

# Revisiting cultural curriculum and marginalized youth: A critical pedagogy for educating the Gangsta

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## ABSTRACT

*This article reexamines cultural curriculum and marginalized youth at-risk for gang involvement. While the literature expresses various approaches to addressing the gang problem in the United States, including comprehensive gang initiative models, get tough policies, and comprehensive peace campaigns to stop the violence. All of these initiatives have seemingly done little to stop gang membership among school age youth. Education has proven to be the most significant means to improve an individual's life chances, but African American students, in particular, are performing worse than Whites on an average. If society is to reach these youth through education, we argue that a new classroom pedagogy is needed. To this aim, creating a culturally responsive classroom through hip hop may be the answer to engage troubled youth in the classroom.*

**Keywords:** Gangs, Hip Hop, Multicultural education, pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

There is well-established literature on various approaches to addressing the gang problem in the United States, including comprehensive gang initiative models, get tough policies, and comprehensive peace campaigns to stop the violence. All of these initiatives have seemingly done little to stop gang membership. One of the most noted causes for gang membership is poor academic achievement (Siegle, Welsh, & Senna, 2006). However, very little attention has been given to the pedagogy for educating these school age youth at-risk for joining a gang. According to Smith (2003), school processes and conflicts produce these troubled youth. A significant reason is that there is disconnect between the youth's immediate cultural reality and their education.

Improving the life chances of troubled minority youth in America has sparked major debate among scholars and criminal justice professionals. Education has proven to be the most significant means to improve an individual's life chances, but African American students on an average are performing worse than Whites (Muhammad, Davis, Lui & Leondar-Wright, 2004; Kober, 2001). There are several facts concerning the achievement gap. The National Report Card indicated that the achievement gap has been persistent overtime. For example, African Americans by the fourth grade are more likely to be two years behind their peers, specifically concerning reading. Similarly, African American eighth graders have lower scores in mathematics than their white peers, but by this time, they have fallen three years behind their peers. By the twelfth grade, they are four years behind their peers. Tests are primarily used to measure progress toward standards in educational achievement. However, these standards are often reformed, which also re-establishes a level of expectation for students. From this, African American students are more likely to be disproportionately harmed by test standards because most public school systems make a direct link to graduation; those who do not make the score will not graduate (Kober, 2001). Students who perform below standards are more likely to drop out of high school and they are less likely to attend college.

The achievement gap between African Americans and Whites exists prior to starting school. Research showed that White and Asian children outperformed African American children enrolled in preschool and kindergarten in the areas for vocabulary, number skills, and general knowledge. When African American children start out behind

in the early stages of their education, the likelihood that they catch up is slim. This gap only widens as the student moves through school (Kober, 2001). This is frustrating for African American students in particular because these results are perpetuated by stereotypes that African American students are not as smart as the White students and disinterested in learning.

In response to this issue, several scholars have posited that significant attention should be given towards the educational progress, dealing with minority youth in urban communities in particular (Lopez, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004). However, very few scholars are able to provide approaches for motivating these urban youth in the classroom, particularly the youth participating in gang activity. These youth often have experience educational inequalities that encourage students to resist the current educational system because of its denial of minority students to access a quality education that creates possibilities for social mobility (Miron, 2004). In particular, African American males are perceived as problematic students in the schools because teachers fail to understand their cultural norms. Schools are typically focused on two primary functions; that is promoting and structuring the intellectual development of students, and socializing youth for roles and responsibilities in society (Davis & Jordan, 1994). African American males are often slighted in this perspective because many schools have failed to meet the social and developmental needs of African American males. The schools are, in short, academically abusing them.

The cultural composition of these youth academically at-risk is that a growing number of them are participating in gang activity. The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association defines gangs as “a group that individually or collectively engaged in, or has engaged in, criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation (Beres & Griffith, 2005)”.

In fact, there are approximately 31,000 identifiable gangs in the United States, operating with over 800,000 members and participating in crime and delinquency (NCJRS, 2005). In 1999, reports indicated that there were 580 juvenile gang killings compared to 809 in 2003 (NCJRS, 2005). The proliferation of gang activity in American communities has ignited a crisis within our school systems. According to the United States Department of Justice (2005), students ages 12-18 in urban schools were more likely to report the presence of street gangs at their school. More specifically, 37% of Hispanic and 29% of Black students were more likely than White students (14%) to report the existence of street gangs in their schools. This phenomenon was more prevalent in public schools (22%) versus private schools (4%). More recent legislation (H.R.1279–Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005) has been proposed to fight the migration and proliferation of gang activity, but legislation seemingly has very little impact on the prevention of gang membership (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2006). Understanding the gang phenomenon means identifying those challenges youth are experiencing daily, particularly in schools.

### **Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Reproduction**

Today, African American students participating in gang activity is one of the most destructive responses in dealing with various forms of marginalization. Rooted in critical pedagogy, the secondary school’s curricula, embodied with rules, assignments, ideologies, and discourse, conflict with the students’ local identities; that is, the understanding that students have of themselves based on the communities they reside is not in accord with the school’s middle-class philosophies (Smith, 2003). These students value their local memberships (i.e. gang membership or neighborhood), including norms, values, skills, and knowledge they acquire within these communities. At the same time, these students are often de-valued by teachers and administrators who seek to suppress the identities that students embrace, while attempting to teach or enforce middle class ideologies that are historically, economically, and politically structured to marginalize students of color and low-income students (Kunjufu, 2002, pp. 9-12)

K-12 schooling mirrors the middle class culture of society, which is the dominant culture. There is no direct link to the economic and political institutions, but indirectly, K-12 schools impose oppression by reproducing the power relations. K-12 schools appear to be impartial by promoting fairness and objectivity, but teachers and counselors intentionally relegate a faction of the population, minorities in particular, to less meaningful learning venues (Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Bowditch, 1993; McCarthy & Hoge, 2006). Often tracked in non-college bound courses, minority students are seriously handicapped by not having equal educational opportunities. Research reveals

that students in lower tracks seldom access science and math necessary for college entrance (Oaks, 1990; Oaks, 1995).

Resistance theorists argue that marginalized students may have an intricate part in the social reproduction of their own inequality (Smith, 2003; Giroux, 1983). The African American community, as a collective action, has developed a mentality that education does not pay (Ogbu, 1994). The thought is that despite the hard work and good grades that African American students may contribute toward their education, they still believe that they are less likely to reap rewards of having successful jobs. In other words, working hard in school and making good grades sounds good theoretically, but will not happen. As a result, African American students tend to resist education, so that they can avoid dehumanization, degradation, and suffering. In such case, school learning is “white learning”, an oppositional culture that translates academic success into white identity.

Overall, K-12 schools are organized as a dominant middle class culture and all other cultures are subordinate. Within the middle class culture are ideologies (pertaining to teachers’ perspectives, teachers’ values, students’ identities, and students’ values) that give rise to conflict. When middle class ideologies are imposed on a subordinate group then resistance may occur. Critics who challenge the dominant views of education argue that middle class values impede the achievement of minority students, perpetuating inequality (Apple, 1995).

Cultural resistance is paramount to understanding the relationship between middle-class teachers and minority students. Too often, teachers possess little insight concerning how to deal with minority students (Steinberg, Kincheloe, & Shanley, 2004), much less the challenge of educating a gang member due to the dilemmas in defining gangs and intervention strategies necessary to combat proliferation and migration (Weisel, 2002, pp. 34-35). Teachers fail to see that many students want to learn, but they are often in an educational environment that makes them feel powerless, disrespected, and have low self-esteem; therefore, they seek alternative ways to restore these feelings (Kharem, 2004). While failing to recognize the true nature of the problem, school administrators and politicians promote and enforce zero tolerance policies that disproportionately impact minority students (Kharem, 2004). For the most part, policymakers have ignored the causes of the problems, and responded to the symptoms by developing and implementing new policies, hiring security personnel, buying metal detectors, and contracting gang-consultants. None of these approaches are working; gang membership continues to grow by the thousands (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). What is needed is a new pedagogy for educating problem youth.

#### **DEVELOPING A PEDAGOGY FOR EDUCATING THE GANGSTA**

As noted earlier, a major problem with school is that there is disconnect between the youth’s socioeconomic reality and their education. Therefore, the operative question is how should teachers integrate what students experience in their communities with what they may learn in the classroom? The first approach is to create a classroom environment of cultural understanding. The second approach is to create classroom activities that are meaningful to students.

#### **Multicultural Education**

In acknowledging the changing composition of today’s school environment, educators should give serious thought to redefining cultural diversity. To this aim, diversity in the classroom not only should celebrate similarities and differences that have been noted traditionally (i.e. ethnicity, race, gender, and physical ability), but inclusive of those underrepresented groups of students and groups typically pushed away from the school environment through zero tolerance policies. That is, one can structure an educational environment that appreciates the social concerns of problem youth who may associate him or herself with undesirable groups, such as a gang.

Social emancipation is a compelling ideology that underscores multicultural education. In other words, the elimination of social injustice is transformed through the process of multicultural education (Sleeter, 1993). In this manner, culturally diverse people come together to learn in a fair environment and challenge the social order, and in doing so, we recognize the humanity of all students (Włodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Multicultural education is a redress of social concerns that people internalize. Norms, values, and beliefs are challenged, making students, as well as teachers, question their existence and their interconnection with society. Contrast

and dissonance awaken important assumptions about our social reality. In some cases, classroom participants (students and teachers) may ultimately feel inadequate, alienated, and insulted, which can alter the learning environment, especially the student's motivation to learn.

#### **Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom**

A culturally responsive classroom should include instructional materials to unite students and teachers through written, oral, aural, and artistic forms, as well as other innovative techniques to reach students (Monroe, 2005). Teachers should expand academic assignments and exercises that utilize the student's strengths as a starting point for learning and progress. To this aim, the teacher must make a concerted effort to meet the students where they are. For most teachers, developing a curriculum that is culturally responsive to gang members is probably contrary to their educational pedagogy, but a divergent framework allows alternative interpretations, answers, and modes of learning (Monroe, 2004). Teachers should have an open mind that allows students some autonomy over their learning agenda, but with guidance. For example, a typical school might not allow gang members to do a research paper on his gang because of zero tolerance policies in the schools, but the learning outcomes might be enlightening for both the teacher and the student.

Implementing a culturally responsive classroom requires substantial effort. One suggestion is that teachers must understand how students have learned to think, behave, and feel, as well as examine their own attitudes toward different cultural groups, so that they can master culturally responsive classroom management, and by doing this teachers are recognizing their ethnocentrism (Brown, 2007; Weinstein, as cited in Black, 2004, p. 36), this means that teachers must recognize their ethnocentrism, which often projects judgments and assumptions about students through a superior lens. This also means that teachers must seek to know and understand their students' cultural heritage and dismantle any stereotypes that typically interfere with teacher-student relationships and student progress. Finally, teachers must understand their students' social, economic, and political issues and values in different cultures.

#### **Creating a Culture of Care and Encouragement**

Caring is a key factor in students' achievement and level of expectation. Students' perception of a caring teacher is one who acknowledges students' thinking or contribution to the classroom, which can be interpreted as the teachers' belief in students' potential. A caring teacher is generally encouraging, which can provide a student with the essential link between school, home, and community. Without the link, school may be an alienating place, particularly when most students do not live in the same neighborhood as the school and when most teachers are not from the same cultural background as the students.

The essential ingredient to caring for students living inside a gang culture is that there can not be isolation between the teacher and the student. Caring can not occur in isolation because it does not foster a development for a healthy relationship or a connection (Noddings, 1992). In this case, the isolation between the teacher and the student emerges when the teacher refuses to understand, receive, respect, or recognize the students' culture. The most significant element that stimulates a dysfunctional teacher-student relationship is stereotyping, which is often based on hearsay or biased media (Noguera, 1995).

#### **Cultural Issues Interfering with Traditional Pedagogy**

The pedagogical framework for educating the gangsta calls attention to principles that are meaningful across all cultures, particularly groups that have historically been marginalized educationally, socially, economically, and politically. These principles generate misunderstandings, problems, and ultimately the miseducation of underrepresented groups.

#### **Culturally resistance in teaching.**

Culturally resistant teaching does not value the difference that students bring to the classroom. For oppressed groups, the curriculum does not allow them to affirm their voice by addressing issues that are essential to their social reality. For example, students who are members of gangs often experience life events that are challenging, whether in the school, in the home, in the community, or within their subculture (Siegle, Welsh, & Senna, 2006). The opportunity to identify problems, analyze the causes of the problems, and find solutions to the problem may present the students with important lessons that may bring some understanding about their social phenomenon and may assist in changing their social reality (Sleeter, 1993). However, what often happens in the classroom is that the teachers who observe students who are meeting social challenges and missing school also give these students the least opportunity to voice their thoughts in class. This in turn, stifles academic achievement and

produces negative feelings between the teacher and the student (Howard, 2002; Miron & Lauria, 1998). Academically identified as White hegemony, students means of coping is to counter the teacher's methodology by not responding positively to it (i.e. not doing assignments, skipping class, and disruptive behavior) (Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999).

#### **Racism in teaching.**

The most noted issue among oppressed groups is their feelings of racism in the classroom. African American and Latino students often feel unfairly treated because of their ethnicity (Lee, 1999). According to some students, teachers automatically think that African American students and Latino are not as smart as the White or Asian students (Howard, 2002). The disproportional rate of growth that happens between African Americans and Whites is a result of different and inferior education (Kober, 2001). Research showed that African American students are three times more likely to be tracked in special education classes, general classes, and vocational classes than Whites, but less likely to be tracked in academically challenging classes, often referred to as college bound courses (Howard, 2002). Furthermore, white teachers also tend to gossip more about African American students (Howard, 2002), in addition to giving less positive feedback on assignments (Ferguson, 2005, p. 96). This teacher-student interaction may be compounded if the student is known to participate in gang activity.

#### **Family values in teaching.**

Another persistent practice of so-called effective teachers is that their classroom often mirrors family values, in an effort to make school feel like home (Howard, 2002). This is fine, if the student comes from a traditional middle class family. Underrepresented populations, particularly gang members might feel alienated. Family issues among African Americans are of great concern (Yablonsky, 2000). He stated... "Four out of five White children live in two-parent households, while less than half of African American children do. Only one White child in thirty-eight lives away from both parents, whereas one in eight African American children lives away from their biological parents. Proportionally, there are far more African American children born to unwed teenage mothers. In contrast, the study found that White unmarried women accounted for about 18 percent of all out-of-wedlock births. These statistics reflect a less favorable family situation for many African American children, and this in part accounts for the higher rate of delinquency." One of the primary reasons why some gang members shift away from home is that their home environment often displays an abusive relationship, one to no parental role model, and a low household income (Siegle, Welsh, & Senna, 2003; Yablonsky, 2001, pp. 17-23; Yablonsky & Haskell, 2000). Promoting cultural inclusion through other means might be more plausible by asserting a connection through common interests, histories, and experiences that do not attack their reality (Heller, 1989). Therefore, it is necessary that these students have the flexibility of meeting educational goals through options or unconventional assignments.

#### **Middle-class values in teaching.**

A teacher's measure of effectiveness often reflects White middle class values. In a market economy, society must depict a social structure that is stable, integrative, and cohesive. To this aim, the educational system must advocate a moral authority that processes human capital in hopes of producing a desirable labor pool for positive economic outcomes. Social relations and quality of resources (i.e. funding, quality teachers, technology, instructional supplies, and other material resources) at various schools plays an integral part in the potential to produce desirable outcomes (Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1982). At the deficit of quality resources and disproportional treatment regarding zero tolerance policies and enrollment in special education courses, underrepresented groups are given limited access to information, so that their life chances are bleak.

Resistance to conventional educational norms is not uncommon among underrepresented student populations, specifically students involved in gang activity. Schools often attempt to socialize students to be passive and it creates conditions in which authority is mistrusted or unappreciated. However, some lower-class students may realize that their opportunities to gain middle-class status are limited; as a result, they reject the normative structure established by the school system. These students then develop values counter to those held by the middle-class, which is in the form of gang memberships and activities (Vowell & May, 2000). Alienated students begin to share the feelings of injustice created by teachers and administrators, so they form a delinquent subculture that establishes their own set of status criteria that they can meet (Vowell & May, 2000). Therefore, to address this matter, the best idea is to promote a learning environment that engages both the teacher and the student, regardless of its cultural representation (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

## **USING HIP HOP AS A COMMON CULTURE AND TEACHING TOOL FOR TROUBLED YOUTH**

### **Hip Hop as a Common Culture**

Using the elements of Hip Hop creatively to express what one has in common with others establishes the identity and presence of young people, particularly (Willis, 1990). According to Willis, this is living common culture. Those participating in the common culture of Hip Hop, engage in Hip Hop's Discourse, as well. Discourse is defined as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful "role" (Gee, 1996, p. 131). Secondary Discourses are those that people learn as part of their socializations "within various local, state, and national groups and institutions outside of early home and peer-group socialization-for example, churches, gangs, schools, offices" (p. 137). The pioneers of this culture, Deejay Kool Herc, CORNBREAD, Cindy Campbell, Afrika Bambaataa and others, while creating the performance elements of this culture, were socializing each other with Hip Hop as a secondary Discourse (Bambaataa, 2004; Herc, 2005). However, for many of our students, members Kitwana's Hip Hop generation and now their children, Hip Hop is a primary Discourse. Primary Discourses are those to which people are apprenticed early in life during their primary socialization as members of particular families within their sociocultural settings (Gee, 1996). Primary Discourses constitute our first social identity, and something of a base with which we acquire or resist later Discourses. They form our initial taken-for-granted understandings of who we are and who people 'like us' are, as well as what sorts of things we ('people like us') do, value, and believe when we are not 'in public'. Because Hip Hop is a primary Discourse for many of our students, they have been socialized in this culture and it is a frame of reference for many of their life experiences. They use it to solve problems. A former student who was an emcee, wrote rhymes as a means of coping when she was angry with her boyfriend. Another student related that, in a commercial rhyme, he heard Chuck D, the emcee for the group Public Enemy, asks "and what are you doing Black man?" That question inspired the student, now a graduate of Bowling Green University, to go to college. A school teacher, who studied at Stanford University, studied for his calculus final examination by writing a rhyme that included the equations and formulas that he needed to know. Because these youth utilize Hip Hop for informal learning practices, educators should make use of it in formal education settings. This common culture, Hip Hop, allows students to fully comprehend concepts being taught by associating what they know with that which they are learning.

### **Hip Hop Applied Learning Activity**

Today, a significant number of troubled minority youth are born within an urban experience of violence, destitution, desperation, and frustration (Lusane, 1993). Many have not learned the traditional strategies of the teaching-learning process that are taken for granted and built upon in education institutions. One way to re-channel positive educational experience is to connect the student's educational experience with his or her cultural experience. A creative way in connecting education and culture is through music and poetry. In the classroom, social science teachers may re-channel students' classroom experiences through creative writing, assigning students the task of writing a Hip Hop rap, for example to express a social, political, or economic position. This assignment encourages students to engage in written communication, expressing points of view that are academically, socially, and morally constructive. For example, Project South (2003) published a learning toolkit for students seeking a deeper understanding of the prison-industrial complex. Included in this toolkit is the Prison Industrial Complex Timeline, which includes economic, government policy, and popular movement history. An assignment for high school and certain college students may be to have them explain gangs and sentencing laws in the context of economic, government policy, and popular movements. What the teacher uses as a basis of evaluation is dependent upon how the student shapes his or her discussion within the rap lyrics. Of course, students who attempt this assignment must have clear understanding of the historical movements present on the timeline (i.e. general economic expansion, police forces militarized, social contract expansion and decline, rise of gangs, civil rights movement, sentencing laws, and so forth). This assignment helps them to channel their experiences and frustrations in a more positive way; it gives them a productive platform to express and discuss their realities (See Appendix A - a completed sample assignment, a set of Hip Hop lyrics that is a rap written by Maurice Pendleton).

### **Transferring Rap into Essay**

It is important that the student also rewrites the rap in the form of the academic essay (See sample essay in Appendix A). If he or she needs assistance in organizing the essay, this is an excellent and appropriate time to refer that student to the writing center or to tutorial. Because of the nature of the writing process, which is the

same process regardless of the genre in which one is writing - Hip Hop lyrics or academic essay - such an assignment can be of value in assisting the student in studying the material, understanding the content of the subject, and developing skills in academic writing, as well as the social science content. Using Hip Hop culture as a teaching tool demonstrates educators' sensitivity to a majority of our students, whom Bakari Kitwana (2002) identifies as the Hip Hop generation, which includes "those . . . born between 1965 and 1984 who came of age in the eighties and nineties and who share a specific set of values and attitudes. At the core are our thoughts about family relationships, child rearing, career, racial identity, race relations, and politics. Collectively, these views make up a complex worldview that has not been concretely defined" (p. 4). Furthermore, using Hip Hop allows the teacher to collaborate with the students, who can actually teach or facilitate lessons and discussions when rap and other elements of this youth culture are utilized. For example, students who are emcees in Yasin's writing classes facilitate the discussion on the writing process because they use this standard process when they compose rap lyrics, although the final products are different genres of writing. These students often introduce the notion of academic dishonesty and plagiarism in class because they do not want another emcee "biting their rhymes"; that is copying their lyrics or purloining their intellectual property. This is an excellent introduction to documentation of one's work. If one uses this youth culture, however, the teacher should know about the history and development of Hip Hop.

## CONCLUSION

It is apparent throughout the literature that issues concerning troubled youth in the secondary school system have been widely discussed among scholars. School disciplinary policies may have some significance in the school system when addressing behavior issues in schools, but it does not provide teachers with approaches for educating these troubled youth. For the purpose of creating a culturally responsive classroom, particularly for the elimination of marginalization in the classroom, we believe that Hip Hop should be an educational tool for teachers because it is already a bridge to mainstream society for many troubled youth for two reasons. First, Hip Hop has been appropriated continuously by mainstream society since its introduction to this youth culture. Fashion designers appropriated oversized clothing worn by b boys and b girls, who were buying clothing, pants and shirts, several sizes too large in order to hide the protective padding covering their knees and other joints when they made power moves on the dance floor (only wearing pants low, showing one's underwear, has been appropriated from the prisons because prisoners cannot wear belts for fear of them committing suicide). Rhymes are often used to advertise products in commercials. An example is the Black Sheep's use of "You Can Choose From This or You Can Choose From That" in the 2006 J.C. Penny Company back-to-school television advertisement. To attract adolescents and youth, The Hip Hop Church worships each Thursday evening at The Greater Hood African Episcopal Zion Church in Central Harlem. The complete worship service is conducted by young adults in a non traditional atmosphere. Adults usually sit in the back of the sanctuary. And as presidential candidate, Howard Dean tapped Keo, the tagger, to design the backdrop for his speech in New York City before the 2004 primary election. Finally, even the Discourse of Hip Hop culture has been appropriated by mainstream society. Various Chevrolet dealerships display signs that read "24/7/365" and below that "We'll Be There"; that is, they are available anywhere, all of the time.

Second, Hip Hop's appropriation by mainstream society indicates it has value and commands respect on a certain level. This builds the self-esteem of youth who are in the Hip Hop community and articulates their self-worth. Jay-Z, for example, an emcee from Fort Greene Housing Projects in Brooklyn, New York is worth an estimated \$86 million according to the various newspapers. Jay-Z's owns a clothing line; he owns a share in the New Jersey Nets Basketball Team; and he owns a record label (producing and recording Hip Hop rhymes) which is an example of how he used their culture to continue to empower them-selves. Using Hip Hop as an educational tool aids troubled youth in realizing the relationship between what happens in the classroom and what happens outside of it. Many of our educators do not understand that relationship, and more research focus could shed light on this matter so that educators can better identify with the culture of troubled youth in our society.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Rap: "A Critical Pedagogy for Educating the Gangsta"**

Now I don't have a degree, but I could show U how to educate a G X 4.  
I'm about to explain how gangs went from good to bad.  
And now the government set 'em right up in a trap.

1967 came FBI programs COINTEL PRO  
Made to prevent the rise of organizations made by “negros”.  
Sametime dropped welfare N the hood  
Now every black person on welfare N the hood.

1974 a man named Larry Hoover made a gang  
called the Gansta Disciples, a nation thang.  
Main goals were to make sure kids go to school  
Open gas stations, supply local food, fought against inequality, and segregation  
not getting jobs, discrimination.

There was also a war on drugs  
guess who had us labled as “thugs”?  
We all got guns at war with ourselves.  
Families addicted so we at war with ourselves.  
How they gonna slam Hoover 4 selling drugs N getting his  
when the CIA been selling drugs 4 over fifty years.  
The system wants you to put the drugs in UR system  
So you can do something stupid and end up right in the system.  
It’s all a trap.

And that’s why they give us all that crack  
definition of money is the kitchen 4 da black man  
dead or in jail is the definition of a black man  
at least that’s what they want it to be  
But I’m ma prove prove’em wrong if they want it 4 me.

1973 Rockerfeller drug laws came along  
get bummed with over 2 ounces, so long...  
Same year Hoover was sentenced to life  
4 the murder of a customer who was using the pipe,  
the customer seen something he shouldn’t have seen  
went and told the police, the wrong thing!

Throughout the 80’s Hoover was on lockdown,  
and still kept his gang on lockdown.

In the 90’s gangs went wild, started killing each other.  
Forget all as one, and we all brothers.

’93 Larry renamed to Growth and Development  
No more killing each other should’ve been evident.

’95 came Operation Headache, damn  
Police stopp’in GD leadership and Hoover’s plans  
Now he has life N the penitentiary  
Look it up they even got a documentary.

In the end we made to be the clowns,  
government will do anything to keep a black man down.

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### **Essay: “A Critical Pedagogy for Educating the Gangsta”**

The CIA has been selling drugs for over 50 years! Our government system is organized to keep minority’s mainly African Americans down. 1967 FBI created program Cointel Pro made to prevent the rise of black organizations

made by "Negros". Every time we get a black leader that gets too powerful to stand up for us as one they either kill them or lock them behind bars. For example: Larry Hoover (founder of the Gangster Disciples). All these are set backs to the rising of our people as a culture.

They give us all these drugs. Why? Because they know most of us can't get jobs because we drooped out of school or we are low income based and on welfare. So the first thing we do is we do is go find other means to get money, which is to sell the drugs if not that use them for our own satisfaction. When this happens we fall right into their trap. We sell the drugs we get caught go to prison; use the drugs we destroyed ourselves spiritually, physically, mentally. This is all a plan that was structured for us as black people to keep us down.

Every leader we get that is black and starts to gain too much power they either kill them or put behind bars. There are many examples I can use such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Huey P. Newton, Jeff Fort, My preferred example to use is Larry Hoover. In 1967 FBI created Cointel Pro this was made to make sure that negro organization couldn't grow or get to big. 1973 the Rockefeller drug laws were established which implied that if anyone got caught with position of over 2 ounces of cocaine you get life in prison.

The same year these laws were established Larry Hoover got life in prison. His mission was to make sure kids went to school, open gas stations, supply local food, fought against inequality and us as a black people not being able to get jobs. His main support to accomplish all these goals was cocaine. He sold the product in the same neighborhoods he was putting all these good things into. The big idea is he eventually had a plan to provide for his people without selling dope ounce everything was established.

In conclusion to the government creating programs and methods to keep us down, giving us drugs, and killing and throwing all of our leaders behind bars, the solution is for us to escape the trap that we've been in for the last 40 odd years not including 400 years slavery. Were still getting incarcerated filling up all the rooms in the prisons which makes us fill less rooms in the schools. In the end we made out to be the clowns, the government will do anything to keep a black man down.