Fight the Power:
Political Expression in Rap Music

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)
by
Rachel A. Buckmaster

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Joseph A. Losco

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Purpose of Thesis

This paper is an examination of rap music as a vehicle for political expression and as an indicator of urban consciousness. Rap music has been underrated and overlooked as a source of creative expression as well as social commentary, but many songs and artists have demonstrated a role in voicing political opinion and calling for political action. The discussion includes a brief history of the art form, social responses to the music, and specific lyrical examinations. Rap music is unique in that while it is a new and innovative art form, it also incorporates historic methods of oral tradition as well as the legacies of gospel, the blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, and other influences. As rap music grew in the 1980s, its potential for social activism was realized, and the music has served to increase political awareness ever since. Rap has served to both reflect urban realities and to provide an outlet for expression and a tool for education, and this paper is an exploration of these functions.
Thanks to Chuck D,
whose words and wisdom inspired me to study political science
and finally declare a major.
"It's no fad, man. And it's not just a new kind of music. It's a whole new subculture that's been invented by the disenfranchised... It may be profane and abrasive, but I think it's a very powerful and positive force. And it's the freshest thing that's happened musically in thirty years."

-Quincy Jones

Rap music has long been underrated and overlooked as a source of creative expression and social commentary, but rap can be evaluated as an indicator of urban consciousness and political opinion and action. This paper is an examination of rap as a vehicle for political expression, including a brief history of the art form, social and legal responses to the music, and specific lyrical examples of the political voice of rap.

Like many forms of African American expression which preceded it, rap has had to combat its own perceived image as crude, noisy, and primitive. Cultural racism has prevented rap music from being fully recognized as an art form, and sometimes even garnering the respectful label of music has been difficult. Condescension from mainstream music critics and media writers has been widespread. Countless articles have played into racist notions equating black with evil and implying that rap is "scary" and lacking in musical merit, such as Jerry Adler's simplistic and condescending observation in Newsweek of "the thumping,
clattering, scratching assault of rap.¹ The popular opinion seems to be that since rap songs are not sung, they therefore are not music; however, as Adam Sexton points out in his article "Don't Believe the Hype: Why Isn't Hip-hop Criticism Better?" singing was not required for Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" to become a classic, nor was a golden voice necessary for James Brown or Bob Dylan to become stars. The simplistic yet oft-made argument that rap isn't played with "real" instruments ignores the historical fact that music evolves, and new instruments (such as a digital sampler, as well as the saxophone at one time, for that matter) often faced ridicule and opposition before being embraced. All in all, arguments abound as to why rap should be viewed as bothersome noise. Combine these popular perceptions with the fact that the form of music is predominantly made by young black males and one can understand why rap music has had to continuously fight for recognition as artistic expression and at the same time counter it's own reputation as dangerous to society. The justification of rap music has been a difficult struggle for respect.

In studying the origins of rap music, a rich and colorful history is evident in the many influences and meanings preceding the form. Rap is profound in that while it is new it also belongs to a centuries-old legacy

of using language creatively in everyday life. Rap encompasses both an historic method of oral tradition as well as innovative and original styles of delivery. Many songs embrace a call and response method reminiscent of the black church; others evoke the joy and pain identified with the blues. The hidden messages and colloquial slang prevalent in rap bring to mind the jive talk of previous decades as well as the methods of communicating secrets through seemingly innocent slave folktales. The emphasis on humor as well as eloquence pays homage to the wit of African American comedians and the grace of Civil Rights activists. Rap music is all of this while simultaneously existing as a fresh art form not experienced in the world before the mid-1970s.

The above-mentioned oral tradition has been traced back to the occupation of the griot in traditional African societies. Oration was a distinguished and developed form of expression performed by the griot, which served both to entertain as well as inform. Since the emphasis was placed upon spoken word rather than written, the griot, usually male, served as a storyteller, reporter, social commentator, comedian, and historian. Mastery of oral communication, therefore, became a practiced art and respectable daily challenge. This tradition and honor evolved further in the church, as the African griot became the African


\[^{3}\text{Ibid, p. 19.}\]
American preacher in the United States.

As record companies began to develop and realize the vast amount of money to be made from African American culture and entertainment, the blues became the outlet for black pain and experience. An interesting aspect of this form of music was the extent to which it was communal. Singers would borrow lyrics or song bytes from other recorders and rearrange them, either in competition or tribute. Seventy years later, rap artists continued this tradition of communal ownership of lyrics as well as melody in the form of sampling. This technique involves snipping bits from songs and rearranging, layering, or distorting them in a new and unique composition.

With the birth of jazz, spoken word began to appear against the backdrop of orchestras, and was used by musicians such as Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway. The call and response of "Hi Dee Hi Dee Ho," for instance, updated the call and response of the black church, this time in completely secular music. Jazz also began a new culture, with its own attitude, lifestyle, and ultimately language. Words such as "hep," "jive," and "be-bop" were invented and integrated into the music.

When the Black Power movement began gaining momentum in the 1960s, poets such as Nikki Giovanni and Don L. Lee wrote and recited poetry in the language and emotion of young African Americans. Activists such as H. Rap Brown began to openly question the
philosophies of leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., and called for more bold confrontations with the established authority. When Gil Scott-Heron released "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," his style of incorporating both singing and recitation into his song, as well as the fusion of poetry, song, social commentary, and black language, preceded and set the foundations for the future days of rap.

One of the most influential musicians for rappers, however, is James Brown. Brown, with his raw energy and stage presence, came across like a preacher, half-singing and half-shouting. He incorporated the call and response with his band, popularizing phrases such as "Can I hit it and quit?" Brown evolved with his career; his lyrics began to reflect the black pride and self-determination of African Americans in the late 1960s, and with songs such as "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)," his recordings would later become some of the most sampled beats in rap music.

In the 1970s, DJs began making innovative decisions with the turntables on the dance floors. DJ Hollywood and DJ Herc of the Bronx started the method of playing records on two turntables at once, using a sound mixer to fade in and out of records, and incorporating sound bytes into the mix. The inevitable marriage of DJs and masters of ceremonies, or MCs, followed soon after, with artists rhyming over the beats. Both roles required skill, precision, concentration, imagination,
and sharp improvisation, and the competition was quickly fierce.

With the rapid expansion of rap music from the Bronx throughout New York City, and eventually into cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and Miami, the form began to diversify. Until 1982, rappers were mainly concerned with giving people good times. When Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five released "The Message" in that year, partying was not the objective. As raw as a documentary, the song's lyrics painted a dismal picture of life in America's forgotten neighborhoods:

It's like a jungle sometimes, it makes me wonder
How I keep from going under
Broken glass everywhere,
People pissing on the stairs
You know they just don't care
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat...
Don't push me cause I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to lose my head.4

The song served as a wake-up call to many due to its quick popularity; still, the real conditions described continued, and the foundation was laid for rap as a political outlet and tool.

Tricia Rose describes rap music as using "cloaked speech and disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current

power inequalities. She argues that not all forms of rap directly challenge nor even critique the power structures, yet a significant element of rap involves bold warfare with a system which oppresses African Americans. In this sense, rap becomes an option of expression for those with little political power otherwise. Rap becomes a network for ideas and philosophies of the underclass, and an open book for the social commentary important to this group. With this immense power and growing visibility, many rappers in the 1990s are realizing their position as communicators and their potential as leaders within their communities. With this growing responsibility, some artists have used their music to convey a wide spectrum of political views, calls to action, and predictions.

One of the most striking examples of the political wisdom to be found within rap music lies in the warnings of and reactions to the rebellion in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict. For years before the King incident, rappers had been documenting both police brutality and urban unrest. In Public Enemy's song "Burn Hollywood Burn" from their 1990 album Fear of a Black Planet, Chuck D rhymed: "Burn Hollywood burn/I smell a riot goin' on/First they're guilty, now they're gone." The song expressed the possibility of an insurrection

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which would be provoked by police brutality and the failure of Hollywood to acknowledge African American creativity and talent. The reality of the Los Angeles insurrection marked a phase in racial and class relations colored by resistance, and rap music provided a strong voice in this resistance through it's texts and lyrics.⁶ Rap artists were the first to acknowledge their longs-standing role in warning America of it's future. On his 1992 album The Predator, Ice Cube refers to his own texts as urgent and tellers of unavoidable truths:

"Everything I said on record before the riot, you know, anything you wanted to know about the riots was in the records before the riots. All you had to do was go to the Ice Cube library and pick a record, and it woulda told you... I've given so many warnings on what's gonna happen if we don't get these things straight in our lives. The clash is that, you know, that Armageddon is near."⁷

Although his words may be self-serving, Ice Cube embraces both rap's role as well as his own role in chronicalling the urban rage and unrest felt not only in Los Angeles but across the country. The attention he draws to himself as teller of truths may be self-serving, but at the same time he is justified in the fact that his records have been warning of the underlying urban frustrations which have the potential to drastically and violently transform society.

There are many other examples of rap's reaction to police brutality,

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such as Boogie Down Production's "Who Protects Us from You?:"

"You were put here to protect us,
but who protects us from you?
It seems that when you walk the ghetto
You walk with your own point of view."

BDP's KRS-One (aka Kris Parker) addresses the song as a verbal questioning of authority; his lyrics encourage individual reflection of the distinction between legal codes and moral codes, as the two do not always coincide for African Americans. A similar message is found in LL Cool J's "Illegal Search:"

"Get that flashlight out of my face
I'm not a dog so damn it put away the mace...
I don't smoke cigarettes so why you lookin' for base?
You might plant a gun, and hope I run a rase...
You tried to frame me, it won't work.
Illegal search."

LL has created both a fantastic and a realistic scenario in this song. The situation is real; many listeners can relate to the condescension of an officer. Yet at the same time, few listeners would dare to retort to an angry officer the way LL does in the song. It is a fantasy of expressing the explosive and usually repressed anger when confronted with being searched for no apparent reason.

The most blatant condemnation of the police came with N.W.A.'s (Niggaz With Attitude) "F__ tha Police" in 1988. The song was so

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provocative (as well as popular nationwide) that the FBI wrote an unprecedented official letter expressing concern over the song and increasing violence, ultimately linking this violence to rap music. The lyrics were bold and forthright, and as straightforward and violent as reality could get:

"F__ tha police comin' straight from the underground
A young nigger got it bad 'cause I'm brown
And not the other color
Some police think
They have the authority to kill a minority...
F__in' with me 'cause I'm a teenager
With a little bit of gold and a pager
Searchin' my car, lookin' for the product
Thinkin' every nigger is sellin' narcotics...
Yo, Dre, I got something to say--
F__ tha police!"\(^{10}\)

The FBI's letter started an informal fax network of police agencies that called for the cancellations of NWA's concerts, to limited success. Nonetheless, the song represented the extreme manifestations of the frustrations felt by many young black males in dealing with the law enforcement.

As NWA is considered the pioneering "gangsta rap" group, other artists used their songs to convey the emotions of the street in the same ways. Ice-T (aka Tracy Morrow), for example, created an image reflecting (and simultaneously condemning) the lifestyles of pimps, stickup men, and underground criminals. Although his lyrics ("Last night

in cold blood my young brother got jacked... my sister smokes crack, my mother can't work 'cause her arms show tracks...") often portray dismal realities of many of the nation's urban centers, Ice-T has been openly criticized and misrepresented.

For the purpose of studying the politics behind rap music, Ice Cube is an excellent case study of an artist in the gangster rap genre. Co-founder of NWA, a group he later left over bitter differences, Ice Cube (Oshea Jackson) exemplifies the intelligent yet coarsing anger of black California. Nelson and Gonzales describe Cube's music as exposing "a world that seems on the brink of exploding in the ear of the listener." With songs such as "I Wanna Kill Sam," "Endangered Species (Tales from the Darkside)," and "AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted," Cube illustrates for the listener the disdain in which he holds white America, and vocalizes the distrust of the American system in serving him or his people.

Ice Cube became a role model without even trying; in fact, he initially rejected the responsibility of being idolized. As his solo career grew, however, his work became more and more politically influenced (although not any less misogynist). His poetic style has impressed and influenced artists in a wide range of genres, and his articulate voice has become well-recognized and emulated. This position has allowed Cube

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to address the problems of his neighborhoods and allied people. In his song "Dead Homiez," he paints a poignant picture of the sorrow found in communities in which the death rate is high:

"Up early in the morning, dressed in black
Don't ask why 'cuz I'm down in a suit and tie
They killed a homie that I went to school with
I tell you, life ain't s__ to fool with
I still hear the screams from his mother
While my nigger lay dead in the gutter
And it's getting to my temper
Why is that the only time black folks get to ride in a limo?"

The recognizes both the mortality of his "homiez" and the senselessness of the violence they face on a daily basis. Another line, "seems like I'm viewing a body every other month," illustrates the reality of living in this neighborhood.

While Ice Cube and NWA were rapping about their experiences on the streets in Southern California, Kris Parker was rapping about the lessons he learned from studying black scholars. Parker, or KRS-One, was a product of the South Bronx, living on the streets or in youth shelters as a child. A school dropout at the age of thirteen, Parker spent many hours in the Manhattan public library, consuming the words of Lerone Bennett, Jr., Malcolm X, and others. Through Boogie Down Productions (a group formed with his friend Scott LaRock, who was killed one year after in 1987), KRS-One has passed along knowledge to his listeners. In "House Niggas," he raps:

"Some people say I am a rap missionary,
Some people say I am a walking dictionary,
Some people say I am truly legendary,
But what I am is simply a black revolutionary."\(^{13}\)

KRS-One himself acknowledged his role as leader to the young black community, and took advantage of this position by working with the National Urban League to organize the Stop the Violence project. Another of Parker's projects, Human Education Against Lies, was dedicated to increasing literacy among ghetto youth.

Belonging to the same genre of educational rap as Boogie Down Productions and often hailed as the most influential rap group to date is Public Enemy. Musically and lyrically, no other rap group has better expressed black rage and alienation, mobilizing their community toward action and awareness.\(^{14}\) The group was the brainchild of college student Chuck D (Carlton Ridenhour), who wanted to form a rap group with a black nationalist message. Public Enemy entered the scene in 1987, coming from the New York suburb of Long Island with a look that was dead serious and a sound that was unique. Their stage show included the "Security of The First World," which was a group of men in uniforms reminiscent of both the security force of the Nation of Islam and the well-


armed Black Panthers.

When Chuck D called rap the "Black people's CNN," he surely recognized himself as the network anchorman. Acknowledging the potential of rap music to unify and educate a black America that the media otherwise ignores, Public Enemy's lyrics confronted the established government, the legacy of racism in this country, and the short-sightedness of the media. The fierceness of their lyrics, however, frightened and intimidated many who believed rap to be "safe" only as long as it was about dancing and who considered knowledge dangerous when placed in the minds of black youth. The liner notes, however, for the 1990 album *Fear of a Black Planet* include this message, in case any listener was threatened by what he or she was about to hear: "Black power 1990 is a collective means of self defense against the worldwide conspiracy to destroy the black race. It's a movement that only puts fear in those that have a vested interest in the conspiracy, or that think that it's something other than what it actually is..."15 Chuck is addressing the backlash against rap and his specific messages of black empowerment, as such a goal is considered negative and dangerous only by those people who have something to gain in maintaining a state of racial inequality. Such anger as that reflected in many rap songs, therefore, are considered justified by Chuck D and others because the long-term legacy

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of racism in the United States has created both the need for such an outlet and the reality which fuels the frustrations.

One of rap's most popular and powerful songs is Public Enemy's "Fight the Power," which was released on their 1990 album *Fear of a Black Planet* and was also threaded throughout the Spike Lee film "Do the Right Thing." The song incorporated a classic James Brown drum beat, snippets from a variety of other sounds, and an in-your-face delivery so hypnotic it became an instant hit with black and white youth alike. This revolutionary anthem solidified Public Enemy's position as leaders:

"As the rhythm's designed to bounce
What counts is that the rhyme's
Designed to fill your mind
Now that you've realized the pride's arrived
We got to pump the stuff to make us tough
From the heart
It's a start, a work of art
To revolutionize, make a change, nothin' strange...
Lemme hear you say
FIGHT THE POWER
We got to fight the powers that be."\(^{16}\)

The song managed to describe both a function and the necessity of rap music as captivating and intriguing and at the same time inspirational and unifying. If rap could pull in the targeted audience, a lost generation of the forgotten and underprivileged, and could then drive that group to fight the status quo for social change, revolution could take place.

\(^{16}\text{Public Enemy, "Fight the Power," Def Jam Records, 1990.}\)
Mobilization in a country in which most of the powerless are quite divided is a strong goal. Educating the masses was foremost on Public Enemy's agenda, as in the same song the issue of history and racism was tackled:

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Meanwhile, Public Enemy was becoming more and more heralded by music critics, college radio stations, and white consumers in general. Their message was reaching suburbia, and a media backlash was the result. Their black nationalist stance, defined by Chuck himself as "not anti-white but anti-a-system that has been deigned by the European elite for the wrong purpose of benefitting off of people of color or at Black people's expense."18

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filmmakers must have known what they were doing; the shirt was a calculated move, and worked better than any rock shirt might have. The shirt went beyond functioning as "tough," and implied a danger, a controversy to the white audiences. But the move also signified something else: most everyone now knows who Public Enemy are, otherwise their name wouldn't be in a big-money entertainment aimed at a nation of millions.\textsuperscript{19}

With the incorporation of a small television show in 1989 on MTV, the white suburbia of middle America got weekly exposure to rap music. From the beginning, the "Yo! MTV Raps" audience was primarily white, male, suburban, and between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.\textsuperscript{20} The show quickly became one of MTV's most popular, and rap was immersed even deeper into America's mainstream. In 1991, when Billboard changed it's method of counting record sales in the United States, suddenly demographics shifted on the sales records and it was revealed that America's favorite record was no longer by college-rockers R.E.M., but was instead Niggaz4life, the new album by N.W.A. In 1993, a former member of N.W.A. (Dr. Dre himself) saw his hard-core gansta


album "The Chronic," outsell those by mainstream acts like Barbra Streisand, Aerosmith, and Sting.\textsuperscript{21}

The media response to rap music has been predominantly negative since the conception of the form. Media coverage, for example, of violence at rap concerts oftentimes fed into white fears that black teens are uncontrollable and that the music incites violence. In actuality, violence at other types of shows, such as arena deaths at Michael Jackson concerts and so on, is downplayed compared to the reports of negativity at rap promotions. Preconceived notions are fueled by media coverage and result in even more escalated anxieties by society in general concerning rap and violence. Many rap artists also feel that they are treated unfairly and inaccurately portrayed by the media; Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype" sums up the pleading of a majority of artists.

As rap continued to grow in size and visibility, so did its opposition. In 1990, the group 2 Live Crew was charged with obscenity, and a court forbade the selling of their album, \textit{As Nasty As They Wanna Be}. A Florida record store owner was arrested for selling the album, and the group themselves were arrested after a live performance in a Florida club. All of this because, according to local law enforcement officials, their use of profanity and sexually explicit content violated ordinances.

against obscene speech. An interesting aspect of this case involved expert witness for the defense, noted scholar Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who argued that the black oral tradition had always encompassed boasting and sexual exaggerations, and the raps were not meant to be taken literally.\textsuperscript{22} Not everyone in the black community supported this argument, but the implications were that no effort was being made on the part of the legal system to understand black culture nor history. Although many people and artists admitted that 2 Live Crew's music was offensive, they felt the group's right to free speech was protected by the Constitution. The controversy illustrated that a rap song or group which is not necessarily considered "political" can have an immense and immediate political effect. The group won its case, but the controversy over rap lyrics was neither new nor over.

Since 1985, Tipper Gore and her organization, the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), have been monitoring contemporary music, particularly rap and heavy metal. Not obtaining the ratings system the group proposed, a settlement resulted in "Explicit Lyrics" and "Parental Advisory" stickers placed on all albums that might contain "objectionable" subject matter. Ice-T, a rapper highly criticized by the PMRC, responded in his song, "Freedom of Speech:"

"The Constitution says we all got a right to speak,\textsuperscript{22}"

\textsuperscript{22}K. Maurice Jones, Say It Loud! The Story of Black Music. (The Millbrook Press: Brookfield, CT, 1994) p. 84.
Say what we want, Tip, your argument is weak.
Censor records, TV, school books, too?
And who decides what’s right to hear, you?
PMRC this is where the witchhunt starts."^23

Ice-T was involved in another monumental controversy in 1991,
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Count, which in no stretch of the imagination could be called a rap group
as was done repeatedly throughout the duration of the controversy,
addressed the issue of police brutality in a violent fantasy:

"Cop killer, I know your family's grievin'
Cop killer, but tonight we get even...
My adrenaline's pumpin'.
I got my stereo bumpin'.
I'm about to kill me somethin'.
A pig stopped me for nothin'!"^24

The song provoked thousands of cops to send in letters to Time Warner,
urging the removal of the song from "the record stores and the media."
Boycotts were threatened, emotions escalated, and eventually Ice-T
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When the young hero John Connor in the popular Hollywood film Terminator 2 wore a Public Enemy shirt, the message is clear: the boy is immediately aligned with the concepts of resistance and overthrowing of the powerful, a symbolism the plot of the movie supports. The

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filmmakers must have known what they were doing; the shirt was a calculated move, and worked better than any rock shirt might have. The shirt went beyond functioning as "tough," and implied a danger, a controversy to the white audiences. But the move also signified something else: most everyone now knows who Public Enemy are, otherwise their name wouldn't be in a big-money entertainment aimed at a nation of millions.19

With the incorporation of a small television show in 1989 on MTV, the white suburbia of middle America got weekly exposure to rap music. From the beginning, the "Yo! MTV Raps" audience was primarily white, male, suburban, and between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.20 The show quickly became one of MTV's most popular, and rap was immersed even deeper into America's mainstream. In 1991, when Billboard changed its method of counting record sales in the United States, suddenly demographics shifted on the sales records and it was revealed that America's favorite record was no longer by college-rockers R.E.M., but was instead Niggaz4life, the new album by N.W.A. In 1993, a former member of N.W.A. (Dr. Dre himself) saw his hard-core gansta


album "The Chronic," outsell those by mainstream acts like Barbra Streisand, Aerosmith, and Sting.\textsuperscript{21}

The media response to rap music has been predominantly negative since the conception of the form. Media coverage, for example, of violence at rap concerts oftentimes fed into white fears that black teens are uncontrollable and that the music incites violence. In actuality, violence at other types of shows, such as arena deaths at Michael Jackson concerts and so on, is downplayed compared to the reports of negativity at rap promotions. Preconceived notions are fueled by media coverage and result in even more escalated anxieties by society in general concerning rap and violence. Many rap artists also feel that they are treated unfairly and inaccurately portrayed by the media; Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype" sums up the pleading of a majority of artists.

As rap continued to grow in size and visibility, so did it's opposition. In 1990, the group 2 Live Crew was charged with obscenity, and a court forbade the selling of their album, \textit{As Nasty As They Wanna Be}. A Florida record store owner was arrested for selling the album, and the group themselves were arrested after a live performance in a Florida club. All of this because, according to local law enforcement officials, their use of profanity and sexually explicit content violated ordinances.

against obscene speech. An interesting aspect of this case involved expert witness for the defense, noted scholar Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who argued that the black oral tradition had always encompassed boasting and sexual exaggerations, and the raps were not meant to be taken literally. Not everyone in the black community supported this argument, but the implications were that no effort was being made on the part of the legal system to understand black culture nor history. Although many people and artists admitted that 2 Live Crew's music was offensive, they felt the group's right to free speech was protected by the Constitution. The controversy illustrated that a rap song or group which is not necessarily considered "political" can have an immense and immediate political effect. The group won its case, but the controversy over rap lyrics was neither new nor over.

Since 1985, Tipper Gore and her organization, the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), have been monitoring contemporary music, particularly rap and heavy metal. Not obtaining the ratings system the group proposed, a settlement resulted in "Explicit Lyrics" and "Parental Advisory" stickers placed on all albums that might contain "objectionable" subject matter. Ice-T, a rapper highly criticized by the PMRC, responded in his song, "Freedom of Speech:"

"The Constitution says we all got a right to speak,

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Say what we want, Tip, your argument is weak. Censor records, TV, school books, too? And who decides what's right to hear, you? PMRC this is where the witchhunt starts.  

Ice-T was involved in another monumental controversy in 1991, this time over his heavy-metal band's song "Cop Killer." The group, Body Count, which in no stretch of the imagination could be called a rap group as was done repeatedly throughout the duration of the controversy, addressed the issue of police brutality in a violent fantasy:

"Cop killer, I know your family's grievin'
Cop killer, but tonight we get even...
My adrenaline's pumpin'.
I got my stereo pumpin'.
I'm about to kill me somethin'.
A pig stopped me for nothin'!"  

The song provoked thousands of cops to send in letters to Time Warner, urging the removal of the song from "the record stores and the media." Boycotts were threatened, emotions escalated, and eventually Ice-T made the decision himself to remove the song from the album. But as he himself described the situation, the group had already performed the song for over 100 predominantly white crowds. It was not until after the riots in Los Angeles that anyone took notice of the song. "Through rock

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