

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Hard Cashless Society: Millennial Economics and Street Hop in Johannesburg

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Ethnomusicology

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

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The concept of the cashless society emerged in the nineteenth century through the writings of author Edward Bellamy. In his work, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888), Bellamy described the implementation of a card-based credit system that eventually replaced cash payments. Widely recognized as the first literary allusion to a cashless society, Bellamy presented a utopia where monetary exchanges were substituted with an established credit model. His socialist-activist writing suggested the possibilities of impending millennial economic transactions and proposed a time when every citizen would be apportioned credit to make purchases.

Subsequent writings by anthropologists, economists, eschatologists, and futurists predicted the global implications of an imminent cashless society. However, there were additional interpretations of the cashless society generated by hip-hop artists. In 2003, South

African hip-hop collective Cashless Society released their debut album, *African Raw Material, Volume One*. The group embraced the name of the financial principle as a means of representing monetary transitions from hard currency (coins and paper bills) to credit and electronic payments. Yet, Cashless Society also created the metaphor of The Hard Cashless Society, a world in which credit systems result in ever widening gaps between the wealthy and the unbanked poor who may not be able to survive within this financial framework. Thus, Cashless Society emphasized the polarizing duality of an increasingly credit driven world.

This dissertation explores hip-hop collective Cashless Society's lyrical accounts of The Hard Cashless Society. It draws upon fieldwork conducted in Botswana and South Africa between 2005 and 2008. The study incorporates Philip Feifan Xie, Halifu Osumare, and Awad Ibrahim's hip-hop tourism methodology (2007) involving artist interviews, lyrical analyses, video analyses, virtual communication mediated through the Internet, as well as ethnographic accounts drawn from visits to sites that were integral in the development of the group Cashless Society. By these means, this dissertation seeks to highlight how hip-hop music and culture can be used to provide an unexamined perspective on the economics of a cashless society in the new millennium.

The dissertation of Abimbola Naomi Cole Kai-Lewis is approved.

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2016

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Oladipo Samuel Cole, who continually encouraged me to complete this study because having put my hand to the plow, there was no turning back.

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PREFACE

An Introduction to The Hard Cashless Society

Video footage featured in the electronic press kit for South African hip-hop collective Cashless Society chronicled an interview filmed at the Johannesburg studios of youth radio broadcaster YFM.¹ This radio station was seminal in airing the music of young Black artists in democratic South Africa in the late 1990s. Following the nation's first democratic elections in 1994, there was an explosion of opportunities for the establishment of fresh radio stations airing Black music like kwaito (a mix of bubblegum, disco, R&B, and hip-hop music) and local hip-hop – genres generally associated with the streets of urban Johannesburg and township culture.² YFM burst onto South African airwaves on October 1, 1997, setting a new precedent for youth broadcasters – programming dominated by young Black South Africans that served as a platform for burgeoning artists like Cashless Society (McGregor 2014). The radio station was credited for how it transformed the Johannesburg “airscape” by producing popular shows featuring hip-hop music, house, kwaito, and spoken word poetry (Mbembe, Dlamini, and Khonou 2008:274).

¹ The acronym YFM stands for Youth FM. The radio station continues to be a local leader in broadcasting hip-hop music, kwaito, and R&B. It streams music through its website <http://www.yworld.co.za>. Ethnomusicologist David Coplan addresses the criticisms waged against YFM in his expanded edition of *In Township Tonight! Three Centuries of South African Black Music and Theatre* (2007). He states, “Among the most severe and frequently heard criticisms of these programmes, and especially of YFM and similar stations such as Radio Metro, was that their talk and play list were too American or Americanised” (Coplan 2007:330). Additional information about youth broadcasting in South Africa appears in Michael J. Rahfaldt’s dissertation “Music-Based Radio and Youth Education in South Africa” (Rahfaldt 2007).

² For additional information on kwaito, see the articles “Resurrecting the Flesh? Reflections on Women in Kwaito” by Angela Impey (2001), “Kwaito, ‘Dawgs’ and the Antimonies of Hustling” by Bhekizizwe Peterson (Peterson 2003), “South African Music after Apartheid: *Kwaito*, the ‘Party Politic,’ and the Appropriation of Gold as a Sign of Success” by Gavin Stiengo (Stiengo 2005), and “‘Kwaitofabulous’: The Study of a South African Urban Genre” by Thokozani Mhlambi (Mhlambi 2004).

Cashless Society is comprised of David “Draztik” Balsher, Alfred “Criminal” Chirwa, Julian “Snazz-D” Du Plessis, Thabiso “Gemini” Mofokeng, Salim “Fat Free” Mosidinyane, Kwezi “X-Amount” Ngcakani, and Tyrone “Tizeye” Philips. However, on this day select Cashless Society members David “Draztik” Balsher, Julian “Snazz-D” Du Plessis, Jerry “Black Intellect” Kai-Lewis, Thabiso “Gemini” Mofokeng, and Kwezi “X-Amount” Ngcakani gathered around three available studio microphones in the YFM studios, chatting comfortably with radio hosts Leslie “Lee” Kasumba and Thomas “Bad Boy T” Msengana. The hip-hop emcees attentively responded to the questions being posed by the two hosts. Kasumba and Msengana asked about Cashless Society’s music and image, deftly probing into what the group advocated for and truly represented. The artists animatedly responded. As one artist leaned in towards the microphone to share a comment, another one chimed in mid-sentence, thereby adding to complexity of the conversation.

When Kasumba and Msengana inquired about the origins of Cashless Society’s financially oriented name, the artists pensively took a moment to think about their conceptual foundation. Then, they began discussing the idea of The Hard Cashless Society, a term seemingly associated with their ever expanding hip-hop crew. Members of the group thoughtfully explained:

X-Amount: See Cashless is a group made up of six, but then there’s The Hard Cashless Society, which is...

Black Intellect: T.H.C., yeah.

X-Amount: T.H.C. Society, which is made up of the whole of Africa.

Black Intellect: Two hundred brothers.

X-Amount: So huge...

Black Intellect: It's like niggas from Malawi, Kenya, Sierra Leone...

Draztik: Family...

Black Intellect: Nigeria. All over the place.

X-Amount: It's so big...

The artists clarified that they belonged to a core group, Cashless Society, and then there was a growing constellation of individuals dispersed across the African continent (Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) which comprised The Hard Cashless Society.

In a group biography accompanying this video, Cashless Society further elucidates the notion of The Hard Cashless Society. They comment on the dualism contained in its meaning, stating, “The name, derived from ‘the hard cashless society,’ aptly captures the group’s vision via a pungent double meaning: cashless, as in the plastic economic future of the modern world and cashless, as in Africa, presently the poorest of the poor being at the bottom of the pyramid” (Cashless Society 2003a).³ The juxtaposition of poverty and a newly emerging digital economy reinforced the power of The Hard Cashless Society as well as its role in the music and lyrics of this hip-hop group.

³ This reference to the bottom of the pyramid is connected to the work of C.K. Prahalad and his book, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits* (2006). Prahalad’s work will be more fully examined later in this study. The work of economist Paul Collier complements the idea of the bottom of the pyramid. He writes about poverty traps and the “bottom billion” in the book *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (2007). For more information on poverty traps, see the writings of Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo (Banerjee and Duflo 2006; Banerjee and Duflo 2011).

There are merely two lyrical references to The Hard Cashless Society on Cashless Society's debut album *African Raw Material, Volume One* (2003). The first appears on the introductory track, "The Meaning," when Cashless Society emcees acknowledge their foundation, boasting, "Cashless Society / CS – *African Raw Material* / The local hard cashless / THC / Cashless Society / Nothing but the livest" (Cashless Society 2003b). Their next lyrical mention of The Hard Cashless Society is on the song "8-3-1 (I Love You)," a lyrical celebration of the overwhelming beauty and ugliness of Johannesburg or Jozi. The group dedicates the song to "all Jozi city massive / Africa / That's how we do / Cashless Society. THC" (Cashless Society, 2003c). Apart from these descriptions of The Hard Cashless Society, Cashless Society also contemplated titling their second album *African Raw Material, Volume 2 T.H.C. Society*. Unfortunately, they disbanded prior to the album's release. Nonetheless, The Hard Cashless Society remains a key musical theme associated with the group.

Cashless Society's admittedly socioeconomic musical concept of The Hard Cashless Society supports Jacques Attali's claim that "music is prophecy" (Attali 1985:11). In his book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Attali finds that music reveals elements of the future. He believes that music "makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things; it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future" (Attali 1985:11). Thus, in the vein of Attali's work, The Hard Cashless Society gives listeners a futuristic financial forecast in which cash is replaced with credit cards. At the same time, it represents the conditions encountered by many people across the globe who are impoverished; those who are noticeably struggling to keep

pace with the rapid pace of economic changes.⁴ This is the context from which Cashless Society arose in the late 1990s as dialogues about the advent of a cashless economy were waged and public concerns were voiced surrounding surges in world poverty in the impending new millennium. Their music exposed their apprehensions about millennial monetary transformations and their subsequent international impact.

⁴ These ideas can be compared with Attali's writing in *A Brief History of the Future: A Brave and Controversial Look at The Twenty-First Century* (2011), where he predicts, "The gap between rich and poor will widen, leading to aggravated social tensions (Attali 2011).

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INTRODUCTION

Street Hop and the Creation of a Cashless Society

The taxi rank at the center of Gaborone, Botswana's capital city, constantly buzzed with activity. Passengers hauled overstuffed bags and parcels onto the top of dilapidated buses with fading exteriors. Fledgling entrepreneurs sold cellophane wrapped candies and fruit to passersby. Gesticulating taxi drivers called out the names of their designated routes to potential customers while blaring, bass heavy music thumped through the rattling speakers of their freshly cleaned vehicles. Passengers hastily found their taxis, squeezing in to take their seats, and then beginning their routine search inside pockets, purses, and wallets for the fare. This vibrant transportation hub was overflowing with people determined to reach their final destinations.

During the two and a half years that I conducted field research in Gaborone, the taxi rank served as the heart of my movement around the city.⁵ Yet, it also functioned as the major conduit bridging my work in Botswana and South Africa. My research trips to South Africa involved ample preparation. I started by cramming clothing, toiletries, and other essential items into my black nylon backpack with its blindingly bright reflective silver strip. My research permit was meticulously folded and stashed next to my passport in my document case. I kept

⁵ In the opening of her book, *Fiddling in West Africa: Touching the Spirit in Fulbe, Hausa, and Dagbamba Cultures* (2008), Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje navigates Ghanaian transit hubs to travel from Accra to Tamale and then to Savelugu. She writes about the busy nature of the transit stations, noting, "The developing urban center was dotted with single- and multi-story Western-style buildings – banks, chain stores, restaurants, markets, hotels, etc. – as well as small parks and flower gardens. The many automobiles and *tros-tros* (vans and lorries used as multi-passenger vehicles) traveling the red dirt roads frequently filled the air with a fine dust" (DjeDje 2008:1).

them nearby as I readied for the border agents that I would encounter who always scrutinized each government stamp and signature when evaluating whether to grant me entry into South Africa. However, there was still a mandatory step prior to boarding my taxi and heading to South Africa – exchanging local currency, Botswana pula, to South African rand. Although local banks and currency exchange kiosks were widely available, some people preferred to rely on the services of money changers.

The money changers that I noticed at the taxi rank were women clad in brilliantly white dresses with white scarves wrapped around their heads. They sat on stools allowing them to remain comfortable until customers ventured in their direction. Travelers usually visited money changers when they needed to have money converted for impending journeys. In return, they dug into their small purses, producing money that was generally lower than the specified daily exchange rates at local banks. After visiting the money changers, travelers could freely board the taxi, shuttle down the road, and begin hurtling towards Johannesburg.⁶

Money changers are an integral feature at the taxi rank. They ensure that travelers were able to acquire optimal exchange rates. Zimbabwean journalist Pindai Dube probes into the labor of money changers in a 2009 article for the Botswana newspaper, *Sunday Standard*, noting, “During their heydays, cross border traders and informal money-changers lined up the same pavements clutching handbags bulging with wads of local currency to exchange for hard currency. Most operated as agents for well-heeled cash barons in return for a commission while others, acting on their own, raked in thousands of dollars which enabled them to maintain

⁶ These taxis are a recurring feature in the book *Johannesburg: The Elusive Afropolis*. In one description of modes of transportation to Johannesburg, Nsizwa Dlamini shares, “Most people use taxis and trains to travel to and from Jozi. The young black elite uses both taxis and private cars” (Mbembe, Dlamini, and Khonou 2008:277).

comfortable lifestyles” (Dube 2009). At the Gaborone taxi rank, these money changers are essential in sustaining informal money transfer systems.⁷ The United Nations elaborates on such systems, suggesting that they are established to “expedite the transfer of money from one location to another” (Buencamino and Gorbunov 2002:1). In the case of the women at the taxi rank, there were benefits to such financial interactions such as escaping the high costs of exchange rates and fees.⁸

During my own travels to Johannesburg, I accessed automatic teller machines (ATMs) where I was able to withdraw money from my bank account. I also used the electronic credit and debit card options provided through my banking institution. Nevertheless, I considered the financial transactions that I witnessed with the money changers at the taxi rank involving the flow of the “hard currency” that Dube describes in his article. People gave the money changers my cash in bills and, in return, received bills and coins. The vast disparities between the bills doled out from money changers’ bags at the taxi rank and institutionalized banking systems are the driving force in this dissertation exploring the nuances of the arriving cashless society in a Southern African context.

Statement of the Problem: A Hip-Hop Model of the Cashless Society

The futuristic idea of the cashless society is not ordinarily studied from a hip-hop perspective. This dissertation seeks to change that by investigating how South African hip-hop

⁷ These informal money transfer systems are not like the *hawala* systems involving cross border transfers. An extensive description of *hawalas* appear in the article, “*Hawala’s Charm: What Banks Can Learn From Informal Funds Transfer Systems*” by Arya Hariharan (2012). Hariharan proposes that the *hawala* system can be used to assist used who are impoverished, living in rural locations, or rebuilding their finance in post-conflict zones.

⁸ Critics have weighed in on the term “informal banking” stating that it is questionable since such exchanges do not require the existence of an actual account and do not involve deposits or withdrawals (Buencamino and Gorbunov 2002:1).

collective Cashless Society integrated messages about the transition from hard currency to electronic payment models into their music. This concept, generally referred to as the cashless society, was a defining characteristic for the group that embraced it as their financial namesake. However, as I learned from each trek made to Johannesburg, the notion of the cashless society was not exclusively about the technological transformations accompanying the cashless society. It was also about how the coming cashless society would affect everyday people like the dependable money changers settled atop their seats in the taxi rank, capitalizing from frequent cash exchanges moving from one hand to the next. The presence of these women affirmed the need for hard currency, even in the new millennium, and the importance of cash transfers from person-to-person. However, what would happen to these small scale financiers if the world reached a point where cash was truly obliterated and replaced with a cashless economy as futurists and economists predicted? How would the cashless society change the manner in which purchases were made? These were some of the key questions surrounding the shift towards a digital economy that are answered by Cashless Society in their music. These questions and their relationship to revolutionary financial approaches are a missing factor in existing scholarship on Cashless Society.

Few studies have investigated the music of Cashless Society and its members. Typically, the group only receives cursory mention for performances in Johannesburg or connections to other local hip-hop artists. Yet, discussions about the group have been included in the writings of anthropologists, communications specialists, dance scholars, ethnomusicologists, and journalists. Despite the variety of writings, there still is not an exhaustive study on the group and the presence of its members in the South African music industry.

Globetrotting author and journalist Patrick Neate gave an anecdotal account of meeting an unnamed member of Cashless Society at a poetry event in Yeoville in his book *Where You're At: Notes from the Frontline of a Hip-Hop Planet* (2004). This brief description includes minimal information about Cashless Society. However, in a footnote, Neate explains, "In 2001, Cashless Society actually released a track called 'Blaze Tha Breaks' on Bobbito Garcia's respected (and now defunct) Fondle 'Em label. This is the only time I know of a Jo'burg hip hop act getting an American release" (Neate 2004:91). His short description of Cashless Society's accomplishment, being the first African hip-hop group to gain distribution by an American label is evidence of the local and global significance of the group. Neate does not, however, supply readers with any additional information on Cashless Society.

Cashless Society receives another annotated comment in the dissertation of anthropologist Remi Warner. In his dissertation, "Battles Over Borders: Hip-hop and the Politics and Poetics of Race and Place in the New South Africa" (2007), Warner interviews Cashless Society members Thabiso "Gemini" Mofokeng and Julian "Snazz-D" Du Plessis. At the time of his study, the two emcees were part of another hip-hop group, Groundworks Crew. Warner discusses Snazz-D's involvement in Cashless Society, writing about "Snaz's [sic] deployment of Afro-futurist themes and imagery on his 2003 hit track, 'Hottentot Hop, Bantu 1,2,' in which he seamlessly combines references to the ancestral African past, with references to a utopic/dystopic 'space age' future..." (Warner 2007:240). In a footnote, he went on to write, "Snazz's verse in Cashless Society's hit song, 'Hottentot Hop, Bantu 1, 2,' projects a 'future past' fictional scenario, merging 'Xhoi San' and 'Bantu' historical references with futuristic space age imagery. The lyrics arguably enable Snazz to identify both with his Xhoisan ancestry,

as a ‘Coloured’-classified South Africa, *and* a cutting edge hyper-modernity” (Warner 2007:328). Warner emphasizes how Cashless Society is linked to futuristic ideals and identity formation.⁹

Music scholar Lee Watkins establishes ties between Cashless Society and other hip-hop crews that could be perceived as part of The Hard Cashless Society in an article “A Genre Coming of Age: Transformation, Difference, and Authenticity in the Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture of South Africa” (2012) appearing in Eric Charry’s edited volume *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*.¹⁰ He outlines the different members of Cashless Society, recognizing the constellation of crews including the Rhyme and Reason crew. He declares, “The Rhyme and Reason crew in Johannesburg are members of a larger crew, Cashless Society, who believe they represent the poorest of the poor and want to promote hope and progress. The crew was formed in 1998 and has seven members. They describe their music as street-hop rather than hip hop. Their single ‘Blaze Tha Breaks’ was released on vinyl by Fondle ‘Em Records in 2000 (Cashless Society 2000). They formed Unreleased Records in 1999 as a way to control the production and marketing of their music. Draztik of Cashless Society has been collaborating with Nations Uprising, a Johannesburg crew with international experience, innovative music, and increasing popularity” (Watkins 2012:62). Watkins shows that Cashless Society is an expansive collection of artists and includes a number of smaller associated crews. He also explains the

⁹ Warner gives another interpretation of hip-hop music and culture in Cape Town in his article “Colouring the Cape Problem Space: A Hip-Hop Identity of Passions” featured in the edited volume *Native Tongues: An African Hip-Hop Reader* (2011).

¹⁰ Watkins provides further information about South African hip-hop in his M.A. thesis, “Tracking the Narrative: The Poetics of Identity in Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in Cape Town,” (1999) and article “Rappin’ the Cape: Style and Memory, Power in Community” (2004).

economic implications of the group's name in its ideology through addressing poverty and the streets.

Dance ethnologist Halifu Osumare briefly points out some of the economic meanings of Cashless Society's name in her article "Motherland Hip-Hop: African American Youth Culture in Senegal and Kenya" (2010). She shares, "In South Africa, a crew called 'Cashless Society' stands in literal and metaphoric contrast to Atlanta's [sic] Cash Money Crew in the United States. Cashless Society's name alludes to the realities of their situation as black South Africans in postapartheid Johannesburg, as opposed to the flaunting of money, diamond jewelry, and cars with twenty-five-inch rims sported by Cash Money Crew and many other commercial U.S. rappers" (Osumare 2010:162).¹¹ Cash Money, a hip-hop collective that actually emerged in New Orleans, was responsible for glorifying bling on their track "Bling, Bling." The song promoted a fixation on extravagant homes, jewelry, and vehicles. Cashless Society resisted public presentations of bling by hip-hop artists by sharing reminders of the widespread global poverty affecting billions of people worldwide. Osumare hints at these ideas, yet they are not fully explored in her work.

Cultural theorist Barry Brummett scrutinizes Cashless Society in comparison to the blinged boasting and consumerism appearing in certain hip-hop songs in the second edition of his book, *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* (2011). However, when he discusses Cashless Society, Brummett diverts from this theme, switching to the topic of racism. Rather than highlighting the

¹¹ I shared my research findings on this topic at the Experience Music Project Pop Music Conference at UCLA in 2011 (Cole 2011). The paper, "No Cash, No Credit: Cashless Society's Anti-Bling Critiques," was based on my preliminary research on Cashless Society. I compared the origins of the term bling, its popularization through the hip-hop group Cash Money Millionaires, and Cashless Society's opposing lyrical commentaries on poverty and disenfranchisement in South Africa.

evident relationship between the group and its financial namesake, Brummett redirects his discussion to how the Cashless Society's music tackles racism. He finds that "Cashless Society produces music that critiques and works against racism, while affirming values of traditional black South African cultures. In that way, it refuses to let itself be co-opted by a racist ideology. Hip-hop could be an effective weapon against racism if it chose to be" (Brummett 2011:256). Brummet's focus on racism reveals a new interpretation of Cashless Society's music as well as suggests directions for future music.

These existing literary accounts about Cashless Society mark the emerging scholarship on the group. This study examines Cashless Society from a different viewpoint by evaluating how their music illuminates the lived experiences of the poor in Johannesburg and global communities. The group adopted a stance that was uncommon in the music of their contemporaries. My study aligns Cashless Society's socioeconomic philosophy with their critique of Johannesburg - a big city on the verge of becoming a megacity. The group's concerns with new waves of "technomillennialism" relate to economics and the distribution of wealth (Tapia 2003). For Cashless Society, a hip-hop collective whose name is obtained from the financial principles of a cash-free, electronic future, this is especially relevant.¹²

The story of my examination of the hip-hop crew Cashless Society literally begins at the taxi rank, a site symbolizing my movement between different areas of research, different forms

¹² While Cashless Society structured their group around the economic principles of a digital future, there were other preceding artists who also tackled this topic. Scot Brown indicates that one example is the song "E. Pluribus Unum" by the Last Poets (Brown, personal communication, March 8, 2016). This 1972 track featured on their album *Chastisement* describes transitions from cash credit cards as well as the dominance of multinational companies in the future. The song also scrutinizes the symbols printed on the dollar bill (the phrase "annuit coeptis," the phrase "e. pluribus unum," the all-seeing eye, the layers of bricks included in the pyramid, the eagle, the arrows clutched in the eagle's talon, and the stars). The iconography of the dollar bill will be interpreted later in this dissertation as it relates to Cashless Society.

of currency, and different physical locations. Johannesburg gave me snapshots of the circumstances and communities contributing to the rise of Cashless Society. I walked the streets that produced the crime reported in their lyrics and artistic creativity. I visited neighborhoods where Cashless Society members resided and had performed at shows in preceding years. I was able to learn more about Cashless Society when traversing Johannesburg's topography. There was, however, still the reality that the group had separated and was no longer performing together. Consequently, I combined ethnographic trips to Johannesburg with the music, pictures, and videos that Cashless Society left behind in the aftermath of their dissolution.

Visualizing Cashless Society: Street Hop and Street Stylization

Archived photographs of Cashless Society helped me to visualize the cityscape at the turn of the new millennium. Following my trips to Johannesburg, I spent substantial amounts of time analyzing Cashless Society's images. The photographs offered panoramic views of life in Johannesburg and how it influenced the group's discussion of the financial cashless society. Early promotional photographs of Cashless Society depicted the group posing in various locations across the Johannesburg streetscape. In one picture, they were huddled together in an empty lot amid pieces of rubbish strewn atop weedy grass. Another shot showed Cashless Society standing in an alley behind towering apartment buildings with barbed wire topped gates and a trail of water running down the pavement beside them. A subsequent photograph revealed group members surrounding the charred remains of a discarded automobile, glaring irreverently into the camera. Then, in a final picture, some Cashless Society members posed on the lawn of a city park wearing oversized tees, baggy pants, loose fitting pocketed shorts, and white tanks; a lone member stood topless, bearing tattooed biceps and tightly clenched fists.

The shots represented the grittiness of the Johannesburg streets and the particular conditions influencing Cashless Society's music. The scenes also illustrated the poverty that Cashless Society spotlighted in their lyrics. Several of these Cashless Society images were circulated in the CD liner notes and electronic press kit featured on their debut album, *African Raw Material, Volume One*. There is an additional image where Cashless Society members posed for the cover of *Hype* magazine, a South African magazine dedicated to hip-hop music and culture.¹³ Six of the artists gather together and stare into the camera. Several of the artists hands are pointed towards the camera, contorted into a variety of signs as well as a plain raised fist.

Each photograph seemed carefully pulled from a dated album documenting Cashless Society's existence in Johannesburg; an historical account of a group that dissolved in 2005 having recorded only one critically acclaimed album.¹⁴ Yet, Cashless Society still earned the continental distinction of becoming the first African hip-hop group to have their music distributed on an American record label, the now defunct Fondle 'Em Records, which was once run by hip-hop luminary Robert "Bobbito" Garcia.¹⁵ Their pictures give visual cues into their former experiences as artists dwelling in Johannesburg.

¹³ *Hype* magazine is a popular publication in South Africa. The monthly publication was distributed with mixtapes of the latest local hip-hop talent. I was able to purchase this periodical in Botswana and build a collection of mixtapes introducing budding South African hip-hop artists.

¹⁴ Art historian Krista Thompson investigates the role of photographs in documenting specific moments in the lives of African diasporic communities. She notes, "The photographic medium, which often captures an unrecoverable moment from the past, allowing it to reside 'freeze-framed' in other times and spaces, might have a special analogous relation to African diasporic communities who are often cut off or removed from spaces and times" (Thompson 2015). Photographs enabled Cashless Society to freeze-frame distinct scenes from their lives in Johannesburg.

¹⁵ Garcia confirmed his belief that Cashless Society was the first African hip-hop group to gain distribution on an American record label in the liner notes to the album *Farewell Fondle 'Em* (Garcia 2001). In addition to working as



Figure 1: Cashless Society members posing for *Hype* magazine

Members of Cashless Society (from left to right, Julian “Snazz-D” Du Plessis, Tyrone “Tizeye” Philips, David “Draztik” Balsher, Alfred “Criminal” Chirwa, Thabiso “Gemini” Mofokeng, and Kwezi “X-Amount” Ngcakani) posing in a picture that was featured on the cover of *Hype* magazine. This photo is used with permission from David “Draztik” Balsher/Unreleased Records.

I pored over these images to help me to visualize the scenes that were lyrically portrayed in Cashless Society’s music. The pictures were graphic cues accompanying the lyrical narratives on *African Raw Material, Volume One*. Thus, my work became an exercise in hip-hop historiography, the act of finding resources that could be used to craft a history of specific artists, events, and lyrics attached to a distinct historical period (Meghelli 2013; Forman and Neal 2012). This inquiry into Cashless Society’s music marked my foray into the musically mastered world of The Hard Cashless Society.

a deejay, Bobbito Garcia is also a journalist, radio host, and former member of the breakdancing Rock Steady Crew. He authored the book *Where’d You Get Those: New York City’s Sneaker Culture: 1960-1987* (2013).

While the Cashless Society group members attributed the origins of The Hard Cashless Society to destinations across Africa, it was also inextricably linked to Johannesburg's urban sprawl. Cashless Society members branded themselves as members of the "Academy of Street Science." Cheryl Keyes makes a connection between street knowledge and the music of NWA, which "played on the capital of street life or street knowledge as credibility in the world of hip hop, that is, understanding the hard knocks and realities of growing up in the hood" (Keyes, personal communication, March 11, 2016). She also makes a parallel to the music of Dr. Dre "opening up with 'Straight Outta Compton' when he states, 'You are about to witness the strength of street knowledge'" (Keyes, personal communication, 11 March 2016). These larger connections to street knowledge show its pervasiveness within hip-hop music and culture.

Another way that Cashless Society exhibited street knowledge was through the three-point crown logo on their clothing which was attributed to the once popular Playasport clothing line, was repeatedly featured in their photographs.¹⁶ They solidified an allegiance to the streets with the message "Academy of Street Science" adorning the front of the artists' tee shirts. The pointed crown insignia associated with the label also appears on the sweat suit jackets and baseball caps worn by the group. Yet, it is the notion of street science that further establishes a link between the emcees and the streets. In the context of hip-hop culture, street science, which is also referred to as "street knowledge," has been defined by Ernest Allen, Jr. as "learnedness acquired from one's life experiences in a harsh urban setting, knowledge, basically concerned with survival skills: how to avoid being taken advantage of while gaining greatest advantage for

¹⁶ Playasport was run by Sonni Chidibere. Since the close of the company, Chidibere has gone on to star in blockbuster feature films including *Blood Diamond* and *District 9*.

oneself” (Allen 1996:181).¹⁷ Thus, the streets are central to both Cashless Society’s image and its ideology.

From its formation in 1999, Cashless Society marketed itself as a group that created “street anthems” or “street hop.”¹⁸ The streets serve as one of the primary sites for the scenes unfolding in the group’s music. As ethnomusicologist Cheryl Keyes notes, there are specific elements of street production that contribute to the development of hip-hop artists, namely “speech, characters, attitude, and crews” (Keyes 2002:125). Each of these features is exhibited by Cashless Society in their use of language as well as their construction of a crew (The Hard Cashless Society). However, they also selected a name, Cashless Society, which represented their unique self-stylization based on life on the Johannesburg streets (Keyes 2002:125). It is directly derived from economic principles representing the economic future. The financial implications of this hip-hop moniker contained two meanings. The first is the replacement of hard currency such as bills and coins with credit cards and electronic payment systems. Additionally, this sobriquet enables Cashless Society to advocate for the poverty that they experienced and witnessed on the streets of Johannesburg.

Cultural studies scholar Sarah Nuttall considers the ways in which the streets contribute to stylization of the body and how this is represented in texts (such as those appearing on

¹⁷ Outside of the realm of hip-hop culture, street science has been analyzed in connection with community-based health issues and the creation of local knowledge. Health scientist Jason Corburn delves into this in the context of new York City in his book *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice* (2005).

¹⁸ Lee Watkins emphasizes the fact that Cashless Society makes “street hop” as opposed to hip-hop music in his article “A Genre Coming of Age: Transformation, Difference, and Authenticity in the Rap and Music and Hip Hop Culture of South Africa” (2012). He notes that Cashless Society started in 1998 in his article, yet the group considers 1999 their official starting year. On *African Raw Material, Volume One*, Cashless Society also refers to songs as street syllabi, such as on “Words 4 Real” where Draztik rhymes, “Yo, let me begin/ Journey through the steps of the street syllabus” (Cashless Society 2003d).

billboards) and imagery across the Johannesburg cityscape.¹⁹ She hypothesizes that self-stylization is an extension of the city and the diversity of visual representations from edifices to signs that sprawl across the urban landscape (Nuttall 2008).²⁰ Cashless Society's photographs conform to this idea. Nuttall posits, "Billboards, newsprint magazine covers, road signs, even the entire surfaces of buildings constitute a stream of local and global city signs, of Johannesburg representation. These texts are really a part of visual culture, and most of the time, they have sartorial and aural accompaniments" (Nuttall 2008:106). The aural additions to Cashless Society's stylization are the images and music attached to the group. This forges a tangible connection to the streets as the crew shares its accounts of tales taken directly from their lives.

Miles White, a professor at City University of Seattle in Slovakia, offers another reading of street stylization and hip-hop artists, linking it to masculinity and the male body. He notes that "tattoos, stylized aesthetic apparel or brand-name urban street wear, as well as the display of the shirtless torso are ways that visually display masculine power and sexuality by privileging the objectified and spectacularized body" (White 2011:25). Each of these elements materialized in Cashless Society's photographs - group members inked with tattoos, the plethora of Playasport gear, and chests daringly bared in scenes set against the city streets. These were hints of the stylized, "spectacularized" male body and its presence within the scenery of Johannesburg.

The significance of the hip-hop, the male body, and the streets is further articulated by author and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates in the autobiographical work *Between Me and the World*

¹⁹ Sarah Nuttall is the Director of the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her discussion of stylization in Johannesburg can be compared to Jean Allman's exploration of fashion and politics in African settings (Allman 2004).

²⁰ Nuttall continues her exploration of stylization in her articles "Self and Text in *Y Magazine*" (Nuttall 2003) and "Self-Styling" (Nuttall 2011).

(2015).²¹ In reflecting on his experiences growing up in Baltimore, Maryland during the late twentieth century, he contends that the streets are a constant threat to maleness and the Black male body. Coates indicates that survival is dependent on learning the edicts, gestures, and language governing street life. He signals that there are unique ways that the streets become relevant for hip-hop artists in conveying their stories, especially the ones who brag of being “addicted to the streets” (Coates 2015:22). Coates also cautions readers about the dangers of the streets, saying, “The streets transform every ordinary day into a series of trick questions, and every incorrect answer risks a beat-down, a shooting, or a pregnancy. No one survives unscathed” (Coates 2015:22). For Coates, the streets can consume the Black male boy, and require an astute awareness of how to navigate situations in order to ensure survival.

Kopano Ratele, a scholar exploring South African masculinities, expounds on this idea of masculinity and the Black male body in a South African context, avowing that men use their bodies as a form of protection against crime and violence. He speaks about this in general terms through televised appearances on South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) programs (SABC Digital News 2015a; SABC Digital News 2015b). His ideas about the male body, masculinity, survival, and street style are also highlighted in an earlier article “*Re Tla Dirang Ka Selo Se Ba Re Go Ke Ghetto Fabulous? Academics on the Streets*” (Ratele 2003).²² Ratele emphasizes the value of street wisdom, affirming, “If it is true that there is a version of wisdom

²¹ Coates is a correspondent for *The Atlantic*. Additionally, he is an educator. Coates is preparing to release his *Black Panther* comic book series for Marvel Comics (see http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/books/ta-nehisi-coates-to-write-black-panther-comic-for-marvel.html?_r=0). Coates has also authored *The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir* (2009), which tells the story of his childhood.

²² Ratele has also researched masculinity and its collection to mortality, power, resistance, sexuality, and tradition in additional articles (i.e., Ratele 2008; Ratele 2013). He is also a monthly South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) commentator on masculinity in South Africa (see SABC 2015a; SABC 2015b; and SABC 2015c).

for surviving the urban streets, style is what rules them. With street wisdom we refer to that mobile ensemble of social and economic poses that attend urban life and with which mostly young, mostly African men, and to a differing extent, young African women, learn and use to ‘survive,’ to cope, to live out their lives, in townships and cities. It is seen in how a man holds his body, walks down the street, jives and the way a woman holds her head, moves her body, dances” (Ratele 2003:47). His observation about the manner in which street wisdom governs life in Johannesburg is evidenced in visual representations of Cashless Society such as photographs and music videos. It also arises in Cashless Society’s lyrics and their descriptions of the city.²³ Consequently, it becomes apparent that in order to truly understand Cashless Society’s street ideology, it is vital to look at the growth of Johannesburg as a big city on the verge of becoming a megacity or Afropolis.

The notion of an Afropolis has been included in dialogues about African cities in the new millennium. Author Taiye Selasi featured the term “Afropolitan” in the 2005 article, “Bye-Bye Babar,” which appeared in *Lip Magazine* (Selasi 2005). She recounts the changing lives of young Africans in urban centers, accentuating that many of them are polyglots who have studied in foreign universities and returned home. Selasi shares, “They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You’ll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and

²³ For example, in the lyrics to “8-3-1 (I Love You)” Cashless Society presents their adoration of certain aspects of Johannesburg life, but detestation of other elements. They rhyme, “8 letters 3 words 1 meaning/ I love you/ I said I love you/ 8-3-1’s not that gun they concealing/ I love you/ I said I love you/ I love you, Jozi/ You’re the city/ I love you/ I said I love you/ It’s too bad these streets show no pity” (Cashless Society 2003c). The song “8-3-1 (I Love You)” will be discussed at length later in this dissertation.

Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos” (Selasi 2005).²⁴ The definitive aspects of being an Afropolitan include a diversity of lived experiences across several nations. Her words exemplify the lives of Cashless Society members who spent different portions of their lives in North America and Europe (the United States and Germany), spoke several languages (Afrikaans, English, Krio, Setswana, and Zulu), and settled in South Africa.

Selasi’s perspective on Afropolitanism is contested by writers such as Emma Dabiri in her online article “Why I’m Not an Afropolitan” (Dabiri 2014). Dabiri links Afropolitanism to Western interest and commodification, writing

Afropolitanism can be seen as the latest manifestation of planetary commerce in blackness. It seems as though having consumed so much of black American culture, there is now a demand for more authentic, virgin, black culture to consume. Demand turns to the continent where a fresh source is ripe for the picking.

Personally, I need to position myself with a more radical, counter-cultural movement. For me Afropolitanism is too polite, corporate, glossy – it reeks of sponsorship and big business with all the attendant limitations. (Dabiri 2014)

Her conclusions about Afropolitanism are grounded in the scholarship of several authors including Homi Bhaba, Frantz Fanon, and Paul Gilroy. It illustrates a different side of Afropolitanism that diverts from the work of Selasi. Debari integrates details about a conference panel she participated in devoted to the relevance of Afropolitanism (“Fantasy or Reality? Afropolitan Narratives of the 21st Century” from the Africa Writes 2013 Festival). Yet, she blends information about one of the critical writers on Afropolitanism, Achille Mbembe, whose

²⁴ Selasi has also participated in public speaking engagements such as her 2014 Ted Talk, “Don’t Ask Where I’m From, Ask Where I’m Local” (Selasi 2014a). During this talk, she reflects upon the politics of identity and descriptions of her Ghanaian and Nigerian heritage. Selasi also presents the idea of “culture over country,” returning to the concept of what characterizes an Afropolitan (Selasi 2014a). In addition to her talks, Selasi is also the author of the novel *Ghana Must Go* (Selasi 2014b).

articles about Afropolitanism and the Afropolis provided a foundation for understanding the concept.

Historian and political scientist Achille Mbembe's article "Afropolitanism," which was originally published in French, gives another viewpoint in the discussion of Afropolitanism and the Afropolis. In the translated version of this article, Mbembe delves into the concept of worlds-in-movement and how it influences the lives of Africans in the twenty-first century. Mbembe shows that these worlds-in-movement occur through two primary activities – dispersion (movement taking place through invasions, marriage, trade, and war) and immersion (movement stemming from people from other locations and establishing residence in African nations). Dispersion and immersion form the crux of Mbembe's definition of Afropolitanism. He explains, "Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity – which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world. It is also a political and cultural stance in relation to the nation, to race and to the issue to difference in general" (Mbembe 2007:28-29). Mbembe shows how Afropolitanism reflects the changing cultural, political, national, and racial identities of Africans in cities across the continent.²⁵

²⁵ Afropolitanism can be compared to philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's description of cosmopolitanism. Appiah explains the significance of cosmopolitanism in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). He refers to his Ghanaian ancestry, citing how cosmopolitanism influences the citizens of Ghana as well as nations around the globe. Appiah writes, "People who complain about the homogeneity produced by globalization often fail to notice that globalization is, equally, a threat to homogeneity. You can see this as clearly in Kumasi as anywhere. The capital of Asante is accessible to you, whoever you are – emotionally, intellectually, and, of course, physically. It is integrated into the global markets. None of this makes it Western, or American, or British" (Appiah 2006:101). Appiah underscores the ways in which diversity contributes to global markets, noting that there are indistinct cultural and physical boundaries.

Cashless Society's Megacity

Cashless Society emphasizes the significance of Afropolitanism and the cityscape in their music. The emcees classify Johannesburg as a megacity in the song “The Meaning” (Cashless Society 2003a). Group members intone, “Megacity/ NY/ Back to Jozi,” categorizing both New York City and Johannesburg as megacities (Cashless Society 2003a). Their ideas are supported by research compiled by the University of Johannesburg in 2008 about the potential impact of megacities. Findings from a colloquium, titled “Johannesburg and Megacity Phenomena” that was hosted by the Research Centre at the University of Johannesburg, illustrate the growth of Johannesburg and its development as a megacity with an expanding population. In an article summing up the colloquium, organizers Leora Farber, a professor in the University of Johannesburg’s Faculty of Art, Design, and Architecture, and Ryan Bishop, a professor at the University of Southampton, affirm, “Megacities embody a host of new or intensified urban phenomena which not only affect the future prosperity and stability of a city, but also unsettle many traditionally held concepts about cities” (Farber and Bishop 2008). Widespread geographical trends indicate that there will be a surge in the number of megacities emerging around the globe. These cities, which generally have populations exceeding ten million inhabitants, are continually increasing. Beginning in the 1950s, there were only a handful of megacities, one of which is New York, and other “burgeoning big cities,” at the time such as Buenos Aires, London, Moscow, Paris, Rhine-Ruhr North, Shanghai, and Tokyo (National Geographic 2002). By 2015, the number of projected megacities around the world was expected to skyrocket, expanding to more cities across Africa (Cairo and Lagos), Asia (Bombay, Calcutta, Dhaka, Osaka, Tianjin, Shanghai, Tokyo, Manila, and Jakarta), Central America (Mexico City),

North America (Los Angeles), and South America (Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo).

In the article, “Cities of the Future? Megacities and the Space/Time of Urban Modernity” (2008), urban geographer Austin Zeiderman interrogates the futuristic ideals attached to megacities. He challenges the view that these cities signal the promise of a millennial future. Instead, Zeiderman suggests that megacities signify the widening gap between rich and poor as well as the global North and South. According to Zeiderman, megacities are precursors to the overwhelming poverty affecting pockets of these cities. Warning readers that problematic assumptions associated with megacities can influence public perception, Zeiderman writes, “Seeing megacities as ‘cities of the future’ expands the boundaries of urban modernity to include places once thought to be either outside of historical time or lagging behind it. Yet this occurs in such a way as to fold other heterogeneous histories into the ‘global’ history of the West, by reorganizing them relative to the West’s own emergence” (Zeiderman 2008:28). His statement illustrates the discrepancies in discourse about megacities, particularly in cases where locations across the African continent are often ignored and overlooked. Consequently, Zeiderman casts doubts on the futuristic nature of these cities and how they are described.

Part of Zeiderman’s article on megacities spotlights Johannesburg, a city that has received substantial focus in urban ethnographies by scholars Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, who have written a variety of ethnographic accounts about the city both individually (Nuttall 2004; Mbembe 2009; Nuttall 2009) and collectively (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004; Mbembe and Nuttall 2008). Zeiderman further assesses poverty and the development of megacities, devoting special attention to the work of Mbembe and Nuttall. He draws upon their

description of the African metropolis or Afropolis, writing, “Here, we can expand Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe’s objection to treating the slum as the defining feature of the African metropolis, as it ‘reinserts the city [of Johannesburg] into a more recognizable frame’” (Zeiderman 2008:28).²⁶ Zeiderman’s mention of Johannesburg raises the matter of stereotypical portrayals of the city as overrun with poverty.

Theories about megacities and the Afropolis help to contextualize the music of the Johannesburg-based hip-hop collective Cashless Society. The group adopted a name that confronted the city’s economic transitions as well as urban futurism. They boldly address the power of the mushrooming megacities in the introductory track to their 2003 album *African Raw Material, Volume One (ARM)*. Cashless Society recognizes the presence of New York as a megacity. Simultaneously, the collective examine cities such as Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth, some of South Africa’s leading cities approaching megacity status. Then they call out the names of two townships, Gugulethu and Soweto, which stand in contrast to the big cities and megacities cited earlier in the song. Just as Zeiderman contemplates the possibilities of megacities, Cashless Society examines the ways in which South Africa was changing as the millennium approached. Cashless Society’s music was a precursor to many of the economic changes that were occurring during the twentieth century. They were attuned to the economic conversions and the prospect that the world might one day become fully reliant on a digital economy. Their music was steeped in the street currency of The Hard Cashless Society. Cashless Society was committed to making songs about the unique experiences of Johannesburg, a budding megacity and an Afropolis.

²⁶ Nuttall and Mbembe refer to Johannesburg as the “premier African metropolis” and “the symbol par excellence of the ‘African modern’” (Mbembe and Nuttall 2008:1).

CHAPTER ONE

Methodology: A Hip-Hop Tourism Approach to Cashless Society

The methodology used in this study is based on hip-hop tourism and the theory of “gazing the hood” presented by Philip Feifan Xie, Halifu Osumare, and Awad Ibrahim in their article, “Gazing the Hood: Hip-Hop as Tourism Attraction” (2007). They define hip-hop tourism as “the images collected from mass media or the snapshots taken from the Hip-Hop attractions that are sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, television, literature, magazines, records and videos. It is the gaze *qua* pleasure: where the local African American beat of Hip-Hop, similar to Jazz and Blues before it, has become a global semiotic language deeply embedded in the African American musical tradition” (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007).²⁷ Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim apply the hip-hop tourism model to African-American culture and its impact on hip-hop music within an American context. They categorize it as an approach that can be implemented to examine the interrelatedness of attractions, culture, and tourists (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007). This form of tourism is mainly rooted in urban communities and central locations within them. Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim flag hip-hop tourism as a largely understudied area of tourism studies and propose that more scholars integrate it into their work.

Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim imagine hip-hop tourism in terms of travelers venturing to specific destinations to learn more about hip-hop music and how the culture is shaped by different gazes. They elaborate upon three primary gazes: initial, mass, and authentic (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007). The “gazes” that Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim comes from John

²⁷ Throughout their article, Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim use the term “Hip-Hop” (with capitalization) and “African American” (unhyphenated).

Urry's theories about the gaze of tourists in his book *The Tourist Gaze* (2002). Urry incorporates the work of Michel Foucault into his own writings on the tourist gaze, citing work from his book *The Birth of the Clinic* (1976) which identified the medical gaze that doctors projected upon patients (Foucault quoted in Urry 2002). Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim contend, "Tourism has transformed music wherever they have come together, whose performances have been performed as a special form of 'gaze'" (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007:453). This is the foundation of the three gazes that they propose throughout their article.

The initial gaze involves an outside view of hip-hop artists and their communities. It is an instance where "tourism begins with the initial gaze by tourists attracted through a curiosity about the Other" (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007). Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim state that hip-hop tourism "in this stage is a concept of *curiositas* involving extensive physical travels" and historical curiosity. They adopt this notion of *curiositas* or "lust of the eyes" from the work of Giuliana Bruno in her book *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (1993). Drawing upon Bruno's ideas, Xie, Osumare and Ibrahim associate the initial gaze with learning more about the historical origins of hip-hop music in communities.

Mass gaze refers to how hip-hop music is experienced through the technological mediation of compact discs, televised music videos, as well as the Internet. This acts as a "distanced and more passive gaze" marked by "a desire to experience the context of the culture..." (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007). Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim propose that the mass gaze transforms hip-hop music into a "decoded message" that can be analyzed from multiple

perspectives (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007).²⁸ The message takes the form of the abovementioned formats and the emphasis is on interacting with hip-hop music through mass media.

Lastly, the authentic gaze calls for visits to pivotal locations where hip-hop culture developed, such as sightseeing tours across the Bronx and Harlem in New York City to visit significant sites.²⁹ At this juncture, the gaze entails “seeking Hip Hop [sic] as a special interest tourism” (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007).³⁰ Xie, Osumare and Ibrahim have categorized this gaze in terms of authenticity. They integrated it into their presentation of the gazes because, as they state in their article, “The notion of ‘authenticity’ permeates most forms of tourism...and is a predominant concept for producing and consuming music regardless of its possible connections to tourism” (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007:453). However, the word “authenticity” can be problematic in ethnomusicological studies (Seeger, personal communication, March 9, 2016).

²⁸ The concept of decoding hip-hop and its relationship to emceeing appears in Shawn “Jay-Z” Carter’s book *Decoded* (2011). Jay-Z explains, “I love writing rhymes. There’s probably nothing that gives me as much pleasure. There have been times in my life when I’ve tried to put it to the side – when I was a kid, so I could focus on hustling in the streets, and when I was an adult, so I could focus on hustling in the boardroom – but the words kept coming. They’re still coming and will probably never stop. That’s my story. But the story of the larger culture is a story of a million MCs all over the world who are looking out their windows or standing on street corners or riding their cars through their cities or suburbs or small towns and inside of them the words are coming, too, the words they need to make sense of the world they see around them. The words are witty and blunt, abstract and linear, sober and fucked up. And when we decode that torrent of words – by which I mean really *listen* to them with our minds and hearts open – we can understand their world better” (Carter 2011). Decoding is also a key part of the book *Hip-Hop Decoded* by Black Dot (2005), and the hip-hop matrix, which will be examined more fully later in this dissertation.

²⁹ One example of a hip-hop sightseeing tour is Hush Tours in New York City. Created by Debra Harris, this company shuttles tourists across the city to see buildings, parks, streets and other seminal locations related to the beginnings of hip-hop culture (Rosen 2006).

³⁰ Ali Colleen Neff addresses the ways in which cultural tourism contributes to music research in the Mississippi Delta in her book *Let the World Listen Right: The Mississippi Delta Hip-Hop Story* (2009). She writes, “A new cultural tourism emerged throughout the 1990s and 2000s in the Mississippi Delta, where contemporary films including *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and Martin Scorsese’s documentary series *The Blues: A Musical Journey*, as well as a spate of Delta blues cover albums and reissues, revived international interest in the genre” (Neff 2009:41).

Therefore I think that it might be more appropriate to consider it as an embodied gaze. The initial and mass gazes were primarily about investigating hip-hop from a distance. Yet this embodied gaze is based on direct interactions with hip-hop artists and the key sites shaping their music.

I believe that hip-hop tourism is a useful tool for exploring hip-hop culture in locations around the globe. It was especially helpful for me as I framed my study and gradually began collecting information about Cashless Society. In “Gazing the Hood: Hip-Hop As Tourism Attraction,” Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim indicate that hip-hop tourism is beneficial for learning more about hip-hop music and culture in ‘hoods’ worldwide (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007).³¹ They explore hip-hop tourism mainly from a cultural and historical perspective, offering an analysis of neighborhoods, sites, and how they are associated with hip-hop culture. In their writing, they do not interrogate the specifics of the music, but focus rather on how the different facets of hip-hop culture are linked to hip-hop tourism. Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim appear to reflect the “scientific stream” of tourism studies produced by academics (Ritchie, Sheehan, and Timur 2008).³² Their article not only includes definitions of hip-hop tourism and gives general examples of how it is represented, there is also mention of companies like Hush Tours in New York City that coordinate visits throughout the Bronx and Harlem as well as figures (DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa) integral to the history of hip hop culture in the United States. Although the article includes discussion of locations connected to hip-hop tourism (8 Mile, the Bronx,

³¹ In acknowledging how hip-hop tourism fits within a larger global music industry, Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim write, “Musical markets were once local but are now increasingly global. Hip-Hop tourism becomes an integral part of the ‘world music’ industry which is consumed in many ways in many places” (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007).

³² Ritchie, Sheehan, and Timur propose that the second stream of tourism is the “management stream,” which corresponds to the “content and management of tourism destinations” (Ritchie, Sheehan and Timur 2008). Thus, while the science stream relates to theorizing and the ideas stemming from research on tourism, the management stream focuses more on the practical aspects of operating and running tourism sites.

Compton, Fresno, New Jersey, South Central), it does not provide a larger picture of how hip-hop tourism can be used to understand more about hip-hop artists and the communities they are affiliated with. Because I find Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim's approach and methodology valuable, I have decided to apply their model of tourism for my research on Cashless Society.

The groundwork for my research was introduced one afternoon in Johannesburg as I shadowed former Cashless Society emcee and producer Draztik. We sat in the reception area of an office conversing about my time in Johannesburg and the scope of my study. Draztik asked me if I had the opportunity to travel across the city and spend time seeing notable sites. I responded that Johannesburg was a central point in my travels across Southern Africa. Before arriving in Botswana, I had to cross the airport to catch a short connecting flight. Likewise, when traveling to South Africa for study excursions, the airport in Johannesburg was where I would board another flight heading to Durban and Pietermaritzburg where I participated in study abroad and language programs. Draztik encouraged me to see more of Johannesburg. I jokingly told him that I was accustomed to seeing Johannesburg through windows while crisscrossing the cityscape in buses and cars. Our exchange made me realize that in traveling from Gaborone to Johannesburg, I often felt like a tourist being guided from destination to destination. Consequently, the research that I conducted on Cashless Society in Johannesburg opened up the "ethnographic windows of tourism" (Nash 2000; Gross 2011), thereby leading me to methods used in researching hip-hop tourism.³³

³³ Within a South African context, anthropologist Anne-Marie Makhulu interrogates the establishment of ethnographic windows on contemporary culture. In her article "Poetic Justice: Xhosa Idioms and Moral Breach in Post-Apartheid South Africa" (2004), she questions the depth of ethnographers' studies and whether they can adequately explain South African "realities" and provide an ethnographic window for deeper analysis (Makhulu 2004:232).

Tourism is an admittedly controversial area of study within academia. Debates have been launched about the distinctions between fieldwork and tourism, challenging whether tourism actually involves ethnographic methods. C. Michael Hall cuts to the heart of the matter by comparing and contrasting fieldwork and tourism. He pinpoints five stages of the tourism experience: decision making and anticipation; travel to the site; on-site behaviour; return travel; and recollection (Hall 2011:10). He then juxtaposes these with the five stages of the fieldwork experience: decision to undertake study (goals, methods, theoretical grounding, and anticipation); preparation (reading, risk assessment, anticipation); in the field (activities, relationships); returning from the field/re-entry issues (for longer periods in the field); recollection, ongoing reflexivity, and possible reconnections and return visit (Hall 2011:10). In his opinion, one of the major distinctions between fieldwork and tourism is temporality. Hall emphasizes that tourism tends to be characterized by “temporary mobility” as well as “social and economic relationships to which it contributes” (Hall 2011:11). Therefore, my journeys to Johannesburg constituted short-term visits that complemented additional research that I conducted while based in Botswana.

As I shuttled between Gaborone and Johannesburg, my fieldwork also took on dimensions of a backpacker ethnography. Anthropologists and sociologists have explored the rise of backpacker culture in recent years. Such ethnographies have originated from academics, researchers, and outsiders (Hampton 2010:8). Kevin Hannam and Anya Diekmann published *Beyond Backpacker Tourism: Mobilities and Experiences* (2010), an edited volume on the development of different accounts of backpacker tourism connected to age, gender, and a variety

of global destinations. The variety of contributions to the volume reveals the boom in the backpack tourism industry as well as its expansion to assorted corners of the world.

Anders Sorensen defines backpackers as “self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary, extended beyond that which it is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern” (Sorensen 2003:851). However, Sorensen believes that certain aspects of this backpacker definition are disputable, and indicates that backpackers may “purchase organized excursions, safaris, treks, and the like during the journey” (Sorensen 2003:851). These identifying features of backpacker ethnographers became elements of my travel to Johannesburg. My backpack was a staple in my excursions when traveling to South Africa for fieldwork and became a clear signifier of my status as a tourist.

Backpack tourism was a relatively inexpensive means of travel between Botswana and South Africa. I usually traveled via the crowded taxis mentioned earlier in this study that departed from the rank and arrived in bustling downtown Johannesburg. Throughout the time that I spent in Johannesburg, I also used taxis as my primary means of transportation, zooming my way through traffic in these minivan style convoys to get from one side of the city to the other.

My work integrates this hip-hop tourism model, yet adapts it to suit the research that I conducted on Cashless Society in Johannesburg. I divert from the emphasis originally placed on hip-hop culture within an American context and its origins in African-American musical genres.³⁴ Thus, my concentration is on South African signs, sites, and sounds linked to Cashless

³⁴ According to Christian Rogerson and Gustav Visser, urban tourism in African contexts is an understudied area of research that “has largely remained invisible to the scholarly gaze” (Rogerson and Visser 2007:17). Stemming from a conference related to urban tourism in South Africa, adds to the discourse on this topic. Within their analyses of tourism in South Africa, they collaborate with a variety of scholars shedding light on different kinds of urban

Society's music. Additionally, I redirect the motivation of the tourism, pleasure, as identified in the definition of hip-hop tourism. I am utilizing hip-hop tourism to understand more about Cashless Society's music. Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim do not include discussions of scholarly hip-hop ethnographies in their examination of hip-hop tourism. They do, however, demonstrate that while some adults are becoming more engaged with hip-hop tourism, it is an entity that is chiefly associated with youth. Another major difference between my study and hip-hop tourism is that at the end of my research, I am responsible for compiling my findings in an extended written product.

Prior to beginning this urban oriented hip-hop tourism, I participated in ecotourism in South Africa. Such tourism was usually attached to academic programs that I was enrolled in. In 1999, I spent four months studying abroad at the University of KwaZulu Natal in Durban, South Africa. The program incorporated tourist trips to game reserves where safari jeeps navigated through wide expanses of the veld inhabited by animals such as elephants, lions, rhinoceroses, springboks, and warthogs. In addition to traveling to the St. Lucia Wetlands to see sprawling stretches of sandy coasts and water, toured the Valley of a Thousand Hills with its verdant peaks.

³⁵ On a subsequent trip to South Africa in 2003 for Zulu language study at the University of KwaZulu Natal in Pietermaritzburg, I saw different segments of the province. I spent a short period of time at the Drakensberg Mountains. I trekked outdoors along trails and had the chance

tourism (conference, exhibition, festival, second homes, creative industries, gay, and township) in cities throughout South Africa (Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg). Each of these categories within urban tourism show different segments of South Africa.

³⁵ Angela Impey provides an ethnographic account of the St. Lucia Wetlands and a collaborative conservancy research project in the article, "Culture, Conservation, and Community Reconstruction: Explorations in Advocacy Ethnomusicology and Participation Action Research in Northern Kwazulu Natal" (Impey 2002).

to see the vast mountain range.³⁶ Each of these trips exposed me to some of South Africa's prominent ecotourism sites, yet they were quite different from the hip-hop tourism that was required for this study.

This study uses gazes to open up discussions about Cashless Society's music and its emergence in Johannesburg.³⁷ The three gazes – initial, mass, and authentic – all intersected when I first encountered the music of the South African hip-hop collective Cashless Society. The group had recently disbanded, therefore the only way that I was able to learn about the members was through artist interviews and communication; previous recordings that were available for sale and through online jukeboxes; and online communities of fans that were united by their interest in the music. They released their debut album, *African Raw Material, Volume One*, in 2003, and issued two subsequent music videos. However, the artists comprising the group – David “Draztik” Balsher, Alfred “Criminal” Chirwa, Julian “Snazz-D” Du Plessis, Jerry “Black Intellect” Kai-Lewis, Thabiso “Gemini” Mofokeng, Salim “Fat Free” Mosidinyane, Kwezi “X-Amount” Ngcakani, and Tyrone “Tizeye” Philips – had dispersed across Botswana and South Africa. Nevertheless, their music was contained in virtual archives created for fans, featuring

³⁶ This language program was part of the Zulu Group Project Abroad (ZGPA), a partnership between the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and Yale University. The program consisted of language classes, lectures, as well as a home visit with families living in urban and rural communities.

³⁷ At the time members of Cashless Society made their entrance into the South African music industry, there was a paucity of writing on global hip-hop. Tony Mitchell, who reinforces this idea in his edited volume, *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA*, writes: “Rap and hip-hop outside the USA reveal the workings of popular music as a culture industry driven as much by local artists and their fans as by the demands of global capitalism and U.S. cultural domination. But the flow of consumption of rap music within the popular music industry continues to proceed hegemonically, from the USA to the rest of the world, with little or no flow in the opposite direction” (Mitchell 2001:2).

audio recordings, comments, photographs, and videos. These online repositories served as a means to introduce audiences to their music and maintain their presence.

Before interacting with members of Cashless Society's virtual hip-hop communities, I purchased the album from Mafia Soul, recently rebranded as Urban Soul, an outfitter of hip-hop apparel and music in Botswana and South Africa. The Gaborone store, which served as the flagship site, was located at Main Mall in Botswana. This central hub within the city is home to several stores. The initial store was established after the store's founder, Molefi "Molf" Nkweti, went from selling goods on the streets of Gaborone to starting a business (Malefho 2014). The Main Mall store was located at the top of a steep flight of stairs and attracted customers by the hip-hop music that usually played from inside the store. It was here that Molf introduced me to Cashless Society's album, *African Raw Material, Volume One*, assuring me that the album was some of the best made by local emcees. The recommendation proved to be hugely important to my research and my ultimate decision to expand the scope of my research to Johannesburg.

In determining the different gazes required in my research, I also had to identify how the 'hood related to Cashless Society. I had definite questions about whose 'hood I was entering and how I could make sense of how Cashless Society grew from this urban terrain. Johannesburg was a city that was unfamiliar to me and, as a result, I needed to learn about the pulse of the city. Murray Forman points out that discussions about the 'hood are joined to spatial constraints and communal concepts of what signifies the local (Forman 2002: xix). He goes on to say that there are multiple vantage points for understanding city life as it relates to hip-hop music and culture. In his opinion, a study of a city "encompasses the physical city and its material features, including architectural edifices, the above- and below-ground crossroads, and the public and

private spaces within a delineated geographic boundary, as well as the symbolic city, which is to say the representational city, encompassing images, verbal articulations, or other artistic expressions of urban cultures, experiences, and identities” (Forman 2002:35). Therefore, just as Nuttall purports that Johannesburg can be navigated according to visual texts, Forman shows that the city can be figured out through its signature buildings and spaces.

I needed considerable help in unraveling the multi-layered city visual texts that led to the founding of Cashless Society. In an effort to gain a point of entry into Johannesburg, as well as Cashless Society’s presence in the city, I approached my research using consultants. Cheryl Keyes illustrates the role of consultants in her doctoral research on rap music. She points out that consultants are especially useful in situations where a research has an “outsider” status. Keyes describes potential suspicions among members of the hip-hop community in New York City seeking to discover the “down-low” or “DL” about her (Keyes 2002:8). This suggests that artists were curious about the causes and motivations of Keyes’ work. Keyes tells readers that she was “a graduate student collecting data for a ‘class project’” (Keyes 2002:8). Sharing these details with consultants helped to foster trust, and in turn, they were more comfortable participating in interviews, videos, and contributing to Keyes’ research in the role of consultants.

Joseph Schloss also integrates the idea of consultants into his research on hip-hop music and culture. He prefers the term “consultant” rather than the widespread term “informant” because it more accurately captures the nature of the relationship. When reflecting on his research on making hip-hop beats, he shares, “The term ‘consultant’ is sometimes used as a semantic gambit to avoid the negative implications of the word ‘informant,’ but in this case those who worked with me were consultants in the fullest sense of the word. They not only informed

me of things but also sent me magazine articles and useful phone numbers, critiqued (and in one case pretty much copyedited) [an] early draft of this work, and introduced me to people[,] situations, and ideas I would never have found on my own” (Schloss 2014:xiii).³⁸ My main research consultant was Jerry Kai-Lewis, Cashless Society member Black Intellect, who traveled with me to Johannesburg on three separate occasions to take part in the authentic gaze of an artist who once lived in the city and participated in the music making process with the group. Jerry’s involvement in my research enabled me to transition from an initial to a mass gaze of Cashless Society, where I was seeking to unearth more information about the group, to an authentic gaze. This is the gaze that assisted me in seeing Johannesburg from the vantage point that Cashless Society presented visually in photographs and music videos as well as lyrically through their songs.

As I conducted my research, the question of authenticity repeatedly resurfaced in my work. I questioned my identity as a researcher, traveling to Johannesburg to explore the environment described in Cashless Society’s songs. I felt like the hip-hop tourists portrayed in Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim’s article on hip-hop tourism. They contend that hip-hop tourism calls for contextualizing the environment from which the culture emerges. “Hood context becomes defining and central to the definition of Hip-Hop and more importantly, to *who* is Hip-Hop. The constructed definitions inform the culture’s commercialized and globalized trajectories” (Xie, Osumare, and Ibrahim 2007). Hence, gaining a deeper knowledge of Cashless Society’s street hop, and exploring how it materialized from specific conditions in Johannesburg and its streets,

³⁸ The 2014 edition of Joseph Schloss’ book, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop*, is a new edition of his initial book that was first published by Wesleyan University Press in 2004. The latest edition appears with a new foreword and afterword.

demands the creation of a specific definition of what it is and how it fits into the larger context of the city.

The bulk of the fieldwork conducted for this study was done in Gaborone, Botswana's capital city. One year before starting my dissertation field research, I spent a month (July 2004) embarking on a preliminary investigation of the musical arts and their use in health education initiatives. I was introduced to a variety of actors, deejays, journalists, musicians, and officials at non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition to my research, one of my friends, Wame Mosime, arranged for me to intern at the Botswana Business Coalition on AIDS (BBCA). The work gave me a glimpse of other dynamics across the country such as the ways in which health education practices were being integrated into different sized companies. My internship led to visits to companies throughout Botswana where I had the chance to observe workplace practices designed to optimize employees' work habits and protect their health. One of the primary sites included in BBCA's work was mining companies where the staff was responsible for procuring mineral resources from mines.

Upon returning to Gaborone in December 2005 to resume my research on the musical arts and their role in youth health programming, I reignited my work with BBCA. However, now I was invited by Wame to return in the capacity of a research consultant. I collaborated with a team of researchers and BBCA staff members on compiling additional data on national companies. The endeavor demanded traveling to a host of construction, financial, mining, and tourism agencies for interviews, on site observations, and reviews of workplace policies. At first these consultancy assignments seemed unrelated to my fieldwork, but once I began listening to the music of Cashless Society, it became apparent how the two were intertwined.

Cashless Society's album, *African Raw Materials, Volume One*, is largely based on discussions of mining metaphors and linking natural resources to the production of wealth. The fusion of these ideas was clear once I visited an underground mine and watched the miners at work in a subterranean setting. Prior to visiting the mine, I did not comprehend fully the nature of the work done in these carefully crafted underground tunnels. The miners spent their days chiseling to find raw materials – the same materials that Cashless Society spoke of in their music. Being underground mirrored the work of environmentalist Elizabeth Grossman who also conducted research at aboveground and underground mines around the world to examine the materials contributing to digital devices (Grossman 2006:28-63).³⁹ Unlike Grossman, however, the mining visits were vital in helping me to understand the overlap between the hip-hop underground and the mining underground as reproduced in Cashless Society's music. The confluence of these two domains led me to interrogate mining metaphors in Cashless Society's music.

A large part of evaluating the mining metaphors in Cashless Society's music required relying on textual analyses. I used techniques similar to those of anthropologist Mwenda Ntarangwi who surveyed East African music in *East Africa Hip Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization* (2009). He invokes these lyrics to illustrate how identity is attached to the music and a larger cultural context. Ntarangwi includes "various examples from hip hop song texts" to demonstrate the interrelationship between colonialism, imperialism, and personally perceived ideas about identity within this nexus.

³⁹ Grossman investigates the relationship between the creation and disposal of digital contraptions such as computers, televisions, and cell phones and the raw materials constituting their parts. Her findings appear in her book *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxics, and Human Health* (2006).

Eventually, I wound up auditioning for the youth performing arts ensemble Exodus Live Poetry! (ELP!).⁴⁰ My performances with ELP! blurred the boundaries of scholarship and fieldwork in a manner similar to the ethnographic work of Ryan Snyder who researched hip-hop music at open mic events. Snyder confirmed the challenges in his own work, stating, “I’d been to open mics before, but not *as a scholar*. Going to a live hiphop [sic] event as research rather than just for fun, you’re not just there to enjoy yourself, you’re there to learn something” (Snyder 2002:184).⁴¹ Moreover, my involvement in ELP! exemplified Mantle Hood’s view of bi-musicality, which posits that ethnomusicologists should be able to “manage themselves quite capably in several musical cultures” (Hood 1960:59). Consequently, my year-long membership with ELP! introduced me to a variety of hip-hop artists, musicians, and poets from many parts of Southern Africa, including Ndabaningi “Zubz” Mbuye, Comrade Fatso, and Maakomele “Mak” Manaka. However, it was my interactions with Mak that proved to be an integral part of my research.

South African performance poet Maakomele “Mak” Manaka stood backstage with me in the darkened wings of Maitisong Theater at the Maru-A-Pula School in Botswana. We were both performing in a monthly show hosted by the youth performance ensemble, Exodus Live

⁴⁰ Exodus Live Poetry! started in 2003 (Rotz 2013). It continued the legacy of preceding youth spoken word movements (e.g., the Black Spirit Movement) that melded the talents of artists such as Mandla Langa, Bob Leshoai, Mbulelo Mzamane, Barolong Seboni, and Wally Serote (Seboni 2011).

⁴¹ Author, poet, and professor M.K. Asante describes the power of performing spoken word poetry at an open mic in Philadelphia in his book *Buck: A Memoir* (2014). He captures one of his first public performances at The Five Spot. Asante remembers, “I walk up to the stage. It reminds me of the blank page” (Asante 2014:240).

Poetry!⁴² Other artists were already on the stage, and we were both waiting to be called for our respective pieces. As we casually chatted backstage, our conversation led to my research and ongoing stay in Gaborone, Botswana's capital city. Mak glanced at me for a moment, clearly deliberating how to phrase what he was about to say. He finally asked, "So, what are you doing here in Botswana?" I gave him a short response, without offering much detail. "Research," I said quickly. Mak continued probing, looking at me before asking, "Researching what?" Without hesitating, I said, "Hip-hop." Mak chuckled, replying, "If you're studying hip-hop music, you should go to South Africa." He proceeded to recommend a variety of cities, artists, and events. During this short exchange, Mak urged me to broaden the scope of my research. He recommended studying hip-hop music and culture in South Africa, where the scene was significantly larger, as well as in Botswana. My conversation with Mak, and the subsequent advice that I received, was a reminder of sociologist Erving Goffman's claim that life can be analyzed using stage performances and terminology. Thus, backstage communication leads to front stage actions (Goffman 1959:111).⁴³

Several months before speaking with Mak, I began exploring the music of Cashless Society, which required an investigation into the development of hip-hop music in Botswana. As I started to interview different artists and probe into the evolution of hip-hop within the nation, I

⁴² Mak is included in the article "From Poetry to Floetry: Music's Influence in the Spoken Word Art of Young South Africa" (2007). His work is described along with that of other performance poets such as Lebogang "Lebo" Mashile and Napo Masheane, leading poets across South Africa.

⁴³ Goffman commented, "In general, then, backstage conduct is one which allows minor acts which might easily be taken as symbolic of intimacy and disrespect for others present and for the region, while front region conduct is one which disallows such potentially offensive behavior" (Goffman 1969:111).

learned that it all began during the 1980s. Motivated to delve deeper into local hip-hop culture, I began to construct a hip-hop historiography tracking notable breakdancers, deejays, and emcees.

According to hip-hop artists and popular deejays of the period, hip-hop culture dated back to the days of breakdancing and emceeing at local malls and primary schools. According to David “Draztik” Balsher, talent shows became platforms for breakdancers to spotlight their skills at locations such as Maru-A-Pula School (MAP) and Gaborone Secondary School (GSS) (Balsher 2013). Another popular location was Gaborone’s Main Mall, a site in Botswana’s city center. This grew into talent shows that occurred across the country.⁴⁴

I attended a concert hosted at Botswanacraft of former Cashless Society emcee and producer Draztik performing with Zosukuma “Young Nations” Kunene. Organized by the team at Mafia Soul, one of the leading local outfitters of urban apparel and hip-hop music, the event was highly publicized. It brought in Draztik and Young Nations as two of the headlining artists from South Africa and promoted the talents of local Motswana emcees like Thato “Scar” Matlabaphiri, the first solo hip-hop artist from Botswana to gain national and regional acclaim. The December 2006 performance illuminated Draztik’s involvement in the South African music industry since the disbanding of Cashless Society. After I was also able to observe the fan response to both Draztik and Young Nations while they were onstage, I contacted Draztik in the weeks following the concert and arranged a visit to interview him.

I made my first trip to Johannesburg to meet with Draztik in March 2007. This preliminary visit bridged the distance between my research in Botswana and that in South Africa. Through my interview with Draztik, and the time that I spent shadowing him, I was able to learn

⁴⁴ Jerry Kai-Lewis expounds upon breakdancing and its role in Botswana’s hip-hop scene in the article “History of Hip Hop in Botswana” (J. Kai-Lewis 2009).

more about his involvement in the South African hip-hop collective Cashless Society. At the time, I believed that this was one of many interviews that I would conduct as I surveyed different Batswana hip-hop artists. Yet, the direction of my research continued to shift as I rethought the scope of my work. I began reconsidering using Cashless Society as the main focus of my dissertation. It would, however, require that I make more trips from Gaborone, where I was based for the duration of my fieldwork, to Johannesburg. My journeys to Johannesburg were mapped out by revisiting the locations of scenes appearing in old photographs of Cashless Society, walking through the neighborhoods where they once lived, having conversations with artists, and crisscrossing the city in cars and taxis. The Johannesburg cityscape became a central setting for both my research as well as the lyrics that I analyze in this study.

From Gaborone to Johannesburg

After considering Mak's advice, I began traveling to Johannesburg to learn more about Cashless Society and their role in the local hip-hop culture. The trip from Gaborone was roughly three hours in the taxis that shuttled between the two cities daily from the bus rank in the center of town in Gaborone. Packing in preparation for these trips required gathering all of my traveling documents, namely my passport and research permit to ensure entry into the country at the South African border. After loading my research equipment, materials, and clothing into my backpack and a small bag, I was ready for the bus trip. In hindsight, these junkets made me feel like I needed a hip-hop passport to guarantee that I made it to my destination.

Cashless Society emcee Kwezi "X-Amount" Ngackani makes comments about the hip-hop passport on the track "Hottentot Hop (Bantu 1, 2)" stating, "My passport's scarred/ My skin's indigenous" (Ngackani 2003). A scarred passport suggests that it is somehow defective

and unworthy for travel. It was a reminder of the scrutiny that my passport underwent each time I approached the Botswana-South Africa border. After completing the necessary paperwork explaining my reasons for traveling to Johannesburg, there was usually a moment of uncertainty -- whether the border patrol guards would find anything unsuitable with my passport or permit and deny my entry into the country.

A second perspective on the hip-hop passport comes from Stic.Man, a member of the hip-hop duo dead prez that Cashless Society collaborated with for concerts in Botswana and South Africa.⁴⁵ In a foreword to the book *Rap, Race, and Revolution*, he avowed that hip-hop music was his “passport,” “language,” and “livelihood” (Stic.Man 2009). The music granted him entry to places in different locations around the world and allowed him to communicate with people in ways that he would not ordinarily be able to. Hip-hop fostered travel to unexpected places and fostered communication in situations where he needed to express his ideas.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Stic.Man defines dead prez as “a revolutionary but gangsta duo” (Stic.Man 2009). dead prez traveled to Southern Africa to perform before audiences in Botswana and South Africa in 2000. Their journey is chronicled by Patrick Neate in *Where You're At: Notes from the Frontlines of a Hip Hop Planet* (2003) and *Close to the Edge: In Search of the Global Hip-Hop Generation* by Sujatha Fernandes (2011). Both authors emphasize the controversy surrounding the dead prez shows. Fernandes gives a short explanation of what happened: “On stage in Almar dead prez burned a dollar bill as a symbol of American capitalism, horrifying local audiences, who saw it as a week’s worth of bread. In South Africa the American artists came to protest the racism of their own government, which withdrew from the Durban conference along with Israel. Yet when the American artists left the concert stage to return to their fancy hotels, the affinities broke down” (Fernandes 2011:18). Despite these challenges in South Africa, dead prez’s music remained an example of resistance and one of their songs inspired the title of M.K.Asante’s book *It’s Bigger Than Hip Hop: The Rise of the Post-Hip-Hop Generation* (2009).

⁴⁶ Halifu Osumare gives another view of the hip-hop passport in her article “Beat Streets in the Global Hood: Connective Marginalities of the Hip-Hop Globe” (2001). She writes, “The hip-hop passport is not a ticket to a polyana [sic] Disney World, but rather it is a cultural bridge to explore other hip hop sites inhabited by young people who have their own issues of marginalization” (Osumare 2001:180).

Organization of the Dissertation

The ensuing chapters in this dissertation relate Cashless Society's street hop to the three gazes comprising hip-hop tourism. Chapter two offers a review of literature about the significance of the coming economic cashless society and how it corresponds to the formation of the Johannesburg hip-hop collective. Chapter three highlights the initial gaze and my preliminary experiences with members of Cashless Society and their music. Chapter four addresses the mass gaze and how virtual hip-hop communities have maintained fans' interest in Cashless Society. Chapter five focuses on the authentic gaze, a visit to Johannesburg to visit former Cashless Society emcees David "Draztik" Balsher and Julian "Snazz-D" Du Plessis. The conclusion elaborates on Cashless Society's reunion and the artists' lives more than a decade after the release of *African Raw Material, Volume One*. The dissertation tracks the impression that Cashless Society made in the music industry within Johannesburg with its unique version of street hop.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: Perspectives on Hip-Hop and the Coming Cashless Society

Since the hip-hop collective Cashless Society combined aspects of hip-hop culture and financial metaphors in their music, this literature review addresses the juncture of these two areas, focusing on studies highlighting the socioeconomic aspects of hip-hop culture.

Additionally, the review examines the social and financial implications of the notion of The Hard Cashless Society. The Hard Cashless Society is grounded in futuristic literature that anticipates the extreme economic, religious, and social transitions of the new millennium. Many of these writings emerged within the last fifty years of the twentieth century as financial markets experienced electronic revolutions. The hip-hop collective, Cashless Society, lyrically challenges these ideas by using their lyrics to address both the financial and religious dynamics of the cashless society. Consequently, it is vital to delve into each of these facets of the literature to gain a deeper understanding of The Hard Cashless Society. This literature highlights seminal studies on the cashless society to underscore how certain theories are incorporated into the music of this hip-hop group.

The first portion of this chapter provides a history of hip-hop music and culture in both the United States and South Africa. It traces the beginnings of scenes in both countries and the growth of hip-hop culture as a global phenomenon. Moreover, the historical framework helps to contextualize Cashless Society's music. The historical overview of hip-hop music and culture will be contrasted with a review of literature about the economic and religious foundation of the cashless society. Select publications about cashlessness and the cashless society are featured here

to demonstrate how hip-hop collective Cashless Society integrated these ideas into their music.⁴⁷ This literature review offers insights into the correlation between hip-hop music and the economics of a cashless society.

History of Hip-Hop Music and Culture

Hip-hop culture traces its roots to the South Bronx during the 1970s (Toop 2000; George 2005). Consisting of aerosol art, breakdancing, deejaying, and emceeing (Keyes 2002:1), it exploded from a community encountering vast socioeconomic challenges during a period of economic decay in the United States. Tricia Rose explains, “In the 1970s, cities across the country were gradually losing federal funding for social services, information service corporations were beginning to replace industrial factories, and corporate developers were buying up real estate to be converted into luxury housing, leaving working-class residents with limited affordable housing, a shrinking job market and diminishing social services” (Rose 1994). Rose’s description of the national landscape illustrates the immense financial difficulties the United States was encountering. She further contextualizes the situation in New York at the time, commenting on the extreme housing crisis and lack of viable employment options. South Bronx was also grappling with the aftereffects of an “urban renewal” program, which entailed the demolition of areas that some called “slums,” and the major relocation of those who lived in these communities. There was also a proliferation of gang activity and violence in the area.

⁴⁷ Anthropologist Bill Maurer uses the term “cashlessness” in his discussion of digital transformations surrounding cash. In his book *How Would You Like to Pay?: How Technology is Changing the Future of Money* (2015), he considers how shifts towards a cashless society change payment systems. He poses a series of questions linked to the transformative technology. He notes, “What is at stake is a matrix of questions: along one axis, whether new technologically enabled systems create second-class banking or even second-class moneys, whether cashlessness promises real benefits or merely another way to bilk people or profit from their digital personal data” (Maurer 2015). Maurer recognizes the vast economic changes occurring as a result of cashless payments.

When the Cross-Bronx Expressway was constructed and cut through the South Bronx, this increased the amount of traffic and pollution in the area. The South Bronx was soon associated with abandoned buildings and deterioration.

Journalist Bill Adler captured sentiments about the South Bronx in his article “The South Bronx Was Getting a Bad Rap Until a Club Called Disco Fever Came Along.” He reflects on public depictions of the South Bronx, calling it “*the* national emblem of urban decay since Ronald Reagan toured its rubble-strewn landscape as a presidential candidate in 1980 and proclaimed, ‘I haven’t seen anything as bad as this since London after the blitz!’” (Adler 2004 [1983]:36). After his election as President of the United States, Ronald Reagan’s national economic plans threw the South Bronx even farther into disarray. Reagan cut funding for education, healthcare, housing, and welfare (Martin 2012:57). By the 1980s, drug culture was on the rise in the South Bronx and there was a rise in the sale and use of crack cocaine. Drug use was staggering and had crippling effects on a community that was already struggling with a number of other issues. Hip-hop music and culture evolved in response to the continual decline in the South Bronx.

DJ Kool Herc rose to popularity as one of the first hip-hop deejays, adopting deejaying techniques from Jamaica, where he migrated from to New York City. He began deejaying in New York City in 1973, where urban lore indicates that he played at his sister’s birthday party in the Bronx (Fernando 1999:14). He went on to play at sites across the community and became well known for the large speakers mimicking the Jamaican sound systems that he used. DJ Kool

Herc rose to prominence in the Bronx and the remainder of New York City.⁴⁸ The outdoor parties that became synonymous with his sets became locations for breakdancers to demonstrate their skills. Breakdance ensembles like the Rock Steady Crew formed and popularized breakdancing.

While deejaying and breakdancing were developing in the Bronx, there was still a surge in gang violence in the area. Afrika Bambaataa, who emerged from gang culture, was a former gang member in the Spades. He was working towards the improvement of his community through preventing the rampant sale of drugs and trying to curb violence. Afrika Bambaataa went on to initiate the Zulu Nation. He was concerned with introducing an alternative to the negative circumstances connected to the Bronx. One of Afrika Bambaataa's solutions was to organize parties across the area (Fernando 1999:18). These parties became popular among residents and were held at different locations, including high schools and Police Athletic Leagues (PALs). Afrika Bambaataa's events were in direct response to the drugs, gangs, and poverty that plagued the South Bronx.

While Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation were emerging as major figures within the Bronx, emceeing was evolving with Grandmaster Flash and the Furious establishing their presence in the Bronx. As emcees rapped over the beats played by deejays at parties, they popularized rhymed lines combined with choreography. Fernando accentuates this, noting, "Through the efforts of the Furious Five, MC-ing progressed to a whole new level with such complicated routines as back-to-back rhyming, in tandem with flows, and choreographed moves. The Furious Five had a way of breaking up phrases to 'make 5 MCs sound like one.' MCs

⁴⁸ Fernando cites other popular deejays of the period, including DJ Flowers and Maboya, Disco King Mario, DJ Hollywood, and Eddie Cheeba (Fernando 1999:15).

quickly reached the status of black ghetto superheroes with their strange monikers, outlandish outfits, and lyrical dexterity” (Fernando 1999:19). As emceeing continued expanding, more emcees materialized. Some of the leading emcees of the period were the Cold Crush Brothers and the Sugarhill Gang. The Sugarhill Gang became legendary for their song “Rapper’s Delight,” which is widely recognized as the track that propelled them to the status of the first rap megastars (Fernando 1999:21). Fernando confirms that “for the rest of the world, beyond the Bronx and outside of New York, rap had arrived” (Fernando 1999:21). The growth of hip-hop music and culture in New York City eventually led to the adoption and rise of the music in other global destinations.

The Development of Hip-Hop Culture in South Africa

Hip-hop music and culture developed in Cape Town during the 1980s. Shaheen Ariefdien and Nazli Abrahams dub the city as the “birthplace of hip-hop in South Africa” in their article “Cape Flats Alchemy: Hip-Hop Arts in South Africa” (2007). Ariefdien was one of the pioneering emcees and producers from the South African hip-hop group Prophets of Da City (P.O.C.). In contemplating the historical origins of hip-hop culture in South Africa, Ariefdien and Abrahams state that it is part of an alchemy of African-American, Caribbean, and South African music and culture. Yet they also contextualize it within the interchange of African-American and South African cultural traditions dating back to the nineteenth century (Ariefdien and Abrahams 2007:285). They classify these interactions between African-Americans and South Africans as follows:

Black South African artists were influenced by minstrelsy to swing to bebop and beyond. The affinity for these cultural expressions was partly in response to British imperialism, but our elders did not do a straight cut-and-paste. Instead, we reworked the expression to speak to our own contexts. Africa, in turn, has acted as a spiritual and mythological

reserve to many activists, artists, and the average cat in the African diaspora. Southern African musical styles have influenced Black American expressions. These cultural conversations went back and forth like the intro in Run-DMC's 'Peter Piper.' Take, for instance, the Bambaataa rebellion that influenced Afrika Bambaataa to start the Zulu Nation, an idea itself partly influenced by Garveyism. (Ariefdien and Abrahams 2007:286)

Ariefdien and Abrahams make it clear that there is a rich history of cultural exchange and hip-hop culture was one of the latest manifestations.

The spread of hip-hop music and culture in South Africa is traced to the Cape Flats section of Cape Town in the 1980s (Ariefdien and Abrahams 2007; Warner 2007; Watkins 2004; Watkins 2012). Aerosol art, breakdancing, and emceeing are recognized as the initial elements of hip-hop that were embraced prior to the craft of deejaying. The early hip-hop movement is attributed largely to the Coloured community, which embodied the diverse South African heritage of Angolan, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Mozambican migrants (Ariefdien and Abrahams 2007:287). According to Ariefdien, Coloured youth identified with breakdancers like the ones in the Rock Steady Crew. While Black youth in America were resisting the dire circumstances created by disenfranchisement, poverty, and violence, South African youth during the 1980s were experiencing another spectrum of problems and issues. Youth in the Cape Flats challenged the apartheid regime, which was not dismantled until 1994 with the nation's first democratic elections.

Throughout the 1980s, South Africans who were exiled and resided in the United States sent the latest hip-hop music back to friends in South Africa. This thriving "cassette culture" (Manuel 1993) established access to the latest hip-hop recordings from overseas. At the same time, South African hip-hop artists were developing their own signature music directly related to the circumstances in the country. Whereas American hip-hop music was an extension of the

specific conditions and events that contributed to the formulation of the music, South African hip-hop was a direct reflection of what was occurring locally.

Music scholar Lee Watkins contends that in addition to the specific local influences, South African hip-hop music is a “diasporic genre” of music bearing “many homes” (Watkins 2012:85). In identifying the connections that South African hip-hop shares with its American counterpart, Watkins discusses the political and socioeconomic context for the music, stating

African Americans claim the genre as an authentic expression of their roots and routes, and as such it reflects their place within the racialized economic and political system of the United States. Adherents in other parts of the globe explain that their marginal statuses are reasons enough for identification with and participation in hip hop. The cross border associations facilitated through hip hop and rap music speak to a global consciousness, which is articulated substantially within a local discourse. This form of global consciousness is not only both real and imagined but also increasingly virtual, thereby rendering the notion of diaspora through hip hop performance even less secure in its moorings. (Watkins 2012:85)⁴⁹

He argues that hip-hop in South Africa is part of a larger movement that is simultaneously locally based and influential, yet fits within an internationally driven consciousness. He provides a historical framework for understanding how hip-hop music and culture began evolving in South Africa in the 1980s. Watkins acknowledges how hip-hop artists contributed to anti-apartheid messages in their music, noting that they forged an “association with the political campaign against apartheid” (Watkins 2012:86). He recounts the rise of breakdancing and aerosol art on the streets of Cape Town, naming important discos that were sites of performances including Base and T-zers (Watkins 2012:86).

⁴⁹ Watkins adopts a stance that is similar to Osumare’s discussion of “connective marginalities” existing among hip-hop communities around the globe. She suggests that there are distinctive socioeconomic and political circumstances binding hip-hop artists and fans internationally (Osumare 2008).

By the time Watkins began his investigation of hip-hop music and culture in South Africa in the 1990s, the hip-hop collective Cashless Society had formed. The group embraced a different ideology from other hip-hop artists of the period, mainly due to their interest in the writings and work of David Icke, a British theorist who has written extensively about conspiracy theories. Two popular concepts in his writings are that humans are the descendants of a reptilian race and the world is dominated by powers seeking global economic, political, and social domination (Icke 1999; Icke 2001). Icke was especially concerned with the financial future of the world. In his book *The Biggest Secret* (1999), Icke warns of a time when controlling “agents” would “complete their agenda for the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical enslavement of every man, woman, and child on the planet with a world government, army, central bank, and currency, underpinned by a microchipped population” (Icke 1999). Although Icke acknowledges that some of his ideas seem somewhat “fantastic” (Icke 1999), many of his theories about the shift towards a central bank and currency were integral to the hip-hop collective Cashless Society and the economic principles presented in their music. The group embraced Icke’s ideas and incorporated them into their lyrics. This unique financial perspective distinguished Cashless Society from other hip-hop groups of the period.

Hip-Hop and the Cashless Society

Although there are few existing studies about the intersection of hip-hop music and the economics of the cashless society, numerous articles, books, blogs, and dissertations detail the arrival of the cashless society and its global implications. Therefore, I will focus my review on the growing body of work on the economic significance of the cashless society and discuss how it corresponds to the ideas promoted by the hip-hop collective Cashless Society. Throughout the

remainder of the literature review, I will identify key works on the cashless society to determine their relevance in assessing the hip-hop group Cashless Society. In so doing, I will demonstrate how this financial principle uniquely positioned this hip-hop outfit and their views on economic systems.

The writings on the cashless society featured in this review will be divided into three primary categories: historical, financial, and religious. Historical accounts include publications about the cashless society written during the late nineteenth century. Financial writings about the cashless society began to appear in the 1950s as changes to electronic funds systems were introduced and the public began to raise questions about the safety of managing money through newly circuited pathways. Religious texts about the cashless society use Biblical scriptures to support the idea that the coming cashless society has the ability to alter individual attitudes about money as well as vastly transform banking. This literature on the cashless society will be complemented by writings on capitalism. Each of these perspectives about the cashless society appears in the lyrics and music of the hip-hop group Cashless Society. The ensuing review will show the ties between the music and literature.

The term “cashless” first appeared in the book, *History of Friedrich II of Prussia*, by Scottish author Thomas Carlyle. In addressing the financial challenges experienced by Friedrich II, also known as Friedrich the Great, Carlyle writes, “We can guess, that the flattering Dessauer has sent his Majesty Five gigantic men from the Madeburg regiments, and that Friedrich is ordered to hustle out Thirty of insignificant stature from his own, by way of counter-gift to the Dessauer; - which Friedrich does instantly, but cannot for his life, see how (being totally cashless) he is to replace them with better, or replace them at all!” (Carlyle 1894:102). This

glimpse of the king implies that he was encountering financial difficulties. As Friedrich the Great gives thirty soldiers from his regiment to Dessauer, he was faced with the reality that he was cashless, meaning that he was practically penniless.

Carlyle initially published these reflections on Friedrich the Great in 1732. They were later integrated into the fourth chapter of Carlyle's book, the 1894 edition of *History of Friedrich II of Prussia*. Although Carlyle died in 1881, his inclusion of the word "cashless" remains its first known usage. Over the next century, the term underwent significant transformations as it went from a signifier of abject poverty to the absence of cash due to the operation of credit systems.

Economic Perspectives on the Cashless Society

The earliest description of a cashless society based on a credit model appeared in the nineteenth century by author and social-activist Edward Bellamy. The 1888 publication of Bellamy's classic novel, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, provides an unprecedented glimpse of the concept of a cashless society. Tinged with utopian elements, the book tells the tale of Bostonian socialite Julian West who goes to sleep one night and is catapulted into the future to the year 2000 when he awakes. Being thrust into a new millennium results in a disorienting time change that forces West to adjust to life in this new timeframe. He is faced with new utopian ideals that change his outlook on life. He gains an orientation into this new world by the Leetes, a family that he stays with as he learns more about the year 2000.

Bellamy, a former lawyer with a passion for writing, imagines a futuristic society in which financial payments would be made with a pressed paper card that could be used to gain designated allocations of food, clothing, and a host of other supplies. In addition to being

available for goods in the United States, the card is also usable in foreign countries, and Bellamy provides an instance of foreign travel to Europe. His vision of the cashless society, vividly demonstrated potential financial shifts as paper currency and coins became antiquated artifacts that were replaced with credit systems. He unknowingly laid the foundations for modern economic transformations.

Bellamy describes his vision of the cashless society by clarifying the coming credit system. He writes:

A credit system corresponding to his share of the annual product of the nation is given to every citizen on the public books at the beginning of each year, and a credit card issued him with which he procures at the public storehouses, found in every community, whatever he desires, whenever he desires it. This arrangement, you will see, totally obviates the necessity for business transactions of any sort between individuals and consumers. (Bellamy 2007 [1888])

The credit card, which Bellamy calls a paper pasteboard card, functions like an early version of stored value card money. The card was based on a credit model where every citizen was designated a certain quantity. Predetermined sums of money could be added at any time and used for global purchases. Bellamy goes further by making the credit card globally accepted, whether in the United States or traveling, as in the case of a trip to Germany (Bellamy 2007[1888]). His depiction of credit cards was a harbinger of things to come.

Bellamy's discussion of the credit card places it almost exclusively in a Western context, considering only the transfer of credit from the United States to Europe. He did not elaborate on the possibilities of the credit system opening up to larger international markets. Instead, Bellamy saw the small paper pasteboard that he referred to in his book functioning within a smaller sphere. However, the idea that he developed about the credit card opened up larger explorations of the potential significance of credit cards in the world of finance.

Bellamy's description of the cashless society is used as the literary foundation for several publications released over the last forty years. Robert Hendrickson turned to Bellamy's work in his 1972 book *The Cashless Society*. He cites it as a sign of demonetization, the dwindling value of money and its replacement by a credit system, "The demonetization of money, of money as cash, of money thought of as intrinsically commodity money, as cash money with gold backing, would bring about a golden age, according to Bellamy because it would cause people to be less materialistic in their dealings with the natural world and with one another. In short, the demonetization of gold would lead to the demonetization of mankind" (Hendrickson 1972:10). For Hendrickson, demonetization is an equalizer that created a balance between the wealthy and the poor. Credit cards were a change from the existing gilded forms of payment. He warns readers about the certainty of a cashless society dominating global economic markets, and in turn, making coins and hard currency. Hendrickson returns to Bellamy's work in establishing a timeline for when the cashless society should arrive. He writes, "If Edward Bellamy was right, we have only a little more than a quarter of a century to wait before a cashless society catches up with us, and we with it. That will be the day, when we simply cash in all our cash (Hendrickson 1972:11). Hendrickson goes on to outline the work of futurists and Utopians believing that the cashless society was something that simply had to be accepted. Throughout the remainder of his book, Hendrickson continues to critically examine the repercussions of a cashless society. He interrogates what he dubs its "darker side" and how the cashless society could result in excessive electronic crimes and threats to individuals' personal information. Consequently, Hendrickson affirms the imminence of the cashless society, he also cautions the public about some of the foreseeable problems it could bring.

A few years after Hendrickson published *The Cashless Society*, August Bequai presents another viewpoint on the cashless society in his book *The Cashless Society: EFTs at the Crossroads* (1981). He places the cashless society within a massive technological movement that would transform currency. Bequai, a lawyer who wrote about the possibilities of crime, gives attention to the elements of crime featured in Hendrickson's work. The distinguishing factor of Bequai's work, however, is his discussion of how Electronic Funds Transfer Systems contribute to the cashless society. In formulating a connection between the two, Bequai states, "We are now on the threshold of the cashless society, a society in which funds and related financial data are transferred, electronically, with the aid of computers. Electronic Funds Transfer Systems (EFTS), precursors of a pure cashless society, have already made an appearance; rudimentary EFTS are in daily operation" (Bequai 1981:1). His comments on the early EFTS involved in the exchange and transfer of money between accounts, institutions, and people are foreboding, for they predate the days when computerization would enable people to use their electronic devices such as cellular phones and watches to make purchases and deposit paper checks.

While Bequai celebrates the "promises" of the cashless society, he does not hesitate to contrast that with its "problems" – computer glitches, electronic theft, privacy invasion, and the divulgence of large amounts of personal data (Bequai 1981:1). Bequai lays out the different kinds of monetary exchange formats that were available in the 1980s. He also introduces key United States legislation, which is featured in appendices within the text, and liabilities regarding EFTS. Bequai takes a moment to tackle the topic of EFTS and their development on an international level. He includes information on Europe (Great Britain, France, Germany, and Scandinavia) and strides made with EFTS in Canada, Israel, and Japan. With the exception of

Algeria, nations from other parts of the world are unrecognized and grouped into the category of the “Third World.” Bequai attributes this to an absence of the “needed computer technological base” and the genesis of “the telecommunications revolution” (Bequai 1981:140-141). When reflecting on how EFTS can enhance the financial systems in these countries, Bequai is dubious. He writes, “Whether the Third World will ever be able to catch up with the developed nations in the area of data processing remains doubtful; efforts to incorporate these nations within an international EFT system could be viewed by them as a form of ‘informal colonialism.’ EFTS may come to symbolize for some Third World countries an added dependence on the West” (Bequai 1981:141). In making this statement, Bequai neglects the fact many of the “Third World” countries that he is describing possess the potential to manage their own financial systems, maintain EFTS, and capably operate without relying on the West. Like Bellamy, who envisioned the cashless society as an American system that would extend to Europe, Bequai takes a similar stance. He briefly touches upon countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Northern Africa, and ignores the global prospects of the cashless society. Nevertheless, waves of economic and technological growth during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries haven proven the infinite potential of EFTS worldwide.

Economist Allen Kupetz continues the discussion of the global dimensions of the cashless society in his book *The Future of Less* (2008). Written from a business point of view, Kupetz places the cashless society within the confluence of a futuristic revolution. He reveals that the world is quickly embracing the plausibility of going paperless (becoming totally reliant on computerized devices, electronic messages, and tablets while eschewing paper) and wireless (increasing reliance on the Internet, the World Wide Web, and modes of electronic technology).

Kupetz wages that the cashless society is the most conceivable of these three aspects. He states, “The notion of a cashless society is appealing because I think the end of cash will mean a huge reduction in cash-related crimes like muggings and bank robberies. No cash means no cash to steal, no money for the government to mint and for us to lose, and no more having too much or too little change. Cashless means convenience and safety” (Kupetz 2008:xviii). Later in the book, Kupetz discusses strategies for the security and protection of the cashless society (Kupetz 2008:113-123). He embraces the benefits of the cashless society from a business and financial stance, but avoids the discussion of crime and fraud that is so prevalent in the writings of Bequai and Hendrickson.

In another article, “Our Cashless Future,” Kupetz gives only a cursory glance at Bellamy’s *Looking Forward* (1888), a critical work in the body of literature on the cashless society, labeling it a “speculative” novel promoting the cashless society of the twentieth century (Kupetz 2007:37). Rather, Kupetz delves into the assorted cashless options that were becoming more available to the public, including credit cards, debit cards, watches equipped with cashless technology, key fobs with added credit, as well as mobile phones with credit management options (Kupetz 2008:38). The article reviews the ways in which cashless advancements will radically alter how cash is handled, diminishing the amount of purchases made with hard currency. Using examples from Asia (China, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea), Europe (France), and the United States, Kupetz builds a case for the disputed cashless society, highlighting the preferred modes of payment. He discusses various cashless payment formats, dividing them into three categories: credit cards (credit and debit cards), cardless credit (key fobs, speed passes, toll tags), and mobile credit (credit loaded onto phones). He also reviews the

advantages (reductions in money related thefts and lowering national debts through electronic cash flows) and disadvantages (the elimination of personal privacy and counterfeiting).⁵⁰

In spite of the large focus on cashless developments in the United States and Asia, Kupetz does devote a small portion of *The Future of Less* on how the cashless society has fared in other locations. His segment on Africa is rife with dismal statistics and predictions. He opens by stating, “It often seems that Africa is less an emerging market than a submerging one. Despite tremendous natural resources and forty-plus years of independence in some countries, no country in Africa can compete with the resource-starved success stories in the Pacific Rim” (Kupetz 2008:148). He shares that at the time that his book was published, it was estimated that 20 percent of Africans did not have banking accounts. According to Kupetz, only the countries Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, and Zambia had implemented mobile banking services. Although he spotlights the service providers M-Pesa in Kenya and Wizzit in South Africa for their financial programs, Kupetz’s accolades for these programs are negated by the opening statement of his last paragraph of the section on Africa: “Africa’s biggest challenge is - and will likely remain - corrupt and inept governments” (Kupetz 2008:151). This opinion overlooks obvious factors that need to be considered before relegating Africa’s cashless obstacles to governmental shortcomings.

David Warwick, who argues for the elimination of cash in his self-published book, *The Abolition of Cash: America’s \$660 Billion Burden* (2015), recognizes the lack of scholarship on

⁵⁰ Another disadvantage was the absence of a “mechanism to easily permit transfers from one person to another” (Kupetz 2008:97-98).

“the impact of a cashless society” (Warwick 2015).⁵¹ Therefore, in outlining the gains in promptly adopting digital currency, he draws upon two main articles to support his research. The first is “A Move Toward a Cashless Society: A Closer Look at Payment Instrument Economics” (2006) by economists D. Garcia-Swartz, R. Hahn, and A. Layne-Farrar. The second is “The Cost of Cash in the United States” by Bhaskar Chakravorti, Senior Associate Dean of International Business and Finance at Tufts University, and Benjamin D. Mazzotta, Postdoctoral Research Fellow for Inclusive Growth (2013). Warwick indicates that these articles provide a framework through which the cashless society can be understood, particularly in regards to the large quantities of money that would be required to convert to a fully cashless economy. In addition to commenting on the pros and cons of transitioning from hard currency to digital money, Warwick pinpoints the challenges that this change would pose for a country such as the United States. Most important, Warwick points out that a digital mode would assist in curbing cash-oriented criminal activity, which tends to fall into two categories: “those in which cash is an object to be seized (for example, bank robbery) and those in which cash serves as a payment medium, such as in the sale of illegal drugs” (Warwick 2015).

Author and journalist David Wolman, who shares his thoughts about a cashless society in his book, *The End of Money: Counterfeiters, Preachers, Techies, Dreamers – and the Coming Cashless Society* (2012), recounts tales that he heard in news stories about the arrival of the cashless society. For him, the cashless society falls within the context of a technological revolution. Although Wolman doubts that hard currency will be completely replaced with a

⁵¹ In his article, “Toward a Cashless Society” in *The Futurist* (2004), Warwick forecasts some of the changes a cashless society would bring.

cashless economy, he lays out the facts that the cashless transition is fully underway and approaching at an alarming speed:

Although predictions about the end of cash are as old as credit cards, a number of developments are ganging up on paper and metal money like never before: mistrust of national currencies, novel payment tools, anxiety about government debt, the triumph of mobile phones, the rise of virtual and alternative currencies, environmental concerns, and a wave of evidence showing that physical money is most harmful to the billions of people who have so little of it. (Wolman 2012:8)

Author David McRee, who warns readers about the cashless society in his book, *The War on Cash: How Governments, Banks, Nonprofits and Academics are Abolishing Cash* (2015), believes that governments are waging a war on cash that will result in total state control of finances, thus enabling them to “restrict the public’s use of cash and to abuse the laws for its own purposes” (McRee 2015). For his data, McRee depends primarily on websites tracking the evolution of the cashless society, using citations also featured on the accompanying website to his book, WarOnCashBook.com. Thus, his ideas include the most current concepts being produced by journalists and bloggers on the Internet. Although he relies on popular media, McRee states that he separates the sensationalized propaganda from other references. The digital nature of his book reflects the intensifying role of digital communication in the cashless society. It also illustrates that many of the latest ideas about the topic are not being published in books – although a few books have appeared in the past few years.

Another economic perspective on the cashless society comes from Wilko Bolt and Sujit Chakravorti in an article, “Digitization of Retail Payments,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Digital Economy* (2012).⁵² Bolt is a senior economist at De Nederlandsche Bank in Amsterdam.

⁵² Bolt and Chakravorti also collaborated for the working paper “Digitization of Retail Payments” (2010).

Chakravorti is the Managing Director and Chief Economist at The Clearing House in New York City. Their article is dedicated to the organization of payment networks and the choices presented to consumers. It does not focus entirely on cashless society, but rather highlights the ways in which certain payment modes will shift with the arrival of a digital economy. Explaining some of the methods that will become synonymous with a digital economy, they write: “While we have not attained the cashless society, we have made significant strides to adopt electronic payment instruments” (Bolt and Chakravorti 2012:108). They acknowledge that a host of paper payment systems -- “cash, checks, and paper giros” -- which maintain the face-to-face elements of economic transactions still exist.

To justify their claims, Bolt and Chakravorti give brief case studies on the digital economy in Australia, the European Union, Spain, and the United States. They investigate the fees associated with credit cards, debit cards, and prepaid cards as well as the limitations that these nations placed on the amounts of associated fees. In each case, the authors review the practices used by specific banks and credit card companies. However, they do not include any discussion of the digital economy in an African context and how financial changes could transform banking models across the continent.

P.V.C. Okoye and Raymond Ezejiofor, senior lecturers in the Accountancy Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Nigeria, explore the Nigerian cashless society in their article “An Appraisal of Cashless Economy Policy in Development of Nigerian Economy” (2013a).⁵³ Using the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as the primary site for their analysis of the cashless society, Okoye and Ezejiofor describe the techniques the bank have embraced to give clients access to

⁵³ Okoye and Ezejiofor partnered to write other articles, including “The Effect of Human Resources Development on Organizational Productivity” (2013b).

cashless transactions. They point out that CBN offers ATMs, checks, bank drafts, computer related e-transfers, funds transfers, mobile money accessible through cellular phones, and point of sale terminals that allow customers to substitute cash payments with cash (Okoye and Ezejiolor 2013a:240). They confirm that there are definite advantages to cashless transactions at CBN, such as “faster transactions, improving hygiene on site, increased sales, cash collection made simple, managing staff entitlements” (Okoye and Ezejiolor 2013a:242). Their research demonstrates how banks, consumers, corporations, and the government can all benefit from a cashless economy.

Despite these positive attributes, they also emphasize that potential problems can arise and should be targeted. Citing Alionu Ifeanyi, they indicate that successful cashless transactions in Nigeria demand sensitization, security, power, and consistent usage (Ifeanyi quoted in Okoye and Ezejiolor 2013a:245). In addition, literacy is a factor that must be addressed; programs to assist customers who are unable to read a European language are a necessity. Okoye and Ezejiolor also argue that sufficient public information campaigns need to be disseminated to raise customers’ awareness about CBN’s cashless offerings.

This is one of the few articles evaluating how the cashless economy can advance banking in an African setting. Okoye and Ezejiolor also reference strides being made in cashless transactions in Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda. They commend these countries for the work that they have done on consumer relations and the national cashless systems that have already been designed. The findings, recommendations, and conclusions drawn by Okoye and Ezejiolor confirm that there are, indeed, plenty of opportunities for applying cashless economies

throughout the African continent. They provide a glimpse of how a cashless economy can move financial transactions forward and continue improving banking for customers.

Religious Interpretations of the Cashless Society

At the end of the twentieth century, Christian scholars published a number of works about the imminent arrival of the cashless society and how it served as a precursor to the end of the world. According to author and pastor Tim LaHaye, these writings can be divided into three categories: amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism (LaHaye 2010).⁵⁴ LaHaye defines amillennialism as the belief held by some Christians that “there will be no literal Millennium on the earth following the second coming of Christ” (LaHaye 2010). He notes that premillennialism envisions a time when “Christ will return to the earth, literally and bodily, before the millennial age begins and that, by His presence, a kingdom will be instituted over which He will reign” (LaHaye 2010). LaHaye indicates that postmillennialism suggests that the world will not improve “until the whole world is Christianized” and Christ returns (LaHaye 2010). Although the three are distinct, each one invokes scriptural foundations to explain the potential impact of the new millennium. Many of these writings have an eschatological foundation, meaning that they illustrate the end of life, the world, and signs of the second coming of Christ. Authors rely on different scriptures to support their ideas and to illustrate the overlap between the cashless society and Christianity. Each of these vantage points will be considered in the literary analysis below.

Glenn A. Guest, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Georgia, correlates the cashless society with the “mark of the beast,” a description of requirements for buying and selling goods

⁵⁴ Tim LaHaye is the author of the *Left Behind* series as well as numerous other texts. He founded the Pre-Tribulation Center at Liberty University in Virginia. LaHaye also opened Christian high schools in California.

that are presented in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 13:16-17). In his book *Steps Toward the Mark of the Beast* (2007), Guest warns readers about the repercussions of adopting this mark, which is equated with an inserted microchip or devices used for purchasing goods in the future. Guest states, “In the not-too-distant future, no one will be able to buy food, shelter, clothing, or any other necessity without receiving the mark” (Guest 2007:116). He cites the scripture, “And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16-17). The mark, therefore, is viewed as an entity that will be mandatory for buying, exchanging, and trading goods.

Guest criticizes the mark and notes that it signifies the centralization of banking and the use of technology for “selfish purposes” (Guest 2007:7). He urges readers to resist the cashless society, declaring that they should refuse the ever present technology. Guest suggests that rather than rushing towards a cashless economic system, people avoid the new trend and return to biblical principles. He implores readers to disregard the messages that they are being bombarded with regarding the cashless society and return to scriptures for guidance about finances.

Mark Hitchcock, pastor of Faith Bible Church in Oklahoma, supplies another religious interpretation of the cashless society by turning to Revelation 13. In the first book that he published, *Cashless: Bible Prophecy, Economic Chaos, and the Future Financial Order* (2009a), he merges a scriptural analysis of the cashless society with reports appearing in newspaper articles. Hitchcock attaches ideas about the cashless society to apocalyptic concepts by stating that the cashless society is an extension of the mark of the beast: “The Bible clearly links the global mark of the beast system with the emergence of a cashless society” (Hitchcock 2009a:21).

According to Hitchcock, the clear signs or “prophetic signposts” of the cashless society can be seen in what he dubs “end-time markers,” including “a stunning disappearance, a season of further preparation, the rise of G-10, antichrist rising, the new *pax romana*, terrible tribulations, Israel’s Pearl Harbor, the march to Armageddon, and the glorious appearing” (Hitchcock 2009a:27-37). With each of these signifiers, Hitchcock gives biblical evidence of how the technology associated with the cashless society exemplifies that the cashless society is part of the end of times.⁵⁵

Apart from alluding to scriptures and articles about the cashless society, Hitchcock also returns to the Bellamy’s book, *Looking Forward* (1888). In evaluating Bellamy’s notions about the economy of the future, Hitchcock states, “What Bellamy prognosticated about credit cards is already here. Could his prediction of a cashless society also be on the horizon. It looks that way. Times are changing more rapidly than ever before, and the concept of a cashless society has been seriously advocated in the United States for almost 40 years” (Hitchcock 2009a:53). Hitchcock goes on to present the ways in which biometrics (technology regulated by biological information), microchips, ATMs, Smart Cards, IVMs, and computer technology are changing how currency is used. He calls readers to ponder their personal religious growth, how the cashless society can transform global governance and lead to a new world order, and the impending arrival of the end of times. He alerts readers to the possible damage and danger that a cashless society can usher in.

Hitchcock delivers another ominous eschatological analysis of the cashless society in his book, *2012: The Bible and the End of the World* (2009b), which was inspired by the film *2012*

⁵⁵ Hitchcock prophetically analyzes cash further in his book *The End of Money: Bible Prophecy and the Coming Economic Collapse* (Hitchcock 2013).

by director Roland Emmerich. In the opening pages, Hitchcock quotes part of a promotional line from the film: “Never before has a date in history been so significant to so many cultures, so many religions, scientists, and governments” (Hitchcock 2009b:10). This serves as the beginning of Hitchcock’s exploration of how 2012 was viewed as the year when the world would end (i.e., Mayan). To address the signs that the world is advancing toward its end, becoming “a one-world economy, government, and religion” (Hitchcock 2009b:121), Hitchcock revisits the idea of the beast presented in Revelation 13: “It looks like we are well on our way down that road” (Hitchcock 2009b:121). Hitchcock believes that such an economy will be driven by technology and regulated by the Antichrist.

Hitchcock also brings hip-hop artists into his cataclysmic vision by mentioning Canibus and Lil’ Wayne at the opening of his book. His insertion of these artists is rare for an author investigating the cashless society and prophetic end of times signs. Hitchcock writes:

Even a couple of well-known rappers have embraced the 2012 deadline. Germaine Williams, better known by his stage name Canibus, is a rapper. He is noted for his intricate and complex rhyme schemes and punch lines [sic], as well as his sound technique and aptitude as a battle rapper. Canibus has released a CD called “Beyond 2012,” which reveals and explains his interest in December 21, 2012. Rapper Lil’ Wayne, also known as Wheezy, after reading about Mayan prophecies while traveling around on his tour bus, is also convinced the world will end in a few years. (Hitchcock 2009b:22)

Although Hitchcock shares additional information about Lil’ Wayne gravitating towards Mayan prophecies, he does not elaborate further on the theme of “Rapping for 2012,” as he titled this brief section of his book. The artists are simply listed as part of the public concern that arose as the world hurtled closer to 2012.

Bible prophecy scholars Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy offer another account of how the cashless society contributes to the end of times in their book *The Coming Cashless Society*

(1996).⁵⁶ Ice serves as the Director of Tim LaHaye's Pre-Tribulation Research Center. Demy is a former United States Naval Commander and presently works as an associate professor at the United States Naval War College.⁵⁷ In addition to returning to themes in Revelation 13 and the mark of the beast as core elements of the cashless society, Ice and Demy identify changes to what they call the "digital economy" – for example, ATMs, biometrics, debit cards, smart cards (Ice and Demy 1996:18). The stance that they take on the cashless society is clear – to properly understand the cashless society, the public should consider its financial and scriptural foundation. They assert, "An understanding of the coming cashless society is necessary to gain proper perspective of our place in history. In order to gain such a perspective, we need God's viewpoint on earthly events, which we can draw from God's Word – the Bible" (Ice and Demy 1996:19). Ice and Demy show how religion can be used as a tool for deciphering the true nature of the cashless society.

One of the resounding points made by Ice and Demy in *The Coming Cashless Society* is that cashless society is not mentioned in the Bible. What exists are theological scholars studying the concept offering their analysis. The authors reason that while the Bible "does not specifically

⁵⁶ Ice and Demy dedicate their book to Tim LaHaye, pastor and author of the *Left Behind* series, a collection of books describing the end of days. LaHaye makes references to the cashless society and the global economy. For instance at the opening of his first book, *Left Behind*, he gives a fictional account of the cashless society, sharing, "Streamlining world finance to three major currencies had taken years, but once the change was made, most were happy with it. All of Europe and Russia dealt exclusively in marks. Asia, Africa, and the Middle East traded in yen. North and South America and Australia dealt in dollars. A move was afoot to go to one global currency, but those nations that had reluctantly switched once were loath to do it again" (LaHaye and Jenkins 1995:9). In another section of the book, LaHaye touches upon the mark of the beast, conjecturing that it could appear in the form of tattoos and stamps (LaHaye and Jenkins 1995:421). LaHaye also writes about the Revelation-based biblical underpinnings of the *Left Behind* series in his book *Revelation Unveiled* (2010).

⁵⁷ Demy also co-authored the book *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* with J. Daryl Charles (Demy and Charles 2010).

predict computers, the Internet, credit cards, or any of the other trimmings that facilitate the modern electronic banking system,” it “does predict that during the tribulation an attempt will be made to control all economic activity” (Ice and Demy 1996:85). They link the cashless economy to the belief that there will eventually be a central power capable of controlling the world’s banking systems.⁵⁸

Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff bridge economic and religious theories about the cashless society through their work on millennial capitalism (Comaroff 1999; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). Their writings on millennial capitalism reveal that it has multiple connotations. Millennial capitalism is used to capture ideas about millennial expectations, a direct forecast of what will happen in the year 2000 and beyond. However, it is also grounded in notions of millenarianism, the futuristic belief in Christ’s second coming and the ensuing events. In describing millennial capitalism to readers, they state:

By this we mean not just capitalism at the millennium, but capitalism invested with salvific force; with intense faith in its capacity, if rightly harnessed, wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered. At its most extreme, this faith is epitomized by forms of money magic ranging from pyramid schemes to prosperity gospels, that pledge to deliver immense immediate wealth by largely inscrutable means; in its more mundane manifestation, it accords the market itself an almost mystical capacity to produce and deliver cash and commodities. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:785)

At the end of the twentieth century, the Comaroffs started reimagining capitalism as it would appear in the new millennium.

One of the factors making the Comaroffs version of millennial capitalism relevant to this study is their focus on class, economics, and labor in South Africa. The attention that they give to

⁵⁸ Financial planner and Dallas Theological Seminary graduate Ethan Pope has also written about the cashless society in his book *Cashing It In: Getting Ready for a World Without Money* (2005). He provides scriptural references and Christian-based perspectives on the implications of a world driven by credit payments.

miners and their treatment within the millennial capitalist economy mirrors Cashless Society's introduction of mining and raw materials in their music. In summarizing the (in)visibility of miners, the Comaroffs liken them to zombies where the "fantasy of forcing underground evil into public visibility, of reversing the arcane alienation that creates phantom workers, is a palpable feature of the domestic cultural scene" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:789). They acknowledge that the precarious presence of miners in South Africa and the work that they do represents the promise and perniciousness of working in the underbelly of the country. In spite of being rich in raw materials, the work performed by miners leaves them open to scrutiny for their economic struggles.

The Comaroffs frame their discussion of millennial capitalism within the lens of neoliberalism. They inspect the contradictory nature of neoliberalism, indicating that it "appears both to include and to marginalize in unanticipated ways; to produce desire and expectation of a global scale" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). They accentuate that millennial capitalism is capable of changing the situations of the marginalized. When attached to its religious dimensions, the heart of millennial capitalism is "a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:2). This is the population that Cashless Society is describing in their music – those who labored with little return on their efforts and functioned on the fringes of society.

The Comaroffs do not overtly mention the cashless society in their writing. They do, however, shed light on how technology is changing the economy. The Comaroffs speak of the "growth of a global electronic economy" that would make it easier to trade currency and goods

(Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:29). Additionally, some of their ideas resonate with the aforementioned writings by religious scholars. One key aspect of millennial capitalism is its unavoidable linkage to religious movements and calamitous visions of the end of the world. The Comaroffs cite the significance of religious movements in their study. They fuse ideas about capital to religious beliefs about deliverance, noting it is “offered as the measure of a genuinely global God, just as it is taken to explain the power of satanism; both have the instant efficacy of the magical and millennial” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:23). Their insights contrasting capital, God, and Satan mirror aspects of the writings of the eschatological scholars who use similar interpretations to explain the cashless society.

Conclusion

A variety of different perspectives about the cashless society have been presented in this literature review. The texts appearing in the review display the various viewpoints about the cashless society. Early writings about the cashless society placed it within a utopian society where credit is freely available to all citizens. Economists analyzed how the cashless society will result in a transition from hard currency to digital payments. Eschatologists relate the cashless society to the end of times and relied on Biblical scriptures to emphasize its drawbacks. Lastly, anthropologists align the cashless society with millennial economics and the inevitable changes that accompany the arrival of the twenty-first century.

The hip-hop group Cashless Society mention many of these topics in their lyrics. Not only do they recognize the relevance of millennial capitalism, but they also discuss the Antichrist

in their music.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, more research needs to be conducted on literature relating hip-hop music and culture to the cashless society. Further investigations on this topic will continue to expand the discussion on the topic and widen the scope of the literature.

⁵⁹ On the track “Stuck,” Cashless Society emcees rhyme, “Cause we’re so sick it’s like it’s permeating / My ways against forces / Yo, this gets me so sick about this Antichrist” (Cashless Society 2003h).

CHAPTER THREE

Initial and Mass Gazes: Heroic and Virtual Interpretations of Cashless Society

Hip-hop artist Robert “RZA” Diggs of the group Wu-Tang Clan contends that an unaddressed connection exists between hip-hop music and comic book animation. A longtime comic book devotee, RZA confesses that during his childhood he and the core members of Wu-Tang Clan (Dennis “Ghostface Killah” Coles, Gary “GZA” Grice, Lamont “U-God” Hawkins, Jason “Inspectah Deck” Hunter, Russell “Ol’ Dirty Bastard” Jones, Clifford “Method Man” Smith, Elgin “Masta Killa” Turner, and Corey “Raekwon” Woods) accumulated innumerable copies of comic books. In relating their coveted comic collections to the overall evolution of Wu-Tang Clan, RZA asserts, “Comic books are a main element of Wu-Tang because they’re a main element of hip-hop in general. They always have been. Both hip-hop and comics are about special powers. And they’re about teams...united in one life-or-death cause” (Diggs and Norris 2005:85). Additionally, RZA believes that the superhuman powers bestowed upon comic book protagonists tempts young fans growing up in urban locales like the low-income public housing projects that produced Wu-Tang Clan with dreams of invincibility. Through comic books, young people can morph into the lives of their imagined superheroes, which also allows them to transcend their immediate surroundings, and break through to greater life possibilities.⁶⁰ As RZA shares with journalist Eric K. Arnold, “We’re not only hip-hop artists, but we also appeared to be superheroes. It made kids wanna be that” (Diggs quoted in Arnold 2007).

RZA reconfigures himself into the comic book guise of Bobby Digital in pursuit of becoming “a superhero in real life” (Diggs and Norris 2005:89). In trademark superhero regalia,

⁶⁰ RZA discusses the centrality of public housing projects in his book, *The Tao of Wu* (2009), co-authored with Chris Norris.

he custom-designs an indestructible vehicle he dubs the Black Tank (a black armored GMC Suburban truck inspired by comic book character Batman's iconic Batmobile) that provides him with the gumption to "go out at nighttime and right some wrongs" (Diggs and Norris 2005:91). The story of Bobby Digital, a brash, street stomping superhero, is spotlighted on several of RZA's albums: *RZA as Bobby Digital in Stereo* (1998), *RZA as Bobby Digital: Digital Bullet* (2001), and *Digi Snacks* (2008).⁶¹ Bobby Digital's superhero ability to transform technology into digital signals enables him "to see things clearly, for what they are and not what they appear to be" (Diggs and Norris 2005:91).⁶² RZA's transition into Bobby Digital reflects Ta-Nehisi Coates interpretation of a hip-hop album as "an autobiographical comic book" (Coates 2009:53).⁶³ RZA's evolution into a superhero launches this presentation about Cashless Society, a hip-hop collective seemingly modeled on Wu-Tang Clan's fraternal superhero conceptualization. The members of Cashless Society cast themselves as antiheroes, declaring themselves "accidental heroes" on their album *African Raw Material, Volume One*. Consequently, the abovementioned vignette illustrating RZA's playful mutation into a superhero launches this chapter on Cashless Society, a hip-hop collective seemingly modeled on Wu-Tang Clan's fraternal superhero conceptualization that they regard as "accidental heroes" on (see *African Raw Material, Volume One*).⁶⁴

⁶¹ RZA also released a film, *Bobby Digital*, chronicling the misadventures of this urban superhero.

⁶² Bobby Digital discovered that he could digitally alter himself after achieving a sense of enlightenment from smoking a blunt (cigar mixed with marijuana) coated in honey serum (Diggs and Norris 2005:90).

⁶³ David Beer and Barry Sandywell find that superhero transformations are a part of our "ludic, metamorphic age ruled by the imperative: *transform your self* [sic]" (Sandywell and Beer 2005:107).

⁶⁴ The idea of the accidental hero or anti-hero is also popularized in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from Underground* (1864). In the closing pages of the story, Dostoyevsky summarizes the plight of the antihero through

The group Cashless Society exemplifies Wu-Tang Clan's heroic hip-hop credo of being unified by a cause through tackling the challenges of being cashless - a double-entendre signifier of both abject poverty and the approaching global financial market where hard currency is replaced with digitally managed credit cards with advanced microchip technology. The recording, *African Raw Material*, captures Cashless Society's exploits through autobiographical accounts, revealing a band of hip-hop artists who are disenchanted with ghetto life, deeply aggravated by the relentless realities of being cashless, and tired of negotiating music industry politics. Their lyrics embody the group's sentiments about their economic woes as well as strategies for uplifting communities across the African continent that are facing similar circumstances. Therefore, Cashless Society's conversion into superheroes is not vastly different from the metamorphosis of RZA, who jokingly contemplates becoming a heroic crime fighting community vigilante, or the members of Wu-Tang Clan, for that matter, who according to Greg Dimitriadis "reinvented themselves as prototypical gangsters and superheroes" (Dimitriadis 2009:37). He goes on to list the range of superhero personas that were adopted by Wu-Tang Clan members: Lou Diamonds (Raekwon), Johnny Blaze (Method Man), Tony Starks (Ghostface Killah), Noodles (Masta Killa), Dirt Megirt (Ol' Dirty Bastard), Maxamillion (The Genius) and Rollie Fingas (Inspectah Deck) (Dimitriadis 2009:37). The transfiguration of hip-hop artists into these superheroes evidences the extent to which artists will go to reinvent themselves.

the nameless protagonist as follows: "After all, to tell a long story about how I missed life through decaying morally in a corner, not having sufficient means, losing the habit of living, and carefully cultivating my anger underground – really is not interesting; a novel needs a hero, but here all the features of an anti-hero have *purposely* been collected, and most of all, the whole thing produces a bad impression, because we have all got out of the habit of living, we are all in a greater or less degree crippled" (Dostoyevsky 1864:122).

Anthropologist Jesse Weaver Shipley integrates a discussion of hip-hop artists and their heroic guises in his book *Living the Hiplife: Celebrity and Entrepreneurship in Ghanaian Popular Music* (2013). He conveys the merger of masculinity, gangsterism, and heroism in his analysis of the growth of hip-hop music in the United States and its manifestations across the African continent. Shipley views male hip-hop artists as “an icon of masculine agency able to recreate himself through an elegant control of language, embodied the contradictory legacy of public representations of black culture: the threat of a violent black male gangster and the potential of a creative antihero struggling against racial oppression” (Shipley 2013:15). There is a definite opposition between the gangster and the antihero – two figures attributed with different forms of power within the hip-hop community. RZA and Wu Tang Clan take on heroic personalities and stand against the superhero. Cashless Society, however, gravitates towards the antihero, using this figure in their music to speak out against social injustices.

This segment of this chapter investigates the notion of the accidental hero and how this figure can be analyzed in terms of the hip-hop matrix, a cultural framework created by New York hip-hop artist turned author, Black Dot, in his book *Hip Hop Decoded* (2005), to interrogate the reasons why hip-hop artists construct heroic alter egos.⁶⁵ *Hip Hop Decoded* questions the state of hip-hop music and culture thirty years after its emergence as a movement bursting forth from the African-American and Afro-Caribbean communities of the South Bronx,

⁶⁵ Black Dot speaks extensively about the hip-hop matrix and the development of hip-hop culture in a number of videos posted on YouTube. A few of these discussions are “The Black Dot: Hip Hop Decoded” (2012), “Hip Hop and “The Truth About The Black Illuminati” (2015), and “The Five Bloodlines of Hip Hop” (2010).

New York, in the 1970s.⁶⁶ Black Dot contextualizes hip-hop in its African historical continuum, linking the four elements of hip-hop culture (breakdancing, deejaying, emceeing, and graffiti writing) to their “ancient origins” -- African traditions of dance, drumming, storytelling, and hieroglyphics. After focusing on these cultural components, Black Dot adds a fundamental fifth feature, knowledge, which he aligns with consciousness. Throughout *Hip Hop Decoded*, he emphasizes the need for artists to exercise their consciousness by displaying knowledge or knowledge of self, a concept that was described by respected hip-hop artist and actor Lorenzo “Lord Jamar” Dechalus (formerly of group Brand Nubian) as the ability to identify “vibrations of truth and falsehood” in the establishment of hip-hop artists’ heroic personas (Dechalus 2009:4).⁶⁷

Black Dot’s theory of the hip-hop matrix is reminiscent of Cheryl Keyes’ description of the African nexus existing in hip-hop culture. In her article “At the Crossroads: Rap Music and Its African Nexus” (1996), Keyes offers an historical overview of the development of hip-hop culture from its rise in New York City during the 1970s. However, she accentuates that there is also an African intersection or crossroads (Keyes 1996:234). Keyes ties these Africanisms (Maultsby 1990) to linguistics, vocal qualities (timbre and texture), time, dress, and dance. Her exploration of these African retentions in hip-hop music and culture is also associated with “street culture” and “street speech (Keyes 1996:231). The prominence of street culture is a return to RZA’s need to be a street superhero and hip-hop artists’ focus on the streets in their lyrics.

⁶⁶ In her book *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, Cheryl Keyes defines hip-hop as a “youth arts movement” fusing elements of the African diaspora. She incorporates the concept, “African nexus,” to explain that hip-hop culture is rooted in centuries old West African bardic traditions (Keyes 2002:17-22).

⁶⁷ Dechalus’ comments appeared in the book *Knowledge of Self: A Collection of Wisdom on the Science of Everything in Life* (2009) edited by Dr. Supreme Understanding Allah, C’bs Alife Allah, and Sunez Allah.

As referenced earlier in Greg Dimitriadis' comment about the correlation between gangsterism and heroism, hip-hop culture resonates with true and false tales of countless artists who adopt heroic alter egos stemming from a fixation and involvement with the underworlds of crime, drug dealing, incarceration, and violence.⁶⁸ Black Dot cites examples of artists purporting such lifestyles that could best be described in terms of Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulation, where an individual attempts "to feign to have what [they don't] have" to "threate[n] the difference between the 'true' and the 'false'" (Baudrillard 2008:3). Thus, as hip-hop artists lyrically recast themselves as superheroes, they are entering into a phase of musical simulation that challenges what is real. *Hip Hop Decoded* takes a clear Baudrillardian stance, highlighting the distinction between truth and falsehood in heroic identities and associating that relationship with its blatant cinematic representation in Andy and Larry Wachowski's film *The Matrix*. It is at the intersection of Black Dot's five elements of hip-hop culture (breakdancing, deejaying, emceeing, graffiti writing, and knowledge), Baudrillard's theory of simulation, and the Wachowskis' film that the hip-hop matrix is formed.

The hip hop matrix is shaped by the basic premise of the movie *The Matrix* -- that a superhero with extraordinary abilities is deployed to resolve a major crisis or stop a destructive entity. In the Wachowskis' film, which debuted in movie theaters in 1999, the heroic figures are the characters Morpheus, Neo, and Trinity. Yet in the hip-hop matrix, hip-hop artists are expertly

⁶⁸ Author and journalist Marcus Reeves gives another interpretation of heroic images in hip-hop music in his book *Somebody Scream!: Rap Music's Rise to Prominence in the Aftermath of Black Power* (2008). He finds, "For MCs -- with all their talk and bravado -- were on their way to becoming reincarnations of Stagger Lee or the Bad Nigga Hero, the bandit archetype of black folklore who emerged in the late nineteenth century and was widely immortalized in song. His violent temperament and refusal to live within the laws of society were matched only by this hero's gift of hyperbole" (Reeves 2008:31). His work echoes the findings of folklorist John Roberts in his book *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (1990) as well as Cheryl Keyes' writings about heroism and hip-hop music (Keyes 2002).

executing heroic roles and fully immersed in lives divided between their real identity and hip-hop superhero enactments. Black Dot suggests that this duality is driven by the combined desires of music producers, corporate record label executives, and the artists themselves. The vested interest of each of these individuals contributes to the perpetuation of the hip-hop superhero image. RZA adds to the complexity of these heroic portrayals, estimating that a hip-hop artist “plays a role, but it’s different from acting, you really do live that role...” (Diggs and Norris 2009:158).

Further evidence about such heroic role play comes from “cinophile” and philosopher Alain Badiou who proposes that individuals entwined in *The Matrix* are “accidental heroes” (Badiou and Toscano 2008: 20). He applies his analysis to Morpheus, Neo, and Trinity, the film’s three protagonists, categorizing them as “a group of rebels (or of accidental heroes)...featuring an ideological leader, a mysterious convert, a seductive woman, a traitor, and someone endowed with exceptional fighting abilities - [trying] to crush an enemy a thousand times more powerful than itself” (ibid. 20).⁶⁹ His findings are also applicable to Cashless Society, and their view of themselves as self-proclaimed accidental heroes of the hip-hop matrix.

Operating within Badiou’s framework of accidental heroes, members of Cashless Society cultivated their own hip-hop matrix inspired heroic story. Although they do not directly apply Black Dot’s rubric to their music, Cashless Society’s rhetoric is informed by the metaphysical writings of David Icke, author of *Children of the Matrix* (2001). In this literary work, which is grounded in themes extracted from the *Matrix*, Icke looks at how truth and falsehood impact societal infrastructure. Cashless Society lyrically elaborates on the truth and falsehood of

⁶⁹ Badiou proposed that *The Matrix* is a representation of a Platonic fable dealing with materiality.

contemporary sagas from the Johannesburg cityscape. The group surfaces from Johannesburg's hip-hop underground in 1999, popularizing the group's music. They are determined to make songs that they call "street hop" that encapsulates their "grimy," "gritty" autobiographical experiences (Cashless Society 2003a). Their track "Accidental Heroes" (2003), however, stands out as a hip-hop matrix anthem toying with superhero ideology.

"Accidental Heroes" reaffirms myths of the hip-hop superhero by portraying Snazz-D, X-Amount, and Gemini as a heroic trio attempting to hoist themselves out of their frustrating inner city lives. Snazz-D supplies an excellent definition of an accidental hero during an interview at the Johannesburg radio station YFM, announcing in pure RZA-like fashion, "'Accidental Heroes' is just that. Hip-hoppers, especially like us, we come out like superheroes and we stumble onto the bad guys" (Du Plessis 2003a). While Snazz-D's words are tinged with hints of RZA and Wu-Tang Clan, they also relate to Badiou's finding that accidental heroes are remarkable rebels determined to overcome oppositional forces.

The chorus to "Accidental Heroes" introduces Snazz-D, X-Amount, and Gemini as superheroes with the surreal ability to "outrun the planet like Reebok," the worldwide athletic apparel and sports gear company that markets itself as Planet Reebok during a 1993 advertising campaign (Cashless Society 2003e). Yet the three emcees contrast this imagined superhero quality with the streets of Johannesburg, which they felt had "crooks by the thousand" who were "products of overcrowded housing" (Cashless Society 2003e). So the chorus clearly depicts two divergent pictures - one of Planet Reebok, which is described by scholar Kenishka Chowdhury as a place "with no rules" (Chowdhury 2002); the other of Johannesburg as a cramped overpopulated city overrun with petty crimes.

Out of this dreary backdrop, emcee Snazz-D dreams of a time when he can “put [his] vocals on tape so [he can] escape the low life and shine” (Cashless Society 2003e). Yet he admits that it “all gets to [him] mentally” because he has an unquenchable desire to “be respected like [he is] meant to be essentially” (Cashless Society 2003e). His escapist lyrics confirm William Smith’s declaration that hip-hop superheroes rely on “their powers of superhuman ability, therefore giving them a mythology that they [can] escape the oppressive living conditions of the ghettos” (Smith 2005:165). Years after recording “Accidental Heroes,” Snazz-D gained acclaim across Africa for winning *Emcee Africa*, a continental wide competition sponsored by digital satellite television station Channel O that pitted hip-hop artists against one another to see who had the best improvisatory freestyle skills. He was awarded a monetary prize, the opportunity to record a new album, and notoriety that attracted further status, thereby helping him move closer to breaking away from the so-called low life.

X-Amount, the next emcee heard on “Accidental Heroes” tells a heroic account that parallels Snazz-D’s. Also known by the name Kwezar Starz, he lives out the bullet dodging aspects of a hip-hop superhero. His environs reveal constant dangers and he recalls a scenario where he “almost got shot,” but received neither justice nor assistance from police officers who witnessed it as they “drove by, waved goodbye” and proceeded to carry out their lackluster patrolling on another block (Cashless Society 2003e). X-Amount compares his superhero image with the “villains down on luck” who do not necessarily bypass danger with the same degree of ease. His superhero powers enable him to skirt the bullets that claim the lives of so many others around him.

Gemini, the final emcee of the “Accidental Heroes” trio, presents himself as a fear inducing gangster. On the track he mentions “the nightmare on Sound Street,” revisiting Wes Craven’s *A Nightmare on Elm Street* comic books, films, and novels that tell the story of Freddie Krueger, the distorted faced demonic character who finds pleasure in tormenting well-to-do suburbanites.⁷⁰

Gemini’s nightmare on Sound Street offers an account of a Freddie Krueger-type menace, except unlike Krueger’s distinguishing fedora, striped shirt, and signature scissor appendages, this one has “an appetite for destruction” and is “dressed in black wool,” Timberland boots, and “grinning” (Cashless Society 2003e) -- clothing and behavior associated with the villains and crooks highlighted earlier on “Accidental Heroes.” Ethne Quinn writes about hip-hop artists’ fixation with Freddie Krueger in her book *Nuthin’ But a “G” Thang: The Culture and Commerce of Gangsta Rap*. She identifies the “slasher motif” in the lyrics of artists such as Geto Boys, Ice Cube, and Scarface, citing the presence of the “psychopathic antihero” in characters such as Jason from *Friday the 13th*, Chuckie in *Child’s Play*, and Freddie Krueger from *Nightmare on Elm Street* (Quinn 2005). Thus, on the track “Accidental Heroes,” Gemini’s gangster character represents the demarcation between good and evil; hero and villain. It is best summed up by Black Dot who is convinced that “every hero needs a villain” and “every great champion needs a great challenger” -- two adages that form the crux of hip-hop artists’ alter egos (Black Dot 2005).

Comic book inspired heroes and villains continue to pervade hip-hop culture. Cashless Society embraces superhero narratives on the track “Accidental Heroes,” a lyrical testimony to

⁷⁰ For further information on *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, see *Ripped from a Dream: The Nightmare on Elm Street Omnibus* (2006) and the *Freddy vs. Jason vs. Ash* comic book series (2009).

the truth that negotiating inner city life situations demands superhuman survival strategies. Being a hip-hop superhero requires resting on the promise of life potential that exceeds the adversities and setbacks of residing on what X-Amount calls “inner city all-star blocks” (Cashless Society 2003e). It also demands managing the truth and falsehoods of the hip-hop matrix. The stories of comic book superheroes display characters’ exceptional abilities to withstand fictional mayhem and misfortune. However, the musical accounts of Cashless Society aim to supersede real-life hardships through carefully crafted alter egos. Their fate is ultimately linked to their ability to escape the dramas they are embroiled in and write their own heroic endings.

The Hip-Hop Matrix and Virtual Communities

Cashless Society’s construction of accidental heroes in their music is directly linked to digital technology and the formation of virtual communities. Media scholar Marshall McLuhan once declared that electronic technology is capable of “reshaping and structuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life” (McLuhan, Fiore, and Agel 1967:8). Originally penned in 1967, these words serve as the basis for his proverbial “global village” and precursors to our digital age. McLuhan recognized that early electronic circuitry had the potential to wire the world, thereby developing intercontinental connections that could bridge spatial and temporal barriers. He predicted the oncoming wave of computers and other computerized devices such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs) that are now inextricable features of our time and possess the extraordinary capacity to link us to individuals and institutions around the globe. However, the rise of wireless computer technology reflects that the Internet is, in the words of technology buff Alan Lightman, bringing us “infinitely” closer to living in a “brave new unwired world” (Lightman 2002).

Using some of the ideas of Marshall McLuhan and Alan Lightman, Halifu Osumare emphasizes that Internet indulgences demonstrate that the “concept of global virtual reality is no longer a vision of a few computer hackers, but is fast-becoming a household phenomenon” (Osumare 2001:171). She reinforces this notion by likening the World Wide Web, the Internet domain code we are all so familiar with, to the entangling spider web of Ananse, the clever arachnid trickster from West African fables who effortlessly outsmarts his foes (Osumare 2008: 178). Osumare’s metaphor illustrates how our level of activity in virtual landscapes is constantly expanding as we depend on computer-mediated Internet interactions to forge virtual communities.

Communication and media scholar Howard Rheingold first presented the idea of virtual communities in 1993 when he published *The Virtual Community: Homesteading the Electronic Frontier*. He defines virtual communities as “social aggregations that emerge from the [Inter]net when enough people carry on public discussions long enough with sufficient human feeling to form webs of personal relationships in Cyberspace” (Rheingold 1993:5). Rheingold’s idea is expanded by Wanda Bryant, author of a pioneering dissertation on virtual music communities that investigates the manner in which folk music unifies groups of people on the Internet (Bryant 1995). Her work on virtual music communities set a precedent for future research on virtual music interactions. Likewise, René Lysloff’s trailblazing work regarding musical communities on the Internet lays the groundwork for ethnographic approaches to studying virtual music communities (Lysloff 2003). Finally, William Duckworth’s examination of virtual music reveals that the Internet engendered the creation of various genres of virtual music that contribute to the development of a “global artistic consciousness” (Duckworth 2005: xv).

For the remainder of this chapter, I will explore some of the elements required to build a virtual hip-hop community -- a congregation of individuals gathering on the Internet who are dedicated to celebrating and debating hip-hop music and culture – that can be used in establishing a mass gaze of Cashless Society. During the six years that the group was together, it attracted a strong local following by performing at venues throughout Southern Africa. They also launched international hip-hop alliances with dead prez, the hip-hop duo that coordinated performances for them in both Botswana and South Africa. Furthermore, legendary hip-hop deejay Bobbito Garcia forged licensing and distribution for Cashless Society on the now defunct record label Fondle ‘Em Records in the United States, making them the first African hip-hop group to do so.⁷¹

After disbanding in 2005, Cashless Society continued to reach audiences through social networking, which in turn led to the formation of virtual hip-hop communities centered around the group’s music and videos. One such community was built on the popular social networking site MySpace.com that same year. They experienced great popularity with the release of *African Raw Material, Volume One*, which cast the members of Cashless Society as part of Africa’s coveted natural resources -- its raw materials. However, Cashless Society utilized what Peter Limb classifies as “digital raw materials” to construct their virtual hip-hop community (Limb 2005:15). These materials are used as the cornerstones for Cashless Society fans and music lovers. Using data collected from interviews with former Cashless Society members in Botswana

⁷¹ As Garcia explains: “I got a hold of [‘Blaze Tha Breaks] when I dj’ed in Johannesburg in April 2000 during the 6th year celebration of the end of apartheid in South Africa. To my knowledge it was the first US release of a hip hop artist from the continent of Africa, but I hope not the last. There was mad more heads down there that were nice. ‘Blaze Tha Breaks’ I thought was the best of what I heard from my trip” (Garcia 2001).

and South Africa, as well as supplemental virtual research, this chapter will examine the development of Cashless Society's virtual hip-hop community.⁷²

I initially learned about the music of Cashless Society in 2004 during a fieldwork trip to Gaborone, Botswana's capital city. One day while I was interviewing Ralph Williams III, the former Motswana hip-hop artist Stagga Don Dada, he suggested that I contact Jerry Kai-Lewis, former Cashless Society member Black Intellect.⁷³ Williams noted that Kai-Lewis and I both shared Sierra Leonean heritages and it would be worthwhile to meet him. Another three years passed before I met Kai-Lewis, this time through an interview with magazine editor, journalist, photographer, and music video director Shike Olsen, who coordinated bookings for Cashless Society in Botswana. Nevertheless, Kai-Lewis was instrumental in introducing me to other members of Cashless Society, namely to Botswana-born emcee/producer David "Draztik" Balsher, who has remained active in the music industry both in Botswana and South Africa. Throughout this chapter, I will reference key points that Draztik made during an eye-opening 2007 interview I conducted with him at his Johannesburg recording studio.⁷⁴ Draztik's remarks regarding the Internet and MySpace.com were useful in gaining a better understanding of how

⁷² In examining virtual communities and interactions during a Ted Talk presentation filmed in Amsterdam, Motswana writer Siyanda Mohutsiwa declares that online communication is the future of the African continent (Mohutsiwa 2015).

⁷³ Williams has released two albums: *Staggalicious* (2003) and *Music for Your Movement* (2007).

⁷⁴ My time in the studio with Draztik illustrated ethnomusicologist Louise Meintjes belief that in South African the studio is a microcosm of the larger society. She says, "The studio represents a microcosm of the society within which it exists. As such, it offers a prism into late capitalist, late apartheid experience and into how global popular culture flows are activated within the context of local politics" (Meintjes 2003:9).

significant the two have been in maintaining Cashless Society's presence and its virtual hip-hop community that consists of nearly 3,000 members.⁷⁵

Creating Buzz through Virtual Communities

One of the key uses for virtual hip-hop communities is to create buzz surrounding an artist and their music. In his book, *The Anatomy of Buzz Revisited: Real Life Lessons in Word-of-Mouth Marketing* (2009), Emanuel Rosen states that buzz is laden with a variety of different meanings and tied to multiple forms of communication: "Some people think buzz is complicated, and mysterious, but what I'm talking about is actually quite simple: person-to-person communication about someone or something. It can involve anything from computers to cars, movie stars to mobile phones. The basic building block of buzz is a comment. It can be transmitted through face-to-face or phone conversations, instant messaging, e-mail, blogs or some other method of communication that someone is developing in his or her garage as you're reading this book" (Rosen 2009:2). Rosen notes that buzz can also include online promotion through the Internet and social networking sites (Rosen 2009:21). The spread of real-world and virtual buzz becomes essential in the popularization of Cashless Society.

Draztik excitedly advocates for the spread of buzz in an early Cashless Society interview. He encourages listeners, saying, "There is no way that we can survive without record sales eventually translating. But to tell you the truth, right now, what we're going to try to do is to work with as many cats as we can in terms of as Unreleased Records is concerned, you know

⁷⁵ In 2011, there were 2,991 members in Cashless Society's virtual hip-hop community (<http://www.myspace.com/cashlessociety.com>). However, Cashless Society's virtual community at this site has stopped functioning as part of its virtual community in recent years. There are no longer any videos posted. As other online platforms gained popularity, Myspace.com was not as central in the development of buzz for Cashless Society. Other sites such as Facebook.com have become more important in maintaining a fan base.

what I'm saying, as a label. And put the material out there. Right now, in the next two years people need to start thinking about how to create buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz. Be out there" (Cashless Society 2003). The reality of record sales translating also relates to the formation of virtual hip-hop communities where Cashless Society's music could be celebrated. Therefore, after the group dismantled, Draztik continued to promote Cashless Society's music by sharing it with fans online. He was able to maintain the buzz about the group through virtual platforms such as MySpace.com, Facebook.com, and YouTube.com.

According to author Peter Buckley, MySpace.com constitutes a mushrooming virtual community -- communities "designed to foster communication and friends. They're a bit like a mixture of school yard, social club, and notice board" (Buckley 2006:5). Since the advent of MySpace.com in 2003, the social networking site has boomed, and is reported to have attracted an estimated 110 million monthly users in 2007 around the period that I spoke with Draztik (Stone 2007a). Becoming a member of MySpace.com is a simple way to correspond with friends and acquaintances over the Internet. Profiles allow individuals and groups to post personal pictures, and there are also options to feature video footage, music, artwork, and comments.

One of the landmark events for MySpace.com was the inception of MySpace Music, which offers users the option to compile what has been described as "an effort to give music lovers the kind of...jukebox they could once only dream of" (Stone 2007b). Users can go to the music pages of their favorite artists and arrange a collection of songs that will appear on their personal profile page, granting easier access to playlists of their favorite songs. The playlists confirm Robert Burnett's claim that we are rapidly moving closer to Marshall McLuhan's vision

of a global village as our computer-mediated listening practices generate a “global jukebox” (Burnett 1996:7).

Recognizing the mounting significance of MySpace.com for artists, Draztik states, “People are so much more connected to MySpace than popular websites. MySpace is the most popular platform. I think technology has moved to a MySpace environment. [Cashless Society] just want[s] to fill in all the gaps in terms of our placement. If you can’t find us on the [Inter]net, you can find us on MySpace...It’s a more powerful tool than the regular conventional website” (Balsher 2007). As Draztik indicated, Cashless Society gained visibility by using digital raw materials (artwork, music, and videos) on their MySpace.com page.

Artwork, music, and videos are also considered key items that hip-hop artists can use to promote themselves. As in the case of subcultural hip-hop communities driven to prosper by means of self-promotion, MySpace.com relies on the “Do-It-Yourself ethos” anthropologist Anthony Kwame Harrison describes in his 2006 article “‘Cheaper Than a CD, Plus We Really Mean It’: Bay Area Underground Hip Hop Tapes as Subcultural Artefacts” (Harrison 2006:284-285). Harrison applies the DIY tag to the distribution of compact discs that independent hip-hop artists must sell to develop a following.⁷⁶ This strategy was used in the creation of Unreleased Records, the independent record label Draztik founded in the late 1990s and eventually became home to Cashless Society.⁷⁷ Unreleased Records emerged in response to the lack of record labels that were prepared to support independent hip-hop music in South Africa then. Draztik explains,

⁷⁶ Harrison observes, “Many recent underground music scenes have utilised technologies in conjunction with a strong Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos to recruit, shape, and sustain their followings” (Harrison 2006:285). For further information, see Harrison’s book *Hip Hop Underground: The Integrity and Ethics of Racial Identification* (2009).

⁷⁷ He indicates Unreleased Records started either in 1996 or 1997 (Draztik 2007).

“Unreleased Records is like a metaphor. It’s like back in the day [record] labels weren’t trying to hear hip-hop. We were behind the music being suppressed. We were dying to come out. Starving artists that wanted to be heard” (Balsher 2007). The urgency of their music being heard extended into the virtual terrain and Cashless Society’s virtual hip-hop community.

Virtual hip-hop communities like that of Cashless Society on MySpace.com attract circles of friends through music, the primary digital raw material, posted on the site. At the Cashless Society page, music from *African Raw Material, Volume One* is featured.⁷⁸ The group’s first release from the album, “Hottentot Hop (Bantu 1, 2),” was integral to the overall layout of Cashless Society’s MySpace.com page. Although listeners can no longer listen to the audio tracks, the song serves as the inspiration for many of the images that are displayed. “Hottentot Hop (Bantu 1, 2)” provides a succinct summary of how Cashless Society members perceived the Internet and its related technologies, offering futuristic glimpses of “holograms,” “satellite appetites,” and “graphic design safari[s].” The title of the song was a play on the term Hottentot, which was coined by Dutch settlers in South Africa in 1677. This seventeenth century word is also believed to trace its origins to the German phrase *hotteren-totteren*, which means to stammer (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>). Cashless Society reverses the negative connotation of the word by integrating it into the title of their track.

“Hottentot Hop (Bantu 1, 2)” also summons the words incorporated in the classic hip-hop expression “microphone check 1, 2, 1, 2.” William Jelani Cobb comments, “It begins with the words: mic check. The MC counts it off, one, two, one, two before running down his pedigree”

⁷⁸ *African Raw Materials* reclaims the phrase “African raw materials,” which categorizes the abundant mineral resources available across the continent such as gold, diamonds, and coal to name a few. Walter Rodney explores the concept of African raw materials in his work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972). On the album, the members of Cashless Society were the designated resources capable of enriching the continent.

(Cobb 2006:13). Patterning their song on this format, Cashless Society did the same thing, using the mic check to capture the assorted meanings behind the word Bantu -- the name of a language group of people dispersed throughout portions of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa and a derogatory term applied to Blacks in South Africa during the apartheid regime (Pearsall 2002:106).⁷⁹ Cashless Society appropriates the phrase and applies it to recounting their pedigree. “Hottentot Hop” begins with the repeated phrase, “Ba, ba, ba, ba / Bantu 1, 2,” that mimics the so-called stuttering that spawned the word Hottentot in the first place. They repeat it again in the chorus, rhyming: “Ba, ba, ba, ba / Bantu 1, 2 / Khoisan Walkman / Gumboot kung fu / Calabash cash / Tribal wars indoors / Telepathic ancestors for traditional dance floors.” The rich imagery juxtaposes the notion of “traditional” life with Cashless Society’s virtual vision of the future.

Lyrics and imagery also contribute to Cashless Society’s virtual community on Facebook.com. S. Craig Watkins, a scholar investigating the connections between youth and digital media, depicts how another mode of social media, Facebook.com, is critical in the formation of community. He refers to Howard Rheingold’s ideas about community and the growth of virtual communities that transcend traditional ideas of space and community. In summarizing Rheingold’s perspectives on communities flourishing on the Internet, Watkins writes, “Since going online, Rheingold, like millions of other people, has not only met people, he has also developed a degree of affection for them. What initially seemed cold and distant became warm and intimate over time” (Watkins 2009:53). This ushers in Watkins’ discussion of Facebook and how it contributes to the proliferation of friend networks that lead to building of

⁷⁹ David Coplan offers supplemental definitions for Hottentot and Bantu in his book *In Township Tonight! Three Centuries of South African Black City Music* (2007), tracing it to German origins rather than Dutch.

social capital in the virtual domain, namely by expanding the ties between friends, and transferring them into thriving real-world relationships (Watkins 2009:71).

Another digital raw material used in Cashless Society's virtual hip-hop community is music videos. The video from "Hottentot Hop" is posted on the MySpace.com page as it appeared on YouTube, a user-generated website created in 2005, which allowed individuals to upload digital audio tracks and video footage that can be followed by Internet users all around the world.⁸⁰ Artists who have added their recordings have the option of posting their YouTube material on MySpace, thereby supporting Paul Levison's *New New Media* (2009) finding that such linked websites have a "symbiotic relationship" (Levinson 2009:2). In the case of Cashless Society, the interchange between these two websites enables members of the virtual hip-hop community to observe YouTube's virtually archived media samples.

Cashless Society's music video for "Hottentot Hop" was a mechanism used to digitally accomplish what Cheryl Keyes called "visualizing beats and rhymes" (Keyes 2002). In examining the role of music videos among hip-hop artists, she points out that videos serve as a form of "iconic memory" capable of referencing "place, historical events, and music familiar to hip-hop viewers" (Keyes 2002:211). Iconic memory is a prominent element of the "Hottentot Hop" video, offering a glance at the merger of digital and physical landscapes that contributed to Cashless Society evolution. Moreover, it shows how a combination of lyrics and imagery give a glimpse of these landscapes.

⁸⁰ Andrew Keen criticizes sites such as MySpace and YouTube, where the content is user-generated, for building the "cult of the amateur" (Keen 2007). As the subtitle to his book indicates, he explores "how blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and the rest of today's user-generated media are destroying our economy, our culture, and our values" (Keen 2007).

Another perspective on music videos comes from Kyra Gaunt in her analysis of how music videos provide visual and sonic cues about society. In her exploration of hip-hop artist Nas' video for "I Can," Gaunt identifies representations of women and the misogyny influencing their portrayal throughout (Gaunt 2010:151-178). Gaunt uses video logging to provide an analysis of the details in music videos. A similar approach can be used to explain key moments in Cashless Society's music video for "Hottentot Hop."

"Hottentot Hop" opens with the sun rising over an expanse of open land in Botswana. Out of this desolate swathe of terracotta terrain, the sounds of an electronic guitar are heard. In ensuing shots, five Batswana dancers clad in traditional leather garb and leg rattles appear on the screen. Next there are clips of one of the dancers playing the electronic guitar, which is attached to an amplifier yet noticeably unplugged, in the open landscape. These opening video shots contextualize "Hottentot Hop" through the juxtaposition of the past (traditional dancers performing in the desert) and the digital present (Cashless Society members).

By the time Snazz-D appears on the landscape in "Hottentot Hop," the pull between physical and virtual landscapes has already begun with the video's visual cues, or as Keyes classifies them, "visual texts" (Keyes 2002:210). He begins the first verse of the song, rhyming, "Electronic cloud support for remote control sound guards / Khoisan with a Walkman using Hertz memory cards / Digital accents for CD language / Perceptions managed by a modern day savage / Eating food for thought processes of elimination / Real-time rhymes versus artificial insemination / Visions of DVD technological landscapes" (Cashless Society 2003f). Snazz-D contrasts the radical technological visions of the future that include memory cards, CD language, real-time rhymes, and DVD technological landscapes. His images are rooted in the possibilities

of technology. Yet, in the second portion of his verse he outlines some of the potential threats of this digitally driven domain: “Flocks of robo-pups, microchipped handshakes / Hottentot Hop, drum patterns for ritual meditation/ Computerized garden, electrified trees / Virtual weed, wooden condoms enhance your needs / Sippin’ umqombothi through a walkie-talkie / With my wi-fi wife electronica on a hologram / Through my third eye scanner I write laptop hieroglyphics / Satellite appetite for a homemade image” (Cashless Society 2003f). Snazz-D imagines the future in terms of robotically operated robo-pups; microchipped handshakes that eradicate face-to-face human interactions; computerized gardens flourishing on electronic currents; weed (marijuana) made available virtually; umqombothi (a kind of fermented alcohol) sipped through the circuitry of walkie-talkies; a holographic wife, electronica, summoned by wireless computer signals (wi-fi); and an enlightened third eye scanner on a computer that can help draft computerized artwork (reminiscent of the digital artwork printed on the compact disc notes to *African Raw Material, Volume One*). The visual narratives accompanying Snazz-D’s verse are holographic simulations, cellular phones, and continued visual references back to the five dancers.

X-Amount propels the virtual vision forward in the video. The landscape changes and X-Amount is seen standing inside a cave, with an amplifier tucked into the crevice of a rock. The recurring presence of the amplifier hints at the theme of digital electronics running throughout the video. With the amplifier perched above him, X-Amount begins rhyming, “I’m runnin’ with the spear of a nation these days called a AK / Gunpowder scent the animal spray / Make me the prey / It’s a jungle in here / A desert when it comes to money / A miracle, no a mirage in the Kalahari / Hottentot Hop graphic design safari / Taking pictures of a monkey with keys to the

golden city / Swinging from tree to tree” (Cashless Society 2003f). These early parts of his verse waver between the digital and physical landscapes. Although he is standing in a cave in Botswana, X-Amount makes multiple references to South Africa in the form of the spear of the nation (*umkhonto weSizwe*) and the golden city, *iGoli* (the name for Johannesburg in Zulu), where gold mining was /is prevalent. He also speaks of the mirages created by money in the Kalahari Desert that runs through Botswana, a home place to many Khoisan. He moves into the second phase of the verse, “I’m sick of smoking trees / Save them for the tea curing every unheard of disease / Like anxiety in my reality / See murder, diamonds are the only things / That be stressing my prosperity / I’m eating road kill / Drunk drivers be serving me speed / And efficiency means emcees can’t arrive alive lately with rhymes” (Ngcakani “Hottentot Hop” 2003). In this middle segment of X-Amount’s verse, he laments his marijuana habit, mentioning the need to use leaves for herbal teas that can relieve illnesses. He goes into the daily routine living in a city like Johannesburg with murder, corrupt diamond trading practices, and roads rampant with drunk drivers. He concludes the verse by announcing, “This time it’s real paper / Now nickels and dimes / Shine like silver killing vampires / Take your life back from these killers / Living off the empire / Trying to survive in nature / Rock hard but perfectly round like the equator / No borders / My passport’s scarred / My skin’s indigenous / This trip begins and ends with ass the size of Sarah’s / Crushing your cranium / Mega brain draining these lies / For the truth about platinum / It’s money sellout bling for they buyers” (Ngcakani “Hottentot Hop” 2003). This portion of X-Amount’s verse is a postcolonial critique. It marks the struggle between making money (paper) and the need to bypass colonial conceptions of wealth that are gauged by displays of “sellouts” platinum. Simultaneously, he presents the possibilities of what

Africa could have been in the absence of colonialism where there would have been no national borders and passport woes. He advances his point by relating this lyrical excerpt to Saartje (Sarah) Baartman, the Khoisan woman who was captured from South Africa and displayed as a European carnival attraction because of the size of her behind. X-Amount's verse adds another layer to both the landscapes and commentaries portrayed in the "Hottentot Hop" video.

Fat Free offers the last verse in "Hottentot Hop" and supplies another explanation of how to handle the onslaught of digital technology. He explains, "I'm drinking 80 proof beverages with my elders under thatched roofs / When looking for truth tribal groups tap into ancestral roots / Artistic youth paint rocks with ancient crayons / Applying war paint on my arms to perform a séance / It's traditional African drums beat in unison / Bushman and aborigine peep each other round the bush fire / The North star lighting the sky / The Hottentot gatherer lets his corners dry" (Cashless Society 2003f). Fat Free underscores the value of holding onto cultural traditions ("ancestral roots") like seeking the wisdom of elders and telling stories at the fireside. In comparison to verses by Snazz-D and X-Amount, those by Fat Free tend to be more focused on the influx of digital technology by becoming better acquainted with cultural practices. He pursues the idea further with the last part of the verse, "Cuz each give to native tongue / Babylon is advanced / Fore glance of taboo / Who was at the Reed Dance / My peeps plan and got mad cattle per capita / *Lobola* from a Face of Africa *Chibuku* rump shake shaker / She fell for this man from Bechuanaland / We deep, kiwi sweet now she got diamonds on the soles of her feet / Celebrate with the calabash / Walk long distances for water taps / My grandma gramophone use banana peels for slip mats" (Cashless Society 2003f). Many of the items raised in this third segment reinforce the traditionalist nature that Fat Free is espousing on the verse. He rhymes

about the Reed Dance (a Swaziland celebration where the king selects a new bride), the use of cattle as a form of financial exchange (another form of a cashless society that eschews cash in favor of bartering and trade of livestock), *lobola* (the bride price given to the family of a bride when she marries), Chibuku (a fermented alcoholic beverage made from maize meal), Bechuanaland (the former name of Botswana when it was a British Protectorate), and the gramophone.⁸¹

The “Hottentot Hop” video elicits iconic memory because its lyrics and visual representation are full of triggers to digital and physical landscapes that members of Cashless Society’s virtual hip-hop community can identify with. The video is interspersed with shots of Cashless Society members Black Intellect and Draztik as well. Thus, the video, which can be viewed on MySpace.com through a YouTube link, successfully weaves together sonic and visual signs that extend the meaning of “Hottentot Hop” within the virtual hip-hop community.

The range of visual signs in the “Hottentot Hop” video ushers in the last digital raw material that I will discuss – artwork. MySpace pages can display any imaginable type of artwork, leading to “pimping my MySpace page” -- a phenomenon modeled on the popular MTV television program *Pimp My Ride*, a show hosted by hip-hop artist Xzibit and dedicated to refurbishing old, dilapidated cars. Imagery from *African Raw Material*’s album cover is the definitive element used to “pimp” the MySpace page, so to speak. It exemplifies Sarah Pink’s assertion that “images inspire conversations, conversations may invoke images; conversation

⁸¹ Fat Free alludes to the song “Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes” by Paul Simon and Ladysmith Black Mambazo in his line “diamonds on the soles of her feet.” His idea of a Chibuku rump shake shaker is partially a reference to Chibuku’s vernacular name “Shake Shake,” which stems from having to shake the curdled fermented drink in its paper carton before drinking it. Rump shake shaker is also tied to Wreckz-N-Effect’s 1992 track “Rump Shaker.”

visualizes and draws absent printed and electronic images into narratives through verbal descriptions and references to them” (Pink 2006). Consequently, in this conversation about artwork used on *African Raw Material*'s album cover, it is important to underscore the centrality of two images. The first image features the silhouettes of two Khoisan, indigenous people of Southern Africa, inserted into a digitally designed landscape. One Khoisan is in the process of hurling a stone, standing atop a freehand graffiti sketch, while the other poses beside him watching. Draztik confirms, “The imagery of the Khoisan, the Hottentot, was for our first single [Hottentot Hop]” (Draztik 2007).

The second Cashless Society image I will describe is the Eye of Providence, also known as the all-seeing eye, which appears on the dollar bill, and was later transferred into the group's logo.⁸² Historians claim that Du Simitière, a Swiss artist, is the artisan who first drew the eye. It is said that Simitière designed it in 1776 as part of the Great Seal that appears on the dollar bill. Subsequent artists such as William Barton and Benson J. Lossing prepared amended versions of the eye in 1782 and 1856, respectively. Rife with symbolism from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Freemasons, the true origins of the Eye of Providence are highly contested (Ovason 2004; Brown 2000:139-142; Churchward 2006[1921]). For Draztik, however, the meaning of the eye is simple: “We were the all-seeing eye. We see...what happens,” he says (Balsher 2007).⁸³

Author George Orwell associates the all-seeing eye with Big Brother, an ever watchful figure issuing state surveillance, in his work *1984* (Orwell 1949). Published more than sixty

⁸² Draztik states that this image was simply scanned and used in the Cashless Society logo (Draztik 2007).

⁸³ In his book, *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger reinforces this notion. “An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved -- for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing” (Berger 1972).

years ago, *1984* is Orwell's perception of the future. Although virtual communities do not factor into Orwell's ultramodern vision, they are representative of changing landscapes. Cashless Society successfully builds a burgeoning virtual hip-hop community. Members of the community rely on the aforementioned digital raw materials -- music and artwork -- to gain views of different facets of Cashless Society. Yet their membership in the community hinges on a shared interest in the group and access to the computer-mediated experience at MySpace.com. This virtual hip-hop community continues to appeal to new individuals, proving that Cashless Society has broadened its scope far beyond its early Johannesburg beginnings, and effectively positioned itself on the Internet with a thriving cluster of virtual hip-hop community members.

CHAPTER FOUR

Authentic Gaze: Critiques of Bling and the Cashless Society

A recent article about the diamond industry in South Africa's *Sunday Times* provides a timeline tracing the history of these prized stones in the nation. Journalist Nivashni Nair indicates that diamonds were first found in South Africa in the 1860s (Nair 2015). Her article, "How to Put the Sparkle in Her Eyes: South Africans Splash Out on Diamond Bling," reveals that nearly thirty years later, in 1888, the diamonds conglomerate DeBeers was founded, marking the beginning of the global jewelry giant. The Oppenheims became key company stakeholders in 1926. By 1938, Henry Oppenheimer had broadened DeBeers market share in the United States by developing a campaign that promoted the diamond engagement ring as the supreme token of affection to be given to a woman. These sentiments were translated into another campaign that was launched to advertise diamonds within the Japanese market in 1967. By 1999, DeBeers was credited for creating one of the best twentieth century advertising slogans with its "A Diamond is Forever" campaign. In 2011, the Oppenheims relinquished their role in DeBeers, by selling it to the Anglo American corporation. Nair asserts that this is the end of a "diamond dynasty" (Nair 2015).

While DeBeers was celebrated for its innovative international branding in 1999, the company still suffered criticism for business practices used in the mining, finishing, and sale of diamonds in the global market. The growing trade of diamonds mined in regions of Africa embroiled in civil wars at the start of the new millennium caused several economic and ethical dilemmas. Some of the diamonds were procured and seized from countries such as Sierra Leone during their 1991-2002 national civil war that led to immense brutality against the citizens.

Similarly, an ongoing war, driven by the trade of diamonds that spanned several decades resulted in Angola becoming a part of the Kimberley Process, which verified that diamonds originating from the nation were not illegally traded. Likewise, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was plagued by civil conflict, although it was once recognized as “the fourth leading producer of diamonds behind Botswana, Russia, and South Africa” (Goreaux 2001:29). The Kimberley Process confirmed that the diamonds were “conflict-free” (Drury 2015). Despite such assertions, accounts of illegally traded diamonds and exploitative working conditions for miners did not stop. Reporters traced the endless hours and harrowing circumstances miners were expected to endure as well as the little pay miners received for the amount of time dedicated to finding diamonds.

When the illegal sale and trade of diamonds originating from these conflict zones was spotlighted by news agencies, campaigns were initiated to spread awareness about the sale of “blood diamonds.” An article by journalist Aryn Baker classifies “blood diamonds” or “conflict diamonds” within the global diamond industry as follows:

It is an industry that was supposed to be cleaned up, after the turn-of-the millennium notoriety surrounding so called blood or conflict diamonds – precious stones mined in African war zones, often by forced labor, and used to fund armed rebel movements. In 2003 the diamond industry established the Kimberley Process, an international certification system designed to reassure consumers that the diamonds they bought were conflict-free. (Baker 2015)

It is apparent that the Kimberley Process was instituted to prevent the widespread distribution and sale of diamonds from conflict zones. Despite efforts to curb the sale of illicit diamonds, the movement of the stones from the African continent to other international markets persisted, and continues today. It also ignited wide-ranging discussions about the intersection of “blood

diamonds” and the bling, dazzling jewels worn by hip-hop artists – that was so popular at the start of the new millennium.

Hip-Hop Music and the Bling Economy

One of the major discussions about bling appeared in the writings of Michael Eric Dyson, who created the phrase “bling economy” to refer to this contradictory relationship between blood diamonds and bling (Dyson 2007:51). During a dialogue with Meta DuEwa Jones featured in his book, *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip Hop*, Dyson considers the ways in which bling is attached to larger global economic, political, and social issues. He reflects upon the purpose of Kanye West and Jay-Z releasing the track “Diamonds from Sierra Leone,” which interrogated the global diamond trade and how the exchange of illicit diamonds fueled a civil war in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002. The war contributed to atrocities and crimes against civilians, including amputations, rape, as well as widespread displacement. Dyson argues that artists such as Jay-Z and Kanye West raised consciousness about political conflicts and blood diamonds, stating that bling symbolizes “the appropriation of African labor at violent cost to life and limb, as African American millionaires across the waters celebrate a gaudily excessive lifestyle fueled by the suffering and death of their kin slaving in caves thousands of miles away” (Dyson 2007:51).⁸⁴ Dyson contemplates how “diamonds from Sierra Leone” promotes awareness about overarching international matters. He associates this with consciousness raising and an enhanced perception of how a local penchant for bling is attached to a global crackdown on the sale of conflict diamonds.

⁸⁴ In Sierra Leone, a large degree of diamond mining is alluvial and processed outside. Low-paid miners spend hours sifting through river deposits in search of diamonds.

Despite the concerns about diamonds, the number of albums and songs about bling released by hip-hop artists during the late twentieth century surged. This affinity with bling grew increasingly more pervasive, thereby influencing popular culture and effectively causing the term “bling” to be integrated into daily parlance. The word earned a place within the dictionary and was equated with “expensive, ostentatious clothing and jewelry or the wearing of them” (Oxford Dictionary 2015). The explosion of references to bling and its related iconography had tremendous global implications, particularly its link to diamonds and the controversial swell in diamond sales amid civil conflict occurring in a host of African nations at the time. While hip-hop artists boasted about their wealth and adorned themselves with elaborately crafted diamond encrusted jewelry, diamondiferous areas of Central, Western, and Southern Africa were grappling with political and social skirmishes caused by the illegal exchange of diamonds.

Literature about bling and blood diamonds underscores the inextricable link between the two. Yet there is also a great deal to be learned from investigating the relationship between mining practices and the grueling work that it encompasses. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to witness the circumstances surrounding underground mining. When I traveled to Bamangwato Concessions Limited (BCL) in Selebi-Phikwe, my trip to the mine was part of a research consultancy project to discern workplace best practices. Although a portion of my visit entailed an aboveground tour including conversations with senior mine staff and administrators, I was also given the chance to venture underground to see the work environment that miners faced on a day-to-day basis. The reality was that these miners lived in a small town and earned modest wages for their work.

BCL mine's underground mining was vastly different from the diamond mining required for producing bling. Although the miners were responsible for the extraction of nickel and copper, they were still involved in the underground labor required for unearthing raw materials. When I traveled underground with the BCL mining staff, I was able to witness the complexities of being underground firsthand. It enabled me to visualize the work that miners conducted in the corridors of subterranean mines. Moreover, it helped me to understand better the subject of African raw material that Cashless Society introduced through their music. Focusing on these resources led to their push for dematerialization as addressed in their lyrics.⁸⁵

When Cashless Society developed in 1999, the bling era of hip-hop was at its height. In the 1990s, fellow hip-hop artists regularly praised the acquisition of precious stones such as diamonds and glittering gold jewelry. Bling also became a visual signifier on hip-hop album covers. With emcees surrounded by cars, diamonds, money, and women, it offered a glimpse of a surreal “visual hyperreality” (Ossé and Tolliver 2006:132).⁸⁶ The desire for bling and the perceived status associated with it was prevalent during this period. Jewelers, who became known for the elaborate pieces they designed for hip-hop artists, gained immense popularity for their high profile clientele. The imagery associated with bling transformed hip-hop in the late 1990s.

⁸⁵ David Coplan examines the correlation between lyrics, music, storytelling, and underground mining in his work on Basotho migrant miners (Coplan 1993; 1994; Coplan 2006).

⁸⁶ Ossé and Tolliver write that teams of designers were responsible for creating the bling album covers; AKA studios, comprised of Albert Mata and Adam Amaya, were at the forefront of generating these album covers. They have made more than 7,000 bling themed album covers. Their first major project was Eightball & MJG's *On Top of the World* album release (Ossé and Tolliver 2006:133).

Cashless Society's Response to Bling

In their music, Cashless Society accentuated the underside of bling and the diamonds that were being unlawfully traded. The group recognized the significance of these diamonds to war as well as the arduous labor involved in mining and processing the stones. "Bling really puts us on a defensive because we were anti-bling, Because of knowledge about the way they went about getting these things. They got these things from the wars and the warlords. We were against what it represented for the poor people who were caught up in these wars" (J. Kai-Lewis, personal communication, 2015). Kai-Lewis makes it clear that the diamonds were a representation of the gap between the wealthy and the poor, which was a return to their idea of the hard cashless society. Two different types of poor people are portrayed in Kai-Lewis' statement. First, there are those who toil the long hours to produce diamonds as well as the rebels; neither group benefits from the diamonds financially. Rather, it is the warlords engaged in the sale of the diamonds who actually profit from the stones. His impressions of bling divert from the attention originally dedicated to diamonds and other types of gleaming gems and metals. The focus was placed on the ability to shine and distinguish yourself from others. In accentuating the fact that a hairstyle could contribute to an individual's bling, Kai-Lewis shifts from the idea of bling as an entity affiliated with consumption and wealth. He links it to self-presentation and shining based on the stylization shared earlier in this study.

In addition to attributing bling to stylization, Kai-Lewis acknowledges the financial implications of bling. Subscribing to Dyson's belief that bling is connected to status, Kai-Lewis confirms that bling motivates many hip-hop artists to attain wealth to give the appearance they are wealthy:

My impression is that really, you know, it helped hip-hop in a way to raise the status of people. The people that usually wear diamonds are rich people. You don't really find poor people wearing diamonds. It was a self-empowering thing to help people aim towards these things. So now when people aim to buy these things – they're assets. They helped people to aim higher. Rappers started to raise their worth. And people started to add to their worth, too. It was a value-added.

Sometimes it was misused when people were putting \$100,000 in their mouths. I mean \$100,000. Like I said it was a value added thing in hip-hop. It added to the caliber. There were a lot of rappers. It showed that they had money. And the fans wanted to do what their idols were doing. (J. Kai-Lewis 2015)

In stressing how bling can be used for self-empowerment. Kai-Lewis' beliefs are similar to those of hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons who arrived in Southern Africa (Botswana and South Africa) in 2006 to start his Diamond Empowerment Fund (D.E.F.).⁸⁷ The effort provided educational opportunities for youth and taught skills related to the production of finished diamonds.

While bling and diamonds can contribute to empowerment, it also has its downside, which is what Kai-Lewis means when he talks about bling being misused. He contrasts self-empowerment with the suffering involved in acquiring the diamonds. Scholar Tricia Rose, who also comments on these ideas in her book *The Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip-Hop – And Why It Matters* (2007). In questioning the desire to accumulate bling, Rose writes, “Our consumption-based culture perpetuates the coveting of the bling-bling lifestyle as it encourages us to spend in the hopes of emulating celebrities' lives, looks, and fashions. This pursuit keeps us from constantly asking why it is that so few have so much, why even the legal system seems to reinforce higher and higher levels of wealth accumulation and concentration, why such excess is okay when so many starve, suffer, and live on the streets” (Rose 2007:267).

⁸⁷ When Simmons arrived in Botswana in 2006 to promote his Diamond Empowerment Fund (D.E.F.), he presented the program as an effort to assist students in need with the opportunity to attend universities and learn more about the diamond industry. The goal was to cultivate local talent that would contribute to the diamond industry.

The contrast between bling and poverty represents the disparities of bling and what Rose dubs the “bling aesthetic” – the preoccupation with the power of consumption among hip-hop artists (Rose 2007:267). She also posits that bling has become a way to imitate celebrity lifestyles in a manner that is truly unattainable for many people.

Amid her discussion of the economic effects of bling, Rose also reinforces the ways in which it counters the realities of life. Criticizing the idea of “keeping it real,” particularly as it relates to street life experiences, Rose writes:

One of the most common claims heard among rappers, their corporate managers, and fans of rap music is the idea that hip hop/rap music is “*just keeping it real.*” This phrase can mean many things, but generally speaking, it refers to talking openly about undesirable or hard-to-hear truths about black urban street life. This popular phrase has also surfaced as a challenge to “unreal” images of hyper-consumption among rappers and hip hop fans who sport extravagant clothing, cars, and jewelry that emulate and suggest wealth levels light years away from nearly all hip hop fans, let alone the black inner-city ones. So, sometimes, keeping it real means rejecting all the bling-bling. (Rose 2007:136)

Her stance on bling illustrates how it contradicts with the realities of inner city living, which are the ideas that Cashless Society underscores with their music.

Hip-Hop Dematerialization

Cashless Society used their music as a form of materialization where they transformed themselves into raw materials that were coveted in a fashion similar to diamonds. In addition to criticizing the extravagant patterns of consumption that bling espoused, their album was presented as an alternative to the materialism connected to bling. Rather than becoming preoccupied with diamonds like some artists of the period, Cashless Society promoted what environmentalists have deemed “dematerialization” – the process of requiring fewer material resources to live our lives (Wernick, Herman, Govind, and Ausbel 1996).

In the article “Materialization and Dematerialization: Measures and Trends” (1996), Iddo K. Wernick, Robert Herman, Shekhar Govind, and Jesse H. Ausbel investigate signs of dematerialization. They posit that the world is encountering dire results from a variety of its inventions and what people consume excessively. Dematerialization addresses the problem because it pushes societies to be more cognizant of what is consumed. Wernick, Herman, Govind, and Ausbel state that dematerialization once “was defined primarily as the decline over time in the weight of materials used in industrial end products or the ‘embedded energy’ of the products. More broadly, dematerialization refers to the absolute or relative reduction in the quantity of materials required to serve economic functions” (Wernick, Herman, Govind, and Ausbel 1996:171). They place dematerialization within the context of what they call industrial ecology, a study that examines “industries, their products, and the environment” (Wernick, Herman, Govind, and Ausbel 1996:173). When applied to industrial ecology, dematerialization is used to discuss materials such as natural resources and how they are expended on a daily basis.

Cashless Society embraced dematerialization throughout *African Raw Material, Volume One*. They adopted the role of natural resources such as the highly sought after diamonds of the bling era. Unlike the ecologists that monitored the use of materials in products over time, Cashless Society looked exclusively at the role of raw materials as they applied to hip-hop culture. They placed it within the context of the new millennium and an anticipated widening gap between the wealthy and the poor. By lyrically transforming themselves into these resources, or African raw materials, Cashless Society criticized artists that flaunted their jewels and material wealth. They offered an alternative to this extravagance, reminding listeners that bling was part of a lifestyle of excess that dismissed the realities of the world’s poor as well as the miners that

worked towards extracting the materials that were required for bling. Thus, mining and the materials that miners produced became symbolic of Cashless Society's stance on bling. The real raw materials were the people and their abilities. Kai-Lewis confirms this by stating, "we the people are the raw material and the things that we represent. Not the minerals and what not. Our message was raw material – we the people" (J. Kai-Lewis 2015).

A Brief History of Hip-Hop and Bling

In hip-hop's early years, bling was manifested in the gold jewelry and clothing that artists wore. There are recollections of artists painstakingly coordinating their looks, which included "pinstripe Lee jeans, suede-front shirts, Kangols, British Walkers, Bally shoes, Pumas, Adidas, Cazal eyewear, all adorned with the bling of the day, from name-plate belt buckles to silver and gold chains holding up the classic Madonna-with-child medallion piece" (Ossé and Tolliver 2006:20). The description depicts how clothing, accessories, and jewelry added to the early perception of bling in the 1980s.

Cash Money Millionaires changed the face of bling when they released their quintessential bling anthem, *Bling Bling* in 1999. *Bling Bling* was a collaboration among several artists: New Orleans Louisiana hip hop artist Christopher "B.G." Dorsey, Brian "Birdman" Williams, Byron "Mannie Fresh" Thomas, Tab "Turk" Virgil, Jr., Dwayne "Lil' Wayne" Carter, Jr., and Terius "Juvenile" Gray of the Cash Money Millionaires. Their song was a hyper-materialistic ode to the pursuit of diamond covered dental fixtures, diamond stud earrings, diamond medallions, and diamond encrusted watches, among other exorbitantly priced items. Despite the mock seriousness of the song, its catchphrase was rapidly absorbed into popular culture, getting parroted by individuals seeking to describe objects that gleamed like the

diamonds that Cash Money Millionaires rhymed about. Cash Money Millionaires' motivation for bling was a direct reflection of their readiness to demonstrate their purchasing power in part through the amount of diamonds they adorned themselves with (Cash Money Millionaires, *Bling Bling*, 1999). For the band of hip-hop emcees that grew up in New Orleans' Holly Grove and Magnolia public housing projects, bling was an affirmation of their success.⁸⁸

Decadent displays of wealth were the crux of the music video for *Bling Bling*, which depicted the Cash Money Millionaires emerging from a fleet of expensive cars wearing oversized white tees, bandanas, baseball caps, jeans, and sneakers complemented by stacks of cash, a mansion, a private boat, a helicopter as well as their trademark diamond finery. The music video was a visual projection of bling's Oxford English Dictionary definition: "ostentatious jewelry. Hence: wealth; conspicuous consumption" (Oxford English Dictionary 2010a).⁸⁹ This type of consumption became synonymous with bling and its associated accoutrements.

Robert E. Weems, Jr., who scrutinizes this sort of conspicuous consumption in the article "'Bling-Bling' and Other Recent Trends in African American Consumerism," accentuates how hip-hop culture contributed to the spread of the idea of "bling bling."⁹⁰ Weems explains

One of the most striking characteristics of contemporary African-American consumerism

⁸⁸ The first use of the term "bling bling" is believed to have been in the reggae group The Silvertone's holiday song "Bling Bling Christmas" (Ossé and Tolliver 2005:15).

⁸⁹ Birdman, the CEO of Cash Money Records states, "Everybody rocking bling. It's one of the biggest things going. And to me, bling is anything that makes a person shine – jewelry, rims, cars, furs – that's all bling bling" (Williams quoted in Oh and Mao 2005:152).

⁹⁰ Weems is a history professor at the University of Missouri. A few of his research interests include American History, African-American History, and African-American Business and Economic History.

is an increased focus on “conspicuous consumption.” Significantly, this phenomenon appears to be fueled by the “bling-bling” genre of hip-hop. While so-called gangsta rap correctly generated a public outcry, bling-bling – which glorifies the acquisition of “ice” (jewelry), big cars, and fancy clothes may be even more insidious in its effect on Black youth. (Weems 2005:252)

He argues that bling was not criticized enough for its impact on young people. Likewise, he points out that the consumerism promoted through bling had the potential to be dangerous for the African American community. I would argue that this notion can be applied to the global perception of bling and what it illustrates to youth around the world who were following trends in hip-hop music and culture at the time. The continuous presentation of diamonds and other items associated with extravagant lifestyles popularized bling, thereby distorting views of what it means to be wealthy.⁹¹

Bling, as envisioned by Cash Money Millionaires, was essentially a return to the conspicuous consumption Thorstein Veblen described a century earlier. In his book *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Veblen provides his vision of conspicuous consumption, stating that it is “a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure” (Veblen 1899:64). He believed this mode of consumption enabled such an individual to “consum[e] freely and of the best, in food, drink, narcotics, shelter, services, ornaments, apparel, weapons and accoutrements, amusements, amulets, and idols or divinities” (Veblen 1899:47). This form of conspicuous consumption was linked to the extravagance of the time and the focus on activities that lacked necessity and productivity (Chaudhuri and Majumdar 2006:2). Veblen’s view is further confirmed by hip-hop

⁹¹ Imani Perry discusses bling in her book *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (2004). She highlights the consumerism attached to bling and its association with mainstream hip-hop music. Perry describes the excess and flamboyance tied to bling, noting, “Consumerism touches on the pleasure derived from the beauty of things, from the adornment of the self. Hip hop consumerism is in part about the use of luxury to express black style. Gadgets also enhance the public self; they declare an importance in being reached” (Perry 2004:197).

artists chasing the trappings of lives of leisure. Like his distaste for “the new rich,” bling officially became a signifier of hip-hop’s “nouveau riche” – artists whose talents transformed them into celebrated young money makers attempting to showcase their wealth through high-priced belongings (West and Plympton 2009:25).⁹²

The barrage of bling’s young money makers sparked discussions about hip-hop artists’ presentations of excess and aspirations for affluence. By 2003, New York Times journalist William Safire suggested bling was passé, writing, “Bling bling is dead because...ostentation...is out of vogue” (Safire 2003). While Safire prematurely delivered bling’s obituary, economists John de Graaf, David Wann, and Thomas Naylor alert the public about their detection of sharp increases in cases of affluenza, a mounting epidemic characterized by uncontrollable urges to purchase unnecessary possessions (de Graaf, Wann, and Naylor 2005).⁹³ During the uncontainable affluenza outbreak, additional attention was dedicated to bling by a vanguard of hip-hop writers. Minya Oh, on-air personality Miss Information from New York radio station Hot 97 FM, wrote the book, *Bling Bling: Hip Hop’s Crown Jewels* (2005) featuring interviews with hip-hop’s “glitterati” (Oh and Mao 2005:138-139). One year later Reggie Ossé and Gabriel Tolliver published *Bling: The Hip-Hop Jewelry Book*. That same year Raquel Cepeda enlisted hip-hop artists Corey “Raekwon” Woods, Jason “Jadakiss” Phillips, Paul “Paul Wall” Slayton, and reggaeton star Tego Calderon to travel to Sierra Leone and witness the connection between the bling they wore and locally mined diamonds that fueled the nation’s civil

⁹² Ironically, Young Money is now the name of the new Cash Money Records imprint, featuring Lil’ Wayne, Aubrey “Drake” Graham, and Onika “Nicki Minaj” Maraj.

⁹³ Other publications about affluenza are *Affluenza: When Too Much Is Never Enough* by Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss, (2006) and *Affluenza* (2008) by Oliver James.

war in the documentary *Bling: A Planet Rock* (2007).⁹⁴ Cepeda's film continued in the vein of Kanye West's 2006 song "Diamonds from Sierra Leone," a track about how hip-hop artist's bedazzling diamond jewelry contributed to the trade of conflict diamonds propelling Sierra Leone's civil war between 1991 and 2002.

African hip-hop artists were also contributing to dialogues about bling and creating anti-bling critiques. Cashless Society is one example. They addressed Johannesburg's centuries' old mining economy, and underground imagery such as the group's famed ability to "cause underground wreckage like mines caving in" repeatedly resurfaced in their music (Cashless Society 2000).⁹⁵ The underground, therefore, served a dual purpose of representing the mining underground as well as the hip-hop underground where artists released independent records without mainstream, commercial interference.⁹⁶ Residing in Johannesburg, the so-called city of gold that formed as a result of migration and the scramble for wealth during the South African gold rush of the 1860s, made these themes even more relevant.

⁹⁴ UNDP press releases for *Bling* announced that the documentary was an attempt to create more consciousness about the international diamond industry (<http://www.undp.org/bling>). When presenting information about bling, Rose mentions Cepeda's film and how it "connects U.S. consumption of diamonds to exploitation and violence and poverty in Sierra Leone (Rose 2007:26).

⁹⁵ Cashless Society focuses on Johannesburg's hip-hop underground in their music. However, hip-hop scholar Marcyliena Morgan recounts the dynamics of the Los Angeles hip-hop underground in her book *The Real Hip-hop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground* (2009).

⁹⁶ Anthropologist Anthony Kwame Harrison explores the relationship between the underground and race in his book *Hip Hop Underground: The Integrity and Ethics of Racial Identification* (2009). Kai Fikentscher offers another dimension of the underground in his study of underground dance music (UDM) in *You Better Work! Underground Dance Music in New York* (2000).

Bling took on different dimensions in South Africa, one of the world's leading producers of diamonds. The history of diamond mining in Johannesburg dates back to 1886, which is also when mining began in the area:

The mines themselves opened on the Witwatersrand near Johannesburg in 1896 and spread east and west. By the 1930s, the most profitable mines were in the far east. Now they lie in the far west and the southwest, so that the gold-bearing reef forms a great semicircular rim like the edges of a giant geological saucer, tipped and broken, covering a narrow buried slice of gold-bearing rock, many meters beneath the earth. (Moodie 1994:1)

The gold rush led to the rise and growth of Johannesburg. People flocked to the area searching for the promise of mineral wealth.

Cashless Society forged a connection between themselves and raw materials such as diamonds, gold, and platinum -- major moneymaking minerals that were extracted in South Africa, and then processed and shipped to countries like the United States to meet the meteoric demand for bling.⁹⁷ Then they proposed that they were the next wave of raw materials originating from the African continent, confirming that they were "getting ready for export" when they released their debut album, *African Raw Material, Volume One* (ARM) (Cashless Society 2003). In explaining the meaning of ARM, Cashless Society designated their lyrics as metaphorical raw materials that could proudly be flaunted, or in the hip-hop vernacular they apply, flossed, just as the bling that was being paraded by prominent hip-hop artists of the period.⁹⁸ Yet at the same time Cashless Society initiated a larger discussion about the local

⁹⁷ Other comparable commodities mentioned on *African Raw Material, Volume One* include beef and oil. Members of Cashless Society link their skills to the export of beef along with the diamonds, gold, and platinum they list on "The Meaning" (Cashless Society 2003b). Additionally, Draztik quips, "Call me crude / I'm struck like fresh oil" (Cashless Society 2003g) on "It Ain't a Game."

⁹⁸ Floss is a predecessor to the term floss and means "to flirt; to show off, esp. (in later use) by flaunting one's wealth, possessions, etc." (Oxford English Dictionary 2010b).

economics of raw materials distinguishing the ones you “want to floss” and the ones “you need to survive” (Cashless Society 2003b). The differentiation between the two types of minerals is reminiscent of Saleem H. Ali’s division of “needs-based” and “consumer-wants” driven mineral consumption (Ali 2009:20). Yet Cashless Society cleverly considered themselves the bling alternative capable of bridging this mineral divide by fulfilling both needs and wants with their lyrical skills.

Members of Cashless Society began reconfiguring themselves into a bling alternative by choosing a group name that criticized the showmanship of the bling era. In revisiting the discussion of the financial principle of the cashless society featured earlier in the dissertation, economic progress suggests that cash would be replaced with credit systems. Philosopher Barry Padgett believes one of the main elements of this credit card driven cashless society is “plastic transcendence” (Padgett 2007), making purchases using approved lines of credit in an attempt to increase one’s perceived class and status through the acquisition of material objects. Padgett elaborates on the theory, commenting, “‘Plastic transcendence’ encourages persons to live beyond their means to transcend (artificially) their class and income limitations, to the extent that possession and use of credit cards is considered ‘freedom’ and a right. Eventually the self becomes identified with the card itself (hence the loyalty to one’s credit card brand) so that spending is simply a way of confirming and affirming one’s own existence” (Padgett 2007: 38). Padgett breaks it down even further by referencing Rene Descartes’ philosophical principle “I think, therefore I am” by formulating the “cashless society’s creed”: “I charge, therefore I am” (Padgett 2007:38). However, Padgett reminds us that the cashless society is not a classless society, and those who are either ineligible for credit cards, unable to open a bank account,

and/or incapable of accessing adequate telecommunications services (i.e., cellular phones, computers, and Internet connections) due to lack of personal finances cannot participate in this cashless consumerism.⁹⁹ Therefore, the hip-hop group Cashless Society chose to represent this segment of the world's population -- individuals that economist C.K. Prahalad calls the Bottom of the Pyramid (B.O.P.), billions of individuals who are rendered cashless due to impoverishment rather than from the plastic pleasures of credit cards.¹⁰⁰

In the video recorded during Cashless Society's visit to the studios of radio station YFM, the group adamantly separates their group's name from its typical credit card associations. When YFM deejay Thomas "Bad Boy T" Msengana asked members of the group about the correlation between currency and the collective's name, inquiring when they say cashless society whether they are talking about the currency, group members responded with the following:

X-Amount: ... We're talking about the people, we're talking about humanity, we're talking about, you know, life.

Black Intellect: We're talking about over eighty percent of the world which is poor basically. There are too many of us already. (Cashless Society, Electronic Press Kit, 2003c)

So while the hip-hop collective diverted from the currency-related roots of their financial namesake, they were speaking out about real life struggles accompanying being poor and being a

⁹⁹ Financial commentator Paul Hochman expounds on the cashless/classless link in American settings, noting, "I can get stuff online from anywhere in the world and have it delivered anywhere I want. And there's only one group in American culture that cannot do that, and that's the people that can't qualify for credit cards or debit cards. So it may be a cashless society, but it's not a classless society. There are now people who literally can't afford that convenience" (Hochman 2010).

¹⁰⁰ Bill Gates uses the idea of the Bottom of the Pyramid, which identifies the world's poor as an untapped market for business, in his idea of creative capitalism (Gates 2008:7-16). Creative capitalism calls for a new approach to capitalism that includes more social responsibility by major companies.

part of the bottom of the pyramid. The anti-bling messages in their music directly focuses on the correlation between cashlessness and class.

Lyrics from Cashless Society's early recordings as well as those appearing on ARM highlight the interplay between being cashless and class. Their track "Blaze Tha Breaks," distributed on New York's Fondle 'Em Records in 2000, gives group members Black Intellect, Snazz-D, and X-Amount the chance to lyrically reprimand bling-oriented artists they deemed "cats that praise papers" or money (Cashless Society 2000). "They proceeded to talk about the "capitalism / rockin' ice and gold and platinum" (Cashless Society 2000). Cashless Society members also scrutinized an economy where artists were "makin' money and gold / 'cause cash rules" despite their tendency to "exploit[t] masses" and "trad[e] rhymes" (Cashless Society 2000). These lyrics revisit hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan's song "C.R.E.A.M.," the acronym for cash rules everything around me, but they are also a reminder of the gigantic economic disparities across classes when dealing with the perceived "bling economy" (Dyson and Jones 2010:41-58).

When Cashless Society released their album *African Raw Material, Volume One* in 2003, their stance against the previously referenced plastic transcendence resonated in their lyrics about bling. X-Amount openly chastised hip-hop artists who "front large ice rings / talk about bling / get things cut up chop chop" (Cashless Society 2003c). In other words, X-Amount lyrically confronted artists who bragged of sporting their diamond rings and gushed about their penchant for ice (diamonds). His choice of the word front automatically implies the pretense of bling, when artists attempt to falsely fashion themselves into an image of affluence with their jewelry. On another track, "Hottentot Hop," X-Amount goes even further with his scathing critique of

bling, concluding, “The truth about platinum / It’s money sellouts bling” (Cashless Society 2003c). Black Intellect adds another viewpoint to the bling debate.¹⁰¹ He rhymes, “I’m surrounded by pretty things / by any means gimme the green / live and be greedy / it’s somethin’, Son / it’s all about the cheddar” (Cashless Society 2003). His verses satirically evaluate the bling modus operandi: when confronted with the allure of beautiful objects and money, overindulge until your appetite is satiated without concerns about being greedy.

Nobel Peace Prize-winning economist Muhammad Yunus warns, “With wealth comes change” (Yunus 2007:99). Yet bling is an extreme extension of wealth embodied by overconsumption. Cash Money Millionaires rose up from poverty to popularize bling with a song reusing the original Jamaican term “bling bling” from the mid-1960s that was applied to flashy objects. They ignited a national frenzy and fixation with indulgence that eventually elicited international concerns. In contemplating the impact of the song “Bling Bling,” Birdman proudly proclaimed, “We are gonna go down in history for the word, but it don’t mean nothing if you ain’t getting paid for it. The movement that we created is powerful. A worldwide movement. And I’m gonna live it up” (Williams quoted in Oh 2005:152). Scholars Michael Eric Dyson and Meta DuEwa Jones dissect artists’ lust for living it up with bling, declaring it both “a mark of social status and phallic displacement” measured in terms of size (“mine’s bigger than yours”), shininess (“mine’s shinier than yours”), and hardness (mine’s “harder” than yours) (Dyson 2007:51).

In the same manner that phallic symbolism contributes to projections of deep play and masculinity in anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s analysis of the Balinese cockfight (Geertz 1973:

¹⁰¹ “8-3-1 (I Love You)” was also part of the soundtrack for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) soap opera *Yizo Yizo 3*.

412-453), hip-hop artists battle to outdo one another through bling's personal posturing and self-aggrandizement. Unfortunately, these posh preoccupations ignore the realities that hip-hop collective Cashless Society continues to reaffirm: on the opposite side of bling's glitz and shine there are billions of cashless people worldwide struggling for financial stability and survival. Their existence and worth are not measured in terms of extravagant jewelry or the accrual of expensive possessions. For the world's cashless population, the challenge is as South African Cashless Society artist Gemini has said, grappling with the "true picture of how we live from hand to mouth" (Cashless Society 2003).

CONCLUSION

Cashless Redux

Revisiting The Hard Cashless Society

This study explored how the Hard Cashless Society characterizes economic, social, and technological transformations arising at the beginning of the new millennium. Hip-hop collective Cashless Society applies this term to a growing digital divide that separates the world's poor from those capable of navigating these changes. The Hard Cashless Society was a unifying factor in the group's music and was employed to symbolize their vision of a global economic future. Cashless Society's music depicts the hardness of street life, the hardness of a dying currency (cash in the form of bills and coins), and the hardness of a digital economy that expands existing economic gaps. The Hard Cashless Society became synonymous with what the group Cashless Society represented, stretching far beyond Johannesburg's cityscape to other corners of the world. Being a part of The Hard Cashless Society entailed promoting awareness of how financial technology polarizes rich and poor global citizens.

Early descriptions of the cashless society such as those presented by Edward Bellamy cast it as part of a utopian future where credit would aid in the equal distribution of wealth (Bellamy 1888). Cash would no longer be required for citizens to make purchases and obtain goods. Yet, the hip-hop collective Cashless Society rhymed about the dystopian realities of these millennial credit-oriented changes. Rather than serving as a financial equalizer, the credit system created a chasm between those who were able to participate in the credit system and those that were excluded due to their lack of funds.

The noticeable lack of funds between the rich and poor led to the term “cashless” being integrated into common parlance to express a shortage of cash. The online lexicon *Urban Dictionary*, which is a repository for an estimated seven million words, classifies cashless as follows: “to be totally broke” or “poor” (Urban Dictionary 2015). Therefore, the word still maintains its dualism embodying both the prospects of a credit driven future and the struggle to obtain enough money to survive on a day-to-day basis.

Throughout this dissertation I have provided lyrical and literary examples of how hip-hop music contributes to The Hard Cashless Society. Emcees from Cashless Society proclaim that hip-hop is their “mother tongue,” the main language through which they communicate (Cashless Society, “8-3-1 (I Love You). In turn, their lyrics are living texts to be interpreted alongside conversations with the artists and journeys to Johannesburg. I relied on an approach that melded observations from initial, mass, and authentic gazes, which have been linked to hip-hop tourism, a subject receiving a greater degree of scholarly attention. I learned more about Johannesburg as Cashless Society experienced it during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In spite of pursuing individual interests, Cashless Society and the hard cashless society did not disappear from South Africa’s music industry. They build virtual hip-hop communities that could maintain the group’s momentum. Previous photographs and songs were posted for fans. News of assorted artist accomplishments was also added for Cashless Society’s followers to review. It was through such communities that fans discovered the different projects the emcees were participating in. Additionally, artists actively participated in recording projects such as the appearance of Draztik and Snazz-D in the 2008 CNN commercial for the show *Inside Africa*.

In 2011, the members of Cashless Society gathered for a reunion. Although Jerry “Black Intellect” Kai-Lewis and Tyrone “Tizeye” Philips were absent from the event, the other core emcees (David “Draztik” Balsher, Alfred “Criminal” Chriwa, Thabiso “Gemini” Mofokeng, and Salim “Fat Free” Mosidinyane) all attended. They appeared in the photo standing side-by-side, arms casually draped over one another’s shoulders. They smile easily, a stark difference from so many of the pictures included in the promotional photographs for *African Raw Material, Volume One*. Each of the artists looked leaner and more mature – a marker of the changes that had occurred in their lives following the group’s split. Some had settled into fatherhood and were nurturing budding families. Others were pursuing new artistic avenues and endeavors such as Snazz-D’s release of the album *Snazz-D & The Ca\$hless Family – Dangerous Mix CD* (2007), featuring emcees Fat Free, Gemini, X-Amount as well as additional artists such as Crismo-D, Nandi, and Croniq-X . Cashless Society members Draztik, Snazz, and X-Amount joined forces and performed at the South African Hip-Hop Awards in 2013, the same year they celebrated the ten years release of *African Raw Material, Volume One*.¹⁰²

Hip-hop music had also changed significantly since Cashless Society’s division. Draztik best summed it up in the lyrics to his song “Certified Fireman,” rhyming, “I started of Cashless / Gemini and Snazz / Tryin’ to get money / Like brown paper bags / Five of us got the block on smash / Money put me in a drop / Botswana tag (Draztik 2013a). This song encapsulates the professional progress that Draztik made from his days as a member of Cashless Society. In

¹⁰² Cashless Society reissued their album through Unreleased Records in honor of the decade that passed from its debut. It is available for purchase on compact disc or through iTunes.

addition to recording songs for artists both in South Africa and the United States¹⁰³ Draztik has become a solo emcee and highly demanded producer.

I bought several of Draztik's singles and a digital copy of *African Raw Material, Volume One* from iTunes, Apple's online music megastore. All of the music is archived in my Apple account, allowing me to access the music through my cell phone, computer, and tablet. The phone is also a new tool of the approaching cashless society. Timothy Taylor notes how such "digital delivery systems" make it easier to access music through platforms such as iTunes, Spotify, and Pandora (Taylor 2016:18). Features on the iPhone allow users to make digital purchases using specialized codes, scanners, and encoded credit card information. Journalists believe that the Apple Pay offering on the phone will be the final step in truly achieving a cashless society.¹⁰⁴ Technology analyst Tricia Duryee reported that Apple was poised to become a leader in cellular payments with the rollout of their Apple Pay system in 2014. She attributed this to a strong groundwork, ownership of hardware and software, company interest in mobile payments, and brand popularity (Duryee 2014). She harkened back to iTunes, stating, "Thanks to iTunes and the App Store, Apple has a growing stockpile of credit card data to the tune of 800

¹⁰³ Draztik collaborated with California-based artist Silence Dem All to create the group Blacwater. They are recognized as the first group consisting of an American and a South African hip-hop artist (Blacwater). Emcees such as Whosane (Brooklyn, NY/Cape Town), Shark Sinatra (Oakland, CA) and Erk Da Jerk (Oakland, CA) have been featured on Blacwater singles ("The Truth," "Fuck I Feel," and "Good Man"). Draztik also partnered with South African artists, including emcees Young Nations ("Rebel Come Down"), PdotO ("Rims Spinnin"), and Blaklez ("Certified Fireman") as well as singer MXO ("Cap Fit").

¹⁰⁴ New York Times journalist Damon Darlin perceived the possibilities of Apple Pay. He envisaged the growth of Apple Pay because of its ability to "replace the wallet, the actual physical thing crammed with cards, cash, photos and receipts. The smartphone has a history of replacing other devices. It has killed or wounded, among others, point-and-shoot cameras, video cameras, tape recorders, MP3 players, GPS devices, wristwatches, daily organizers maps, alarm clocks, calculators, flashlights and compasses" (Darlin 2014). He is arguing that cellphones will also be responsible for completely eliminating wallets.

million accounts, which are making thousands of transactions every day around the world. It is no doubt using this volume as leverage in its talks with banks and credit card processors” (Duryee 2014). In December 2014, news conglomerate CNBC broadcasted that Apple was attracting banks and companies to join in their efforts, but as *PCMag.com* editor Dan Costa reiterates the need of making Apple Pay ubiquitous for it to truly work. Almost a year later, his magazine advocated for using Apple Pay instead of credit cards for safer transactions. *PCMag.com* journalist Max Eddy boldly claims, “Cash is dead, and tap-to-pay cards can finally save us the trouble of swiping a credit card and keep the wheels of capitalism rolling” (Eddy 2015). There was a general feeling that cash was becoming extinct and phone based digital wallets like Apple Pay were becoming a dominant payment format.

Another benefit of mobile payments is the rise of mobile banking. Extolling the possibilities of mobile banking in a famed 2015 letter, Gates returned to many of the foundational theories from his work on creative capitalism and underscored the fact that there are billions of people around the globe who do not have bank accounts. Gates referred to data collected from the World Bank, indicating that there are an estimated 2.5 billion people who do not have bank accounts. Gates states, “Traditional banks cannot afford to serve the poor because of their costs. That’s why 2.5 billion adults don’t currently have a bank account. In villages where people borrow or save in tiny denominations, building and maintaining a bank branch just doesn’t make sense” (Gates and Gates 2015). He later promotes mobile phones as a more affordable method for banking, accentuating the fact that “70 percent of adults in many countries are subscribers now” (Gates and Gates 2015). He imagines mobile money as the next stage of

banking for the world's poor, citing the success of a company in Bangladesh, bKash, which is a trailblazer in this area of finance.¹⁰⁵

Other mobile payment services such as Kenya's M-Pesa, a system similar to bKash, also offer options for monetary transactions. Based on a partnership between Vodafone and ICICI Bank, M-Pesa allows users to transfer money through their cellular phones. It enables users to send money (to either a bank account or mobile phone), recharge Vodafone cellular phones and DTH digital television service, as well as withdraw money and pay Vodafone bills. Registration for M-Pesa services can be completed online through their website, <https://www.mpesa.in>, or through mobile phones. M-Pesa is an example of mobile banking services that are currently offered through phones. Allan Kupetz defines this form of banking as follows, "One of the financial services offered as a part of mobile commerce. Also known as *m-banking*. Refers to the availability of banking and financial services through the mobile technology, including bank and stock market transactions, mobile remittances, microfinance, and micropayments" (Kupetz 2008:170).¹⁰⁶ M-Pesa illustrates the potential of mobile payments in an African context.

Wizzit is another m-payment model that is often compared to M-Pesa. In a 2011 *Harvard Business Review* article, "Mobile Banking for the Unbanked," Senior Editor Carmen Nobel describes the benefits and drawbacks of the two systems. She invokes references to the Prahalad's theory of the Bottom of the Pyramid and the unbanked in her discussion of m-payments. Nobel highlights that Wizzit unveiled its payment system in 2004 and was intended to

¹⁰⁵ Gates confirms that bKash handles close to 2 million transactions on a daily basis, which accounts for monthly values of almost \$1 billion (Gates 2015).

¹⁰⁶ Kupetz connects m-banking to m-payments and m-wallets. Apple Pay is an example of m-wallets where a "mobile user [stores] credit or debit card information on his phone's SIM card" (Kupetz 2008:170). The information can later be used to make purchases directly from the phone.

reach the segment of the population living in poverty. Due to the large national distribution of cellular phones, and a mobile phone penetration rate “of almost 100 percent,” Wizzit was able to spread rapidly.¹⁰⁷ Nobel states that this contributes to both the viability of m-payments and its obstacles. Nobel shares that in 2011, “more than half of South Africa’ population had no access to a bank account. This was largely because half of the population lived below the poverty line, and banks, understandably, were not eager to serve a moneyless customer base” (Nobel 2011). However, as the article reveals, Wizzit faltered because it did not successfully meet the needs of its customers. Unlike M-Pesa, which relied on several modes of deposits, withdrawals, and recharging, Wizzit was dedicated mainly to making deposits and increasing savings. Nobel suggests that the major issue with this is that “the founders failed to recognize the true needs of their target customers” (Nobel 2011). Consequently, the company was unable to reach its full level of success.

In addition to m-payments, there is also more discussion of Bitcoin as a currency. Created by Satoshi Nakamoto, Bitcoins “were worth only what someone was willing to pay for them – initially nothing. But the system was set up so that, like gold, Bitcoins would always be scarce – only 21 million of them would ever be released – and hard to counterfeit” (Popper 2015). Bitcoins can be purchased online, transferred from other users, or by mining them online (solving complicated math problems to acquire them) (CNN 2015). They are labelled a form of crypto-currency. Because it is encrypted, stealing the actual digital value of each coin is difficult.

CNN measures the value of Bitcoin, a digital currency, in a series of short news clips.

One of the brief videos indicates that Bitcoin is “untraceable,” which gives it immense potential

¹⁰⁷ Nobel writes that the proliferation of mobile phones can be attributed to a number of factors, including “the onset of prepaid services that offer low-cost handsets and the opportunity to buy airtime in advance” (Nobel 2011).

for being used for “nefarious things” (CNN 2015). Nevertheless, it is also gaining usage among businesses seeking to expedite payments among customers and make purchases easier. In another video, “Bitcoins’s Digital Drubbing,” author Jeffrey Robinson, the author of *BitCon: The Truth About Bitcoin* (CNN 2014a), reflects on Bitcoin and virtual currency: “Well, virtual currency is the future. No doubt about that. Digital payments are the future. Bitcoin is not that. Bitcoin is a step along the way and will eventually disintegrate and atrophy, but yes digital currencies and digital payments are the future” (CNN 2014b). Later in this interview, Robinson wages that Bitcoin is a “pretend currency” upon which other businesses have been constructed, yet it is lacking a large global following (CNN 2014b). Notwithstanding these critiques, CNN Money anchor Zain Asher has jokingly said that “using your credit card is so twentieth century” and digital currency is “in” right now (CNN 2015).¹⁰⁸ Asher shared that digital currency “can be sent or received without a financial institution or government agency whatsoever,” which includes Bitcoins (CNN 2015).

The economic benefits and drawbacks of Bitcoins are still being contemplated. Fluctuating currency rates and allegations of its use for money laundering have tainted public perception of Bitcoin. Despite these hurdles in rolling out the currency, it remains apparent that digital or virtual currency is the next phase of the global market. The general consensus is that virtual currency is pushing the world closer to a completely cashless society. There are still questions about the best types of digital currency. For instance, digital wallets are one method for reaching the cashless society, but economists speculate that at the rate at which technology is developing, something else will certainly emerge.

¹⁰⁸ Asher elucidates that this is an online payment system without credit card payments that “pays online, trades online, and stays online” (CNN 2015).

Despite these affirmations that cash will eventually be obliterated, recent research reveals that it is more feasible that cash and coins will coexist with new digital currencies. Anthropologist Bill Maurer proposes that this is a characteristic of the “monetary ecology,” different stages in the development and evolution of money (Maurer 2015). In his book *How Would You Like to Pay?: How Technology is Changing the Future of Money*, Maurer introduces the various scholarly arguments about the future of cash – new forms of money replace the preceding ones, new forms of money create greater efficiency, and that there are not infrastructures supporting new forms of money (Maurer 2015). He counters that there are several forms of money and payment that are used in the new millennium. He points out, “We have coins, paper and plastic. Plastic did not replace paper. Many of us also barter. And many of us mark certain kinds of monetary transactions with specific forms of money” (Maurer 2015). Moreover, Maurer demonstrates that each of these forms of money function within a complex system of relationships.

Cashless Society addressed this change from hard to digital currency in their lyrics years before the advent of the iPhone or digital wallets. They recognized the transformation that would radically alter the way money is used globally. Hip-hop music seemed an unlikely medium to discuss the infinite financial changes that were sure to make paper bills and coins obsolete. This was one dimension of Cashless Society’s philosophy, yet the other component pertained to the growing number of poor people around the world. This study reinforces the fact that the individuals who are at the bottom of the pyramid, and the poorest of the poor, desperately need opportunities to survive the imminent arrival of a cashless society. The music of hip-hop collective Cashless Society emphasized this point.

In the years after Cashless Society disbanded, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons introduced the Rush Card, a debit card for people who were unbanked, meaning they were unable to open a bank account. In reflecting on the reasons why the Rush Card was so necessary, Simmons states, “When I started my financial service company, there was none like it. And the idea that my friends didn’t have a bank account and couldn’t get a bank account and had to operate fully with cash blocked them out of the American dream. So I created an industry. I was the first in an industry. And now there’s lots of competitors, but it’s really a fast growing financial service company and financial industry” (Consumer Reports 2014). The Rush Card was a collaboration between Simmons and the tax company Jackson Hewitt. It operated as a Stored Value Card (SVC), which enabled its users to make a variety of different payments. Author Howard Jacob Karger illuminates the role of SVCs, writing that they are “refillable” and can be applied to purchases on the Internet or at stores. Moreover, they can be used to coordinate ATM withdrawals, bill payment, and direct deposits (Karger 2005:59). Simmons established an electronic payment system that grants users more financial options. Public feedback about the card commended its financial possibilities for those without formal bank accounts, but there are also complaints about the activation and maintenance fees attached to the card.¹⁰⁹ Despite these slight objections about the Rush Card, it was a major effort between a hip-hop figure and a financial institution to reduce poverty.

¹⁰⁹ Karger called individuals who are unbanked and gravitating towards the Rush card part of the “fringe economy.” He coined the phrase “‘fringe economy’ to refer to corporations and business practice that have a predatory relationship with the poor by charging excessive interest rates or fees, or exorbitant prices for goods or services” (Karger 2005:x).

Research Findings and Further Research

Technological advancements are bringing the world closer to the cashless society. Reports abound about the eventual extinction of cash and its benefits and ramifications. Hip-hop collective Cashless Society pondered both sides of the economic debate and framed their lyrical discussions within a South African context. They took their brand of street hop, bred from the streets of Johannesburg, and took their stance. Street hop was the music of The Hard Cashless Society. It was founded on the ideas of Johannesburg as an Afropolis and a megacity.

One of the areas that can be elaborated upon in future studies on Cashless Society is the role of female emcees. Cashless Society mentions South African hip-hop artists such as the group Godessa and solo emcee Jean Grae. Nevertheless, women are noticeably absent from Cashless Society's music. After the group disbanded, Snazz-D started working on the *Dangerous Mix LP* with members of the Ca\$hless Family. Unlike the all-male collective comprising Cashless Society, Ca\$hless Family embraced female emcee Nandi, who was formerly a member of the group Ghetto Love and female singer Busi (British Hip Hop 2016). She earned the title of Ca\$hless Family's first lady. The other members of the group are Crimso-D, Croniq-X, and X-Amount. Ca\$hless Family reconfigured some of the members of the original Cashless Society crew and blended them with new emcees. The reformation reinforces the notion of The Hard Cashless Society as a changing and growing collection of artists.

Subsequent research on Cashless Society can also encompass a broader review of literature related to Johannesburg as an urban location. There is a long history of studies examining music within Johannesburg. The studies of ethnomusicologist David Coplan, which were examined at different points of this dissertation, explore urban music in the city. His book,

In Township Tonight!: Three Centuries of South African Black City Music and Theatre, provides an extensive look at different genres of music in Johannesburg such as choral music, Christian music, instrumental music, jazz, and miner's music. Coplan places the music within the framework of urban development across South Africa, dating back to Cape Town in 1652. His research was based on the research conducted for his dissertation, "The Urbanization of African Performing Arts in South Africa" (Coplan 1980). He continued updating *In Township Tonight!* and eventually added a section on hip-hop music and culture. While *Cashless Society* is not included in his 2006 edition of the book, Coplan does analyze the music of hip-hop collective Skwatta Kamp. Coplan's discussion of the group highlights how hip-hop music can be used as a tool to amplify political discourse (Coplan 2006:334).

Veit Erlmann examines other dimensions of performance practices in Johannesburg and other urban centers in South Africa. In *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (1991), he offers case studies about various types of performance in South Africa including African-American influenced choral singing, popular music in Durban, *Ingoma* dancing, and migrant music. Erlmann concedes that this book is not meant to be an exhaustive evaluation of South African music. Rather he demonstrates how each of the individual cases impacted the musical landscape.

Another topic that Erlmann investigates is *isicathamiya*, a distinct genre of choral singing and dance among miners. He attended competitions in Johannesburg, occasionally serving as a judge. Erlmann's work on *isicathamiya* and mining appears in his book *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa* (1996). He considers the dynamics of migrant workers living in South Africa and the tension between home and the city. He also contemplates how

elements from home contribute to *isicathamiya* performances in Johannesburg. Erlmann looks at the music of popular *isicathamiya* singers Ladysmith Black Mambazo and their noteworthy performances.¹¹⁰

Louise Meintjes supplies a different perspective of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, writing about their performance on Paul Simon's album *Graceland* in her article "Paul Simon's *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning" (Meintjes 1990). Her article shows the difficulties with the collaboration between Simon and a collection of artists such as Los Lobos, Good Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters, Youssou N'Dour, Linda Ronstadt, the Everly Brothers, Barbacar Faye, and Assane Thiam. In addition, to underscoring the presence of South African artists Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Stimela, she scrutinizes the partnerships between the artists and their assorted political and social implications in the context of apartheid South Africa.

Meintjes describes the significance of studios in the creation and production of mbaqanga music in her book *Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio* (2003). The text is an outgrowth of her dissertation, "Mediating Difference: Producing Mbaqanga Music in a South African Studio" (1999). In her ethnography, Meintjes devotes a substantial amount of time visiting Johannesburg music studios to trace artists' recording processes. In so doing, Meintjes monitors the ways in which studio recordings are linked to cultural and racial identities. I allude to her work when detailing my observations at the studios of Unreleased Records with Draztik,

¹¹⁰ Erlmann also writes about Joseph Shabalala and Ladysmith Black Mambazo in the article "A Conversation with Joseph Shabalala of Ladysmith Black Mambazo: Aspects of African Performer's Life Stories" (Erlmann 1989). Music scholar Christopher Ballantine also published an article on Joseph Shabalala, "Joseph Shabalala: African Composer," in the edited volume *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (Ballantine 2001). Some of Ballantine's other work on urban music in Johannesburg is connected to jazz, vaudeville, and choral singing (Ballantine 1993; Ballantine 1999; and Ballantine 2000).

Snazz-D, and Young Nations. However, Meintjes' work sets a precedent for how to approach ethnographic accounts of studio work in Johannesburg.¹¹¹

In the since the group disbanded decade, Cashless Society fans have continued to celebrate their accomplishments. Scholars, however, have overlooked Cashless Society's role in South African hip-hop music. They characterized the fusion of hip-hop and economics at the start of the twenty-first century. Cashless Society confronted the explosion of the bling economy by discouraging blatant displays of diamonds and other remarkably expensive items. The group unhesitatingly recorded songs that contrasted lack with excess. In turn, they inverted the message about bling by taking on the persona of miners, likening the hip-hop underground to the mining underground, and deeming their music the true raw material that could bring wealth.

Far more research needs to be conducted on hip-hop and the cashless society. Apart from discussions of Russell Simmons and his creation of the Rush Card, the cashless society is hardly ever linked to hip-hop culture. Messages about the economic future presented by Cashless Society in their lyrics warrant further investigation as a tool for understanding the overlap between digital finance and hip-hop lyrics. Cashless Society gave their account of how electronic currency and oncoming transitions would transform the world.

Cashless Society's music inverted theories of what the financial cashless society would look like in the future. They were not preoccupied with giving accolades to new electronic payment systems. Instead, the group implored listeners to see the system for its impact on the poor. The legacy left by Cashless Society has resonated within the South African music industry. Their enduring hip-hop interpretations of the imminent transition from hard currency to

¹¹¹ Alex Perullo gives another comprehensive account of studio work in an urban African setting in *Live from Dar es Salaam: Popular Music and Tanzania's Music Economy* (Perullo 2011:239-282).

electronic exchanges prove the timeliness of their messages and the lasting impact they will have for years ahead.

Appendix 1

Cashless Society Electronic Press Kit Video Transcript

Deejay 1 (Thomas “Bad Boy T” Msengana): When you say Cashless, you’re not talking about the currency.

X-Amount: No. We’re talking about the people, we’re talking about humanity, we’re talking about, you know, life.

Black Intellect: We’re talking about over eighty percent of the world which is poor basically. There are too many of us already.

X-Amount: See Cashless is a group made up of six, but then there’s The Hard Cashless Society, which is...

Black Intellect: T.H.C., yeah.

X-Amount: T.H.C. Society, which is made up of the whole of Africa.

Black Intellect: Two hundred brothers.

X-Amount: So huge...

Black Intellect: It’s like niggas from Malawi, Kenya, Sierra Leone...

Draztik: Family...

Black Intellect: Nigeria. All over the place.

X-Amount: It’s so big...

Deejay 2 (Leslie “Lee” Kasumba): Touch on that.

Deejay 1: Talk about that quickly. Accidental.

Snazz-D: I'm from Cape Town, man.

X-Amount: Accidental heroes is just that, you know.

Black Intellect: It happened by accident.

X-Amount: Hip-hoppers, especially like us, we come out like superheroes. But we're accidental heroes because we stumble onto the bad guys.

Snazz-D: Yeah. We just did it for the love, you know.

Black Intellect: It's the product of overcrowded housing.

Snazz-D: Even it out, yo. It's about inner city Johannesburg streets.

Deejay 2: Okay. You're also going to have vinyl pressings. Draztik, you were telling me about that. Now with the videos and the vinyl pressings, funding for this sort of thing...Are you funding anything? Or...?

Draztik: Yeah. Yo, check it out. It's like this: We're an underground record label, you know what I'm saying. So we're basically trying to do everything right now from our pockets. This is where it's coming from. This is how we got to make things happen. 'Cause no one is going to sit there and say, "Hey, listen we got some money just sitting there and you can have it."

Gemini: I just want to encourage any cat. If you've got music out there, you know, you cats you've got to push it out independently, man.

Black Intellect: No doubt.

Gemini: So that you maintain control of this thing and it doesn't go pop. And you can always do what we came to do – represent and wreck shop.

Black Intellect: Yeah, and make sure you get that money, too, yo.

Draztik: And what brothers need to understand is that when you take this level of industry from the street to the professional level, you know what I'm saying, niggas need to regroup and come and make this thing happen. Rather than just saying, "Okay, I'm going to let my boy listen to it on the block." Let's take this to the radio stations. Let's take this to the record stores.

Black Intellect: This is a business, bra. This is business.

Draztik: You know what I'm saying. Let's make this an industry. Right now people are not taking it to that next level, you know what I'm saying. And the other thing that I think people also need to realize is also making sure that we create a level of identification in Africa. African hip-hop needs an ID.

Black Intellect: No doubt, no doubt.

Draztik: Don't start rhyming about stuff that you don't know about, you know what I'm saying. Rhyme about stuff you see. Rhyme about stuff you breathe every day. Rhyme about what you see, you know what I'm saying.

Black Intellect: No doubt, no doubt.

Draztik: Know what I'm saying. I heard that recycled stuff every day long ago, man. I grew up on that stuff. I'm tired of listening. Let me spit something from the 'hood.

X-Amount: The slang isn't saying a lot, niggas.

Black Intellect: Yeah the good thing is we've learned something from the cats overseas. We're in a good position not to make the same mistakes they made in the '80s and the '90s. We can be in a position where we can actually set the stage so that we can reap the benefits of our work.

Deejay 2: Can I actually jump in there? Sorry. You mentioned something about the industry. That's obviously something very important. 'Cause you can have all this talent and people can rhyme release and all these records. Let's talk about the whole business behind Cashless Society and Unreleased Records and how you guys are going to extend yourselves as a brand. Because nobody actually lives off record sales. How are you guys going to make yourselves a brand that's going to be recognized around the world?

X-Amount: Mad tours.

Draztik: I tell you what. There's a lot of luck that is involved in what's going to happen in the next year or two. At least for a lot of the artists that are coming up when hip-hop is like, booming, you know what I'm saying. Record sales have to translate. There is no way that we can survive without record sales eventually translating. But to tell you the truth, right now, what we're going to try to do is to work with as many cats as we can in terms of as Unreleased Records is concerned, you know what I'm saying, as a label. And put the material out there. Right now, in the next two years people need to start thinking about how to create buzz. Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz. Be out there.

Black Intellect: Local.

Draztik: Be like 50 Cent. Be out there on a thousand mix tapes before you come out, you know what I'm saying. Then people will start paying attention to you and now people will start saying "You know what, now I can dig into my pocket and reach for that 50 or 100 bucks because I've been listening to it over and over again."

Deejay 1: What's it all about?

Snazz: Yo, “Stuck” is basically about a ghetto situation where you have... We sort of stereotyped the situation. You’ve got mama in the kitchen, papa at the shebeen, brothers nowhere to be found, sisters sucking the money green, you know what I mean. What we’re trying to do is identify with the masses out there. That is the situation unfortunately that we’re stuck. So it’s really creating an awareness. It’s like when you have an addiction. You have to realize you have an addiction and heal yourself. So basically it’s like a healing process.

Appendix 2

Cashless Society Song Lyrics

“The Meaning”

2-0-3-0-4
Nothin' but the livest
Since '99
Fuck
Cashless Society
CS - *African Raw Material*
The local hard cashless T-H-C
Cashless Society
Nothing but the livest
Smoke that
We're the family, yo
Unreleased
Yo, it's a metaphor
No hard currency
The future of this bitch
Nothing but the livest shit
Johannesburg
Comes street hop
Street anthems for your ass
Move out the way
Move out the way you're in the line of fire
Worldwide, straight up
Mega city, NY
Back to Jozi
Cape Town, Soweto, Gugulethu
Durban, G.C., P.E.
Nothing but the livest
Botswana 26-7, no doubt
Overseeing, overstanding
Gold, platinum, diamonds, beef
Getting ready for export, baby
Nothing but the livest
This is the shit that you want to floss
That shit that you need to survive
Yeah, bump this shit
Yeah
It's about to go down

Nothin' but the livest
Most anticipated, long awaited
For real, for real, for real
Things have been alive 29,000 years
African Raw Material
Nothing but the livest shit
Volume One
ARM yourself, *ARM* yourself
Get everything ready
Grab your picks, grab your spades
We're digging in your system right about now

“Accidental Heroes”

INTRO

Yeah, strap your laces
Jozi, Cape Town
Taking over
Bring that shit

CHORUS

Accidental hero, essential if the beat's hot
You needs not, for we outrun the planet like Reebok
JHB's no soft spot, got crooks by the thousand
Intelligent products of overcrowded housing

VERSE 1

No clowning
Juggle when my stomach's wildin'
No money
Just got sent eviction notes for the rent
Knockin' boots, B
No window sills for edibles
Fuck skills everybody talking about these vegetables get cooked
Get overlooked when I blow this
Shook hold the crook
On the motherfuckin' verge of takin' the right road
I might blow the mind into mic mode
And strike
Revealin' all the secrets the night holds
In J-Section I'm like, "Fuck, you only got me to look up to"
Father figures get bucked too quick
Slick adolescent living for the present
It's evident when I get outta jail I'm gonna be president
On my territory
Marijuana connect
Thought so brothers get organized make money, bet
Put my vocals on tape so I can escape the low life and shine
But all it gets into me mentally
Be respected like I'm meant to be essentially
(What you do?)
I'm pulling your trump card
Yo, so ain't no need for acting hard

(Gimme your wack ass card)

CHORUS (2x)

VERSE 2

Yo, on Jozi's inner city all-star block
You niggas differ fire sticks from the hip or the hop
I almost got shot
Cops drove by to wave goodbye, go away to another block
My character's extra graffiti like Biggie upon Tupac
Yo, way I roll rocks you can't slip and slide like hockey pucks
Front large ice rings talk about bling get things cut up chop chop
It lasts from Hillbrow to your village villains down on luck
Everywhere there's been the common man wages like fake five buck
All my lawyers with dump trucks
Buy my mama sissy broad stuff
In situations all occasions are corrupt practice
Like open and shut case in your face
Just like ugly duck
Home videotape pure racist pig media shouting immigrants
Sort of a pretty time but it's a cold cut
Keep true and talking spitting stuff
In front of masses poverty stricken
Live alone souped up as classes white men picked up
Felt like I pimped that hoe and ate all my dough
Looking like bread salty avocado chilling at Jumping Jack in the ghetto wasted
On Johannesburg sloshed
No escape

VERSE 3

Yo, give me a second
It's been a minute since a nigga did this so many things to be said
It's ridiculous to think I don't know where to begin
Extended it so I get my revelation's the genesis
Murder she wrote the fat bitch didn't quite hit the note
Some cats ain't even saying their lines right when they recite quotes
The plot thickens
It's steps the villain for the killing
He's through chilling
Dipped in black wool, Timbs, and grinning
The killer's smile will lead to them hunting you
Nightmare on Sound Street

Caught sleeping you get took
The craziness book plus I done smoked the dope shit
And munchies is a motherfucker and dun yo I ain't joking
Appetite for destruction
For all my soldiers that's sick with it
Sippin' on beers hittin' wack spliffs staring at ugly bitches
Stays on it till the bigger picture
It's ours for the taking
Suckers on stiff slippery for frontin' faggots fakin' on the same shit
Just another day the only difference besides the whereabouts
And how you took the dick in
Is you ain't hittin' when you mimic
Misunderstood the gimmick 'cause you don't live it
But did it doggystyle
Come with it
Sounding life half-baked translations of your favorite rappers scripts
So spaced out probably that them college rappers are hard as tits
Suck like New Kids on the Block pop emcees
Candy coated real classy teeny bop emcees

CHORUS (2x)

“Hottentot Hop (Bantu 1, 2)”

INTRO

1, 2, 1, 2
Ba, ba, ba, ba
It goes
Ba, ba, ba, ba 1, 2, 1, 2
Ay yo
Ba, ba, ba, ba, 1, 2, 1, 2
Ba, ba, ba, ba, 1, 2, 1, 2

VERSE 1

Electronic clouds part for remote control soundguards
Khoisan with a walkman using hertz memory card
Digital accents for CD language
Perceptions managed by a modern day savage
Eating food for thought
Process of elimination
Real time rhymes versus artificial insemination
Visions in DVD
Technological landscapes
Flocks of robopups
Microphone handshakes
Hottentot hop
Drum patterns for ritual meditation
Put souls on Internet
Release infrared
Computerized gardens
Electrified trees
Virtual weed
Wooden condoms and hand grenades
Sippin’ umqombothi
Through a walkie-talkie
With my wife electronic on the hologram
Through my third eye scanner I write laptop hieroglyphics
Satellite appetite for homemade images

CHORUS

Hottentot hop 1,2,1,2
Khoisan walkman gumboot kung fu
Calabash cash for tribal wars and laws

Telepathic ancestors for traditional dance floors
Hottentot hop 1,2,1,2
Khoisan walkman come through, come through
Calabash cash for tribal wars and laws
Telepathic ancestors for traditional dance floors
Hottentot hop 1,2,1,2
Khoisan walkman come through, come through
Calabash cash for tribal wars and laws
Telepathic ancestors for traditional dance floors
1, 2, 1, 2
Ba, ba, ba, ba
1, 2, 1, 2
Ba, ba, ba, ba

VERSE 2

I'm armed with the spear of the nation these days called the AK
Gunpowder make the animals spray
Make me the prey
Money, a miracle
No, a mirage in the Kalahari
Hottentot hop graphic designs taking pictures of a monkey with keys to the golden city
Swinging from tree to tree
Arms sick of smoking leaves
Save 'em for the tea curing every unheard of disease like anxiety
My reality
See mining diamonds are the only things that be stressing my prosperity
I'm eating road kill
Drunk drivers be serving me speed
And efficiency means emcees can't arrive alive lately with rhymes
It's time to score paper
Not nickels and dimes
Shine like silver killing vampires taking their lives back from these killers
Living off the empire
Trying to survive in nature
Rock hard
But perfectly round like the equator
No borders
My passport's scarred
My skin's indigenous
This shit begins and ends with ass the size of Sara's
Crushing your cranium
Mega brain draining the lies
For the truth about platinum - it's money sell out

It goes ba, ba, ba, ba, 1, 2, 1, 2
For the homemade image

CHORUS

1, 2, 1, 2
Ba, ba, ba, ba
1, 2, 1, 2
Ba, ba, ba, ba

VERSE 3

I'm drinking 80 proof beverages
For elders on the thatched roofs
While looking for truth tribal groups tap into ancestral roots
Artistic youth beatbox with ancient crayons
Apply war paint on my arms perform a séance
It's tradition
African drums beat in unison
Bushmen, aborigine, and pygmy share the wisdom around the bush fire
The north star light in the sky
The Hottentot gather in this corner
It's dry
As each gives to native tongue
Babylon is advanced
Full glance of taboo at the reed dance
My peeps plan
And got mad capital per capita
Lobola for my Face of Africa
Chibuku rump shake shaker
She fell for this man from Bechuanaland
We deep kiwi sweet
Now she got diamonds on the soles of her feet¹¹²
Celebrate with the calabash walk long distances for water taps
My grandma gramophone use banana peels for slip mats
And now the Hottentot, and now the Hottentot

¹¹² This is a reference to "Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes" by the South African group Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

“8-3-1 (I Love You)”

INTRO

Yeah, all Africa
Outta Johannesburg, baby
Cashless
Goin' out to all those who struggle
It's our time
Right?
8-3-1
For all Jozi city massive
Africa
That's how we do
Cashless Society
T-H-C
What?
No doubt
Check it, unh
Come on
Yeah, we got

CHORUS (1x)

8 letters 3 words 1 meaning
I love you
I said I love you
8-3-1's not that gun they concealing
I love you
I said I love you
I love you, Jozi
You're the city
I love you
I said I love you
It's too bad these streets show no pity

VERSE 1

Yeah, yeah
Just like Jozi city I got my heart set on you, baby
My eyes wander when they see candy
Mind's wonderin' about all this money
In the industry won't make me get a new lady

Just a souped up crib
With you and the world in it
All of my babies
Allah holdin' us down like Noah and the ark
Wear crowns for king country cotton
Girl, it's Kwezar Starz
It's goin' out to Africa
8-3-1
Playin' my part in this renaissance
All smiles, exiled
Born child in the belly of the beast
That's where I'm comin' from
Hip-hop's my mother tongue
No disrespect when I'm done
Just spittin' it the only way I know how
Straight just like a gun
Killin' my critics I come with territory like bullets
The ghetto's concrete under my feet
We don't hear you like we don't hear crickets
These roaches comin' through sinks in kitchens
To eat crumbs
Turn them into fortress
Strength in numbers
Peace to all the loxions comin' through the city slummers
We got...

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 2

Yo, I'm surrounded by pretty things
By any means gimme the green
Live and be greedy
It's somethin', son
I'm all about the cheddar
'Cause iGoli's night
Daytime smokin' weed in the park
I know cats that be servin' the fiends
See, them cars that be sittin' on things
Now your chick lost in between
Searchin' for means
In the city of dreams and big dicks
Where the good die young
And the strong get floored by niggas with guns

Watch your lips when you runnin' your mouth
You can get that ass jacked, boy
In broad daylight
We don't front
We let the gods spark
Cuttin' niggas down to tree stumps
It's either war or it's love, son
Make up your mind
We show you love 'cause Johannesburg's tough
So many fools runnin' abroad searchin' for peace
Fuck that
Life's a bitch no matter where you're at, son
You gotta eat
Shit is deep
Make sure you come equipped with a clip, nigga

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 3

Ay yo, sometimes the city and sunshine look pretty
Damn fine especially on a good day's pay
And sometimes the gritty
Run down and empty souls
Still pity in any mood for a fade
And words play a small part
When clubs sprayed with blood marks
Prove that there's real art to bein' in the streets
We earn pay with hallmark tracks that tore apart
Listen gifted jams blessed with poor beats
Plus they don't relate to the cuts we create
A true picture of how we live from hand to mouth
It's a must we dictate who and what is at fate
They can only get stuck when we rep our family in South
JHB's the city where crooks have no pity for fruits
Actin' ready when the situation's serious
Poverty considered me lowest arts celebrity
The hardships we endure only make us stronger and devious

CHORUS (1x)

“Life”

INTRO

Let's go...

CHORUS (1x)

Life
Look, listen, smell, taste, feel
The streets
What we rap is concrete hip-hop
The beats
The after dirt path to success
What we see is poverty in this Cashless Society
Life
Look, listen, smell, taste, feel
The streets
What we rap is concrete hip-hop
The beats
The after dirt path to success
What we don't see - peace in this Cashless Society

VERSE 1

I spit the genuine
Whiskey breath confessions of
Niggas chillin' silly drunk
We hear shit and toss it up
Here's another fuck stuck in my own zone
And I'm back high
What you cats don't know?
My thoughts stem from the roots of the inner city
Struggle where a brother's hustle comes from livin' gritty
Cops are shifty
Chicks act silly
Toilets pissy stinkin'
What you do?
Black Label pushed till the cap twisted
Foam drippin'
Pop this shit in your system
Beats be hittin' from these basements to the streets we live in
It's the hardcore for majitas with no jobs

Hold down your own fuckin' 9 to 5
You'll get yours
And I'ma get mine
And, son, in due time
We're gonna all shine
Get off the fuckin' sidelines
And try to stop mines
I'll cop nines to protect it
Pop five
Shots fly
High in that direction

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 2

If it's gotta be me
Then it's me
I'ma spit these words
I've been through many hardships
This record label biz is absurd
Listen, I prefer to deal with these niggas at arm's length
I done spent
Too many days and nights to promote any worthless events
Strength to strength I leave these niggas bent
I Johnny Walk with these niggas talkin' no sense at all
Might trip and fall
You cheap talk like a bunch of niggas bargaining at a flea market store
You can't ball
You're either a soldier or your absent from roll call
M.I.A.
P.O.W.
Call yourself what you want to
Your credibility lacks and reflects upon you
Respect?
Nah, you just a dummy
You took this long to represent hip-hop out of Mzansi
Please, nigga
You're crew's just gassed offa one single
I'm not saying I'm the African renaissance
But I'm not American material
Get that through your dome
26-7's the country code
The birth stone at home

0-1-1 is where I claim this throne
In the city where a nigga still gets killed for his cell phone
Now take a minute and smell the pot you're pissin' in
Most of y'all niggas lack substance and the shit you're spittin's contradictin'
The life you front ain't what you're livin'

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 3

Much experience with mics
Equips me to talk about such things as street life
I walk with purpose, right?
Whenever the weather like summer
Skatin' on thin ice
Winter might spring or fall
Depending on the wholesale price this year
And the street profit's double in price
I'm pushin' sales down your throat with a fork and a steak knife
It's all raw
Johannesburg'll take a bite of the name
Spittin' for my niggas
'Cause my niggas slang for fame
The spotlight remains on the ghetto everyday
Cops raid
Illegal aliens settle
Nigerians get paid
Puttin' the pedal to the metal thugs from in SA
Hillbrow to your village to Berea
We ride the strip now
Known as the bridge
If I see you
See me it's down
Smilin' at the motherfuckin' kid rockin' the crown
All the sounds surround the Cashless Society
No longer is underground
We got up top till we bought a flight

CHORUS (1x)

“Summer Craze”

INTRO

This is a summer craze
For the sunshine in the daytime
Yo, night sky and the moonlight
Whether you're in the club
Cruisin' in your ride
Or at your 9 to 5 24 hustle
We get by
Yo

CHORUS

You've gotta seize the day
Reflect the night
Deep light shine bright
Thank God you're alright
High as a kite
Let's get high as a kite on life
Come on now,
Seize the day
Reflect the night
Street light shine bright
Thank Allah you're alright
High as a kite
Let's get way above street life

VERSE 1

Yeah, I know the role the dirt path
Down the Nile like before life
Start flash, flash cash
Crash
Survive
Don't be so sure
Stuck in limbo between a rock and the ghetto
A hard place to live like Yeoville, Eldo, Soweto
It's the city of gold
In the hands of a clepto
Old Johannesburg
Home of the poorest of the poor

On the new metro on the down low, low, po-po
You gotta give 'em some of that dough from the get go
It's the Black, white, natural, Colored gangster code
Make me think about the way buffalo lost in the fold
Come straight down the middle
But still part of both
Exactly how I feel like either it's God or man's world
Built on top of the real world
Let go of my ego
I might kill, yo
Peace to my man, Criminal
Just out of hospital
Oppress a man
Law breakin' individuals
Back on the streets eatin' niggas like cereal

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 2

Twice upon a time I made mistakes in life
Traded relationships to "Blaze Tha Breaks" entice
By tight beats I sacrifice
Feelin' no compromise
Rolled chick like dice
Gamblin' with love or mics
In the maze I realize my true vocation's inspired by
Days and nights spent makin' shit right
No more waitin'
Hatin'
Wasted sick and tryin' to take flight
With impatient sight
Now it's bakin' like Arabian nights
We creatin' hype
'Cause I'm focused on savin' dimes
Instead of fadin' light
Chasin' pipe
Cleans and means
Engaged in all types of scenes

VERSE 3

I put a show before a ho
My philosophy risked it

Makin' creed
With my priorities twisted
Adjacent streams between choices
I've decided
Voices have denied for self-sustaining schemes
Now my boys are divided into men and mice
So my pen suffice
Life's imprecise
I comprehended end of trife style terms
I aim to redetermine this phase
Another day in the life
Yo, turn the page

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 4

Another year, another summertime
Honeydips lookin' fly
Flashin' them thighs
Got 'em alive
Jozi style shine bright around this time
Still on the grind
Getting' high
But in the meanwhile
My 9 to 5
This keyboard
Stuck in the office
On a beautiful day like this
I'm in the parks
Smokin' joints with the boys
Discuss the move for the night
High as a kite
Red-eyed off the sack of the nice
Clockin' shorty's ass switchin'
Dress barely fits her
Daisy Dukes look killer wrapped around those hips
Plus the nipples beam out the tank top
Got cats hot
Makin' niggas stop
Roll down the window
And say, "What's up?"
Lock down the digits and broke out to Taj's spot
Cruisin' up the block

Spotted Snazz scooped him up
Chillin' smokin' cigarettes
Feelin' the vibe
Cracked the liqs
Break out the sack
It's about that time

CHORUS (1x)

OUTRO

Jozi
Cape Town
P.E.
Gab City
Durban
P-Town
Zim
Africa
Worldwide

“Bring It On”

VERSE 1

Yo, outer planetary
Non-artificial motions that are not slow but committed
My use of words and phrases got heads bobbing unlimited
We on some next shit
Submitted versions of recitals
Not well knitted
Well-constructed ciphers have now spitted
Causes of this dysfunctional behavior
Has caused my henchmen and I to return favors
Discrediting my stature on many radios
Underground habitation has created heroes
Because of your non-preparational nature
You're unsanitary
You're zeroes
As for me, Mom says I'm red like Zimbabwe curios
Curiosity they say has killed cats and bats
Has become courtesy to blood on your mom's mats

CHORUS

Bring it on, Black
We on some next shit
Bring it on, Black
Jozi gonna wreck shit
Bring it on, Black
We on some next shit
Bring it on, Black
Jozi gonna wreck shit

VERSE 2

Yo, as the pendulum swings
Fake ones get their heads chopped off
When we're lampin' the missed play post
Hold your heat close
We dump lead
Watch the blood spread
Fertilize the earth
Dead bodies up in the stream

Catchin' beef
Puttin' niggas down six feet deep
For the sake of the kids who rob, kill, and steal to eat
For better kicks
Crocodile from Belize
Many grids
Biggest piece of the pie
I wanna live life high
Off the African trees
My back's dotted with Maks and Techs
In the midst of action we bring the real ones
Real niggas know the deal in fatigues
When we squeeze niggas retreat

VERSE 3

Yo, I'm the hip-hop aficionado
I daze, yo
Emcees I leave behind
Fast fall like Charlie Chap¹¹³
The movies
Oochie rappers I drink them¹¹⁴
Piss 'em off and then call it waste disposal
Keep them puzzled
Smile through the nasal
Record companies I got them reversing their proposal
I ain't about the sex
I might sign a bucket
And archaeologists suffering from panic attacks
Give 'em point
Like the black write on my mental
Blacker than the express one a 'gwan
The rise or otherwise I got it
A new note though
Son, your style's a virgin
It ain't never been fucked with
There ain't a metaphor
My style ain't never known viscosity
Cause live minds squat like stupors literally
Murder live minds 'cause I'm the seaside strangler

¹¹³ Charlie Chap is a shortened version of silent film star Charlie Chaplin.

¹¹⁴ Oochie is reminiscent of rapper Nasir "Nas" Escobar's 2000 track "Oochie Wally" with Bravehearts.

VERSE 4

It's come down to this
Counterfeit clowns are bent
My surroundings
Shit, I'm ready to pound a bitch
Round the clique
Sound check
Now how's this shit
Set thousands rip
Gem on some rowdy shit

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 5

Yo, this world so chaotic, demonic, mov' exotic
I'm on it
I'm trying to conquer Masonic with the sounds that I monic
So for strings
This topic
No over life
'Cause we're so sick it's like it's permeating
My ways against forces
Yo, this gets me so sick about this Antichrist
So that I can store it in my brain
Who's playing the game
And fuck it 'cause on the mic I'm embracing
While I'm facing this history that I am making
Man, taking it constantly with this crazy mentality
I just wish you wouldn't end up in this fucking vitality
So don't you get mad at me
I'm just viewing my points
You see the propaganda democracy
Be prepared for war
You have a choice
You just have to
'Cause eventually Em and me
Blowin' up the whole city
We need some vitamin lyrically
With pictures and scriptures
We're fuckin' doin' it practically
I just wish we could arrange these days

Rearrange this page and engage with sorcery
And the maj on the stage
Who's stopping me?
Living reality

VERSE 6

Yo, who the fuck in Jo'burg spits more gutter than this
If you're pussy 'round me
You get fucked with a fifth
You emcees look like bitches
So pucker your lips
The only magic you performed is when you suckin' my dick
Some rapper took me out with his sixteen bar verse
Nigga, took him out the hood in a sixteen car hearse
I went from a bad boy to death row after I rocked a fella¹¹⁵
My gat speaks so to say

VERSE 7

Besides me you can die of natural causes and forces like earthquakes
Real accostings without warning
Tend to decapitate
Your life's not viable like abortions with proposals for marriages
Guess it's big business like AIDS corpses in used coffins
It's all propos and losses
Majority rules by bosses
For fools meant to be broken like cookies with fortunes
You drool over what these crackers make too often
Can't believe in crumbs from minding yours
Dead, rock bottom, can't go any lower
Just like overdoses on coke mountain
I been left for dead in pools of blood flowing like fountains
So bring it on
'Cause I'm still countin' more than six million
X-Amount of ways to die frontin'

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 8

¹¹⁵ Rocked a fella is associated with Roc-A-Fella Records, the New York label started by Damon "Dame" Dash, and Kareem "Biggs" Burke, Sean "Jay-Z" Carter.

My bleedin' heart slays the devil
Mind state
Third eye mental level
Pluggin' into your main ore cable
If you break away
Tell you what
You got to play humble
If not you stumble and fumble
Circumstance showed me the sunlight
Now I separate what's right from yadda yidda yadda yadda
Mic one, two
Operation scanned
Ruling on prism and planned
Save our land
It be the all LMB
24-7 operating through criminal works with Cashless
Project survival mathematics what we deal with
But police cannot see us
So that we just run
Proceeding with a patrol
Thinking that they got it under control
But I'm invisible
I'm stuck with us untouchable
Identified as a criminologist, hustler, and lyricist
Yes, rest in cash please
I'm outta here

“Live @ Jumpin’ Jack”

INTRO

Yo, crack the Black Label¹¹⁶

Ho

Yo, roll the blunts

It’s about to be on

Live from Jumpin’ Jack

Corner shop freestyle ciphers

It’s on now

VERSE 1

Whatever you want to do

Whether you want to kick

Rip verse freestyles

Kick old lines with mad bitches

This is how we do at Jumpin’ Jack, baby

On a Friday night

Yo, check

Let’s take it back to the streets

With rugged raps and phat beats

That bump harder than bass beats

Crackers can feel the bump

Comin’ down from here

It’s big

More shit and slangin’

But since the game’s bitter

Really gotta assist the planet

Moves to cut the middle man

Control my own stash

But since I gotta team of niggas that are splittin’ cash

Just got a whole lot complicated

Plus, fuck arrangin’ payments for strangers

When bringin’ where we made shit

It’s all about the cause

But somebody gotta fund it

And you ain’t runnin’ shit

Broke as fuck

¹¹⁶ Black Label is a popular brand of beer.

Dumb and blunted
Give the people what they want
Unless it's something new
And prove groove is cool
But dude, move for the revenue
And you can pretend independent
When you represented
And your ass is relevant
Intelligent and let it ride
Record set mine's the inner city
Yeoville and those frozen trips rust and pissy
That's right, motherfucker
Ciphers galore
Yo, Tyrone what the fuck's up kid?
You tryin' to rhyme on it or what

VERSE 2

Nah, don't even get it twisted
What you tryin' to say?
Yo, I'm flippin' urban rhymes while I'm herbin'
Slow swig, you're slurpin'
When nothin's workin'
Sex when I'm tokin'
Broke but outspoken
Bruised I been croakin'
Lose car when broken
One finger ropin'
Poke when you're gulpin'
No I'm not jokin'
You lang like token
Now you've awoken
Best you be smokin'
Only where you understand what's been spoken
Whah, whah
Bitches are on the mic
But they don't like freestylin' up in your dome
Go home
Can't fuck with the Cashless
They can bring it on to you like,
"Yo, suck our dicks"
Fuck
Gemini
Tizeye Whiz-izeye on the mic

This is how we do it, baby
Yeah, comin' through
Who's next?
Fuck that
Go home and flex those muscles
'Cause you're gonna get your shit ripped, bitch

VERSE 3

Man, these optical illusions are a hidden force like no H2O¹¹⁷
In your Skwatta Kamp while I'm on the fifth floor with MXO¹¹⁸
Blaze breaks like bionic for the dollar witness
My naked mind's a loose cannon in this wilderness
Audiovisual experience from basement to platforms
So don't play any assistance to these profits don't put any cats on
A smooth criminal staying true to my Godessa¹¹⁹
That made you look crook like Jeru the master of mic breakers¹²⁰
Jam like apricot
Talk to motherfuckers like Playasport
For with global control my roots is black thoughts¹²¹
My time's in an asylum
Next to normal on the redwood
'Cause I got more paper from no paper
True the underground works for me
Image graphics like Dev
Sabotage you with ammunition for that motherfuckin' ass
I'm Ghetto Ruff like hip-hop¹²²
I'll your petition with matches
Yeah, got bitches from Gabs to Cape Town
Even though I'm Cashless

¹¹⁷ H2O is a South African hip-hop group.

¹¹⁸ Skwatta Kamp is a South African hip-hop group and MXO is a South African Soul singer.

¹¹⁹ Godessa are a female hip-hop group from Cape Town.

¹²⁰ Jeru here refers to the Brooklyn hip-hop artist Jeru the Damaja.

¹²¹ The mention of the Roots and Black Thought are related to the Philadelphia hip-hop group.

¹²² Ghetto Ruff is a South African record label.

“Taxi Wars”

INTRO

Taxi
Yeah, yeah

VERSE 1

Taxi wars, taxi wars
Again I’m squashed for a seat
The biggest gang including police
My niggas cruisin’ the streets
AK 47 degrees from Russia with love heat
Inner city Jozi from Yeoville to Hillbrow to Brea
Locally 2.50 maxi taxi 20 as far as I can see
No keys in the ignition
Screw the driver you get beef up and down
Beep, beep, beep, beep
I’m going to town
Pull out a bankey full of coins weighing a kg
Just in case police wanna lock me down for no id
‘Cause I talk American
Look Zimbabwean
Stink like Swazi
Gangsta tsotsi business
Taxis are older than the movies
Surprise a white driver’s speakin’ Zulu like my homies
I arrive alive in the rank
Happy
Get out scared past a buggy
Iron
Your city combis fired shots
Killing everybody
Except three passengers
One’s me
Muti
The other’s Z.C.C.¹²³
A million more became believers in G-O-D
Cashless got no money for your pyramid schemes

¹²³ Z.C.C. is a large religious movement across Southern Africa.

But we go green wrapped in banana peels
For fifty beans

CHORUS (1x)

Short left, short right
After robots, Baba¹²⁴
Short left, short right
After robots, Baba
Short left, short right
After robots, Baba

VERSE 2

Yo, heat beneath the seating case
Gunfire heats tanks
From rival taxi drivers
Tension takes over these ranks
Straight bullets killin' passengers
Lining up to get home
Instead a couple of school kids
Get struck by the chrome
Nines, AKs, or Uzis
Sellin' arms like grenades
See the holes in the windscreen
Too deep for your band-aids
Taxi ranks like war zones
Owners like generals raiding
Fleets are numbered when police at petrol stations
Thembisa to Zola
No matter what they all swervin'
In Cape Town to P.E.
B and B and Durban
White, blue, red-eye
Aces violently recruitin'
From black tinted windows
You can breathe slow poison
Regardless of zenith
You get shot in a minute
That's why when the gun speaks
No heavyweights in the front seat

¹²⁴ Robot is another word for traffic light or street light in this context.

Mind your chrome in the window
Obstructing the view
He's lookin' out for enemies
Cops and customers, too

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 3

It's sorta like the drug system
Niggas get bucked missing
If a buck's missin' listen
Red strips with gun clips
Crowbars swingin'
Come up short
Liftin' the gutter
Takin' a brother's hustle for a ride
Y'all gotta die
Cops cock block non-stop
Poppin' fifty when his pocket's fifty
Fuck luck
He's just a shifty custie
Sippin' shots unintended
Don't remember the cat
With the system bangin' tracks
Way off the mat and he's fat
Don't rock the profits
As long as the money comes straight my way
Any other direction
I'm on insurrection
Guns blazed
What's up with the new kids on the strip
Ain't seen the script
Now he's on my turf
Doin' dirt
Yo, X
You noticed him?
Violate this prince
We'll fry your shit two ways
You'll try to get your mace
We'll tie and strip the maid
They'll tie the shit to me
It ain't a game, playa
All bets are off when it comes to stackin' these layers

Fuck what you sayin'
If you ain't payin'

CHORUS (1x)

“Tizeye”

INTRO

Unreleased Records presents
Tizeye, Whiz-eye
Comin' at ya
Who's this on the microphone
AKA Psychosis
AKA Ty-Whiz-ey up in your dome
When I say, “Jozi”
You say, “Hip-hop”
Jozi hip-hop
Jozi hip-hop

VERSE 1

Tizeye, Whiz-eye
Alright mic
Mic bites
Ripe like hype
Tight rhymes on beats
Eats treats for the streets
Needs not be soft
Cough rough stuff
Called your bluff
Huffin' and puffin'
I blow your house down
White clown
Drown sounds
My hounds around
Your style got chowed
Now bow down to the sharpest toe in the ring
Bring adrenaline to your style
Jim, see you're feminine
Pimped out without any ammo
Camouflage your cadence
Great dark surveyors
Even smiles from
While you anus
The Brea is where I get my shit from with soul
Hey you, stay low
Lay low

Tyrone

Written shit I'm spittin'

Listen, it's beginning of giving you something within it you winning

'Cause it's wild when I flow at a show

And your poor slapped rhyme

“Madd Shit”

INTRO

Yo, what's up Snazz?
What's up Tizeye?
What's goin' on?
Yeah, you know, you know
What's up?
What's up with you?
Man there's mad shit goin' on?
What's that shit you're smokin'?
Yo, Tizeye
What's up man?
I don't know, Snazz
What's on your mind?
You know, you know son

CHORUS (2x)

I'm thinkin' about mad shit
I'm thinkin' about mad shit
I'm thinkin' about mad shit
About to flip

VERSE ONE

Yo, thinkin' about fuckin'
Your pussy's so big
Your dick's in a world of its own
My finger lickin' petition
I did it so much
You're thinkin' it's home
Comin' out of the womb
Assumin' it's multiple personality types
Snazz rights
Have it establish the faggoty rights
At nights
Like typical beautiful back rubs
Doin' it
Like numerous tumorous fat cells

Ridiculous ticklish
Cats found the inexplicable
Let the network stickin' fools for minerals
Lyrical style about to duck up
Fucked up
What's up, Puck
About to park and parlay
Chronic be makin' 'em stay
The bitch so deep in the pussy
The movie's about to begin
Waitin' for me to come over
And bring the makeup
By kissin' their cheeks
The husband's been missing for weeks
Weeks on end
Weeks on end
By the weekend
That's it
I'm keepin' it hotter in bed
Than a ton of electric fuckin' blankets
The moral's always sexin' 'em out
Always searchin' 'em out
Stickin' 'em
'Cause whether you're fuckin' her too
It's possible
Your house or crew can tell you
What I'm for
Or what I'm about to do

CHORUS

VERSE TWO

Yo, head over head
I'm up in the mix
Get a fix
Scripts
That manifest in your dome
Can't ignore me

'Cause I'm wreckin' shit
And as for this
The beat is eatin'
Through the reason
Isn't hearing believing
But deceiving
Wake up, bra
This is hardcore Jozi hip-hop
Which one
This one
Infinitive
Raps I live
Hoppin' and rappin'
On many a song
Squashin'
Like King-a-ty Kong
Am I wrong?
Suck my shlong
Oh no
It's Ty-o
It's Tyrone
He's infamous
Blows up
The show
You don't know?
Ridiculous
Thinkin' I'm not hitting
Not even leaving a trace
Of envy in me
Many of the scariest
Very deadly emcees
Come up against me
Hating
You're thinkin' you lame
But you'll never make it
Let's face it
You're out there
And you're wastin' your time

Could you please be
A little bit
Considerate
I'm sick of it
I bust rhymes
I break 'em
Normally rake 'em
In the head
Like a psycho's soap
This rhyme is timed enough
To be sickening
Makin' this math for the dough
I wanna bring
This script is
Song is
Yes, yes
This is Tizeye how we flip it

CHORUS

VERSE THREE

Some niggas be on some mad shit
Can I kick it backwards
I'm hype to reach up higher
Smokin' firearms that blasted
Askin' why's this shit so fat
It's lurkin' on
A working mom
Jerkin' on
Your words are offensive and derogative
And that's not all
I kick it like emcees on Red Bull energy drinks
My enemy thinks
Feelin' me is goin' to be deceiving
Eenie meenie miney moe
Which little ho
Will give me a blow?
We are caught

In the middle of something so big
That I'm in the planets
So hard I'm chewing on magnets
Yo,
Givin' me
My rap
Virgins on the mic
We save them fright
Devil's in disguise
My rhyme's love at first sight
On the first night
Piss like up on the track
Deep like Ocean's Eleven
Ten times better
But not as good
I'm magnificent
Gemini had his time
Snazz posts bulletins
X-Amount with metaphors
Expose the war to solve the art
And Draztik incisions
On your visions of precision
And don't mention BI
Black Intellect
Wreckin' next
Because you're scoopin' train of thought
Hard but you prevailed
I was just about to drop

CHORUS

OUTRO

Where the fuck you at?
Yeah
2004
Bi-yotch
Suck on that

“It Ain’t a Game”

INTRO

Once again it’s on
2 double 0 3
Yeah, Unreleased Records
Cashless
Hold me down
No doubt
26 7
Country code
Ay, yo

VERSE 1

The pictures I paint are graphic visuals
Explicit mental schematics like a born ritual
Dig deep like a mineral
Deep like a pinnacle
You can search the lyricals
But you can’t find a style that’s similar
I’m alone on the podium with a mic and headphones
Transmit till your head’s blown
You can’t condone
I’m sewn like a snare
I drop the vocal when the beat hits your eyes glare
Prepare for the lyrical conditioning
Professional auditioning
I’m the Baptist on the flows that I’m christening
Step forth to the center get deaded like the cold in the winter
Return to sender
You need to step off
The situation ain’t gonna change
You ain’t gonna retain my level or my range
I see right through your rearview
When I’m switchin’ four lanes
Though I’m thinking

CHORUS

It ain’t a game

Coroners be takin' measurements
When I roll out the clips
Lay you down like a fifth
It ain't a game
Forever maintain the realness
There's a fine line between the real and the bullshit
It ain't a game
You niggas is lame
Quick to fame
Quick to reign
The streets are gonna remember my name
It ain't a game
For real this rap shit
I chose this
I'm focused the opus
Call me the rap Moses

VERSE 2

Call me crude
I'm struck like fresh oil
My soul gave birth like the seeds in the soil
The grips I spit are fit like diamond backs
You lack tact you couldn't even act
Add and subtract
Representin' 26 7
You niggas stand tall but we blast y'all like 9/11
Shots with the lead in
You'll see heaven
I bring hollow tips to join your body
Like a family wedding
I make y'all pray for tomorrow
Niggas is shook like night and day
Like Courvoisier
Shots is hollow
We lead y'all follow
You niggas get jumped, jumped
Like cigarette ash camouflage tactics
Stakes in my path
I'm tired of industry plots
A&Rs controlling what's hot
Much like corrupt cops on your block
But check it
It ain't a game

And if it is
I'm a fuckin' rook and a soldier
Takin' out

CHORUS (2x)

OUTRO

Yeah, Draztik
African Raw Material
Peace to my man, Q
Open up your mind

“Mr. Forgetful”

INTRO

Yeah, now this is just a take
As you can see my voice is gone
Unh
Yeah
What
Yo
You know the deal
Kwezar Starz
Unh, check it
Yo

CHORUS (2x)

I love my girl but I always forget
What’s your name again, girl?
I don’t think we have met yet
Promised myself I’d quit all these bad habits
Got your number at the club and never used it

VERSE 1

Besides memorized that second
I know I punched it in my cellulite
I also wrote it down that night
I was told it was six underground
In the club fight
Shorty, it wasn’t a pretty sight
Had to roll with a thirty year old biscuit
Let’s go sprinkle the town
I was like, “Give me a mic take a toke”
Something never had before
No joke like fever and jungle
Bein’ all the colors of the rainbow
Creatin’ a nation with you R.S.A.
Repin’ this game Jozi you are my personal space
You know I’m thinking global citizen
But at the end of the day African
Take in local action

We can take that away packin'
Maybe like Michael Jackson went from Black, white, to alien
To demonstrate we are one without pigment-ten-tation
Salivate no fear dry your tears
Save the day
Don't wait to regret what could have but never happened anyway
This opportunity comes once like Em rappin' with Dre
Coppin' 50 that's all I'm tryin' to say, baby¹²⁵
Screw the rest of these emcees
They live on the same street
Buggin' to battle these beats
Battlin' the beast that raises from family trees
Yeah, dragon slayer

CHORUS

VERSE 2

Dipped silly
The chick was hella pretty
But things fell shitty when missy started the quizzin' chillin'
Nonchalant, tipsy blunt, whiskey buzz mode
The throw down went out
The ziggy burned slow
Which nigga ever remembers the September at Brenda's get together?
Where I met her drunk on Amaretto or whatever
Wasn't circulation
It was a Friday I remember that
But the date, what you were wearing, and which track was playing?
First of all, sweetie, we was at a party
How many times have you stayed home on the weekend?
Sorry
Even your moms wouldn't buy that shit on a discount
I met you there
Now what's that look all about?
You know I didn't mean it the way I said it
All I'm sayin' is that night things were pretty hectic
Your ass was boomin' louder than speakers
Caught me at a weakness
Plus the way you were freakin' your game
Was at a peak sequence

¹²⁵ Em, Dre, and 50 are the hip-hop figures Eminem, Dr. Dre, and 50 Cent who were all collaborators on musical projects for Interscope Records.

Next to the whiskey I was to dizzy and really
couldn't remember my own name silly, what the deally?
I know it was Lindi I was only playin'
I'm sayin'
I admit I forgot the occasion, but it's still another day
And...

CHORUS (2x)

Shit,
Whose fuckin' number is this?
Alright let me call it and find out
Yo, this is Gem
Who is this?

VERSE 3

Yo, if memory serves me correctly
I be your lover man ace
From the taste of alcohol, tonics, and weed laced
You caught me on the worst day
Forgot your birthday
Consequence is a witch make me wish I didn't play
Forgive and forget that's what make you the shit
Only I'm late for a date once again
Not on purpose
I gotta get this money and it don't stop for honeys
Hangin' out till the break of day
Eyes chink in the skully
Oversleepin' appointments 'cause of last night's appointed
Your patience is a virtue
Not to be toyed with
You waited up food getting' cold while I was out
Found you dozin' in front of the TV
Now I know you're sick and tired
I was wired
Punctuality I tried it, but events conspired
To make me forget
In the spur of the moment
That I'd be back when noted
Ready to bone and you know this
Yeah, this is Mr. Forgetful
Yo, what's your name again?

CHORUS (2x)

“Stuck”

VERSE 1

Don't get it twisted
This is true journalism
Not just CNN correspondence
Who buys white lies that's why you can't identify us

VERSE 2

Peace and love be upon the cipher disciples
And monsters of microphones
Seekers of truth who measure life with a metronome
I'm from a city that is appreciating odes by xenophobes
That are trapped by geographical zones

VERSE 3

You know not the whole plot
The store stocks when all the clones drop
Holed up conditioned to give the system blow jobs
My ghost pops come on here for post docs
Watching whole flow on the total cops
Remote control charged

VERSE 4

I used to dip in honey oils
Smoke menthol cancer sticks
Kill sperm like germ
Black on alcohol mix
Sick sex
Guns
Funds
Hash on hot nines
Smoking gun pellets out of anus doing jail time

VERSE 5

I'm going to probe earlobes
And leave flows froze cold

Deaf as Beethov you stay a minor
Like piano concertos

CHORUS (2x)

Mama stuck in the kitchen
Baba stuck in the shebeen
Brother nowhere to be found
Sister stuck in the money dream

VERSE 6

In J section the rocky road ice cream's frozen
Straight out the freezer I'm taking licks
Tongue lashing in hip-hop fashion
I'm from South of the equator
Line of Capricorn
U.S. over African
Explain skills beyond the dawn of 2001

VERSE 7

Robots and soul pops
Broke cops and smoke spots
Road blocks and whole blocks
To have your old dope shops
Whole stops and your whole cocks
Smoke rocks
Tote glocks control flocks
Toes until I code drop

VERSE 8

Word observe how these emcees epitomize J section
Shit, fat emcees we burn like aerobics for sweatin' it
Lettin' it get in it
Under your skin like melanin
With adrenalin burnin' 'em third degree pedigree permanently

CHORUS (3x)

VERSE 9

My momma's got sleepless nights

High blood pressure
I haven't been seen or heard since
Shebeen prince watching her destiny
Describe these social ills
When sister's dressed to kill
Strips wraps her legs around poles
Bubble when all-star blood footprints living at a side store

VERSE 10

When the cost of loss goes beyond what's common to y'all
Sure we've moved forward and before when the beat's raw
Walked into mean
Dodging bullets form a police army and an insomniac beast
That don't even stumble or sleep
Probably just dark in the deep coffin
In the wee margin and plea bargain
In these flea markets
Keep warning so see more of your skyscrapers or streets
Scorching by way for the beach over the beat runs until your knees knock
And the rebounds go back to the fact
That we fucked and peace won

VERSE 11

You seem stuck in dream hook
No schemes to eat books
Mama keeps up that you grew up
The hood has no free stuff
Papa without alcoholic demonic diabolical verbals
That rock in balance of family in the sickest vicious circles
Hard to escape
Hold up the greater plan
Dominating for papas
The art of connecting our pages to present day hell in the ghetto
Relate to the little guy
Simplify criticize uncivilized
Getting high
Thinking
Wishing
Drinking till I die

CHORUS (8x)

“Words 4 Real”

INTRO

Yeah
2-double-0-3, baby
African Raw Material
Unreleased Records
Only the real, the real

VERSE 1

It must be the shoes
That has a rapper singing the blues
When revenue ain't comin' through like it used to in school
So if money talks
My bullshit's the fertilizer
My thoughts can see the insides
My light
The energizer
It's not a science, just the nature of things
Photosynthesis begins the emphasis of this scheme
More than that it's just good living
Prosperous in between
Throwin' raps and drop the hottest tracks
And plus build the scene
Why?
Because being broke sucks when stuck on the pussy drive
And even sluts want bucks and here is the jive
Teeny boppers get you time behind bars besides
Cradle snatchin' ain't my style
I like mine refined
Fully grown design
Serious thighs
Mind thrives with mine
Intertwined beaming with style
Yup
Bonus points on them pretty ass eyes
Still elegant your talk is as ill as that smile

CHORUS

You are wondering if the words I'm saying are for real
For real, for real
You are wondering if the words I'm saying are for real
For real, for real

VERSE 2

Yo, let me begin
Journey through the steps of the street syllabus
I'm clappin' niggas
Smackin' niggas
Dishin' out distance with death wishes
I'm tired pussy niggas
Tryin' to get up in my business
Talkin' like ya been to this
Have you wipe the smirk off your face before you get caught
To your jaw
My style will son you
Have your crew filin' for child support
It's only obvious
Tryin' to get paid
To shit on this bar
Remain true to underground for the love
But where the fuck is the support
Y'all niggas so deep ya get caught in your own thought
I'm tired of the same old lines
I'm going to pay the boss
Imagine this
We move product like Microsoft
'Cause the time is now
I'm gonna shine like deep dish
Switch from poor to rich
Independents to the major labels, bitch

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 3

You can't begin to understand my type of hardships
Pushin' African mixtape concepts for overseas markets
I'm lovin' you and emcees will pass me tracks
Not for greenbacks
Emcees who need food down the hatch
Breakbeats and then scratch

Cashless
And come within us in your society
From moments of notoriety
Got niggas feenin' studio time
Dishin' out fines for me
No surveillance cameras to convict ya
Record execs are a pain in the neck
Like Dracula
No airplay for underground
Their aim's another sound
Fairways on both estates
That's where we be livin' now
At 1200
Life turn tables and had me against term buckles
Without a microphone this noble can't return
Juggles my thoughts will bring jingle tingle
When I drop singles
I serenade the sweet sixteens

CHORUS (2x)

“Dolly Partin”

INTRO

Country style, country style
Dolly Parton
Come on
I'm cashless
I'm African
So come test
You on your back again
While I rock these hits
You hardly started
And I got the legs of your Dolly Parton

VERSE 1

Jumpin' Jack we comin' back runnin' tracks
Sellin' wax buttin' chaps eatin' shrimp cussin' back
Bein' pimps wanting stacks shoutin' rap
You try to rhyme chances are you buyin' time like Master Card
Your life is mine I'm takin' it
Whose flavorless types of rhyme
Is makin' it for paper, kid
On thresholds I wreck shows
So scorch vision
Vets fall
Abort mission
Put him in pension zones
Broad selling broads knitting
I shake the world
Go up to you like Phillies
Make your girl touch her titties
Take her bra
Suffer silly
The only thing rough and rugged about you is your condoms
Make nothing of it while you're hot and bothered
Used to have a gutter crew
Now we're in front of you
Talking you scalding
When your single summer proof
You're seriously contemplating

Beef with me
Consider this
Your hate got your boys scheming on your prerogative
Youse a crab
But youse a b-boy now
Don't make me have to show you how I put a toy down
You're wet behind the ears
I'll be your blow drier
Get behind your career and bring it mo' fire
Why resist
You might insist on high hits
Karaoke verses of perverted verb science
Killer streets
Four million sheets
Yo, listen chief I just guess I've got that winning streak

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 2

Yo, I eat to live, you live to eat
I cheat to live, you live to cheat
Fuck the world
Must of hurled
Yeah you eatin' cats meat
You sick of someone turning gay
Bein' someone smart to say
Sentimental bullshit sounds like bums in a parking bay
Your style's wanting
Your voice is tired
How should I put it
Your freestyle leaves much to be desired
Youse a long baller
Claimin' youse a shot caller
You're a sugar emcee
AKA cop caller
Yo, this year
I'm sippin' a beer in your ear
Waitin' for a fly chick to appear
Yo, I disappear after I tossed it
I'm back like, "Nigga, I didn't know she was your chick"

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 3

Yo, you might do it
Like you're a knight to it
Hits run through it
Now you're just bitin' the bullet
Your mic's butchered
Put your life through it
See I do it lookin' talkin' right
But your eyes knew it

CHORUS (1x)

VERSE 4

Boop, connection off
Erection's soft like J section droopy
Get off on sex, drugs, and rock and roll
Groupies
Thin lines still goin'
Won't stop till I'm blowin' like Lyor Cohen¹²⁶
Stay strong put the J on
Pin 'em to the scene like a mack
Make sure I stay on
Played on through the wack
Brains like barbed wire
Never the same attire
Your name's expired
Prepare for a reign of fire
It's onslaught
Your pops fought on my side
You repin' gospel, dude
Take a walk on the wild side
Fuck cops
Rough spots like raid the drug spots
You'll find me gat strapped in a hot box

CHORUS (1x)

OUTRO

¹²⁶ Lyor Cohen is the former CEO of Def Jam records.

Yeah, Snazz-D
Check it
2003, how we be

“Blaze Tha Breaks”

INTRO

Come on
Okay, okay, okay
This is Snazz the Dictator
Unreleased Records
Yeah, X-Amount
We're about to put Johannesburg on the map
Once again
My man Draztik on the beats
You want to test me
Are you stupid?
You must be out of your mind
Snazz-D is the don seen

VERSE 1

If a picture's worth a thousand words
My rhyme book's like a photo album
Public awareness like Farrakhan lapsin' on Malcolm¹²⁷
I splits emcees like a mid-life crisis
More killer lines than cocaine laced with arsenic on mic devices
I catch so many sleepin' I should be called the Sandman
Leave your nose runnin'
Feet smackin' like you doin' a handstand
I'm known for underground wreckage like mines cavin' in
I'm constantly higher than your average
I get respect like a newsreader
If I had twenty-four hours to live I'd order two million margaritas
I'm a modern-day wonder
Your style is rustic
I slice your belly open and let out those butterflies in your stomach
Riding beats like a Testerosa
Blowing up unexpectedly like landmines in Angola
Raps so well thought out it's twelve months ahead of taped performance
If I flipped it tomorrow

¹²⁷ Snazz-D is making a connection to the relationship between Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm X.

I might mix up your hearing organs
You couldn't be complex
If your ghostwriter was Isaac Newton
I'm shooting for the stars causin' confusion
Get you wet like a flood victim
From a hard night's drinkin'
You couldn't bite this with wooden teeth like Abraham Lincoln
I move the crowd like a four hour earthquake
X-Amount crank the full track
And make the world wake
Up jump the boogie
When I flex I'm bringin' the ruckus
Like fifty castanets at a school for the deaf

CHORUS (2x)

Underground Records
We're fittin' to raise the stakes
Blaze tha breaks
While you cats praise the papas
We amaze the greats
Phase the fakes
Upstage the snakes
Get paid
Get laid
Evade the jake

VERSE 2

I stay equipped like military
Money green like night vision
Unseen like camouflage
Vietnamese
A Vietnam veteran
Offspring abandoning the jungle
I'm like Uncle Tom droppin' A-bombs up in the ghetto
From the White House like Jay-Z
The next election we're winnin'
Though my campaign is Black Noise
Like Ali Muhammad I want it
Money and power like the World Bank
Emcees end up payin' taxes forever like African debts
I know it's interest
One hundred percent

Collectin' every cent
It's the capitalism
Rockin' ice and gold and platinum
Yo, I steal
While I distract you and wax you

VERSE 3

Do you understand the plan?
Open the gates
Reload
Let the class proceed for mic skills
Generation X
What you sayin' though
I don't know
Listen
Makin' money and gold
'Cause cash rules niggas gotta eat with my skills
Exploitin' masses
We trades rhymes
We got degrees
Held it down and represent
I'm not a racist
When you're holdin' all the aces
Your arguments of business
No sense in my predicaments
My resume has the feel of blood stains
Bullet holes against the windows
Waste on hoes
You understand my flow
From jail cells to cemeteries where they bag bodies
And God's leaders are money hungry
We use mics to kill dummies

CHORUS (2x)

VERSE 4

Back like Tom Jones
You wack like Sean Combs
I got girls wanting to blow my horn like trombones
I move a Black or white crowd
Live shows quite loud
The main reason wack emcees need somebody right now

I'm too much like one hundred and one Dalmatians
Shittin' in your crib and cleaning it up without an apron
If I catch you slippin'
I'ma pull the rudest prank
Like unleashing a swarm of killer bees inside a nudist camp
My shit's so dope I get high while I'm takin' dumps
Come out the bathroom with the munchies and forget to flush
My shit's so dope I need to clear my urine samples
Stick a bankey in my ass and sell it singin' Christmas carols
Before I held a mic I used spoons
I practiced with your mama's crack pipe
Until she started howling at full moons
I'm hot like stolen cars
Bizarre like golden arms
It's Snazz the chosen
The most voted
I rhyme so hard
My tongue's on a strike
From Cape Town to Cairo
My peeps can't wait for the vinyl
I gatecrash a party
Get five star treatment
Emcees can't see me like a Middle East peace agreement
From JHB to NYC
Heads I'm touchin'
Stealin' shows like bringing the spot down while opening up for Bongo Maffin¹²⁸
Went backstage rapped with security until 5 am
Frisked DJ Fresh at the door because they couldn't recognize him¹²⁹

CHORUS (2x)

OUTRO

Big shout out to all the emcees who're out there
Big shout out to all the deejays
Big shout out to the b-boys
Big shout out to the graph artists
Big shout out to my man Crooked the Warmonger
Captain to captain
Big shout out to Africa

¹²⁸ Bongo Maffin is a South African kwaito group.

¹²⁹ DJ Fresh is a house music deejay who has appeared on radio programs and created several albums.

The Dark Continent
The next level
Yo, peace to Bobbito
Cucumber Slice
And Fondle 'Em Records
Mr. Lif
Jean Grae¹³⁰
No doubt, know what I'm sayin'
AKA Sipherwe
Sam Boogie out in Baltimore
No doubt
Yeah, J Section
You know how it is
Representin' worldwide
B.I., Snazz

¹³⁰ Jean Grae is a South African hip-hop artist who has released several albums in the United States. Her parents are the jazz musicians Abdullah Ibrahim and Sathima Bea Benjamin.

Appendix 3

CNN *Inside Africa* Commercial Lyrics Young Nations and Snazz-D

INTRO

A-F-R-I-C-A
We goin' inside
Let the story begin

VERSE 1 – Young Nations

Come and see Africa
Through African eyes
Sports
Technology
Africa rise
Every single weekend
On CNN
Tune into Africa
The places you've never seen

VERSE 2 – Snazz-D

It's a continent that constantly changes
Modern day Africa
Today's the day
Who?
Why?
How?
On CNN
Inside Africa every weekend

VERSE 3 – Young Nations

Business
Politics
People and art
From Cape to Cairo
It's the leaders of tomorrow
It's real life
Let the story begin
See Africa's future on CNN

Appendix 4

CNN *Inside Africa* Commercial Log

- [0:01] Young Nations walks across a field to catch a lorry. Snazz-D texts the word Africa in capital letters on an HTC mobile phone.
- [0:05] Young Nations types on a laptop. Snazz-D hails a taxicab while still texting.
- [0:09] Young Nations hops on the back of a lorry. Snazz-D continues texting on his HTC phone in the taxicab.
- [0:11] Aerial views of the Johannesburg cityscape.
- [0:13] Young Nations stands on top of a building. People start running towards a bus shelter plastered with C.N.N. *Inside Africa* posters opposite an ABSA bank branch.
- [0:16] Snazz-D types “let the story begin” onto the screen of his HTC phone.
- [0:18] Young Nations rides on the back of the lorry as a train passes behind him.
- [0:19] Shots of an athlete breaking through the tape at the finish line of a marathon and the inside of a broadcasting studio.
- [0:20] Young Nations stands atop a building with the C.N.N. *Inside Africa* logo projected on the building behind him.
- [0:21] Split screen of Snazz texting on his HTC and Young Nations typing on his laptop.
- [0:22] C.N.N. *Inside Africa* billboard appears alongside a freeway by a passing vehicle.
- [0:23] Snazz-D and Young Nations rap on top of a building.
- [0:26] Two young men seated at a café view streaming video footage of C.N.N. *Inside Africa* on a laptop.
- [0:27] Close-up of a man streaming video while standing on plains talking on a cell phone.
- [0:28] People dance in front of a wall with a graffiti mural. A group of young people stare at video footage displayed through a wall plastered with *Inside Africa* posters.

- [0:29] Close-up shot of a woman walking down a runway during a fashion show.
- [0:31] A large flat screen monitor projects the C.N.N. logo on top of a building.
- [0:32] A collection of shots features Isha Sesay dancing and interviewing guests such as Wangari Maathai.
- [0:34] A man is seated at a desk in an office having a telephone conversation.
- [0:35] Images of rioting, a fire is burning in the street, and stones are being tossed.
- [0:36] Snazz-D and Young Nations are rapping in a recording studio.
- [0:39] An image of a little boy contrasted with Snazz-D and Young Nations standing on top of a building with people dancing below.
- [0:40] Snazz-D and Young Nations stand on the balcony of a building. People below wave their fists, dance, and wear C.N.N. paraphernalia.
- [0:43] Isha Sesay reports from the field. Children stand outside a camp. A side profile of a woman's face is shown.
- [0:45] Snazz-D and Young Nations are in the recording studio rapping.
- [0:46] Draztik and a producer adjust the sound levels in the production booth.
- [0:47] *Inside Africa* correspondent speaks with interviewee. A man stands on the street.
- [0:49] Snazz-D and Young Nations rap on top of a building.
- [0:50] Close-up then wide shot of the Johannesburg cityscape.
- [0:51] People dance in the street wearing C.N.N. paraphernalia.

Appendix 5

“Taxi Wars” Video Log

- [0:14] The engine to a taxi revs. Close-up shot of a tire and hubcap rim.
- [0:16] X-Amount sits in the front seat of a taxi.
- [0:17] X-Amount starts the first verse.
- [0:22] An image of the streets of Johannesburg.
- [0:27] Shots of buildings in the Yeoville, Hillbrow, and Brea sections of Johannesburg.
- [0:32] “Screw the driver you get beef.”
- [0:36] Close-up shot of a hand pressing down the taxi horn.
- [0:39] X-Amount holds up a baggie filled with coins to the camera.
- [0:46] Close-up shot of a tax grill and license plate SR501GP.
- [0:51] X-Amount steps out of the taxi at the rank.
- [0:59] Passengers exit the taxi. Snazz-D steps out of the taxi. Draztik puts his arm around X-Amount.
- [1:10] Gemini, X-Amount, Draztik, Snazz-D, and a crowd stand between two taxis.
- [1:13] Close-up shot of taxi wheels moving left and right mixed with views of neighbors.
- [1:21] Snazz-D stands on top of a taxi.
- [1:22] Snazz-D jumps down from the taxi and stars rapping.
- [1:25] Snazz-D and a crowd duck as if avoiding gunfire.
- [1:32] Draztik, Gemini, and Tizeye are seated in the taxis.
- [1:36] Snazz-D and the crowd at rank duck a second time.
- [1:41] The crowd stands in between two taxis.
- [1:51] Close-up shot of Snazz-D between two taxis.

- [2:07] Images of taxis approaching the rank.
- [2:18] Images of Gemini standing near a taxi.
- [2:20] Close-up shot of Gemini squatting.
- [2:26] Gemini stands with the entire rank behind him.
- [2:31] Gemini walks in between taxis.
- [2:48] Cashless Society members surround a taxi behind Gemini.
- [2:57] Image of crossing Nelson Mandela bridge in Johannesburg.
- [3:05] Close-up shot of taxi wheels.
- [3:20] Criminal stands in front of Jahnitos Rasta pride wall. X-Amount stands in front of the Jahnitos wall.
- [3:25] Snazz-D stands at Jahnitos wall.
- [3:27] Draztik stands at the Jahnitos wall.
- [3:29] Tizeye stands at the Jahnitos wall.
- [3:33] Gemini stands at the Jahnitos wall.

Appendix 6

“Hottentot Hop” Video Log

- [0:08] Full view of the sun rising over the horizon.
- [0:11] Five traditional dancers appear in the desert.
- [0:12] One of the dancers begins playing an electric guitar attached to an unplugged amplifier.
- [0:14] Close-up shot of dancer playing the electric guitar.
- [0:18] (Chorus begins – “Ba, ba, ba, ba, bantu, 1, 2”) All five dancers reappear and begin dancing.
- [0:21] Close-up of one dancer playing the electric guitar.
- [0:22] The five dancers are shown dancing.
- [0:23] Draztik, X-Amount, and Snazz-D are in a cave rhyiming verses from the chorus.
- [0:24] Slanted shot of Snazz-D standing on the landscape.
- [0:25] Fat Free rhyiming the chorus.
- [0:28] Snazz-D starts the first verse (“Yo, electronic clouds part/ For remote control sound guards/ Khoisan with a walkman/ Using hertz memory cards”).
- [0:35] (“Digital accents for CD language”) A series of digital numbers run across the top of the screen.
- [0:37] (“Perceptions managed by a modern day savage”) Snazz-D is shown swinging an amplifier cord.
- [0:45] Close-up of Snazz-D with the five dancers behind him. (“Visions in DVD”) He draws a box on the screen to demonstrate the visions in DVD.
- [0:46] Close-up of Snazz-D crouching down. (“Technological landscapes”). He draws a box highlighting the landscape.
- [0:50] The five dancers are dancing behind Snazz-D (“Drum patterns for ritual meditation”).

- [1:00] Snazz-D bends down and shakes a gourd filled with umqhombothi.
- [1:01] Snazz-D sips beer and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.
- [1:04] (“With my wife electronic on the hologram”) A digitally created hologram of a woman flashes.
- [1:07] (“Through my third eye scanner I write laptop hieroglyphics”) Close-up of Snazz-D holding up a laptop.
- [1:09] (“Satellite appetite for a homemade image”) A man takes a digital photograph using his digital phone.
- [1:10] Chorus begins. The five dancers start dancing.
- [1:13] Close-up of Snazz-D’s legs as he dances.
- [1:18] Black Intellect rhyming the chorus in the cave.
- [1:33] Draztik posing in the cave and rhymes the chorus.
- [1:38] Snazz-D standing in the cave.
- [1:42] (“I’m armed with the spear of the nation these days called the AK.”) X-Amount starts verse two.
- [1:43] X-Amount simulating AK fire with an imaginary gun that he is holding in his hand.
- [1:55] (“Take pictures of a monkey with keys to the golden city”) X-Amount pretending to take a photograph.
- [2:07] (“I’m eating road kill”) X-Amount taking a bite of an imaginary piece of meat.
- [2:14] (“It’s time to score paper/ Not nickels and dimes”) X-Amount letting a stack of bills fall to the floor of the cave.
- [2:24] (“My passport’s scarred”) X-Amount holding his passport up to the camera.
- [2:36] Chorus begins. X-Amount shadowboxing in the cave.
- [2:45] Five dancers dancing behind Snazz-D.
- [2:47] (“Khoisan walkman/ Gumboot kung fu”) Woman seated on the ground listening to a discman.

- [2:49] Fat Free rhyming chorus.
- [2:50] Black Intellect rhyming the chorus while standing at the mouth of the cave overlooking trees below.
- [2:54] Snazz, Fat Free, and X-Amount standing in the desert.
- [2:55] Draztik, Snazz, and X-Amount in the desert.
- [2:59] Dancer playing electronic guitar.
- [3:04] Close-up of Fat Free.
- [3:06] Close-up of X-Amount.
- [3:07] Close-up of Draztik.
- [3:08] Close-up of Snazz-D.
- [3:10] (“I’m drinking eighty proof beverages”) Fat Free begins verse 3.
- [3:39] (“Lobola for my Face of Africa/ Chibuku rump shake shaker”) Fat Free standing beside woman holding a tin of Ecco meat. He holds up a carton of Chibuku.
- [3:43] Fat Free displaying a mobile phone (“She fell for this man from Bechuanaland”).
- [3:45] (“Kiwi sweet/ Now she got diamonds on the soles of her feet”) Woman in the distance walking towards Fat Free. There is a close-up of her feet.
- [3:49] (“Walk long distance for water taps”) A woman is walking with a plastic jug of water on her head and talking on her mobile phone.
- [3:58] Chorus begins. The five dancers are dancing.
- [4:24] Close-up of the unplugged amplifier cord.
- [4:25] The dancer playing the guitar walks off into the distance.
- [4:27] A man with a donkey carrying the amplifier and a dog walk by.

Appendix 7: Draztik Lyrics (“Chasin’ Money” and “Certified Fireman”)

Chasin’ Money (Draztik featuring Whosane and Nicky)

INTRO

I know a man
I know a man
Who curses his brother
Curses his brother
I know a man
I know a man
Who thinks of no other
No other
Always chasin’ after money
Chasin’ after money, money, money, money
Thinks a poor man is funny
It’s hard
Chasin’ after money, money, money
Money

VERSE 1

I don’t do it like the rest of ‘em
My people I invest in ‘em
The ‘hood already tested ‘em
Now that they perfected
We the best and we gon’ murder shit
Ghetto nigga chillin’ in the kitchen
With the burner lit
The only thing concernin’ ‘em is

CHORUS

Chasin’ after money
Chasin’ after money
Oh, yeah
Oooh oooh oooh

VERSE 2

Shit
I come from Crown Heights
Where youngins shovel snow in the winter
Pack bags in the summer
Pack bags for the come up
So brag to your biddy that

Laugh that's your mother
It's New York City
All the cash in the gutter
Cut close so many
How they blasted my brother
Bare face
Snow mask
In the grass
With the putter
Coulda took 'em to the glass
'Cause the last thing he uttered was
Stop
And he's shot
Like his crack game was butter
Woulda been shot
Gotta let my bread drink
Come outta that
It's four air balls and a brick
You're a amateur
There's blood on his Nikes
Blood on his banister
He back like Christ
Try hard
No camera
Wit' eighteen cousins
Or eighteen hundred
That's fifty more fifty seven
Thirty motherfucker
If he hit 'em
Bet he comin' wit' em
Yep
Word to mother
He chasin' that money
Word to god he a knucklehead

CHORUS

VERSE 3

Nighttime
Shades on
Three-D vision
I see everything
But I don't see prison
I stay in a coupe

So I stay wit' a pigeon
Give me brain 'til you're blue
Like deep sea fishing
Pull the net from the water
To the deck
I'm a baller wit' a rep
Like Jordan
When he fall into them steps
Defense look a mess
Dribble right
Dribble left
Give your boy five mics
Fifty points and a check
Yep
Cash money got me in the lab
Like a crash dummy
Girls gone wild
All they do is show they ass to me
Straight from the street to the booth
Then I breeze to the roof
Like Jay
Now they wanna get a laugh from me
Tellin' wack jokes
Kiss ass
Get a cab for me
Call me P. Diddy
G.P. up the ave from me
When the beat break
Nigga gimme what I want
Got my nine and my rhymes
And I'm runnin' in my dump dump

CHORUS

Certified Fireman (Draztik featuring Whosane, Blaklez, and PdotO)

CHORUS

You don't understand
It's about my money, man
Everyday I'm walking through the 'hood (Let's go)
'Cause you don't understand I get that paper, man
And now you know I keep it all good (Let's go)

You don't understand
It's about my money, man (Let's go)
Everyday I'm walking through the 'hood (Let's go)
Tryin' to keep the grind with my money, man (It's my money, man)
My money, man (That's right)
It ain't funny
Don't ya know

VERSE 1

Call me money man, money man
Gully peep the rubber band
Jeans still saggin'
I'm blastin' a Black Uncle Sam
Couple screws loose, for real
Ain't nothin' funny, man
Trouble breaks loose when fools
Move a bummy hand
Shocker
Stay the fuck back
Don't ask me for shit
Bla-cla-clap
Sounds of the blocker
When it come to money
I do not play nice
Your dime's sprung
'Cause she know the kid lay pipe
On the same night I'm back on my scrilla shit
Got the tongue working
So the money come really quick
And it's basic
Draztik on the beat
Homey laced it
It's P-Dot
Never known defeat
I'm done

CHORUS

VERSE 2

Yo, raisin' the stakes
You raisin' mistakes when I'm paper chasin'
I'm breakin' the chains
Blazin' and takin' the center stage
Changin' the game
Shakin' and bakin'
And changin' lanes
I'm basically aimin' to make it rain
To raise the stakes
And y'all losers can't move me wit' your new troops
'Cause I'm a survivor
And the rest of y'all is juju
Shoot time
Spittin' somethin' that'll bleach your skin
Look how they killin' themselves
'Cause they the weakest link
See I was born to make it
And spend it
And make it back
Fred was born to break
And you're part of the Jason pack
Steppin' hard
I'm pacin' myself
When I'm lacin' tracks
I am part amazing
Y'all ain't fakin' that

CHORUS

VERSE 3

Listen, they say I grind hard
Yeah, I grind the hardest
Plus I rhyme smart
And the line's the target
So rapper's gettin' hit
Smoked out like pepper sticks
No doubt they gettin' ripped
Hold down the baddest clique
Let's clear the body
And that's the glitz gang

Drop words with sick slang
Got girls that miss stag
And she wants trouble
That's why she still hang
AKA M-A-double
'Cause I got real bank
And she know me
I do it for the gold city
Jo'burg hustler
That's we these hos pick me
I guess they ready to die
But then it's no biggie
'Cause I always been the bad boy
But with no Diddy

CHORUS

VERSE 4

I started off Cashless
Gemini and Snazz
Tryin' to get money
Like brown paper bags
Five of us got the block on smash
Money put me in a drop
Botswana tag
I don't even rap 'less she hot with her ass
But I be like kick, snare, speak
Then I pull hair
Make 'em sleep like a MD
Yellin' clear
Plaques on my walls like a souvenir
Listen here
I'm a pioneer
Sippin' beers with my peers
Still in your mother's stomach
Eat your spinach
And play the trenches
You'll be tall as my money
I'ma leave
Draztik
On you dummies

CHORUS

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