, temporary or nonexistent.<sup>10</sup> Within this seething caldron of growing social discontent and pending upheaval, both movements were conceived by those besieged with the same problems and similar conditions.

In assessing specifically how the conditions wrought by the industrialization-migration-urbanization phase impacted the development of the storefront churches, most scholars agree on two facts. First, the movement toward storefront churches drew strength and leadership from working African Americans in the lowest economic stratum. Second, the disaffected and jobless or under-employed resorted to using storefront facilities because they lacked the financial resources to build, rent or purchase traditional church edifices.<sup>11</sup> Not all critics agree, however, as to what particular factors drove so many of the urban poor to such a disgruntled state that their only solace appeared to lie in the establishment of their own independent religious assembly.

On the one hand, there are historians who theorize that the main impetus for the quick rise of storefront churches was the convergence of frustration, alienation and demoralization with the harsh realities of dislocation, isolation, and acute poverty. Hans Baer expresses a variation of this perspective by arguing that storefront churches emerged “in response to the displacement of many Blacks from the rural South and the stresses accompanying the processes of urbanization and industrialization that accompanied the rapid expansion of American capitalism.”<sup>12</sup>

In the same vein, but with greater emphasis on the effects of the migration process itself (e.g., population shifts, religious dissonance, cultural alienation), Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson contend that storefront churches mainly attracted three groups: (1) “migrants [who] did not feel at home in the city church”; (2) those suffering from “moral and religious shipwreck because they could not make the necessary adjustment”; and (3) “southern people who desired a church similar in worship to the churches in the rural South”<sup>13</sup>

Introducing class distinctions as a driving influence, Milton Sernett explains that many southern migrants and other poor urbanized Blacks felt that the mainline, well-established, urban churches were “too large, formal, and impersonal” or “too high class” to meet their spiritual and emotional needs.<sup>14</sup> Desiring to hear sermons preached, prayers delivered, and songs performed in a style, language and idiom which resonated with them—but having no funds with which to build or purchase their own church facility—these folks had “no option but to find whatever shelters they could and open up religious shop.”<sup>15</sup>

Given the multiplicity of human needs addressed by storefront churches, Seth Schiene offers one of the best summaries of the complex interplay of determinant factors, including the pernicious influence of racism:

The storefront church performed an important function in attempting to facilitate the adjustment of the rural lower class to the urban North. The storefront provided a congenial environment to meet old friends or to make new ones among persons of similar background in the impersonal city. Its smaller membership made for warmer relations, a greater involvement in church affairs and a sense of security not available in larger churches.

Facing economic hardship, the crowded tenements, the rapid pace of urban life, and the unfamiliarity of the city, the lower class migrant discovered in the storefront a piece of his rural past. These smaller houses of worship, like rural churches and larger urban churches, also compensated for the black man's exclusion from the mainstream of American society. They provided a place of insulation from the discriminatory practices of the wider community.<sup>16</sup>

In studying the causal factors leading to the establishment of so many Holiness and Pentecostal churches—the vast majority of which were storefronts—Arthur E. Paris offers yet another slant.<sup>17</sup> He argues that the migrant's "alienation was much deeper than simply a feeling of being out place in the 'cold formality' of northern 'high-toned' churches." The Holiness and Pentecostal groups were "evangelical and defined the world in religious terms." This along with other beliefs and practices (e.g., sanctification or double cure; baptism in the Holy Spirit manifested by speaking and singing in tongues, trances, dancing, etc.; perfectionism; biblical fundamentalism) caused a rift between them and the mainline Protestant churches.<sup>18</sup> So, the Holiness and Pentecostal groups established their own religious assemblies. These storefront churches offered their members "a nexus of social connections and a web of relationships;" but, most importantly, they provided an "ideological framework for dealing with a new world."<sup>19</sup>

Expanding this same theme, but cognizant of the plethora of "new religions" emerging as independent storefronts, Wilmore cites the rise of the Moorish Science Temple which attracted... adherents from the poor and uneducated who found themselves cast adrift in an unfamiliar urban environment. It drew also from the growing number of restless, inquiring young men and women who were searching for an alternative belief system, greater knowledge and understanding of the world in which they lived, and a more satisfactory way of dealing with the tragic realities of color prejudice in a supposedly free and democratic society. ... The new faith, with its lapel buttons, and red fezzes, and identification cards, opened up a whole unexplored and fascinating perspective on "the black race in Babylon" for black youth, new books to read, a new "scientific view" to conjure with, and a new life style in the drab existence of the great industrial centers of the nation.<sup>20</sup>

Wilmore's assessment broadens the interpretive framework for understanding the rise and proliferation of storefront churches. Rather than view the emergence of the storefront church as a vehicle for recreating an "old identity," he joins other writers in claiming that many of these religious assemblies emerged in response to the "search for a new identity"<sup>21</sup> by urban Blacks uprooted from Southern rural venues. Joseph Washington best articulates this perspective:

The black ruralites moving to the urban South and North who joined the permanent sects did so for the same reasons as the majority members of these sects who were urbanites. They did not wander helplessly into them seeking an intimate fellowship or a primary-group experience so much as *they came determined to establish a new set of attitudes and values in an atmosphere of certainty*. Joining a sect was an intentional act, not an accidental one. Often it was facing up to a personal crisis or an awareness of their true condition of black people that led these ex-ruralites and urbanites to become new persons. As a confirmation of that decision they joined a sect seeking strength. *The religious quickening enabled them to be reborn as new creatures. The organization in its combative and nonconformist stance against the churches and society engendered group consciousness, stability, and confidence. The sect thrived on controversy and its distinction from other religious groups united the members in an exclusive fellowship.*<sup>22</sup> [italics added]

Washington's incisive critique provides a good springboard now for examining factors leading to the emergence of the hip hop movement, a transformation that (much like the storefront churches of an earlier stage) also "furnish[ed] young people fertile spaces for crafting new identities"<sup>23</sup>, supplemented by "specific attire, and a specialized language and vocabulary."<sup>24</sup>

Scrutinizing the extent to which the "postindustrial city" contributed to the emergence of hip hop, Tricia Rose states:

Situated at the "crossroads of lack and desire," hip hop emerges from the deindustrialization meltdown, where social alienation, prophetic imagination, and yearnings intersect. Hip hop is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African American and Caribbean history, identity, and community. It is the tension between the cultural fractures produced by postindustrial oppression and the binding ties of black cultural expressivity that sets the critical frame for the development of hip hop.<sup>25</sup>

In her view, the "cultural fractures" resulting from deindustrialization cover a broad range of social splinters that encompass the "whole way of life" and "social order".<sup>26</sup> The intent here is not to itemize each of those fractures<sup>27</sup>—some of which were mentioned above—but merely to draw attention to their influential role in the genesis of hip hop as a cultural response and outcry to intolerable and desperate living conditions that were seemingly impervious to reform. Derrick Alridge underscores the point that, like other Black cultural developments, hip hop "emerged from the oppression of African Americans and people of color" who were, in this case, living in urban areas marred by "deteriorating economic infrastructures".<sup>28</sup> Michael Dyson elaborates:

Rap music is a peculiar and specific phenomenon produced by conditions under late monopoly capital in postindustrial urban America, where the hemorrhaging of resources in the inner city, the evaporation of social services to address those specific conditions, has left a gaping void in both the culture of African Americans and Americans in general. So the filling of that void and vacuum by rap music is a means by which people sustain themselves and maintain certain forms of sanity.<sup>29</sup>

The postindustrial disinvestments in cities produced a spectrum of interconnected fractures. Hip hop became “like a light ... a great light”, so says the rap artist Defiant Giants.<sup>30</sup> Others saw the new movement as a potential “source of political and spiritual awakening”<sup>31</sup>; or as “a highly dynamic cultural force” which would “bring some equilibrium into existence.”<sup>32</sup> According to DJ Flame (formerly known as DJ Spank of Mercedes Ladies), it was a divine gift because “God allowed hip hop to emerge.”<sup>33</sup>

These statements reflect the euphoric optimism embraced by the movement’s supporters. More difficult is articulating how this movement represented a socially useful response to these rifts, voids and fractures under circumstances where life in the inner city offered no roadmap to understanding and few options for hope. For scholars and hip hop enthusiasts alike, Josh Kun provides a helpful conceptual framework. In his view, the “hip hop nation”<sup>34</sup> refers to “an effort by communities of black youth to *establish political, philosophical, and racial identity through an accessible framework of recognizable linguistic, historical, and cultural markers.*”<sup>35</sup> [italics added] Within this construct, the hip hop movement provided its adherents with the same ideological reassurance as the storefront church movement did for its followers: a “framework of recognizable linguistic, historical, and cultural markers”. The promises embedded within the rise of storefront churches and the hip hop movement brought their devotees a much-needed sense of equilibrium in a topsy-turvy world of change that seldom appeared for the better.

Like the storefronts, the hip hop movement gave young urban Blacks and Latinos a more favorable environment for creating new identities—hip hop identities which fermented into “a way of life.”<sup>36</sup> Although these identities were often as multifaceted, varied and controversial as those in the wide-mix of storefront churches, Rose identifies a number of common components:

Hip hop culture emerged as a source for youth of alternative identity formation and social status in a community whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished along with large sectors of its built environment. Alternative local identities were forged in fashion and language, street names, and most important, in establishing neighborhood crews or posses. ... Identity in hip hop is deeply rooted in the specific, local experience, and one’s attachment to and status in a local group or alternative family.<sup>37</sup>

These “crews or posses” serve as “new kinds of families” that “provide insulation and support in a complex and unyielding environment”<sup>38</sup>; yet they were merely a microcosm of the whole. At the macro-level, the entire neighborhood (the “hood”) served as that connective tissue used for nurturing communal bonds and boosting the morale among those whom George Lipsitz identifies as the “most aggrieved population”: the “materially deprived and culturally despised youth” of the inner cities.<sup>39</sup>

In sum, both movements emerged and flourished amidst comparable social and economic conditions and attracted devout followers with similar demographics and a somewhat ill-defined general yearning for better than the everyday life which seemed to imprison them. These urban areas of social disinvestment—in some quarters, called simply the “ghetto” or “barrio”—came to epitomize the cumulative effects of those conditions wrought by similar periods of economic stress and dislocation. Far beyond geographic parameters, however, the “ghetto” was also a “crucible for ethnic development and culture building.”<sup>40</sup> It was from this seemingly barren terrain that both the storefront church and the hip hop movement sprang forth with vigor and vitality, a driving twin-engine force for further ethnic and cultural development and collective creativity reflecting the social aspirations and cultural needs of their often overlapping constituencies.

### **“Disturb the Peace”**

According to the noted Black psychologist Joseph White, to “create a collective psychological space for African-Americans independent of their oppressor where they [can] generate a sense of worth, dignity, affiliation and mutual support” is both the expression and actualization of the African ethos.<sup>41</sup> Within the cultural context relevant to the Black experience and tradition, both movements reflected this ethos by creating a “social space” where members and supporters could affiliate with one another; build social and other networks; engage in life-affirming and community-sustaining activities; and craft new identities or revamp old ones.

Amplifying the concept, Patricia Collins notes that these spheres, or “safe spaces”, are organizational or institutional structures where negative images can be rejected; “objectification as the Other” can be challenged; oppressive ideologies questioned; and new cultural activities undertaken.<sup>42</sup> Addressing the fundamental human needs implicit in community-accessible safe harbors, storefront churches and the hip hop scene alike established cultural venues where Black people under growing social stress and dehumanization could undertake such activities; and find a welcoming refuge, a degree of soulful solace, and reassurance of the value of their humanity.



Storefront churches and hip hop artists both took great pains to (re)affirm, (re)define, and (re)assert themselves in an environment that sought – early on, at least - to negate their presence and disparage the cultural products of their labor. The make-over included flossin’<sup>43</sup>—without apology—and celebrating—without restrictions—the “be for real” ethnic self which was not accompanied by any “peculiar sensation” that comes with “looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.”<sup>44</sup> Eventually, their conspicuous occupancy of space evolved into what Rose terms a “contestation over public space.”<sup>45</sup> As she explains, the fight for space involves “not just what you say, it is where you can say it, how others react to it, and whether you have the power to command access.” It is a “struggle over context, meaning, and access to public space.”<sup>46</sup>

Poor migrants and other indigenous urban Blacks improvised their own “space” by converting vacant secular buildings into sacred facilities. This represented not only a rebuff to the mainline churches but also reflected poor people’s resolve to be self-determining agents of their own lives and culture, and in charge of their own “urban renewal” program. By becoming proprietors of their own faith-based cultural and ritual spaces, they, in fact, wrote another chapter in the ongoing history of the African American religious freedom movement.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, the fact that the migrants found an imaginative, vibrant and, perhaps, even divinely inspired use for the plethora of vacant storefronts that lined the streets of depressed neighborhood—thereby infusing life into what otherwise would have remained just another patch of abandoned commercial property—was frequently greeted with scorn and hostility from other Blacks. Part of this resentment was fueled by ongoing intra-racial class antagonisms. Others, however, took umbrage at the physical appearance of these “storefront” churches, a reaction that Cheryl Townsend Gilkes terms “edifice complex.”<sup>48</sup> In a recent study of storefront institutions, Omar McRoberts provides some insight as to what may very well have been at the root of certain critics’ aversion to these neighborhood icons:

[S]torefront churches are a transgressive form of religious presence. They are ubiquitous yet out of place. They break tacit societal norms about where and how people should worship. They emerge from the depression of the neighborhood and bluntly remind people of that depression by occupying otherwise vacant commercial spaces.<sup>49</sup>

This “transgressive form of religious presence” is equivalent to what Rose calls the “aggressive public displays of counterpresence and voice”<sup>50</sup> which parallels exactly what Austin terms the “disruption of the normative”<sup>51</sup> so characteristic of hip hop artists. Nearly half a century before hip hop artists began asserting their “counterpresence” in the “hood”, storefront churches had already staked out their own turf in defiance of norms. Herbert Collins observes:

Storefront churches are remarkable on the visual and street level where the symbolic outpouring of rejected people can be observed. ... *[T]he storefront churches add an element of visibility. Through progressively more detailed simulations of conventional churches, the storefronts mount an aesthetic of inscriptions and designs ranging between naïve representations and graffiti.* The facades are painted, papered, curtained, or sheathed, and generally embellished with biblical iconography. ... [E]ven the most shabby stores are emblazoned with neologistic sect names, signs listing the order of services, and posters listing references to biblical passages.

Alienated from the dominant society with its system of racial definition and restricted participation and from the minority society which is not always taken to extreme religious nonconformity, *the storefront churches boldly announce their existence.* The prestigious sect names must be positively invigorating to the members.<sup>52</sup> [italics added]

In addition to asserting a conspicuous *structural* presence, these early storefront churches proclaimed their space in anything but subdued tones. For example, Osofsky reported that in Harlem, worship services at storefronts were typically ...

fervent, loud and boisterous as members felt the spirit of the Lord and shouted and begged for His forgiveness. Tambourines sometimes kept up a rhythmic beat in the background and heightened the emotionalism to a state of frenzy. Neighbors of one storefront church sued the congregation for conducting a public nuisance.” The “weird sounds” which emanated from the building, they complained, seemed like a “jazz orchestra.”<sup>53</sup>

The “weird sounds” during worship—an admixture of jazz, blues and gospel, coupled with moans and shouts—were akin to the “hybrid sound” which Houston Baker associates with hip hop artists, a sound that historically “erupted in [and transformed] seemingly dead urban acoustical spaces.”<sup>54</sup> In any case, the participants from both movements made “fervent, loud and boisterous” noises in the “hood” which others found bothersome and a few tried to silence.

After scrutinizing the litany of criticisms hurled against storefront churches, St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton concluded that: “If we analyze the complaints which middle-class people make against store-fronts, it is obvious that it is not *size* alone that repels them. They are reacting against the type of religious *behavior* which goes on in most store-fronts—and this behavior is not confined to such churches”<sup>55</sup> [italics in original]. Describing in greater detail the type of worship behavior commonplace in storefront churches especially of the Holiness and Pentecostal tradition, Mellonee Burnim gave telling witness: “Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, congregants sang, clapped their hands, shouted, and danced with exuberance to the accompaniment of instruments shunned by the traditional Baptist and Methodist denominations—trombones, trumpets, mandolins—and even jugs. The spirit of the worship was celebratory ... .”<sup>56</sup>

Teresa Reed believes that the enmity towards these storefront churches extended beyond their “charismatic worship style.” She states they were ridiculed and reviled “because of their independence from mainline denominations, their uneducated clergy, and their position on the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder.”<sup>57</sup> The mainline churches considered them to be “an embarrassment and a hindrance to racial progress”; and their “enthusiastic worship” was viewed as being “not only bizarre but actually humorous and fit to be the butt of many a joke”.<sup>58</sup>

What was not immediately apparent to “good neighbors” and other curious onlookers was that these storefront churches were, in part, established so that their members “could be free to sing, shout, clap, emote and praise in a manner to which they were most accustomed.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, they wanted the freedom to “bring the noise”! Storefronts not only allowed congregants the freedom to be expressive but, as Frazier points out, they actively promoted “*the maximum of free religious expression*”.<sup>60</sup> [italics added], reiterating again the African ethos in a new land.

Trying to account for such non-traditional styles and instruments of worship, Michael Harris asserts that the storefront churches were defining and exerting their own “philosophy of worship.”<sup>61</sup> Sernett writes that storefronts “resisted total assimilation into the cultural traditions of the Old Settlers.”<sup>62</sup> Reinforcing the same point, Zora Neal Hurston states that the style of worship by Sanctified churches was, in fact, a “protest against the high-brow tendency in Negro Protestant congregations”, a haughtiness that stemmed from their “education and wealth.”<sup>63</sup>

Adding to the class issue, Evelyn Higginbotham has developed the view that “through the vernacular discourse of religion, the black poor waged a struggle over cultural authority that ultimately subverted the hegemonic values and aesthetic standards of the traditional Protestantism of the black middle class.”<sup>64</sup> Whether these poor urban churches, especially storefronts, succeeded in toppling such hegemony is debatable; but there is little doubt that they served as one of the main venues where the “rural folk, turned urban proletariat,” could compete and offer the community viable alternatives in a number of areas (dress, music, values, race ideology, theology, style of worship, leadership) to the otherwise unreachable Black Protestant mainstream.<sup>65</sup>

That such distance was growing within the Black community is well-stated by Wilmore: “the period between 1890 and the Second World War was one of luxuriant growth and proliferation of many forms of black religion in the United States and Africa that challenged the bourgeoisification of the mainline black denominations.”<sup>66</sup>

Allen Spear frames the issue in such a fashion that it is difficult to ignore the candescent role class played in determining institutional preferences for certain cultural practices.

[T]he emergence of the storefront was *symptomatic of increasing differentiation with the Negro class structure*. For the storefronts were decidedly lower-class churches. ... While the upper-class churches followed formal, decorous orders of worship and emphasized ethics and social concern, the storefronts allowed the widest range of personal expression and uninhibited emotionalism, and offered a salvation-centered religion that ignored and provided an escape from the problems of everyday life.<sup>67</sup>

Although some writers may question Spear’s assessment of the theological orientation of some storefronts, he offers a clear critique of the class-based cultural differences affecting the Black religious community during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other ethnographic studies have documented the same; and the implications for the later development of hip hop are significant. For example, with reference to the hip hop movement, Ernest Allen noted that: “Out of the turmoil of poverty, drugs, and death emerged an African American youth worldview at considerable odds with those of the more stable black working and middle classes.”<sup>68</sup> Echoing a similar sentiment, but with specific reference to rap music, Dyson contends:

“[R]ap music is emblematic of the glacial shift in aesthetic sensibilities between blacks of different generations, and it draws attention to the severe economic barriers that increasingly divide ghetto poor black from middle- and upper-middle-class blacks. Rap reflects the intraracial class division that has plagued African American communities for the last thirty years.”<sup>69</sup>

In fact, intra-racial, class-based aesthetic divisions were manifest decades earlier in the emergence of what was frequently referred to as the “lower class” storefront church movement, one of hip hop’s cultural antecedents. Dyson’s point is well taken, however, in that the hip hop arts, especially rap music, represented “a rejection of black bourgeois sensibilities”; a “refusal to accommodate conservative cultural and political forces” and a push-back to the “tyrannizing surveillance of black speech.”<sup>70</sup>

Beginning in a financial state no better than the storefront church, and with “little access to any actual physical space”<sup>71</sup>, hip hop artists appropriated “free public” (and sometimes, private) spaces which they likewise used as venues to exert and exhibit their sense of self as defined by their art. They took blighted sections of neighborhoods, like those existing in the South Bronx devoid of any “life, energy, and vitality”, and transformed them into “creative and aggressive outlets for expression and identification.”<sup>72</sup>

The hip hop artists’ opportunistic seizure of places, spaces and things as spheres in which to proclaim and display their art was without precedent in the “hood” or elsewhere in urban scenes. Lipsitz acknowledges the magnitude of the physical and aural spaces they hijacked, and the implements by which they did so: these young people, “hemmed in by urban renewal, crime and police surveillance,”<sup>73</sup> “seized the most advanced forms of modern technology to present their experiences and aspiration to a wider world.”<sup>74</sup> They used “their own bodies, ghetto walls and city streets as sites for performance and play”; they wrote “graffiti on subway trains and buses so that their names and images [could] travel all over the city and be seen by strangers”; and they adjusted amplifiers in cars and boom boxes so that their music could “travel freeways and city streets, claiming space by projecting out sound.”<sup>75</sup>

At first, the hip hop movement’s “counterpresence” in the neighborhood was no more popular than that of free expression by the storefront churches. Rose writes: “In a number of ways, rap has followed the pattern of other black popular music, in that at the outset it was heavily rejected by black and white middle-class listeners”.<sup>76</sup>

Before long, the hip hop movement began to be scrutinized by the news media, some African Americans leaders, and government officials. For all the wrong reasons, the power structure reached the correct conclusion that something more than new music was in the making! Ever present, of course, racism precipitated and intensified the dogged harassment of Black and Latino youth who pushed back with ever more popular forms of cultural protest, eventually drawing in elements of disaffected white youth and other young people. These peripheral constituencies—both inside hip hop circles and without—grew to include a significant number of non-Black performers as well (e.g. Eminem), affirming the overnight appearance of what became a lucrative global marketplace for hip hop products and performers. The genre itself, however, along with many artists themselves, never lost the early potential of new cultural movements to promote and celebrate rebellion against oppressive forces and traditional norms.<sup>77</sup> For example, Robin Kelley connects hip hop’s sound amplification with space contestation and aesthetic protest:

Their music and expressive styles have literally become weapons in a battle over the right to occupy public space. Frequently employing high-decibel car stereos and boom boxes, black youth not *only* “*pump up the volume*” for their own listening pleasure, but also as part of an indirect, ad hoc war of position. The “noise” constitutes a form of cultural resistance that should not be ignored, especially when we add those resistive lyrics about destroying the state or retaliating against the police.<sup>78</sup> [italic added]

As previously noted, many storefront churches took a “combative and nonconformist stance against [mainline] churches and society” and they “thrived on controversy”.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, numerous authors have contextualized the hip hop movement as an outlaw or oppositional culture, as comments by Melina Abdullah illustrate: “Hip hop emerged organically from the generation itself as a vehicle through which they could assert their own existence and challenge the conditions that push them to the ‘edge.’”<sup>80</sup> In characterizations that might just as easily apply to features of the storefront church, Abdullah contends that hip hop’s components represent an ... amplification of voice that comes entirely from the outside of mainstream society. Each form further affirms their isolation from the American mainstream by carving out new and often prohibited spaces where the expressions are heard or viewed. Because Hip Hop expressions stand so far outside of mainstream parameters, they serve to loudly challenge the existing structure, many times running in direct opposition to the norms of acceptability. Each expression serves as a form of rebellion, in effect destroying symbols of mainstream culture.<sup>81</sup>

Clearly, during their early development, both the storefront church movement and hip hop wave served as conduits for the modification, development, manifestation and transference of expressive cultural practices. Indeed, the historical evidence thus far indicates that many of the Southern-borne culturally expressive practices that survived and flourished in the northern Black urban communities did so because of the dauntless labors and popular appeal of the storefronts. Frequently overlooked, their chief contribution to the Black Diasporatic religious heritage, in general—and to the hip hop movement, in particular—was an active role in the preservation and advancement of an expressive cultural tradition, enriched through deep and distinctive African roots. Within a broader community-wide context and cultural platform, Keyes is one of the few scholars who acknowledge this important role:

Southern traditions were transported by African Americans during their massive migration from the rural South to the urban North between 1920s and 1950s. Southern cultural traditions were transformed and modified in the new milieu and generated expressions reflecting urban life. The rural context in which African Americans gathered in the South to hear performances of their neighborhood artists were replaced in urban centers by storefront churches, public parks and street-corner taverns. These new gathering places comprised what urban African Americans call “the streets.”<sup>82</sup>

Of the urban venues Keyes cites, only storefronts had the organizational apparatus to ritualize, via repetitive re-enactment, those expressive cultural practices that eventually became commonplace in the “hood”. Subsequently, when Black urban life came to be discussed or depicted in literature or theatre, memoirs or the media, film or family gatherings, the exuberance and demonstrative features typical of storefront worship services were invariably cited or used as familiar icons, with disdain or admiration and perhaps, by some clergy, with righteous envy.

Part of the storefront’s cultural iconicity stemmed from its distinctive use and embrace of symbols and practices that some viewed as “characteristic of churches which cater to the poor”.<sup>83</sup> However much this expressiveness is construed as a hallmark unique to poor communities and the storefront, Drake and Cayton are correct when they point out that energetic, passionate and animated faith-inspired behaviors are hardly confined to the urban poor or their churches.<sup>84</sup>

Beyond an unabashed expressiveness in worship, the religio-cultural legacy of southern Blacks to the north stimulated the free and unfettered expression of religious beliefs that later provided a cultural bedrock for the freedom of expression and spontaneity employed by rappers. Sernett notes that Southern migrants (“uprooted but not without roots”) “...brought cultural gifts, though an appreciation of this religious treasure was not always evident.”<sup>85</sup> The cultural gifts extended far beyond manifestly expressive rituals: the storefront church permitted “*the maximum* of free religious expression” and created a favorable environment for their participants to mine from their urban experiences and Southern heritage other “cultural gems”, perhaps the most precious (and popular) of which was gospel music, one of the essential antecedents of rap.

Even more boldly than Keyes (see above), Angela Spence Nelson argues that the “new,” “unique and innovative black musical form” known as “‘rap’ ... evolved from the contemporary urban descendants of southern blacks of the Great Migration. ... That is, there are characteristics of rap that show the persistence of the black aesthetic, which is rooted in a dynamic spirituality and the power of rhythm and the spoken word.”<sup>86</sup> And central to the task of further refining and defining this ever-evolving “black aesthetic” are *freedom of expression* and *spontaneity*: each is as crucial to the rap performance as to a worship service at the neighborhood storefront.

From the caldrons of migration and social upheaval, elements of the Southern cultural heritage confronted new Northern urban realities and morphed into expressive patterns and practices that storefront churches fostered and that hip hop eventually used for its own purpose. Each movement expressed *reaction* to new, uncertain and brutal urban conditions in protest and outrage. Each one offered a cultural stage with new opportunities for members to salvage from their African /African American heritage—and *revitalize*—that which had already proven itself to be viable and instrumental in their survival as a people combating a hostile and dehumanizing environment: the Black aesthetic as a tool of hope and weapon of resistance. Giving voice to old agonies and new injustices—remembering yesterday’s patient dreams but asserting urgent demands for “Freedom now”—Gospel emerged as a new musical genre within the same Black aesthetic from which Rap would follow decades later.

## “U Can’t Touch This”

In his *Autobiography*, Malcolm X commented on “those little evangelical storefront churches” which, “three or four nights a week”, were “shaking and rattling and rolling the gospel with their guitars and tambourines.” He wondered if others were aware of the fact that “a whole circuit of commercial gospel entertainers” came “out of these little churches in the city ghettos or from down South.”<sup>87</sup> More recently, a handful of scholars have also begun to credit the storefront churches as the birthplace of gospel music<sup>88</sup>, especially “... among members of the urban working class—the lower economic and educational strata of the Black community.”<sup>89</sup>

Eileen Southern notes, “...for many years, ministers of mainline churches strongly opposed bringing that kind of music (sic) into their churches.”<sup>90</sup> Social class differences and the newness of the genre itself both played a part in maintaining this early distance. No less a gospel legend than Mahalia Jackson recalls that: “In those days, the big colored churches didn’t want me and they didn’t let me in. I had to make it my business to pack the little basement-hall congregations and storefront churches and get their respect that way. When they began to see the crowds I drew, the big churches began to sit up and take notice because even inside the church there are people who are greedy for money.”<sup>91</sup> Though new to the North, gospel soon gained wide acceptance, as the cultural gatekeepers of the day began to consider the genre “more relevant to the need of the common people in the rapidly growing cities.”<sup>92</sup>

Burnim identifies four major functions of gospel music that help to shed light on why this genre may have resonated so strongly within storefront venues:

- (1) Gospel music reflects and transmits a sense of historical past for Black Americans, while simultaneously addressing immediate concerns and projecting future solutions.
- (2) Gospel is an affirmation of life and the meaning of living.
- (3) Gospel music is a vehicle for individual expression within the context of a shared system of meaning.
- (4) Gospel music is simultaneously an agent for spiritual sustenance and an agent for reinforcement of cultural identity.<sup>93</sup>

Although “rap music is a musical form that encapsulates urban African American street aesthetics and traditions” and “uses urban black street language”<sup>94</sup>, more than a few scholars have identified features and functions very similar to those noted by Burnim in the context of gospel. Previous works have claimed that rap music, especially “message rap”: (1) “expresses the desire of young black people to reclaim their history, reactivate forms of black radicalism, and contest the powers of despair, hopelessness, and genocide that presently besiege the black community”<sup>95</sup>; (2) constitutes “one of the principle vehicles by which young African Americans express their views of the world, [by] attempting to create a sense of order out of the mayhem and disorder of contemporary urban life”<sup>96</sup>;



(3) conveys a “spiritual” quality that is “liberatory,” “liminal” and “integrative”<sup>97</sup>; (4) represents “a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America”<sup>98</sup>; (5) functions as a cultural “witness: talking about what one sees, feels, and experiences”<sup>99</sup>; and (6) serves primarily as a “musical expression of the paradoxical cry of desperation and celebration of the black underclass and poor working class, a cry which openly acknowledges and confronts the wave of personal cold-heartedness, criminal cruelty, and existential hopelessness in the black ghettos of Afro-America.”<sup>100</sup>

In discussing the evolution of rap, rapper KRS-One suggests yet another dimension. He argues that: “Rap was the final conclusion of a generation of creative people oppressed with the reality of lack” [i.e., impoverishment]; and that “It is the lack of something that creates Rap.”<sup>101</sup> Although deprivation amidst plenty may well nurture socially useful creativity in a number of ways, the same conditions produce its opposite: cynicism, pessimism, nihilism, ruthlessness, violence, obscenities and other negatives are also found in rap music—and not just “gangsta rap”. Without defending this “antisocial baggage”, Allen brings home the point that such tendencies in contemporary American culture are “hardly limited to the rap phenomenon.”<sup>102</sup>

Over the course of their development, gospel and rap music have both caught the eye of corporate America and, to varying degrees, suffer the ill effects today of having become highly commercialized and profitable commodities, long since disengaged from their community-based pioneers. Portia Maultsby assesses this transformation with regard to gospel music but her critique is equally applicable to what is now a multi-billion dollar rap “industry”.

Gospel music has been expropriated and used by the music industry to generate new consumer markets, *giving rise to new functions and performing contexts. Repackaged and promoted as entertainment to a cross-cultural and non-Christian audience in nontraditional arenas, the spiritual message and cultural aesthetics of gospel were subordinated to the money-marketing interests of the music industry.*<sup>103</sup> [italics added]

The problematic aspects of this commodification of Black culture are subject to much discourse and debate, especially in the hip hop literature; and many issues still remain largely unresolved. Along with the commercial exploitation of these cultural artifacts and products there came economic opportunities within both gospel and rap that obviously benefited many an enterprising individual – there were also opportunities to exploit cultural workers in new ways. With respect to hip hop, Kelley describes how many of the early performers (breakdancers, graffiti /aerosol artists, rappers, emcees, DJs, etc.) and others with entrepreneurial skills tried to use their “labor of play” (or hustling skills) to earn a living.<sup>104</sup> Street corner performances, dances and house parties, commercials and movie stints, making/distributing rap demos and videos, city murals and selling of hip hop wares (e.g. T-shirts) were all opportunities generated within the urban hip hop movement, by the movement, where job and small business options were limited.

For most hip hop artists, the ultimate goal was to market one's skills so successfully that one could afford to live the "good life" and, like others new to the mid-to-upper income brackets, move out of the "hood" to the suburbs. Indeed, storefront churches also operated with the same general expectation, namely, that once they became financially secure enough, they, too, would relocate from the inner city and either purchase or build a "traditional" church edifice, usually in a so-called "better neighborhood".

In contrast to the storefront church establishment, the hip hop community has been more vigilant and self-critical in scrutinizing how commercial interests and economic forces have impacted their own aesthetic practices and cultural work products. For example, many rappers today still hold the view that financial success breeds artistic complacency, resulting in the music losing its expressive "edge" or authenticity that made the lyrics so popular in the first place.<sup>105</sup>

Although the response within storefronts was somewhat different, new opportunities for social mobility and lucrative niches also existed for them as well, leading an early critic to take issue with what he regarded as the pernicious influence of overzealous commercialization. In a sarcastic article of 1926 entitled "*Let Us Prey*," Ira De. A. Reid decries the "tidal wave" of storefront churches throughout Harlem, led by "exploiters and charlatans" who sell all kinds of "charms and wares in the form of Grand Imperial incense, prayer incense, aluminum trumpets, luminous bands and other accessories" and who practice "various doctrines and creeds provocative of no good save the financial returns obtained by the leader."<sup>106</sup> Reid's critique is a reminder of how creative fundraising within financially strapped community storefronts can also reveal their parasitic potential; and one would hardly be surprised to learn that such practices still plague urban communities to this day, and not only by late-night televangelists.

At the same time, there were (and still are) many reputable storefronts established by "enterprising preachers."<sup>107</sup> In her study of the Spiritualist churches<sup>108</sup> that existed in Chicago during the 1920, most of which operated as storefronts, Yvonne P. Chireau stated that the proprietors of these assemblies were "religious entrepreneurs" who engaged in a thriving market of selling various "merchandise directed at achieving success" (e.g., charms, dream books, amulets).<sup>109</sup> Unlike Reid, she sees these Spiritual leaders as performing a valuable and important function in urban areas that—like inner cities half a century later—afforded less skilled and lower income working families few job and business opportunities for upward mobility.

Racial discrimination, poverty, violence, and limited opportunity were constant realities for a great number of blacks living in the cities during the first quarter of the twentieth century. As a cultural practice of individuals, Spiritual advising *may have empowered persons whose lives had been marred by insecurity and uncertainty, as was the case with many black Americans at this time. The messages obtained from Spiritual advisors and mediums were considered to be authoritative. Readings offered glimpses of one's potential future and the possibilities for change, but they provided an alternative framework for interpreting one's experience.*<sup>110</sup> [italics added]

Among other functions of the storefront leaders, none superseded the importance accorded to “bringing the message”, i.e., the spoken word. Black preaching has been the one element from the African American religious tradition to which the research literature on hip hop has paid the most attention, especially with regard to its impact on the art of rapping. There are many variations of Black preaching styles, however; and what writers often overlook is the fact that the contemporary rapper stylistically mirrors the characteristics of the charismatic storefront preacher.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, in critiquing commentaries on rap music, Adam Sexton admits that the “best rap” is not unlike “a Pentecostal preacher’s sermon or lyric poetry read aloud—like speech itself—[it] can be truly song-like.”<sup>112</sup>

The “whooping preacher” and the “chanted sermon” (i.e. when the preacher speaks with a beat) were initially styles associated with poor and uneducated preachers, not with the more dignified preaching styles of the educated, middle-class Black clergy. There are other features of the African/African American oratory tradition modified by storefront preachers and manifested later in the styles of MC-rappers. For lack of space, these additional features will not be discussed here.<sup>113</sup> Suffice it to say that “some rappers [styled] their cadences and rhymes after the passionate, percussive preaching that fills storefront churches and elaborate sanctuaries across the country.”<sup>114</sup>

That more than a few aspiring Black urban rappers may have borrowed from storefront churches is not at all surprising, given that storefronts were (and remain) ubiquitous and common place in inner city poor and minority neighborhoods.\* By all accounts, hip hop was born in the South Bronx, where urban decay is renown, Black/Latino families predominate, and traditional church buildings are still “outnumbered” and surrounded “by makeshift storefront churches.”<sup>115</sup> The sights and sounds of storefronts may go unnoticed—and thus their subtle effect on cultural styles and practices may appear obscure and nebulous—because their influence is so pervasive and inescapable for those who live and play, work and shop, in close proximity.

In this regard, the South Bronx is no different than many other lower-income areas in major cities across the country where storefronts—and the hip hop arts—tend to flourish and draw impressive audiences. Of interest in future research studies might be the direct influence which storefronts exercise on local hip hop artists who grew up in the neighborhood and, in some instances, may have been “raised up” in the church.

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- A research team of two faculty members and six undergraduate students from the Penn State University [PSU], Abington College, received funding to record and explore the cultural and political implications of various hip hop works in the City of Philadelphia (e.g., murals, poetry and rap). Funding for the project came through grants from the *Africana Research Center* at PSU, University Park, and the PSU-Abington College Faculty Development Fund. The research included videotaping several storefront church preachers during worship services and several local rap performances. A comparative analysis of the cultural synthesis between “*Storefront Preaching and Street Corner Rapping*” will be forthcoming.

For instance, Calvin Broadus' [a.k.a. Snoop Dogg] stated that prior to his involvement in the street life, "he was a dedicated student and athlete who looked forward to attending weekly services at one of the neighborhood's many storefront churches."<sup>116</sup> Darryl McDaniels, better known as D.M.C, stated that he was not surprised at the religious conversion of his friend and fellow rap artist "Run" [Joseph Simmons, now "Rev. Run"] because: "Even when we were little, and used to walk around Jamaica Avenue or Forty-second Street [in New York City], he [Run] would stop to listen to the street preachers" for long periods of time.<sup>117</sup>

Excluding stylistic similarities, another shared feature between the storefront preacher and rappers involves the dialectical role that street experience plays in bolstering the persona and credibility of both performers. Highlighting how some storefront ministers capitalized on their "street" or secular knowledge and experiences, Washington reports:

*The revolution in black religious [gospel] music was stimulated by unattached black Pentecostal and Holiness preachers who combined their baptism in the Holy Spirit with their baptism in the black realism of the streets. In the beginning, as well as in the present, these uneducated or "jackleg" exhorters were men of wide experience in the ghetto. Sometimes they moved from criminal activities, to signing the blues, to playing jazz, to preaching, though they seldom took the reverse route. But they always knew whereof they spoke, whether or not they were able to convey by the spoken word the meaning of that experience. They had been there and participated in all they later came to reject. They could speak with the voice of experience and be an authority to the prostitute, the dope addict, the adulterer, the thief, the murderer, the gambler, and the panhandler. In fact, they could set their experiences to music, or use the existing music of the people in verification of their spiritual rites of passage.*<sup>118</sup> [italics added]

As suggested by Washington, the storefront preacher experientially identified with, and idiomatically spoke the language of, the poor and marginalized urbanite. Similarly, Drake and Cayton observed that ministers of "mixed churches" (i.e., churches comprised of both low and middle-income congregants) accomplished the same result, as required by circumstances of the moment or the message, by "'talking down' — using dialect or broken English or referring to aspects of lower-class life."<sup>119</sup>

Most important, Washington implies that some (or many) of the storefront preachers used their former secular experiences in order to boost, if not authenticate, their credentials to serve as a minister of the spoken Word. Malcolm X, who once identified his own New York-based, Nation of Islam Temple No. 7 as merely "a little storefront," employed, with considerable effect, the same rhetorical devices as a "street preacher."<sup>120</sup> As in the case of Malcolm X and similar populist leaders from the "hood", a former street life permits a direct connection to audiences, while repudiation of secular ways gives public witness to the claimed transition to a sacred life.

In the same manner, the success of hip hop artists has depended in part on their ability to identify with the audience's social milieu and personal background, both directly with inner city youth, and vicariously with a broader suburban and international market. Imani Perry explains that the hip hop artist consistently represents "a self the listener can identify with, either through the depiction of life it offers, through the aspirations and hopes it articulates, or through the language, clothing, and body politics of the artists..."<sup>121</sup> Equally important to the credibility of the artist is transmitting the "truth" or "reality" of the inner city life, and that requires their own familiarity—either as participant or eyewitness—with the street life (e.g., the language, images, sounds, everyday incidents) about which they are testifying.<sup>122</sup>

According to Keyes, "Rap artists affirm that one has to come from the streets or understand street culture in order to properly interpret and perform this music."<sup>123</sup> Echoing the same message but with an eye to its ironic implication, Rha Goddess asserts that: "Everybody knows that hip hop's worst nightmare would be to wake-up one morning with no street credibility. But what are we willing to endure to maintain it? Street credibility can get you killed. The list of dead rappers is a mile long."<sup>124</sup> Her candor and insight underscore the double-edged sword of sustaining "street credibility": it promises an alluring "rapper's life" but too often delivers death at an early age.

This dialectical use of street experiences and knowledge has become internalized as part of the persona of rappers, and it appears most often in their musical and written autobiographies. For example, in Snoop Dogg's own story, he portrays himself as both savior and sinner:

I paid the price to get myself free, from drugs and violence, from incarceration and intoxication, and from fear and death of every description. I paid the price so that maybe you don't have to, so that maybe when you read this book you can take a lesson from me, avoid my mistakes and share my success.<sup>125</sup>

Like storefront preachers, some rappers have used their "street" or "gangsta' credibility" to condemn or, at least, criticize the very lifestyle to which they owe much of their fame. Kelley provides numerous examples of this with respect to gangsta rappers, although he readily admits that "most gangsta rappers" do not take a definitive stand against the use of violence. He states while some "idealize criminal activity", others use... first-person autobiographical accounts or the ostensibly more objective "street journalism"—to criticize inner-city crime and violence. Songs like Ice-T's "Pain," "6 in the Mornin'," "Colors," "New Jack Hustler," and "High Rollers"; Ice Cube's "Dead Homiez" and "Color Blind"; NWA's "Always into Somethin'"; Cypress Hill's "Hand of the Pump" and "Hole in the Head"; and the gangsta groups that participated in making "We're All in the Same Gang" express clear messages that gang banging and jackin' for a living usually end in death or incarceration ...<sup>126</sup>

In his study of early 20<sup>th</sup> century “bluesmen”, Charles Keil examines performers who made the journey from blues singer to gospel preacher—a transition which apparently could be made with ease since both required some of the same skills and often drew from the same Black community base. Keil opined that the “bluesman-turned-preacher” might even have had “an advantage over his fellow clerics” because “the most exciting, attractive, and charismatic preachers are often those who have been big sinners in their prime.”<sup>127</sup> Of course, Keil calls attention to the entertainment and theatrical dimension of preaching that includes, among other features, a dramatic, awe-inspiring delivery of an attention-grabbing message. What Keil hints at, however, is explicitly stated by Drake and Cayton who noted that: “The high rate of attendance at lower-class services is partly due to the fact that a rousing service is an exciting show. The curious and skeptical enjoy the spectacle as much as the participants and the non-shouting church members.”<sup>128</sup>

Echoing the same theme, Perry explains that some rap artists encourage their listeners to engage in “voyeuristic fantasies” by enjoying songs “littered with violence and viciousness.”<sup>129</sup> As an indication of the pervasiveness of the practice, consider one news reporter’s description of what transpired at a 2004 religious concert:

Christian rappers, who once presented themselves as squeaky clean alternatives to their secular peers, are increasingly spinning graphic tales of urban life, with little aroma of church sanctimony. Corey Red and Precise, a New York duo that performed at Aftershock, rhymed about their past as drug dealers, lacing their rhymes with sexual frankness and references to gunplay. Strutting the stage in a do-rag and football jersey, Corey Red rapped “I put the heat to your knot,” pointing a finger to his head like a gun, even as he talked about being saved.<sup>130</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Further research may establish with finality that virtually every major component of the hip hop movement finds an historical antecedent in Black religious traditions, particularly and especially, in the early storefront church movement. Based on the preliminary work reported here, and the contributions of other scholars and artists, such linkages are not only persuasively evident in decades past, but are re-emerging today as new convergent trends on both the cultural and “new age” religious fronts.

For example, the growing number of “hip hop churches” and the increasing popularity of “Christian rap music” will continue to bring to the fore expressive practices common to both storefronts and hip hop.<sup>131</sup> Clearly, researchers need to identify and analyze such shared attributes, and unravel what today may be a very complex dynamic of reciprocal influences, a transformative process wherein storefront churches (among religious institutions across many cultural and ethnic lines) are now adopting and adapting rap forms and styles in order to attract and hold young audiences.

Finally, additional research may show that particular groups within the storefront church movement (e.g., Holiness, Pentecostal, Sanctified, Spiritualist, Baptist, Islam) have stronger ties to the development of hip hop than other groups. That task would be greatly aided by the gathering and analysis of new qualitative data, and new efforts to uncover any existing historical information that may still lay hidden. The anecdotal information known thus far suggests that storefronts may have influenced not only significant features of the hip hop movement but individualized styles of particular rap artists.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Beverly Stewart, "The History and Function of the Black Storefront Church in the Urban Community" (master's thesis, Smith College, School for Social Work, 1974), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur E. Paris, *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ira E. Harrison, "The Storefront Church as a Revitalization Movement," *Review of Religious Research* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1966): 160-63.

<sup>4</sup> Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for The Promised Land: African American Religion and The Great Migration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 190.

<sup>5</sup> One of the most noted earlier works on these so-called "cults" is Arthur H. Fauset's, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1970). This ethnographic study examined five prominent Black religious "cults" in Philadelphia during the early 1940s: Bishop Ida Robinson's Mt. Sinai Holy Church; Daddy Grace's United House of Prayer for All People; Prophet F. S. Cherry's Church of God (Black Jews); Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple; and Father Divine's Peace Mission. Fauset's detailed study also provided information useful to analyzing the storefront church movement as a whole. See chaps. 8-10.

<sup>6</sup> For a list of the groups represented among storefront churches from the early 1900s to the late 1930s in various cities, see: Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, *African-American Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), esp. pp. 47-63; and Hans A. Baer, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), chap. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People*, 3d ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, @1973, 1998), 191.



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<sup>8</sup> One of the best examples of this transition from sect to mainline church is the Church of God in Christ [COGIC], a Pentecostal affiliate, one of the fastest growing denominations in the country at one time. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 223.

<sup>9</sup> KRS-One / Knowledge Reigns Supreme [Lawrence Kris Parker], *Ruminations* (New York, NY: Welcome Rain Publishers, 2003), 179-180.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of inner city conditions during the industrialization phase, see: Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, @1945, 1993), chap. 8; Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto—Negro New York, 1890-1930* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, @1963, 1966); and Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 619-622; E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in American* and C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* [two books in one volume], ed. C. Eric Lincoln (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 58-59; Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 188-193.

<sup>12</sup> Hans A. Baer, "Black Spiritual Churches: Thaumaturgical Responses to Racism and Social Stratification," in *African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Gayraud Wilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, @ 1989, 1995), 82-99.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (1933; reprint, Salem, NH: Ayer Company, Publishers Inc., 1988), 97-99, 219.

<sup>14</sup> Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 193.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

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<sup>16</sup> Seth M. Scheiner, "The Negro Church and the Northern City: 1890-1930," in *Seven on Black: Reflections on the Negro Experience in America*, ed. William G. Shade and Roy C. Herrenkohl (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1969), 92-117.

<sup>17</sup> Paris, *Black Pentecostalism*, 9-30; 81-92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion & Black Radicalism*, 189.

<sup>21</sup> Jill Watts, *God, Harlem U.S.A.: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Pr., 1992), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph R. Jr. Washington, *Black Sects and Cults* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, @1973, 1984), 81.

<sup>23</sup> S. Craig Watkins, *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Katrina Hazzard-Donald, "Dance in Hip Hop Culture," in *Dropping Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*, ed. William Eric Perkins (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 220-35.

<sup>25</sup> Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 21.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-33; 198, n. 16.

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview of the social and cultural fragmentation, political injustices, and economic inequities commonly found in postindustrial society, see: Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Derrick P. Alridge, "From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Toward a Nexus of Ideas," *Journal of African American History* 90, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 226-52.

<sup>29</sup> Michael E. Dyson, *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 21. Also see: Dyson, *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 177.

<sup>30</sup> Defiant Giants, "Seizing the Cultural Initiative: Hip Hop at Its Crossroads" [Excerpt], 1st Annual Hip Hop Conference, Howard University, 2005, in *Nation Conscious Rap*, ed. Joseph D. Eure and James G. Spady (Brooklyn, NY: PC International Press, 1991), 201-04.

<sup>31</sup> Robin Sylvan, "Rap Music, Hip-Hop Culture, and 'The Future Religion of the World,'" in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, ed. Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 293.

<sup>32</sup> James G. Spady, "Societal Customs and the Emerging Black Youth," in *Nation Conscious Rap*, ed. Eure and Spady, 161-63.

<sup>33</sup> DJ Flame quoted in: Tommy Kyllonen [a.k.a. Urban D], *Unorthodox: Church, Hip Hop, Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 79.

<sup>34</sup> According to Cheryl Keyes, the term "Hip Hop Nation" refers to a "community of artists and adherents who espouse[d] street performance as expressed through the four elements of hip-hop." Ideologically, she links the term to Afrika Bambaataa, the founder of the Zulu Nation. *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 157.

<sup>35</sup> Josh Kun, quoted in Keyes, *Rap Music & Street Consciousness*, 160.

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<sup>36</sup> Efreem Smith and Phil Jackson, *The Hip-Hop Church*, 217. Also see: Todd Boyd, *The New H. N. I. C.: The Death of Civil Rights and The Reign of Hip Hop* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002), 13; and KRS-One, *Ruminations*, 211.

<sup>37</sup> Rose, *Black Noise*, 34.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>39</sup> George Lipsitz, “We Know What Time It Is: Race, Class and Youth Culture in the Nineties,” in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 17-28.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 137.

<sup>41</sup> The African ethos also included “the principles and practices” of “self determination and definition; the intergenerational continuity enhanced by and through the oral tradition; a strong religious faith, including participation in organized worship; immediate and extended family supports; language, and expressive patterns; and personal expression through music and art.” Thomas A Parham, Joseph L. White, and Adisa Ajamu, *The Psychology of Blacks: An African Centered Perspective*, 3d ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2000), 140.

<sup>42</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2d ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, @1990, 2000), 100-102, 204, 209.

<sup>43</sup> “Flossin” is a hip hop term which means “flaunting, boasting, [or] bragging.” Alonzo Westbrook, *Hip Hoptionary: The Dictionary of Hip Hop Terminology* (New York, NY: Harlem Moon Broadway Books, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, NY: New American Library-Signet Classic, @1903, 1969), 45.

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<sup>45</sup> Tricia Rose, "Hidden Politics: Discursive and Institutional Policing of Rap Music," in *Dropping Science*, ed. Perkins, 236-57. Also see Rose, *Black Noise*, 124.

<sup>46</sup> Rose, "Hidden Politics," 236.

<sup>47</sup> According to Lerone Bennett, the Black church freedom movement "marked a fundamental turning point in the Negro's relations with white America. Institutions are great social pools in which men [sic] see themselves and their ideals reflected. They are instruments with which men come to grips with the questions: Who am I? Where do I belong? Without meetings, without rituals, without ceremonies, myths, symbols, men cannot define themselves or enter into real relations with others. American Negroes, recognizing this, attempted first to enter institutions formed for Americans—and were rebuffed. They then embarked on a perilous journey of self-naming, self-legitimization, and self-discovery." *Confrontation: Black and White* (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1965), 52.

<sup>48</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "Plenty Good Room: Adaptation in a Changing Black Church," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 558 (July 1998): 101-21.

<sup>49</sup> Omar McRoberts, *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2003), 57.

<sup>50</sup> Rose, *Black Noise*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), 148.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Collins, "Store Front Churches," *Negro American Literature Forum* 4, no. 2 (Jan. 1970): 64-68.

<sup>53</sup> Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*, 145.

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<sup>54</sup> Houston A. Baker, *Black Studies, Rap and the Academy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 89.

<sup>55</sup> Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 672.

<sup>56</sup> Mellonee V. Burnim, "Religious Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 51-77.

<sup>57</sup> Teresa L. Reed, *The Holy Profane: Religion in Black Popular Music* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 70.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Frazier, *Negro Church*, 59.

<sup>61</sup> Michael W. Harris, *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 121.

<sup>62</sup> Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 180.

<sup>63</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley, CA: Turtle Island Foundation, 1981), 103.

<sup>64</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture: Black Religion and Race Records in the 1920s and 1930s," in *The House That Race Built*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York, NY: Vintage Press, Inc., 1998), 157-77.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>66</sup> Wilmore, *Black Religion & Black Radicalism*, 181.

<sup>67</sup> Spear, *Black Chicago*, 177.

<sup>68</sup> Ernest Allen, Jr. ,“Making the Strong Survive: The Contours and Contradictions of Message Rap,” in *Dropping Science*, ed. Perkins, 189-91.

<sup>69</sup> Dyson, *Reflecting Black*, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>71</sup> George Lipsitz, “The Hip Hop Hearings: Censorship, Social Memory, and Intergenerational Tensions Among African Americans,” in *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 395-411.

<sup>72</sup> Rose, *Black Noise*, 33.

<sup>73</sup> George Lipsitz, “We Know What Time It Is,” 20. Also see: Murray Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 42; and Rose, *Black Noise*, 22.

<sup>74</sup> Lipsitz, “We Know What Time It Is,” 20.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>76</sup> Rose, *Black Noise*, 6.

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<sup>77</sup> Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 32.

<sup>78</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1994), 206.

<sup>79</sup> Washington, *Black Sects and Cults*, 81.

<sup>80</sup> Melina Abdullah, "Hip Hop as Political Expression: Potentialities for the Power of Voice in Urban America," in *The Black Urban Community: From Dusk Till Dawn*, ed. Gayle T. Tate and Lewis A. Randolph (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2006), 465-74. For additional commentary on hip hop as an oppositional culture, see: Theresa Martinez, "Popular Culture As Oppositional Culture: Rap as Resistance," *Sociological Perspective* 40, no. 2 (1997): 265-86; and Layli Phillips, Kerri Reddick-Morgan, and Dionne Patricia Stephens, "Oppositional Consciousness Within an Oppositional Realm: The Case of Feminism and Womanism in Rap and Hip Hop, 1976-2004," *Journal of African American History* 90, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 253-77.

<sup>81</sup> Melina Abdullah, "Hip Hop as Political Expression," 469.

<sup>82</sup> Keyes, *Rap Music*, 28-29. In a subsequent article ("The Meaning of Rap Music in Contemporary Black Culture"), however, Keyes fails to credit the storefront church as one of the major northern centers where Black Southern traditions were transformed, modified and recreated. She mentions only taverns, parks and street corners, which were "considered remote from the home and religious centers" and which comprised part of what Blacks called "the street." Given the broader spectrum of community-based influences on early hip hop, the omission of storefront churches is unfortunate. Keyes, "The Meaning," in *The Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music*, ed. Ferdinand Jones and Arthur C. Jones (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 153-79.

<sup>83</sup> Alphonso Pinkney, *Black Americans*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2000), 123.



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<sup>84</sup> Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 673-674.

<sup>85</sup> Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 180.

<sup>86</sup> Angela Spence Nelson, "Theology in the Hip-Hop of Public Enemy and Kool Moe Dee," in *The Emergency of Black and The Emergence of Rap* [A Special Issue of *Black Sacred Music: A Journal of Theomusicology*, .5:1 (Spring), 1991], ed. Jon Michael Spencer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 51-59.

<sup>87</sup> Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 252.

<sup>88</sup> Burnim, "Religious Music," 68; and Lawrence W. Levine, "The Development of Gospel Song," in *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, ed. Larry G. Murphy (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), 175-87.

<sup>89</sup> Burnim, "Religious Music," 51.

<sup>90</sup> Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3d ed. (New York: NY: W. W. Norton & Company, @1971, 1997), 459. Also see: Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 208-209.

<sup>91</sup> Mahalia Jackson, "Singing of Good Tidings and Freedom," in *Afro-American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, ed. Milton C. Sernett (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 446-57.

<sup>92</sup> Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 452.

<sup>93</sup> Mellonee V. Burnim, "Functional Dimensions of Gospel Music Performance," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 12, no. 2 (1988): 112-21.

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<sup>94</sup> Cheryl L. Keyes, "The Meaning of Rap Music," 171.

<sup>95</sup> Michael Dyson, *Reflecting Black*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Ernest Jr. Allen, "Making the Strong Survive," 160.

<sup>97</sup> Mark Lewis Taylor, "Bringing Noise, Conjuring Spirit: Rap as Spiritual Practice," in *Noise & Spirit: The Religious and Spiritual Sensibilities of Rap Music*, ed. Anthony B. Pinn (New York University Press: New York: NY, 2003), 107-30.

<sup>98</sup> Rose, *Black Noise*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> James Bernard, "Don't Believe the Hype: Why Isn't Hip Hop Criticism Better?" in *Rap on Rap: Straight-up Talk on Hip-Hop Culture*, ed. Adam Sexton (New York, NY: Delta Book [Advance Reading Copy from Uncorrected Proofs], 1995), 267-70.

<sup>100</sup> Cornel West, "On Afro-American Popular Music: From Bebop to Rap," in *Sacred Music of the Secular City: From Blues to Rap* [A Special Issue of *Black Sacred Music: A Journal of Theomusicology*, vol. 6:1 (Summer), 1992], ed. Jon Michael Spencer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 282-94.

<sup>101</sup> KRS-One, *Ruminations*, 217-218.

<sup>102</sup> Allen, "Making the Strong Survive," 160.

<sup>103</sup> Portia K. Maultsby, "The Impact of Gospel Music on the Secular Music Industry," in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin,' and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed. Gena Dagele Caponi (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 172-90.

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<sup>104</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997), see chap. 2; and Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 200-201.

<sup>105</sup> KRS-One, *Ruminations*, 219; Watkins, *Hip Hop Matters*, 120-140.

<sup>106</sup> Ira De A. Reid, "Let Us Prey," *Opportunity* [National Urban League] Sept. 1926: 274-78.

<sup>107</sup> Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 189.

<sup>108</sup> Hans A. Baer explains that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Spiritual churches is the emphasis "on the manipulation of one's present condition through the use of magico-religious practices." *Black Spiritual Churches*, 92.

<sup>109</sup> Yvonne P. Chireau, "Varieties of Spiritual Experience: Magic, Occultism, and Alternative Supernatural Traditions Among African Americans in the Cities, 1925-1919," in *The Black Urban Community*, 194-203. Baer notes that the spiritualist advisor is frequently cast as a "charlatan or phony" but he did not find this to be the case in his study. While there were "certain questionable practices in Spiritual churches, the majority of pastors, prophets, and advisors" he interviewed "lived in modest surroundings, [had] a salaried occupation or other legitimate sources of income and seem[ed] to be sincere in their belief." *The Black Spiritual Movement*, 81.

<sup>110</sup> Yvonne P. Chireau, "Varieties of Spiritual Experience," 196.

<sup>111</sup> Here, the term "style" is used broadly to refer to "the peculiar manner in which a preacher expresses him[her]self" through the use of language, including "vocabulary, grammar and syntax, and figures of speech." Mervyn Warren, *Black Preaching: Truth and Soul* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), 32.

<sup>112</sup> Adam Sexton, "Don't Believe the Hype: Why Isn't Hip Hop Criticism Better?" in *Rap on Rap*, ed. Sexton, 1995, 1-14.

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<sup>113</sup> For an overview of features unique to Black preaching, see: Grace Sims Holt, "Stylin' Outta the Black Pulpit," in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1972), 189-204.

<sup>114</sup> Claudia Perry, "Gospel Breaks Out the Music--The Message--Cross Over and Beyond Church Walls," *San Jose Mercury News* (CA) Friday, 24/Nov. 1995, <<http://infoweb.newsbank.com>>.

<sup>115</sup> Eric Gutierrez, *Disciples of the Street: The Promise of a Hip Hop Church* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2008), 14; and Herbert E. Meyer, "How Government Helped Ruin the South Bronx," *Fortune* 92, no. 5 (Nov. 1975): 140-54.

<sup>116</sup> Frank Owen, Chuck Philips, and Ira Robbins, "Gansta Stars," *Newsday* (Melville, NY) 21, Dec. 1993, <<http://infoweb.newsbank.com>>.

<sup>117</sup> Ronin Ro, *Raising Hell: The Reign, Ruin, and Redemption of Run-D.M.C. and Jam Master Jay* (New York, NY: Amistad, 2005), 244.

<sup>118</sup> Washington, *Black Sects and Cults*, 79-80.

<sup>119</sup> Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 675.

<sup>120</sup> Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, [With Assistance of Alex Haley] (New York, NY: Grove Press-Ballantine Books, @1964, 1973), 250-251.

<sup>121</sup> I. Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 89 and 44-45, 47, 122-123.

<sup>122</sup> I. Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 91.

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<sup>123</sup> Keys, “The Meaning of Rap Music in Contemporary Black Culture,” 160; and Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 5.

<sup>124</sup> Rha Goddess, “Scarcity and Exploitation: The Myth and Reality of Struggling Hip-Hop Artist,” in *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop*, ed. Jeff Chang (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2006), 340-48.

<sup>125</sup> Snoop Dogg (with Davin Seay), *Tha Doggfather: The Times, Trials and Hardcore Truths of Snoop Dogg* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999), 3.

<sup>126</sup> Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 197.

<sup>127</sup> Charles Keil, *Urban Blues* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 148.

<sup>128</sup> Drak and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 622.

<sup>129</sup> I. Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 42.

<sup>130</sup> John Leland, “Rappers Are Raising Their Churches' Roofs,” *New York Times* 13/Sep. 2004, <<http://infoweb.newsbank.com>>.

<sup>131</sup> For example, see: Smith and Jackson, *The Hip-Hop Church*; and Ralph C. Watkins, et al., *The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007).