ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	THE MIXTAPE: A CASE STUDY IN EMANCIPATORY JOURNALISM
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During the 1970s the rap music mixtape developed alongside hip-hop as an underground method of mass communication. Initially created by disc-jockeys in an era prior to popular "urban" radio and video formats, these mixtapes represented an alternative, circumventing traditional mass medium. However, as hip-hop has come under increasing corporate control within a larger consolidated media ownership environment, so too has the mixtape had to face the challenge of maintaining its autonomy. This media ownership consolidation, vertically and horizontally integrated, has facilitated further colonial control over African America and has exposed as myth notions of democratizing media in an undemocratic society. Acknowledging a colonial relationship the writer created *FreeMix Radio: The Original Mixtape Radio Show* where the mixtape becomes both a source of free cultural expression and an anti-colonial emancipatory journalism developed as a "Third World" response to the needs of postcolonial nation-building. This dissertation explores the contemporary colonizing effects of media consolidation, cultural industry function, and copyright ownership, concluding that the development of an underground press that recognizes the tremendous

disparities in advanced technological access (the "digital divide") appears to be the only viable alternative. The potential of the mixtape to serve as a source of emancipatory journalism is studied via a three-pronged methodological approach: 1) An explication of literature and theory related to the history of and contemporary need for resistance media, 2) an analysis of the mixtape as a potential underground mass press and 3) three focus group reactions to the mixtape as resistance media, specifically, the case study of the writer's own *FreeMix Radio: The Original Mixtape Radio Show*. The research shows that while *FreeMix* may need technical fine-tuning, the mixtape itself does offer potential as part of a powerful underground mass press and source of cultural expression.

THE MIXTAPE: A CASE STUDY IN EMANCIPATORY JOURNALISM

By

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Nelisbeth Ball to whom I am now married is absolutely responsible for providing the love, strength and space needed to confidently proceed in pursuit of all goals, not the least of which, this one. Our unborn child has already profoundly changed my world and the ordering of what is to be considered important. This child has made the imperatives described in this work that much more important as I now have to consider the world not only as it is but as it will be for our new baby. My new and growing family has been a loving impetus for the completion of this degree.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: POLEMICS, EMANCIPATION AND REVOLUTION

I studied law to become a better burglar.
- Huey P. Newton

When worst comes to worst my peoples come first.
- Dilated Peoples

Europe's Black possessions remained – and do remain – in Europe's colonies.
- James Baldwin

Freedom: The very being of the For-itself which is "condemned to be free" and must forever choose itself – i.e., make itself. "'To be free' does not mean 'to obtain what one has wished' but rather 'by oneself to determine oneself to wish' (in the broad sense of choosing). In other words, success is not important to freedom.
- Jean-Paul Sartre

In the future, when social scientists study the mix tape phenomenon, they will conclude – in fancy language – that the mix tape was form of "speech" particular to the late twentieth century, soon replaced by the "play list."
-Dean Wareham

Polemic
po·lem·ic Pronunciation: p&-'le-mik
Function: noun
Etymology: French polémique, from Middle French, from polemique controversial, from Greek polemikos warlike, hostile, from polemos war; perhaps akin to Greek pelemizein to shake, Old English ealfelo baleful
1 a : an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another b : the art or practice of disputation or controversy -- usually used in plural but sing. or plural in constr.
2 : an aggressive controversialist : DISPUTANT
- po·lem·i·cist /-'le-m&-sist/ noun
-Webster's Dictionary

Marimba Ani, in *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* (1994), begins with the following: "*Bolekaja*![1] This study of Europe is an intentionally aggressive polemic. It is an assault upon the European paradigm; a repudiation of its essence" (p. 1, original emphasis). Just as Tupac Shakur once ended an interview saying that after 20 years of life "this is my report" (Lazin, 2003) so too is this a summary of my own after years of academic study and personal experience. What follows is my own attempt to challenge aggressively the prevailing "wisdoms" as they relate to notions of freedom, journalistic practice, history and theoretical approaches applied thereto. That I admit to polemics does not discount that this is a studied analysis which has among its goals a reshaping of how we view media, alternative and underground press and the relationship this country continues to have with those referred to as "minorities" – who as people of color, women and the poor are actually an overwhelming global majority.

Centering the experience of Black America is done intentionally to highlight historical and existing contradictions, gaps in knowledge and archetypal relationships between media and image which continue to work against a popular understanding necessary for there to occur any meaningful change. This refutation is of ideas and practice, not people. It is meant to join those already attempting to forcefully encourage individual and collective rethinking so as to facilitate the hard and painful discussions and debate in which we all need to engage to bring about an improved world.

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[1] Ani cites the definition of *Bolekaja* as being a Yoruba term that means "Come on down, let's fight!" (p.1).

In *The Dissident Press: Alternative Journalism in American History* (1984), Lauren Kessler outlines a history of the press often ignored in conventional circles. She summarizes press histories of groups whose ideas and politics have historically been kept from mainstream discussion. She includes "Blacks, suffragists, Populists, socialists" as those, among others, "who professed aberrant beliefs" and "were heard, not in the closed marketplace of the conventional press but in the marketplace of their own creation" (p. 14). By focusing on African America as a point of departure I intend to demonstrate both the continuing need for such presses and offer the rap music mixtape as a site for that kind of journalism. I will argue that such a suggestion is not at all anomalous given the history of Black American media resistance and the relationship between media and societal control over Black America. And within the larger context of a "dissident press" I will, again, follow Kessler in reminding us that "the presence of alternative voices in America is a *tradition*, not a time-bound phenomenon" (p. 16, original emphasis). My contribution will be the suggestion of the mixtape as a site for the practice of "emancipatory journalism" (Shah, 1996) to address continuing needs of African America in particular but also as an example of how other "aberrant" communities might respond to what I will argue is a media environment as closed as ever.

Robin D.G. Kelley has echoed recently in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002) the sentiments driving this work. He wrote, speaking of the efforts and goals of a variety of "social movements" in the US, that "virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely [their] alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue struggle for change" (p. iv). I am hoping to extend some of those

visions as they applied to journalistic practice and an understanding of media. I am also intending to give those visions new life in a 21ˢᵗ century context centered in contemporary Black America but carried worldwide via that community's cultural expression and practice. For, fundamental to this current study, is another of Kelley's premises that, despite popular commentary to the opposite, "we are not yet completely free" (p. xi).

What this lack of freedom means I will try to summarize below along with a more detailed explanation of emancipatory journalism. Who needs emancipation is largely in the eye of the beholder. I am suggesting most of us do, certainly those upholding beliefs similar to those mentioned above by Kessler. My selection of African America is as much a specific and particular selection as it is arbitrary in that any self-identified group who in reality or perception has insufficient access to mainstream mass media can employ what is a philosophy of journalistic practice and function – emancipatory journalism. But Black America has an archetypal relationship with this nation that gives it a slightly different connection to the press and media in general. Black America's relationship to American press and mass media is a particularity I am using as a platform from which to extend the visions of which Kelley speaks.

In this work there is the not so covert theme of societal change. Those calling for change are often asked what they mean, and understandably so. From the outset let me be clear that I am not sure. Years ago James Baldwin, in a comment not unlike one made later by Malcolm X that there would be "freedom for everybody or freedom for nobody," said that, "What is meant by a new society is one in which inequalities will disappear, in which vengeance will be exacted: either there will be no oppressed at all, or the

oppressed and the oppressor will change places" (1955). Similarly, before his death in

1998, Kwame Ture was asked what he meant when he said he was "ready for the

revolution." Ture's response was simple: "total change. An immediate end to poverty

and homelessness. A complete reordering of societal institutions. Total change" (Ture,

1998). Along those lines, by change and revolution I mean a start with a radical

redistribution of wealth, complete access to the highest forms of healthcare, housing and

education.

Further, more directly related to what follows, I mean by revolution a powerful

adjustment in how we view "others," and "races" and how those views translate into

tangible material inequality, imprisonment and early death (Marable, 1983/2000; Lipsitz,

1998; Davis, 2003). I would like us to start from a place where wealth, health (physical

as well as psychological) and safety are forever disconnected from one another and from

phenotype or religion (Muhammad, et al, 2004). With these as points of departure I have

attempted below to apply that emancipatory philosophy and practice of journalism to

Black America, the hip-hop community and the medium of the mixtape. This work

attempts to clarify the continuing need for such a form of journalism, to offer of a

practical example of the mixtape in that role and then to help assess the potential and

challenges of the mixtape to serve that purpose.   I cannot pretend to have definitive steps

which once taken will bring about "freedom," the definition of which itself needs to be

more widely debated. I can, however, call for more debate, discussion and personal

reflection and perhaps an analysis of the mixtape as emancipatory journalistic tool can

begin that process. It may be slightly painful to do so but, as was heard often while in

military service, "pain is good. It lets you know you're still alive." And in the words of

one of our great poets Method Man, "I came to bring the pain" (Boyd, 2003).

THE MIXTAPE AND *FREEMIX RADIO*

The word "mixtape" carries many definitions. I will describe some of

these below, but the form which is to be the subject here is that of the rap music variety.

Initially on tape cassette and now compact disc (CD) mixtapes contain blends of music

created by a disc-jockey (DJ) or simply by music lovers putting together compilations of

their favorites. My first mixtape experience was some time just before my eleventh

birthday. It was around the summer of 1982 shortly after the release of Afrika

Bambaataa's *Planet Rock*. I cannot remember if my tape had been recorded from some

obscure radio station or someone's album or even exactly how I got it. I only remember

walking around Jackson Pond in Columbia, MD, with my little boom box on my shoulder

rocking to this infectious track. As I attempt to remember it all the feeling is one of hip-

hop moving slowly ever outward from its epicenter in New York. With a trickle-down

effect hitting far harder than anything Wanniski[2] ever conceived, hip-hop was beginning

to make deep in-roads to those of us in less proximity to its origins. Much of that reach

had come via the mixtape, which in the absence of any of today's hip-hop/R&B radio or

video, had been a bridge between the hard realities of inner-city New York to the less

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[2] "Jude Thaddeus Wanniski (June 17, 1936, Pottsville, Pennsylvania – August 29, 2005,
Morristown, New Jersey) was an economist, journalist and conservative commentator.
He is perhaps best known as the associate editor of The Wall Street Journal from 1972 to
1978. In 1976 Wanniski coined the term supply-side economics to distinguish the revival
in classical economic thought from the more dominant "demand-side" Keynesian and
monetarist theories" From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

hard existence of my section 8 suburban life.[3] Intentional or not, imagined as a large

phenomenon or not, the mixtape was a greater carrier of culture and information for a

young burgeoning hip-hop generation than any dominant media outlet.[4]

Over the years from that point on, rap music mixtapes would become, aside from

a primary source of art for me personally, a major player in both the mainstream and

underground world of cultural expression and communication. As I will demonstrate by

using the example of my own creation, *FreeMix Radio: The Original Mixtape Radio

Show*, the mixtape today is among our better hopes for establishing a much needed

alternative to our current media environment. This will be discussed within the context

of a colonized setting in which cultural expression and information dissemination play a

key role in maintaining social relationships (control) established in the infancy of this

nation. Image and perception management have long been issues in maintaining order

(Aptheker, 1943; Cesaire, 1955; Fanon, 1964; Wilson, 1993; Lipsitz, 1994; Clarke, 1996;

Jensen, 2005). It is into this relationship that hip-hop emerged – as would the mixtape –

forcing an eventual submission to managed popularity. However, as new media

technologies emerge and garner much of the attention, fractures occur in the structure

which may allow for older technological forms to take on new positions of influence.

Perhaps this too can become the role of the mixtape.

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[3] Columbia, Maryland is the famed planned city that rests almost exactly in between
Baltimore and Washington, DC along I-95. It promised a multi-racial and class mix that
would benefit the world. Columbia used section 8 housing with rents as low as $14 per
month to attract families from either city as was the case with my mother and me who,
attracted by those low rents, moved there in 1975.
[4] This underground distribution of hip-hop is acknowledged in part in a recent PBS
documentary on the music business.

While I will revisit this issue of "underground" below in this instance "underground" is meant to describe a form of mass communication produced and disseminated absent the assistance or sanction of dominant media companies or the circles of national power. Aside from these issues of production and dissemination "underground" also represents ideas expressed by the least powerful and/or ideas expressed that run counter to societal norms or conventional wisdoms (a point to which I shall return below). What the "underground" press has represented historically in the United States is space where these ideas could be expressed and debated without being seen as "fringe" (Rips 1981; Kessler. 1984).

This return to a freer medium is necessary for the practice of emancipatory journalism. *FreeMix Radio* openly rejects notions of "objectivity," encourages movement-building, grassroots organization and involves reporting from those intimately linked to these efforts. This situates *FreeMix Radio* perfectly within the tradition of such a practice of journalism and the development below of a colonial model for analysis allows for such a philosophy of journalistic practice to be applied here.

MIXTAPES AND THE PANOPTICON VIEW

My favorite books of fiction are Richard Wright's *The Outsider* and Neal Stephenson's *Snowcrash*. With the former I identify with Cross Damon's panopticon view of life. My identification with the latter begins with the fact that the story's protagonist delivers pizza for a living. It was my eight years doing just that where I had my most profound introduction to the real and potential power of mixtapes. Many hours of my day spent in the car with mixtapes created a new media environment which helped

me address what Marshall McLuhan once said about we "not knowing who invented the ocean" just that we knew "it was not the fish" (McMahon, 2002). There absolutely is a "cosmic oneness" and our inability to recognize that "everyone and everything in the universe are interconnected" (Vincent, 1996, p. 258) is inhibited to the extent that we exist within socially constructed perceptions. We all become fish struggling (consciously or less so) to see beyond what has been constructed and named for us. Mixtapes became my primary sources for this discovery.

My time with mixtapes began to instill in me the quite accurate idea that mixtapes offer what may be our best hope for a desperately needed alternative to prevailing mass media. For hours I would deliver pizza while alternating between my two favorite forms of mixtapes, rap music mixes compiled by disc-jockeys (DJs) and those containing lectures, discussions and debates some set to music, some not. In one shift I would not only be exposed to music most radio listeners never heard, sometimes in forms they would never consider, but also to a world of knowledge rarely acquired in institutional settings.

IT'S NOT REALLY "RADIO;" IT'S UNDERGROUND

As I continued my formal education with an increased critical focus on media it occurred to me that there may be at least one more function of the mixtape and in April of 2004 I began producing *FreeMix Radio: The Original Mixtape Radio Show*. Each month my colleagues and I produce and freely distribute a mixtape that incorporates journalism, music and audio sound-bytes, speeches, etc. In this case the compact disc (CD) becomes the "airwaves" allowing us to circumvent highly consolidated and regulated radio.

Despite not being traditional terrestrial "radio," the name was designed to alert listeners to the fact that this particular mixtape is proudly different. And while I cannot claim to having originated the use of the phrase "mixtape radio"[5] I can lay claim to originating this particular definition and purpose of such usage. Here, again, the conventional use or naming is decidedly different. Popular usage of the phrase "mixtape radio" describes the use of a DJ or artist hosting the mixtape show which itself largely consists of the same commercial artists and certainly the same message content heard via the mainstream radio and video outlets all supporting the dominant popular hip-hop image, i.e., of violence, pimping, drug dealing etc.

In the case of *FreeMix Radio,* the term radio was kept in the title to draw attention to the journalistic capacity of the mixtape and a harkening back to the earlier days of a more politically driven radical nature of Black radio – particularly the pirated work of a Robert Williams broadcasting *Radio Free Dixie* in exile from Cuba in the mid 1960s.[6] By "political" I mean the practice of journalism and inclusion of artists whose music performs many of the functions of emancipatory journalism described below. That is, journalism and music that first recognizes a lack of freedom and which supports activist struggle designed to inform the audience of existing problems in such a way that is supportive of positive "humane development" (Shah, 1996). The free distribution allows us to reach people who may not normally seek out such politics or forms of music. While at times we do involve more popular forms of rap music we often include local artists,

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[5] See http://mixtaperadio.net for one example.
[6] Robert Williams was the founder of the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the NAACP. He was excommunicated from that group for his willingness to engage in armed self-defense and was later framed by the FBI causing him to flee the country in political exile. He resided for a time in Cuba, the China before returning to the US in the mid 1990s until his death in 1998.

unsigned artists or those considered "underground" offering a musical blend not likely heard on dominant commercial outlets. The idea was to create a new mass medium designed as a much needed alternative to a dominant mass media that is today more pervasive, powerful and perhaps more detrimental than at any other point in history.

MIXTAPE FLEXIBILITY

Aside from the time offered to listen to mixtapes, pizza delivery also demonstrated another powerful aspect of the medium. Such a job required constant breaks in listening as I would go from house to house. I noticed that radio loses its value in this setting as I would rarely hear a song, discussion or news item uninterrupted. Between deliveries drivers are in-store, further increasing the likelihood of missing whatever was being broadcast. I soon came to appreciate the pre-recorded, direct control offered by the mixtape. I could easily pause and rewind assuring I never missed a thing. No more would I have to worry about turning up the radio so I could hear it from the customer's front door or hoping that said customer would be quick in answering their own call for delivery.

Whether the mass public was aware of them or not, mixtapes have, since the appropriate technology became popular, been part of many lives. They originated on cassette and have since moved primarily to compact disc (CD). They remain individual artistic expressions (Maerz, 2001), manifested as compilations of mostly music but also other forms of audio from speech to sounds of nature. Many of us know mixtapes as our saving grace on road trips or for parties where no quality disc jockey is available (Levitan, 2001). Perhaps, however, the most popular form is a mixtape created for a

loved one. On television Homer Simpson made one to get Marge "in the mood;" in the film *High Fidelity,* John Cusak practically narrates his life based on mixtapes he'd create for girlfriends; and on *Curb Your Enthusiasm,* Larry David becomes suspicious after finding his wife listening to Al Green on a mixtape given her by another man.

Other uses of mixtapes abound. Some mixtapes are humorous in their blending of music and satirical sound-bytes ("High Five...," 2002). Others are serious. For example, in a Michigan court of law, Judge Herman Marable, Jr. uses his own brand of mixtapes to punish noise violators who cross his judicial path ("Judge Punishes Noise Violations...," 2002). While these kinds of mixtapes have to a certain extent reached popular consciousness even in literature (Moore, 2004) my focus is on rap music mixtapes whose creation by disc jockeys, beginning in the 1970s, was actually the African American wing of an international mixtape movement with origins in the DJ-inspired disco era (Brewster & Broughton, 1999). This form of the mixtape, particularly as I will discuss it, has received practically no attention at all.

HIP-HOP: FROM FREE EXPRESSION TO COMMODITY

The shift in hip-hop from autonomous creation to concentrated ownership as commodity has been discussed at great length (Gladney, 1995; George, 1999; Neal, 2003; Kirk, 2004). And while I am aware that despite this process hip-hop has been able to remain a site for resistance media and image production (Gladney, 1995; Krims, 2000; Neal, 2003) – a reality I am attempting to explain and exploit via the mixtape – it cannot be ignored that these efforts have hardly been successful. Hip-hop remains today as much a part of the colonizing machinery as any liberating effort.

Its most recent cultural antecedents are the lyrical and sonic poetics that grew from the mid-20th century jazz age and coalesced into the rebellious rhyming of artists such as The Last Poets and Gil-Scot Heron during the post Civil Rights and Black Power eras of the 1960s and early 1970s (Dery, 2004, p. 412; Dimitriadis, 2004, pp. 421-422). It is oration over cyclical, patterned and poly-rhythmic beats. Hip-hop is often described as a "culture" containing four core/elementary elements: rapping (emceeing), DJ-ing, graffiti and break-dancing. While these elements all find their origins in the larger African world (also called diaspora), they cohered in New York City, itself a hub of the African world since at least the mid 1920s (Ball, 2001).

Rapping, the rhythmic verbal expression set to beats brought an old African oral tradition to new light and life. Rappers, or emcees, began initially as those celebrating the skills of DJs who were the original centers of attention as they artfully blended one record into the next keeping a steady stream of danceable music meant to "move the crowd" (Rakim, 1987). The continuous stream of danceable music was created by DJs (original Kool Herc) who would find that moment in songs where all music would drop out leaving just the rhythm section (drums, percussion). This was the "break" in a song and those who danced to this became known as "break dancers." DJs would bring two copies of the same record and then move between the two – each on their own turntable – extending the break for as long as they liked. What was once a 20 second moment of a song (often the favorite part) became endless extended beats geared nicely for the dancers. Graffiti, what authorities saw as "vandalism," became an equal part of the burgeoning "culture." I say "culture" as such to differentiate between this conventional use of the term and how I will be defining it below. In short, I do not see hip-hop as a

distinct culture in that it is a continuation or a contemporary form of African culture as practiced by African descendants in a new setting.[7] Hip-hop evolved as the African world converged in a North American urban setting (New York City) at the nexus of people, culture and technological innovation.[8]

And despite hip-hop's humble beginnings, it is now a leader both in business and popular culture. With $2.8 billion a year in cd sales, or 13% of all music sales second only to rock music, rap music is far from insignificant (RapNews.net http://www.rapnews.net/Printer/0-205-259577-00.html). But this is not the end of hip-hop's impact. A handful of rap moguls have parlayed this kind of album sale success into clothing lines, liquor distribution and rapper Jay-Z is now even a part owner of The New Jersey Nets professional basketball franchise. These ventures routinely generate tens and hundreds of millions of dollars more and are primary generators of pop cultural norms, definitions and image (James, 2004). As will be discussed later in greater detail, hip-hop has become, in the words of writer Nelson George a "capitalist tool" (1998). Hip-hop is now a commodity in full service to those who own and control that process, a process I will describe in greater detail below. It is used to sell every kind of product (James, 2004) and to shape popular consciousness to fit a colonial reality. And considering, as has Bakari Kitwana, that "Today, more and more Black youth are turning to rap music, music videos, designer clothing, popular Black films, and television programs for values and identity" (2002, p. 9), this becomes increasing problematic

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[7] I do not mean to ignore the involvement of Latinos (also African descendents) or Whites or others in hip-hop. However, their involvement does not change the fact of what it is, they were just involved in the practice and development of a modern African cultural form.

[8] Tricia Rose in her seminal work *Black Noise* develops this theme of technological convergence with African cultural forms (1992).

considering that the content of these mass media have been, as Stuart Hall has said, been "colonized" (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 295). I will describe this colonial process and its impact on cultural expression, journalism and media studies more fully below.

HIP-HOP AND THE MIXTAPE

Hip-hop has over the last 20 years become not only a primary cultural expression impacting the globe but also the subject of considerable scholarship. From its socio-economic and cultural history (Rose, 1994; Kelley, 1994; Chang, 2005), to its origins in Black nationalism (Spady and Eure, 1991), to its impact as brand-maker (Klein, 2000) and its relationship to capitalism (George, 1998), feminism, cultural criticism (hooks, 1996, Powell, 2000), identity and community-building (Lipsitz, 1994; Krims, 2000), even its having its own "generation" (Kitwana, 2002). Hip-hop scholarship has expanded into anthologies that recently included one on hip-hop and philosophy (Darby and Shelby, 2005) and others that have explored hip-hop's "many genres and personalities [and] examined its effect[s] on the larger white market [and] acknowledged hip-hop internationalization" (Perkins, 1996, p. vii; Kitwana, 2005).

Hip-hop scholarship now has its first "hip-hop studies reader" that has coalesced many of the existing viewpoints and debates on hip-hop from its history to its impact on global culture, the impact of media and its relationship to commodity, the culture industries and corporate capital (Forman and Neal, 2004). And in 2004 the first academic hip-hop journal, of which I am now managing editor, the *WB&L Journal* (Words, Beats and Life) launched in order to help compile some of the unending new scholarship being produced. That I am involved in hip-hop scholarship as scholar and professor, as a

practitioner as mixtape producer and as managing editor of the seminal hip-hop journal, I am happily well-situated in the luxurious position of being surrounded by the bulk of what the expression produces both musically and intellectually. And again, what has garnered almost no attention at all in the academic arena is the mixtape itself and certainly not at all as a source of space for the practice of a radical philosophy of journalism – emancipatory journalism.

The mixtape's relationship to hip-hop is old and remains strong. Developing in the 1970s "underground tapes showcasing a DJ's skills or an MC's rhymes" were, prior to the first rap record being cut in 1979[9], the primary medium through which rap was heard (Ards, p. 312). By the mid 1980s, began to emerge as powerful conveyors of this largely underground cultural phenomenon (Kirk, 2004). As hip-hop became more widely accepted as part of the pop music's mainstream, so too did mixtapes increase in their popularity. By the mid 1990s mixtapes, growing alongside the popularity of hip-hop and the emergence of CD and CD duplicating technology, mixtapes exploded.

In New York City, the epicenter of both hip-hop and the mixtape, vending suffered and was criminalized under mayor Rudy Giuliani and his "apocalyptic gala for tourists and terrorists in Times Square ominously code-named Project Archangel" (Lederman, 1999) which targeted street artists and vendors for removal. This represents well the general trend facing mixtape distributors around the country. This in part, therefore, makes empirically measuring mixtape sales or use nearly impossible. The hip-hop mixtape "industry" is a clandestine one that circumvents copyright laws by massively duplicating and disseminating music whose publishing rights are owned mostly by major

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[9] Sugar Hill Gang, "Rapper's Delight."

recording companies. Secondly, this dissemination occurs via street corner vendors and small record stores mostly in New York City but throughout the east coast of the United States and elsewhere. There are no sales receipts or Sound Scan monitoring to track amounts sold so, again, there is little by way of tangible evidence detailing numbers. These vendors, much like open-air drug markets, conduct their business always under the potential of arrest and at the whim of prosecutors and police. Anecdotal and "off the record" statements describe a situation where individual DJs produce mixtapes that somehow, without an admission of knowledge, find their way to warehouses that produce and then disseminate hundreds of thousands of copies all sold via vendors and small record stores. The specifics of this process will not be easily assessed.

Cornelius Mays, "Big Man or Big Daddy," as he is known on the street, has earned the nickname. He is at least 6'4 in height and somewhere around 300 pounds and for a time served as a major source of mixtapes in Washington, DC. "I move about 200 cds {compact discs} a week if the police ain't harassing me. But other than that man, I provide a service. I provide {music and information} to people who are not computer literate or who cannot afford store-bought music. Shit, if you have a computer these days you don't need me or the music store. And when people complain that I am taking money from artists I remind them that groups like TLC (Teboz, Left-Eye and Chili) went broke long before I got in this business" (C. Mays, personal communication December 16, 2002). Though police harassment eventually drove Mays from the mixtape vending game his story is indicative of the problems facing those involved, as well as, with tracking sales and actual pervasiveness of mixtapes.

Getting more details from those involved in the production and distribution of

mixtapes has proven difficult. Few are willing or able to take the time to explain their work or divulge where the volumes of mixtapes come from. My brief interviews with Mays were only the result of a long-time relationship established over the years of me being a regular customer of his. Getting access to those in the warehouses will likely take more investigative reporting and time and will be a strong foundation for future research. But by his account of roughly 200 sold per week, he being but one example and working in Washington, DC, versus the more popular and crowded New York market, suggests high volume sales.

Another reason is one mentioned above – that the rap music mixtape has never been subject to scholarly focus. The seminal nature of this work, in this respect, has yet another challenge of having to parse together suggestive but ultimately inconclusive evidence of mixtape use and impact. However inconclusive, though, substantial evidence does exist suggesting the popularity of mixtapes and their widespread use. Websites, both national and international are dedicated to the production, distribution, artwork and measuring the talent of the DJ. Such websites are becoming more common and articles are easily found that discuss the power of the mixtape and its ability to create or ruin a career (Maerz, 2001; Smith, C.; 2002, "High Five...," 2002; Hall, R., 2003; Hall, R., 2003). Attention to mixtapes has led to the establishment of their own annual mixtape award ceremony, now in its ninth year (http://remixmag.com/transmissions/mixtape-awards-031705/).[10] The overall popularity of the mixtape can also be found by its adoption into the work of more mainstream artists both in and outside the genre of rap music. Such examples would include recent releases by Me'Shell N'degeocello *Cookie:*

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[10] A special RIP to Just-O. Without his efforts and diligence the mixtape underground would not likely be as vibrant.

The Anthropological MixTape and Dead Prez, *Turn Off Your Radio.*[11] Recently, author

Jeff Chang distributed a companion mixtape to supplement his new book *Can't Stop,*

Won't Stop: A History of Hip-Hop. Unable to escape the increasing popularity of the

mixtape, even mainstream commercial media outlets such as MTV.com have dedicated

web space to their attention. They note how the mixtape sells more rap music than the

music industry, and takes more risks, which make it the leading source for the discovery

of new talent. This is in part the result of mixtapes being compilations where only the

best songs make the cut which gives the mixtape an immediate street-level marketing

boost (Mixtapes: The Other Music Industry, 2003). However, despite this display of

versatility and freedom, mixtapes too suffer within a commercial (colonial) context.

USES OF THE MIXTAPE

Music industry influence, through mixtape DJ signings and usage of the mixtape

as a means to build artist credibility in the streets prior to an album release, led to a

formulaic or homogenizing process of mixtape creation. Already there is discussion of

having lost the underground essence of the mixtape in a move away from the skill of the

DJ toward emphasis on who can be first to get a song or performer on their set (Mixtapes:

The Other Music Industry, 2003). This has led such legendary DJs such as Jazzy Jeff to

comment as he did recently that, because the larger art of DJ-ing has suffered under the

weight of playing radio hits (homogenization), so too has the ability for people "to grow

musically" (D, 2003).

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[11] A great mixtape where DP demonstrate a militant "radio"-styled mixtape format.

And while even this kind of attention has been drawn to mixtapes, there is another mixtape format and function to which no attention has been paid; the mixtape as a source of liberated cultural expression and emancipatory journalism. Overall, very little in the ever-accumulating literature focused on hip-hop focuses on the mixtape. And aside from discussions of mixtapes in passing (Brewster and Broughton, 1999; Ards, 2004; Kitwana, 2005) or more recently as background to a focus on copyright infringement and bootlegging (Sanneh, 2005) no discussion of mixtapes as potential sources of journalism has taken place. And generally speaking "little attention has been given to music as a mass medium in theory and research" (McQuail, 2000, p. 26). The mixtape continues to suffer a lack of scholarly focus and, more importantly in terms of a potential journalistic function, the mixtape is an underutilized method of dissent.[12] *FreeMix Radio*, a mixtape that infuses journalism, commentary, historical speeches into a musical hip-hop mix, demonstrates a mixtape function that continues the legacy of anti-colonial, liberating struggle within the geopolitical territory known as the United States.[13] Herein lies the importance of this study. There remains today a need for the mixtape to be acknowledged as part of the historical legacy of African American underground mass communication. This need is rooted in a continuing relationship between Black America and the United States that more closely resembles a colony than an equal member of a pluralistic society.

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[12] I do not mean to ignore the abundant numbers of mixtapes used by underground artists, turntablists and others whose use of the mixtape is as a source of alternative distribution of cultural content. I am merely suggesting that this be politicized, organized and expanded.

[13] Though *FreeMix Radio* gets wide distribution via the internet and otherwise (some have been taken even to Thailand and distributed by a supporter) its target audience is African and Latin America.

THE MIXTAPE AS EMANCIPATORY JOURNALISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF "CONVENTIONAL WISDOM"

In what follows I will resituate African America historically and contemporarily so as to make plain why I see a need for a greater underground mass media and why I see the mixtape as a potential hope for one. Conventional wisdoms as to Black America's current condition and history confuse this need so I will take some time to revisit the historical relationship between Black America and the dominant media. Mythologies of American history and democracy continue to lead many "media reformists" to a misguided belief that there is potential to democratize media in a decidedly undemocratic society. They often miss the point I will be developing herein, that media hardly function independently of societal institutional structures or absent some determined societal function/purpose.

To help correct this misapprehension I will join the ranks of those whose scholarship, more often than not, recognizes this reality and will be reviving some anti-colonial theory which will help in my explanation of a need to practice what Hemant Shah has called emancipatory journalism (1996). Through the aforementioned three-pronged methodology, I will suggest that while definite challenges exist so too does the potential for the mixtape to serve that journalistic purpose. For despite common sense notions of progress – notions that C. Wright Mills appropriately calls "more common than sense" (Mills, C.W.; 1956, p. 54) – we are, as Robin Kelley explains, "by no means in some post-colonial moment" (2002, p. 201). A look at the mixtape will help to make clear that we are not yet saved (Louis, 1997), but instead are all caught in an international "reactionary intercommunal" (Hilliard and Weise, 2002) relationship. Simply put, Newton's intercommunalism theory holds that in a world in which there is but one super-

power nations cease to exist. More than nonexistence the mythical nation-state no longer

can be anything to which a process of decolonization can return us. What we are left

with are disparate communities all interrelated and all bound in service to that one super-

power which is, in fact, an empire. This relationship is currently, as Newton said,

"reactionary" and is in need of becoming a "revolutionary" intercommunal one where all

recognize our interrelationship and work within it to the benefit of, as opposed to the

current exploitation, the people of the world. Exposing this in terms of reality and

mechanization will help encourage new ways of approaching journalistic practice and

function of mass media.

  My own creation, *FreeMix Radio* is meant to elevate the status of the mixtape to

the level of the 19th century militant pamphlet *Appeal* of David Walker or the 20th century

crusading anti-lynching journalism of Ida B. Wells and the guerrilla *Radio Free Dixie* of

Robert Williams. For despite a saturated media environment we remain in need of a 21st

century equivalent to these forms of underground, autonomous and liberated media. We

remain in need of the "social revolution" called for by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967)

whose arrival is impossible without, in part, what George Jackson once argued, "an

increasingly pervasive underground press with new emphasis on a 'mass style'" (1971, p.

43). Given that hip-hop continues to increase in popularity, that "advances" in

technology do not result in advances in equanimity (Hilliard and Weise, 2002; Phillips,

2002) and that we today have less control or access to dominant media than at any other

time, my suggestion is an increased development of an alternative press that is driven by "primitive"[14] technology.

While we are rapidly moving deeper into an era of hyper-technology and new media, our needs may yet best be served by what is by now a primitive technological form, the compact disc (CD) mixtape. The mixtape, like hip-hop in general, developed underground, found its own methods of distribution in the face of an inaccessible dominant mass media only to find itself too succumbing to a colonial, capitalist co-optation. Mixtapes, originally cassette and now mostly compact-discs (CDs), originated alongside hip-hop in the early 1970s New York City[15] as a means by which DJs who were lacking access to radio, video or industry outlets recorded their sessions, duplicated them and distributed them through cabs, barber shops, beauty salons, parties, etc. (Boucher, 2003). Mixtapes introduced to a wider audience the skills of the DJ, "the cream of nonmusical musicians," (Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey,* p. 340.) and music and/or musical mixes not likely to be heard anywhere else. Today, much like any other genre or medium, mixtapes are both sanctioned as legal enterprises in support of industry artists and unsanctioned, illegal enterprises that are claimed to be part of a larger piracy/bootlegging concern that hurts artists (Sanneh, 2005) [16], a claim that has been empirically proven false (Oberholzer and Strumpf, 2004).

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[14] Perhaps this is a good time to add to the existing attempts to reclaim the word "primitive" or "first" whose negative connotation was subsequently ascribed in quite imperial fashion.

[15] Primarily, but mixtapes were found wherever DJ-ing took place.

[16] Legally DJs such as Kay Slay, Clue, Envy and others have record label sanctioned mixtapes. Illegally they remain sold by street vendors and are said to be the cause of a loss of industry profits.

The following chapters will examine the need for a new philosophy and practice of journalism geared to the condition of African America. In the following chapters I will explain just what is emancipatory journalism, how this philosophy and journalistic practice is applicable to African America, the need to relate this to existing cultural industry practice and function, the historical legacy of resistance media in which I am seeking to place the mixtape, and the results of and responses to my focus group study of the potential for the mixtape to serve this purpose. This study will be conducted in a three-pronged approach: 1) an explication of the literature demonstrating an alternative reading of American history, journalistic practice and education, 2) a seminal analysis of the mixtape and its application as a form of mass press and 3) focus group analysis designed to gauge the potential of the mixtape to serve as a source of emancipatory journalism.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

EMANCIPATORY JOURNALISM

Emancipatory journalism is tied to several theories of journalism: development

journalism, social-responsibility, democratic-participant and communitarian journalism,

civic or advocacy (Shah, 1996; McQuail, 2000). As Shah summarizes, these theories of

the press do not involve the necessary "critical reanalysis of the context from which they

emerged" specifically the "Western interpretations" of which these theories attempt to

"universalize" absent a particular consideration of the cultures and worldviews of the

majority rest of the world, and certainly not those colonized by the West (Shah, p. 146).

The phrase "emancipatory journalism" is generally applied outside of the Western-

dominated theoretical and practical discourse (Shah, 1996). The present discussion,

however, finds it useful to consider emancipatory journalism because of its focus on a

"Third World" model of national development and thus its applicability to the context of

Black America. The connections between Black America and emancipatory journalism,

with all its theoretical associations, will be discussed in this chapter. Hemant Shah

explains that "the emancipatory goal of journalism is to promote and contribute to

humane development." Such development, according to Shah, has three central foci:

(a) meeting both basic material needs, such as food, shelter,

clothing, and nonmaterial needs, such as dignity, respect, and peace; (b)

empowering people so they may articulate and manage their own

development; and (c) ameliorating spatiotemporal and other obstacles to

humane development, such as poverty and inequality; divisions of

caste, race, and gender; and corrupt and unresponsive bureaucratic

organization (Shah, 1996).

Further, emancipatory journalism involves more than an ideological perspective. It

encourages its practitioners to be fully involved in movements for social change (Shah,

1996). Far from encouraging any journalistic pretense of neutrality or objectivity

emancipatory journalism holds that the journalist is her/himself as being directly involved

in manifesting "humane development."

The importance of this demystification of objectivity in emancipatory journalism

cannot be overstated, particularly considering that objectivity has become an "ideology"

(Schudson, 1989) or "philosophy" (Lichtenberg, 1991) in American journalism. While

Schudson acknowledges that objectivity, as an ideal, is a "peculiar demand" to put on an

institution of journalism that is a business "dedicated to economic survival" (p. 81).

Lichtenberg recognizes the argument that the rhetoric of objectivity is "a strategy of

hegemony used by some members of society to dominate others" (p. 217). However,

neither scholar extends this discussion to touch on how objectivity affects society or

specifically groups whose historical relationship to a society is characterized more as the

struggle of the colonial subject than the beloved or included citizen. Discussion of

objectivity is insufficient absent the context of the colonial setting existent in nations

around the world including the United States.

The conservative Walter Lippmann, touching on the topic of objectivity, made

clear the role journalism played during two European struggles for global dominance that

are popularly called "World Wars." During the first of these World Wars, Lippmann

wrote at length describing a lack of objectivity in the form of political, economic and national biases of presses involved in these conflicts (1921). A more contemporary study has shown the dominance of public relations over war coverage in Iraq (Hiebert, 2003), where Hiebert describes the emphases of political and military leaders on fighting a "media war" and illustrates the acknowledged relationship between mass media, press coverage and the exercise of power (p. 244). And along these same lines are the discussions of the role mass media play in a globalizing communication network. Marshall McLuhan argued some years ago that the coming "global village" would be greatly affected by forms of mass communication. He argued that new technologies create "new environments" which shape our perception of what we consider to be real (p. 24). Questioning this perspective but also considering the impact on globalization by mass communication, Gurevitch (1991) questions the notion that international conflict is a result of poor communication going so far as to ask whether more communication "is a good thing" (p. 178). Like other scholars, Gurevitch examines and questions the function of journalism within larger institutions and in the context of domestic and international politics.

Shah (1996) is first to coin the phrase "emancipatory journalism" and to theorize that our society is characterized by a lack of freedom, hence; the need for "emancipation." This expands greatly on a problem noticed by Louis Wirth when he considered that, "people may never know that they are exploited and oppressed until they see their own humble status juxtaposed to an actual condition of relative freedom..." (Wirth, 1948). Shah's focus is on the experience of the majority of the world (i.e. those considered as "minorities" in the United States or part of the "Third World" or neo-

colonies), and he challenges current Western notions of journalism practice and media

research by placing them both properly within the context of European imperial

expansion and colonization from which they emerged.

Shah's argument exposes as fraudulent the constant underlying theme among those

of the West who say that, despite potential problems of capitalistic monopoly, their

systems of media are free relative to the elite- "strictly controlled and manipulated"

media of the Third World. Shah writes, "I contend that press freedom per se is not the

issue that deserves close scrutiny. Rather, it is the politicization of the notion of press

freedom that needs to be examined carefully" (Shah, 1996, p.144). In his opening

statements Shah explains that the debate surrounding emancipatory journalism's

ideological seed development journalism:

> needs to be reconceptualized because deliberations about its
>
> validity and usefulness have been bogged down in arguments structured
>
> by Western notions of press freedom. The debate has diverted attention
>
> from important questions about how journalism can contribute to
>
> participatory democracy, security, peace, and other humanistic values
>
> (Shah, 143).

The struggles of the "Third World" to develop a journalism theory and practice

that supported their struggles against post-World War II European neocolonialism

culminated in the 1960s establishment of development journalism at the Press Foundation

of Asia in Manila "as independent journalism that provided constructive criticism of

government and its agencies, informed readers how the development process was

affecting them, and highlighted local self-help projects" (Shah, p. 143). This fundamental belief in how journalism was to be practiced has evolved into the contemporary theory coined by Shah.

Emancipatory journalism, as mentioned, assumes a lack of freedom for those of the colonized world. This is of prime importance in making its own defense. Only under a myth of "freedom" can arguments in defense of any form of "neutrality" or "objectivity" be made. But by placing the experience, history and culture of those colonized – those of the non-West who are a majority of the world – a lack of freedom is not merely assumed, it is known. It is here that emancipatory journalism truly separates itself from similar ideas of media and journalism practice. Shah explains the differences between emancipatory journalism and the theories of social responsibility, democratic-participant, communitarian and advocacy or civic journalism (Shah, 1996, pp. 144-146 and H. Shah, personal communication, May 14, 2003).

He separates emancipatory journalism based largely on the call of the latter for reporting with a "critical edge" that will challenge the media to be an instrument in social change, that any notion of neutrality be discarded in favor of reporting that brings explanation of oppressive forces to grass root levels and encourages (if not demands) that journalists be directly linked to movements for social, political and economic change. Shah explains that he had once hoped that the burgeoning field of civic journalism would continue where development journalism left off but upon realizing that this would not occur sought himself to expand the established framework. In fact, according to Shah, the well- meaning developers and supporters of civic journalism lost out to the corruption of it by the corporate media structure who turned it in to a method "marketing" to these

specific and marginalized groups (H. Shah, personal communication, May 14, 2003).

EMANCIPATORY JOURNALISM AND THE WEST

Pertaining to the context of the United States, Shah defended emancipatory journalism against critics who either said it is not viable, could not work, or that there simply was nothing to be applied here or learned from the Third World. He explained that just as there is the aforementioned myth of Western press freedom that there is the attendant myth of the West being free from ideology or politics (H. Shah, personal communication, May 14, 2003). Therefore, emancipatory journalism, having such a decided ideological outlook, was illegitimate. This is supported in McQuail's description of civic journalism that because it employs a "Trustee model" we can "see a basis of legitimation in the professionalism of the journalist" (McQuail, p. 159). From this we can infer, open criticism of the established order means a lack of professionalism and some kind of irrational thought and practice. Emancipatory journalism builds, extends or evolves canonized theories that do at minimum attempt to address the ideological function of mass media. Certainly Marxist theory contends that there is an elite-supporting ideological function of the press.

Stuart Hall, in his expansion of encoding/decoding, discusses the ideological function "of concealing the practices of coding" (Hall, 1980, p.170) and has recognized that "mass media have colonized the cultural and ideological sphere" (Spitulnik, p. 295). And Lazarsfeld and Merton too seemingly point to an ideological function of mass media when discussing "a virtual psychological monopoly of the mass media" (Lazarsfeld & Merton, p.117). Aside from defining the particular ideology in practice there is a

discussion of it within canonized (or recognized) media theory. What emancipatory journalism does is place that ideology within a colonial, dominant paradigmatic context thereby explaining the necessity for those suffering from it to practice a journalism that seeks to upset existing oppressive forces.

In fact, what Shah explains is another difference between emancipatory journalism and recognized media theory and even criticism is emancipatory journalism's non-project base and emphasizes its philosophical one. This, he says, has again been met with the standard discarding language of being "too ideological." Shah explains that his critics claim that he has "an ax to grind" with journalism and journalists to which he replies, "well, I do" (H. Shah, personal communication, May 14, 2003). This again points to why emancipatory journalism, and Shah's work, should become part of the canon. He offers an openly philosophical basis for journalistic practice one he says is necessary to go beyond popularized criticism of media institutions as needing ownership change or regulation. This, Shah argues, does not completely address the issue. If the philosophical practice of the journalists involved does not change no rearranging of leadership/ownership will change existing journalistic practice. This philosophical outline of emancipatory journalism is explained by Shah in order he says to organize it and maintain some kind of tenet-based practice that prevents a simple freeform and ultimately ineffective journalistic practice. The three primary aspect of a journalism of emancipation include; 1) a concern for the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of development, 2) a democratic bottom-up flow of communication and 3) an unconventional approach to reporting (Shah, 1996, pp. 155-157).

The first aspect recognizes that there can be no "universal meaning of

development" but that emancipatory journalists must focus on meeting material and nonmaterial needs of oppressed communities, empowering people to manage their own development and alleviating division resulting from a dominant-societal practice of racism, sexism, class bias, etc. This allows for direct interaction and involvement at all stages of journalistic practice the people whose needs are being questioned and determined.

Secondly, news reporting should come from the perspective of those most negatively affected by development, modernization, globalization, etc. This would mean the inclusion of the majority in any society as opposed to the top-down flow of information and perspective that dominates Western media. As happens most often now reporting of these trends/events does not include the perspectives, fears, concerns of those whose lives are most affected by them. Shah explains that emancipatory journalism, "empowers [the grassroots] to become senders of mass media messages and to resist definitions imposed by the West or by urban elites" (Shah, 1996, p.156).

Thirdly, emancipatory journalism "makes explicit efforts to promote reform and encourage social action" (Shah, 1996, p.156). Doing so allows consumers of emancipatory journalism to become aware of community needs and methods or actions to take to bring about positive change in their communities. It also makes possible agenda-setting from the bottom-up as well by affording people an opportunity to determine what remains in the forefront of their policy-makers. Ultimately, emancipatory journalism makes natural the involvement of people in their own community development and removes people from the margins of their societies. By advocating direct involvement in social action emancipatory journalism becomes a method, practice or philosophy of any

group that is or feels as though they are in the margin and challenges the false

consciousness of "democracy" or "freedom."

The practice of emancipatory journalism within the United States, and among Black

Americans specifically, has long been practiced. My only contribution here is my

application of an officially delineated and named theoretical/philosophical practice of

journalism to contemporary African America with the mixtape as the medium. Absent

the particular phraseology Black Americans (though not exclusively) have long since

been engaged in the practice of emancipatory journalism. African Americans have from

the first been involved in the development of resistance media meant to combat popular

image and mainstream press obeisance to national norms as they pertained to the

treatment and imaging of African descendants in these lands. I will now highlight some

of this work in order to better place my call for a new mixtape function.

COLONIALISM AND RESISTANCE MEDIA: A LIBERATING RESPONSE TO CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Conventional wisdom can be unhealthy and often results in poor analyses. That

anyone should be encouraging the development of a technologically simple underground

press in 2005 may to some seem strange. But such an idea gains power when considering

the US context of a mythologized history and a misunderstanding of the role media play

therein (Aptheker, 1944; Parenti, 1993; Zinn, 1999; Parenti, 2002). Attendant to this

mythologized history is the existence of a mythologized present. A mythological

freedom prevents sharper assessments of the present or strategies for change. According

to recent reports from United for a Fair Economy (Muhammad, et al., 2004) and the

National Urban League (Clemens, 2005) African America is making no progress and

even devolving in areas of health care, housing, employment, income and incarceration.

Economist Claude Anderson has said that African Americans today hold the same "1/10 of 1 percent" of the nation's wealth as was held in 1860 (p. 6). And comparisons to traditionally held colonies have shown Black America's relative similar condition but have also made the point that Black America's relative material condition needs to be compared not with the so-called "Third World" but to the rest of the United States in order to properly illustrate the truly horrendous conditions facing most of the country's Black population (Marable, 1983/2000; Kunjufu, 2002; United Nations, 2005).

An internal colony remains and can be seen in terms of the nation's spatial relations. African America is as separate and distinct as has ever been the case. For instance, in metropolitan America the average White citizen continues to live in a community that is 80% White and 7% Black, while a "typical black individual lives in a neighborhood that is only 33% white and as much as 51% black" (Logan, 2001). Derrick Bell, legal scholar, author and professor at New York University, wrote recently of public schools, in *Silent Covenants*, that this current rate – in some cases a segregation rate of 99.2% - "leaves two-tenths of one percentage points as the distinction between legally enforced segregation in the South of fifty years ago..." (pp.127-128, 2004). Jonathan Kozol has also returned to make this point suggesting that today's segregated education is not only as bad as ever but results for Black and Latin America in an "economically enforced apartheid" (p.9) and "cognitive decapitation" (2005). Further, according to a 1998 report from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation the United States has, in fact, become what the 1968 Kerner Commission report on racial equality warned nearly forty years ago. That is, we are now a nation of "two societies, one Black, one White,

separate, hostile and unequal" (*Journal of Men's Studies*, 9/2003). We should note also that this same Kerner Commission report found that a fundamental problem causing this division was in large part due to inaccurate images and reporting disseminated via mass media (1967).

Maintaining/explaining/justifying this has long since meant image or perception management. The point was recently articulated by comedian, activist and dietician Dick Gregory during our Pacifica Radio interview.[17] When the subject arose my colleague reminded Mr. Gregory of a comment he made some years ago, one that remains true today, that "one of the main problems facing the American Negro is that we have never been able to control our own image" (2005). He summarized what has been the ongoing need of an institutional control of Black image and the coexistent resistance against that control. This conflict has been described as a "war of images" (Dates and Barlow, 1993) and in a brief overview of this history the two authors trace the legacy of the role image has played as carried through "mass media [that] help to legitimate the inequalities in class, race, gender, and generational relations for commercial purposes" (p.4). While I argue that commercial purposes themselves serve a deeper concern over social control what remains agreed upon is that this symbiotic relationship between image and power not only continues but is in another ascendancy.

It is within this struggle that a Black underground press emerged, has always existed and today needs further support. Writer John Oliver Killens once explained the fundamental difference in perspective between African and European America that has

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[17] *The Blackademics*. Part of Washington, DC's Pacifica Network hip-hop block, Decipher: The Music, The Movement, The Message. 89.3FM Tuesdays 11p-12a. Online at www.WPFW.org

since governed the differing practice of, and relationship to, journalism and mass media. That difference, he explained, was that the United States to European descendants had been their "freedom" but to African descendants "our slavery" (Louis, 1997, p. 24).

For the United States generally, and African America specifically, it is that enslavement which remains the standard by which we judge historical and contemporary condition. With that most horrendous existence as the standard it becomes that much more difficult to highlight current injustice. Can we today look critically at the function of an Oprah Winfrey when the conventional wisdom is that there is no longer a need for a Harriet Tubman? How might our view change were our standard for the human condition not plantation slavery but something else entirely? If our standard, real or mythologized, were something vastly different, and we did see a need for a Harriet Tubman in 2005 what would we do? What if the standard of plantation slavery was replaced with a standard of a historical or futuristic freedom? Would we be so readily willing to accept the state of the world today?

Similarly, existing myths as to the origin and history of American mass media or press make it that much more difficult to see that the American Revolution was simply a shift from King George III to President George I. Would we not judge differently today's practice of journalism and the general function of mass media were the equally false labels of "democracy," "free press," and the "fourth estate" not applied? What if this mythologized standard were replaced with one that held as true that the press has never been free and that media in this society (as in all) have always been in the service of the ruling elite? Would we view differently today's media reform movement and its goals of "democratizing media?" Can there be a democratic media in a decidedly undemocratic

society? Likewise, what form would criticism of current journalistic practice take if we were to dismiss the false standard of there having once been a better press? Failure to address these considerations has led many a scholar of journalism to either misidentify the core problems facing the press or to prescribe remedies that are simply inapplicable to our current condition (Herman, 1999; Barsamian, 2001; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Crouteau and Hoynes, 2001; Goodman and Goodman, 2004; McChesney, 2004; McChesney, Newman and Scott, 2005).

So just as today's Black existence is consistently measured against plantation slavery, thus creating a false standard, so too is a false standard of freedom and democracy applied to a history of the American press and function of media. This is not to say that freedom and democracy are poor goals for society; instead, my point here is that while chattel slavery is no standard from which to compare current existence neither is a press freedom or democracy – *which have never existed* – a proper standard by which to judge the practice and function of the modern-day press or mass media. The problems emerge from the same source. Media play a similar role in every society. So then, as now, as always, the acceptable media and, therefore, journalistic practice, serve to maintain order as prescribed by that society's leadership. Prior to the completion of the shift in power from the monarch to the plutocrat, the elite in the US called for a "free press." Shortly after the transfer of power over to the hands of the ruling mercantile class, that call became one for the market-model, solidifying an elite press and forever establishing other media as alternative, underground, fringe or dissident. The colony became the colonizer.

But, in fact, it had always been. It is this issue of colonialism and the function of media as protectors of that established order that delivered up the on-going need for resistance media. Kwame Ture (1996) once spoke of the need of any society to have a common "myth of origin" that would unify its population and supply the requisite popular ideological focus necessary for societal cohesion (1996). It is perfectly consistent and, therefore, understandable that there exists an American form of this myth. I, however, align myself with those who sees accepted American myths of origin as entirely incompatible with my own. This American mythology, described below, exists – though not exclusively – with the support of mass media. By *media* I do not simply mean the "organized technologies that make mass communication possible" (McQuail, p. 14), i.e., radio, television, newspapers, etc. Instead, media are "the plural of medium" and, therefore, are the "range of possible channels of communication employed in discourse" (McLeish, 1995, p. 459). This is important because as McLeish explains, discourse refers "to the way systems function in culture, ideology, language and society" - and most important of all - "the way in which that functioning reflects and sustains power and those who wield it" (p. 207).

THE ISSUE OF CULTURE

Similarly, by *culture* I do not mean merely language, dress, art, etc. Instead, I see culture more as an invisible worldview, frame of reference or paradigm out of which those aforementioned visible traits emanate. I envision culture to be more along the lines of what Clifford Geertz, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), describes as "a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions… - for the governing of

behavior." He continues, "that man is precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms…" (p. 44). Culture for him "begins with the assumption that human thought is basically both social and public… a traffic in significant symbols" which are "words for the most part but also gestures, drawings, *musical sounds*… anything, in fact, that is disengaged from mere actuality and used to impose meaning upon experience" (p. 45, emphasis added). Geertz's concept of culture is a "semiotic one," where "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of *meaning*" (p. 5, emphasis added). This is of particular interest to me as my attempt in this dissertation is to place the practice of culture and journalism within a colonial context where meaning and function are of prime importance.

Marimba Ani, in *Yurugu* (1994), offers useful summaries of culture as well. She quotes Wade Nobles who says that culture is a "process which gives people a general *design* for living patterns for *interpreting* their reality" (p. 4, emphasis added). Perhaps more important to my own focus is her description of culture as being "extremely political in nature, since [it is] about the *definition of group interest*, the determination of group destiny and common goals" (pp. 5-6, emphasis added). For East African writer Ngugi Wa Thiongo, in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of African Literature* (1986), culture "embodies those… spiritual eyeglasses through which [people] come to view themselves and their place in the universe… Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries" (p. 15). And though I do not share his difficulty in seeing culture as

"antiseptically quarantined from its worldly [i.e. political] affiliations," I do agree with Edward Said when he writes, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), that "culture can even be a battleground" and that "the challenge is to connect [cultural expression or art] not only with pleasure and profit but also with the imperial process of which they [are] manifestly and unconcealedly a part" (p.xiii and xiv). For Said, and myself, the issue is how does cultural production, expression and/or dissemination function in support or justification of the kinds of exploitation inherent to imperialism and colonialism. In other words, culture is no joke. "Pop culture" is often discussed in smirks and dismissed with shrugs. But to me it is not simply a discussion about fads and styles but about conscious-shaping worldviews with real political and material consequences. In fact, McQuail is correct when noting that "in respect of culture, the mass media constitute a primary source of definitions and images of social reality and the most ubiquitous expression of shared identity" (p. 4).

<center>**THROUGH THE COLONIAL LENS**</center>

A clarification of my concerns with the two dominant myths – one of America and the other of free press – will be helpful in explaining the theory and practice involved in *FreeMix Radio*. Traditional forms of study often de-center the experiences of non-Whites, or the world's majority. Re-centering the experience of Black people is one method of addressing that tendency and open up the dialogue to include a wider array of applicable perspectives. My selection of a colonial lens is meant to do just that. As William K. Tabb wrote in *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto* (1970), the use of such a model, "allows the application to the ghetto of theoretic tools of analysis used in

the study of developing nations" (p.3). But defining a colony, or colonialism, is not always easily done. DuBois realized this challenge as he wrote in *Color and Democracy, Colonies and Peace*:

> What then are colonies? Leaving analogies, in this case none too good, we look to facts, and find them also elusive. It is difficult to define a colony precisely. There are the dry bones of statistics; but the essential facts are neither will measured nor logically articulated. After all, an imperial power is not interested primarily in censuses, health surveys, or historical research. Consequently we know only approximately, and with wide margins of error, the colonial population, the number of the sick and the dead, and just what happened before the colony was conquered (Lewis, p. 677).

By colony I simply mean a racially, ethnically and geographically distinct group whose politics, economics and social/cultural lives are controlled from afar by a dominant group (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967). In this case, African America exists as an "internal colony" to the United States whose White elite act as the "Mother Country" would in a traditional colonial relationship. That is, labor, wealth, cultural expression are all "mined," packaged, marketed and sold back to that community (and others) in such a way that derived benefits rest overwhelmingly with the latter.

This analogy is nothing new and has for some time now been used to analyze Black America's condition (Fanon, 1964; Memmi, 1965; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Kofsky, 1970; Tabb, 1970; Blauner, 1972; Cabral, 1973; Barker, et al., 1999, Kunjufu, 2002). An important work by Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (1972),

helps us along toward some clarity. First he assists in the rescue of the term "colony" from its popular use in US history. One problem, as Blauner explains, is the disconnect created between the "imperialism of Western societies" and the "American racial experience" which he says becomes "blurred" by the "standard usage of the term 'colonial America'" (p. 12). Blauner says, "in emphasizing the relations between the emerging nation of white settlers and the English mother country rather than the *consolidation of white European control*, the conventional usage separates the American experiences from the matrix of Western European expansion" (p. 12, emphasis added). The mythology shifts focus from what was more a replacement of the monarchy with a plutocracy with a tale of liberation from oppression. The nation merely went from a King George to a President George with little material difference for the majority of people colonized therein. Or as McLuhan has even considered, "the American Presidency has become very much more personal and monarchical than any European monarch ever could be" (1964, p. 29).

The similarity of the new world to the old is the crux of Howard Zinn's chapter called "A Kind of Revolution" (Zinn, 1999) and Michael Parenti's "A Constitution for the Few" (Parenti, 2002). Both argue that the newly established nation was more akin to a reorganization of power whereby a Constitution was established as a compromise between the two groups vying for dominance: "slaveholding interests in the South and the moneyed interests of the North" (Zinn, p.98). Parenti quotes a French visitor to the newly forming country who noted that while there were "no nobles" there was a very similar class "of men denominated gentlemen" (p. 43). Zinn notes that in the last decades of the 18th century only "3 percent" could be considered wealthy landowners.

Currently, even within the halls of the nation's most esteemed journalism and media studies programs, this historical reality is turned on its head by those professing a mythologized view of *The Federalist Papers*. In #2, writing of the blessings of "Providence" that bestowed upon "one united people – a people descended from the same ancestors" a nation, John Jay clarifies the intent that this be a *White* nation (Rossiter, p. 38). And in #10 James Madison, who proudly exclaimed being able to purchase enslaved Africans for $13 each out of which he would make $257 per from their labor (Parenti, p. 42), writes clearly that republicanism will forever *prevent* democracy, thereby, protecting the elite from mass "faction." He wrote that these factions, made up of the poor and those of inferior quality, might one day want to engage in the "wicked projects" of equally distributing property and wealth. To protect against such "diseases" of democracy Madison argued in favor of a representative government disbursed over three branches in order to prevent the "spread" of these ignoble ventures (Rossiter, p. 84). This goes without saying that women of all backgrounds, all Native people and all Africans were excluded from the discussion entirely.

Again, the protection of minority interest continues to mean projecting that group's interest onto the larger community. As Marx was correct that "the ideas of any time are the ruling ideas" (Kofsky, p. 13). In 1860, according to W.E.B. DuBois, 5 million white southerners owned no slaves and of the 2 million who did "an oligarchy of 8,000 really ruled the South." Better stated, he explained, that 7% of the South owned 76% of those held as slaves (1935, pp. 26, 32). In fact, this imbalance even in the most egregious form of exploitation led Karl Marx to write to Lincoln on the eve of his Emancipation

Proclamation[18] congratulating him for freeing *European* labor as a result of toppling that slaveholding Southern "oligarchy" (p. 168). Baran and Sweezy explained long ago in *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (1966)*:*

> The Civil War was not fought by the Northern ruling class to free the slaves, as many mistakenly believe. It was fought to check the ambitions of the Southern *slave-owning oligarchy* which wanted to escape from what was essentially a *colonial relation* to Northern capital. The abolition of slavery was a by-product not its purpose, and Northern capitalism had no intention... of liberating the Negro in any meaningful sense (p. 252, emphasis added).

Again, it is this "colonial relation" that is important to understanding the historical tie between American media and its Black subjects against which the latter would struggle from then to now.

Further unpacking the role of image Blauner (1972) explains how it is only the created and projected "self-image of our national ethos" that "has deeply repressed" the "realities of our heritage." When we hear the words "colony" or "colonialism" we tend only to think about the European "domination of Asia and Africa" which "reached its peak in the late nineteenth century…" However, Blauner reminds us, the heritage of the

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[18] Lincoln actually freed not one human being and spent most of his life trying to prevent genuine equality among the "races" (Bennett, 1999). In fact, a close reading of the 13th Amendment shows not only that Lincoln's Proclamation was a farce but that slavery is no less illegal now than at any point in American history. It only requires that one be first convicted of a crime.

United States "has always been a part of this Western colonial dynamic, however isolated… from the European center." Blauner accurately illustrates that connection to European colonialism when he writes:

> Our own development proceeded on the basis of India conquests and land seizures, on the enslavement of African peoples, and in terms of a westward expansion that involved war with Mexico and the incorporation of half that nation's territory. In the present period our economic and political power penetrates the entire non-Communist world, a new American empire, basing its control on neocolonial methods, having supplanted the hegemony of the European nations. *A focus on colonialism is essential for a theory that can integrate race and racial oppression into a larger view of American social structure* (p. 12, emphasis added).

(This last sentence is of prime importance here as I will be using colonialism as a basis to not only draw links to Black America's current condition, but also so as to incorporate a wider array of anti-colonial theories and strategies into this project).

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COLONIZATION

Colonies have long been written about in terms of their necessity in creating wealth and power for the tiniest of minorities. Regardless of the form, however, there is generally speaking a common result. That is the colonized always find themselves

controlled from afar in three primary areas; economic, political and social/cultural (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967, p. 3). In some cases colonies serve to expunge excess labor and populations which reduces competition at home. Others discuss colonies in terms of the land, natural resources and cheap labor they supply (Smith, 1776; Marx, 1976; Williams, 1935; Tabb, 1972; Blauner, 1977; Kunjufu, 2002). Both somewhat apply to African America and in either case the end result remains; enormous wealth for a few and descending scales of poverty and exploitation for the rest, i.e. the "colonial pyramid" (Memmi, 1965). Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations* (1776) was clear about the importance of colonies to historical Europe. For Greece, Smith explained, colonies were meant to rid itself of surplus populations, "when the people in any one [territory] multiplied beyond what the territory easily maintained, a part of them was sent in quest of a new habitation…" (p. 414.). Of Columbus and his voyage to St. Domingo Smith further explains the importance of colonies saying that the, "pious purpose of converting [Indigenous People] to Christianity sanctified the injustice of the project" but the search for gold and silver for the crown was the "sole motive" (p.420).

Similarly, as V.I. Lenin pointed to the practicality of imperialism. In *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1939/2000), Lenin tells of Cecil Rhodes – the notorious conqueror of Southern Africa and founder of DeBeers diamond company[19] –and of how Rhodes explained that to save the "40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from bloody Civil War, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population… If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists"

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[19] Rhodes, according to Bernard Magubane in *The Making of a Racist State*, greatly lamented the separation of the White nations of England and the United States. His goal was the reunification of the two as a centerpiece for a global White dominion. For his part he would conquer Africa from "the Cape to Cairo" (pp.97-120).

(Lenin, p. 79). Aime Cesaire, in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955/1972/2000), cites a

French version of the same where Carl Siger is said to have written that colonies "offer a

vast field for individual, violent activities" which at home would be seen as problematic

considering "a sober and orderly *conception* of life… Thus to a certain extent colonies

can serve as *a safety valve for modern society*. Even if this were their only value, it

would be immense" (pp.41-42, emphasis added).

Eric Williams explained in *Capitalism and Slavery* (1935) the use of colonies as

either places for resettlement, as in the North American colonies, or as suppliers of raw

materials and natural resources, as in the islands of the Caribbean (p. 4). He also further

explains Rhodes' concerns by showing how "two-thirds of the immigrants to

Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century were white servants" and how "convicts

provided another steady source of white labor" (pp. 10-11) . The need to secure colonies

and rid homelands of excess population led to the establishment of severe

"transportation" laws. Initially feudal England had over 300 crimes punishable by

hanging by 1745 shipment to the colonies was sentence for crimes as low as "the theft of

a silver spoon and a gold watch" (pp. 11-12). Massive importation of these "convicted

criminals"[20] from England led Benjamin Franklin to lament the reception of "outcasts

from the Old [World]" suggesting that the colonies in the "New" return the favor by

shipping "rattlesnakes" back to England (Williams, 1944/1994, p. 12). But as Williams

reminds that the "great increase of indentured servants and free emigrants would have

tended to render the convict influence innocuous, as increasing quantities of water poured

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[20] Comparisons can and will be made between those convicted of such petty crimes in
order to supply labor to colonies to the modern form of convicting the Black and poor on
equally petty crimes (usually non-violent drug possession offenses) to feed America's
number one business – the prison-industrial-complex.

in a glass containing poison" (p. 12). And few saw the negative as did Franklin. The vast majority of the elite recognized the need for the cheap labor and the wealth (i.e. power) they would incur as a result (p. 12).

It is this recognition that would lead Lenin to note the fact that by the end of the nineteenth century, "… all the free territory of the globe, the with the exception of China[21], has been occupied by the powers of Europe and North America" (p.86). Among the reasons for this vast spread of European and North American capital investment (or economic control) was that "in the colonial market it is easier to eliminate competition" because there opportunities for "monopoly" control over labor-pools and natural resources was possible (p. 84). There was no greater way to gain so much. The trade in enslaved Africans was the initial builder of Western European power. Their way of maintaining such power and remaining in the intra-European competition was/is through colonies.

According to John Henrik Clarke, Flora S. Lugard, or "Lady Lugard," was, before becoming wife to the man responsible for establishing colonial rule over Britain's territories, "one of the first female journalists" and "a supporter of empire [who] went out to the British-governed protectorate that would later become Nigeria to write a series of articles in defense of the British takeover of this territory" (Lugard, 1906/1997, p. i). She later wrote in her book *A Tropical Dependency* (1906/1997) of the "diverse" nature of empire. Explaining, again, the need of colonies for the accumulation of wealth and power beyond the scope of one's immediate society she begins, "it has become the habit

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[21] NPR story today (January 18, 2005) about a new book which discusses the need to weaken China as a competitor by bringing it in to globalization. How this is a method to quell rebellion and "terrorism."

of the British mind to think of the British Empire as a white empire. But, as a matter of

fact, we all know that ours is not a white empire." This is not to say that White

supremacy was any less important at the time of her writing in 1906. She was simply

explaining the need for a White elite to project its interests onto others in order to attain

and maintain inordinate wealth and power. She continues, "Out of an estimated

population of 413,000,000, only 52,000,000 or one in eight are white" (p. 1). In other

words, once one accounted for all the people in British-held Africa and India – seven out

of eight people – whose exploitation was essential to British wealth and dominance, the

empire was awfully "diverse."

Interestingly, Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist of the World Bank, was

recently forced to retire because of his continued reminders that these basic relationships

continue to exist on a heightened and global scale. As he wrote in *Globalization and its*

Discontents (2002), international lending agencies are "pretending to help developing

countries by forcing them to open up their markets to the goods of the advanced

industrial countries [Mother Countries] while keeping their own markets protected,

policies that make the rich richer and the poor more impoverished" (p. xv). Further, John

Perkins has written recently in, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (2004) that his role

as such meant that he was part of a group of:

> ...highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the
>
> globe out of trillions of dollars. They [Economic Hit Men or EHMs] funnel
>
> money from the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development
>
> (USAID), and other foreign 'aid' organizations into the coffers of huge
>
> corporations and the pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planet's

natural resources.   Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged

elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder. They play a game as old as empire,

but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of

globalization (p. ix).

Karl Marx, who is said to be instrumental in the development of the field of mass

communications (Rogers, 1994), we should not forget that he was himself a journalist,

was also clear on the importance of colonies to accumulating wealth for a few. For Marx

the primary difference between the imperial homeland, or Mother Country, and the

colony was the openness with which the elite could express its desires in the latter. He

wrote:

> The great beauty of capitalist production consists in this, that it not
>
> only constantly reproduces the wage-labourer as a wage-labourer, but also
>
> always produces a relative surplus population of wage-labourers in
>
> proportion to the accumulation of capital. Thus the law of supply and
>
> demand of as applied to labour is kept on the right lines, the oscillation of
>
> wages is confined within limits satisfactory to capitalist exploitation, and
>
> lastly, the *social dependence* of the worker on the capitalist, which is
>
> indispensable, is secured. At home, in the mother country, the smug
>
> deceitfulness of the political economist can turn this *relation of absolute*
>
> *dependence* into a free contract between buyer and seller, between equally
>
> independent owners of commodities, the owner of the commodity capital

on one side, the owner of the commodity labour on the other. (Marx,

Capital, p. 935, emphasis added).

"But," as Marx continues, "in the colonies this beautiful illusion is torn aside" (Marx, p. 935). Marx explains that in the colonies the population increase is immediate (as it is not traditionally a part of the Mother Country's population) resulting in more workers than capital or employment. What he argues occurs is that this overflow of workers become themselves independent "peasant[s]" and "artisan[s]" who "disappear" from the pool of available cheap labor but not "into the workhouses" (Kamenka, pp. 499-501). "Think of the horror!" Marx exclaims in jest. For, again, the outcome, and irony, of this colonial situation is that the capitalist loses the home-court advantage so to speak. At home, as just explained, there is a close enough relationship between capital investment, or the number of jobs available, and the needy labor-pool. So the social control mechanism of dependence on the capitalist remains relatively hidden and runs smoothly. Where this balance is upset in the colonies due to higher numbers of unemployed and less capital investment, thus, fewer job alternatives potentially develop among those colonized. If you cannot or will not employ me why then should I feel dependent upon you? The dependence on the capitalist is weakened. Again, for Marx, whether in the imperial Mother Country or colony, the same fundamental relationships exist between the wealthy elite and those whom they employ. The shape of, or methods used, to facilitate that relationship may shift from one location to another but only as those shifts are needed to maintain the elite as such.

And because of my particular focus I am interested also in what Marx's says about a "social relationship of dependence" where the worker must be dependent on the capitalist in order to both preserve the economic and *social* order. Because this recognition makes room for a discussion of culture, and as I will show, the need to shape it for the purpose of maintaining that social order. If the worker, as he explains, does not feel dependent on the capitalist for her/his income the capitalist enters dangerous waters. Marx explains this by making clear that capital only exists "under circumstances in which they serve at the same time as a means of exploitation and subjection of the labourer" (Kamenka, p. 495). In other words, money is only valuable based on its ability to affect a social relationship whereby people do what they are told in order to earn it. A dollar bill will not itself build a house. However, it will allow for the purchase of tools and those who will wield them to build. Parenti (2002) explains how, "wealth is created by the labor power of workers." And quoting Adam Smith he continues that, "labor… is alone the ultimate real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only" (p. 7). More directly related to my immediate topic Marx wrote:

> … *capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things*… A negro is a negro. In certain relations he becomes a slave. A mule is a machine for spinning cotton. Only in certain relations does it become capital. outside these circumstance, it is no more capital than gold is intrinsically money, or sugar is the price of sugar… Capital is a

social relation of production (Marx, *Capital*, p. 932, emphasis

added).

In fact, it is interesting to note Adam Smith's own description of the history of

money altogether (pp. 29-35). The development of coin and money was only to create a

social relationship where none could previously exist. Prior to the advent of coin and

money people traded based on the barter of tangible items. I need your goat you need my

cow we switch. If I needed your goat but had nothing in exchange of any value to you a

substitute had to be offered and its value (real or nominal) created in order to facilitate an

exchange. As Smith says, "when the division of labour has been once thoroughly

established," an individual must rely on the work of others to procure certain items or

have certain work accomplished. The individual no longer is self-sufficient (p. 29).

Therefore, coin and money are created, a value attached and a social relationship (for

good or worse) ensues. You need work, I need money, I then must behave accordingly.

Do what I am told to earn what I need. And my power as a worker only exists to the

extent that labor is organized and has needs which can be appeased absent the employer.

To the extent that it is highly concentrated, and it certainly is, "wealth," as Smith

accurately quotes Thomas Hobbes, "… is power" (p. 37). This continues as more

recently Kevin Phillips has said how, "Power and money represent one of the world's

enduring covert partnerships" (p.xix).

Part of the colonizing mission of Europe was to force the colonized to accept the European form of currency.[22] The United States used the American "greenback" to subdue Native Americans. As described by Lame Deer, "the idea of an Indian having to pay for a [license] in order to be allowed to hunt on his own land to feed his own, genuine, red man's belly seemed like a bad joke to me" (Bramann, Nelson, Patnaik, 1991, p. 75). For the British, who in Kenya could not afford to kill the very people needed for continued labor, used this method to help subdue that nation. Of course, this was not entirely successful as the Kenyan Land and Freedom Party (inaccurately called "Mau Mau") found this unacceptable. The point being, once people are forced, for their own subsistence, to accumulate money controlled by an elite the use of violence as a means of control are less important – but always a potential threat. It reminds me of the statement made by Don Lucheisi in *The Godfather III* where he explains that, "Finance is a gun. Politics is knowing when to pull the trigger" (1990).

CONTROL AND HEGEMONY

The works of Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) and Blauner (1970) talk about the three major areas in which colonial control is administered. For the former the three are broken into politics, economics and social categories. Blauner is a bit different. He discusses the three in terms of first there being a "forced entry" of the colonized into "the larger society" or "metropolitan domain." This is followed by "subjection to various forms of unfree labor" which I will describe briefly in a moment. Thirdly is a "cultural

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[22] This is also at the core of many of the current problems with the Middle East, the euro and the value of the dollar. Were oil to be sold on the basis of the euro the American dollar would collapse.

policy of the colonizer that constrains, transforms, or destroys original values, orientations, and ways of life" (p. 53). Again, while I will offer a glance at the first two it is the cultural form of colonization on which I will largely focus. It is here that we can see the intersection of hip-hop and journalism as means of both control and liberation. Focusing for a moment on the colonized culture has long been an issue of concern.

For Clovis Semmes*, Cultural Hegemony & African American Development* (1992), "cultural hegemony has become the *metaproblem*" whereby, "the systemic negation of one culture by another," is how "economic gain" through "exploitation" is "consummated" (p. 1, emphasis added). In other words, the colonial exploitation of African America is performed through cultural dominance. For Semmes dominance over African America is maintained, similar to Geertz's view, through a "psychic struggle" where control over image, language ("cognitive process"), historiography and spirituality allows the dominant society to "define" relationships, where assimilation is seen as complete "cultural negation" which results in Black America's "full acceptance" of "European hegemonic consciousness" (pp. 1-40).

Whereas earlier we saw Marx describe how in the colony the "pretty fancy" of a benign relationship of wealth to labor is "torn aside"[23] Frantz Fanon explains how this is sustained by using culture to reduce the blunt nature of exploitation, thereby also reducing chances of rebellion among the colonized. In *Toward the African Revolution* (1964) Fanon writes of a "social group" being first "militarily and economically subjugated" and then maintained in that position through a "polydimensional method" involving cultural manipulation in service of a colonial power (p.35). He notes a process,

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[23] Kamenka's translation has it as "torn asunder" (p. 468).

integral to my current study, that mirrors not only the development of traditional colonies but also that of the African American one. First, a "vulgar racism in its biological form corresponds to the period of crude exploitation of man's arms and legs." This is then followed by "the perfecting of the means of production inevitably [bringing] about the *camouflage* of the techniques by which man is exploited" (p. 35, emphasis added). Noam Chomsky has summarized this viewpoint another way suggesting that, "violence is to totalitarianism as propaganda is to democracy" (Jhally, 1997).   And while Marx talks about colonies from the vantage point of one exploring the relationship between European settlers and the Mother Country and Fanon takes the perspective of non-European indigenous people being colonized by a European Mother Country the two both recognize that the wealth of the latter cannot exist without the exploitation of the former and that this process first begins in direct violence followed by various means of indirect coercion.

Blauner, explains how the "voluntary immigration" among Europeans made both individual and ethnic group identification with the "host culture" more a "positive opportunity" than an "alien dominating system" (p. 56).   What he describes as an "immigrant model" created by Eurocentric sociologists "suited the cultural mythology" which attempts to describe everyone as an "original immigrant, later immigrant, a quasi-immigrant or a potential immigrant" (p. 56).   This works to deny differences in relationship and treatment between European and non-European people within the United States. In fact, while those colonized had to have their cultures reshaped to suit and maintain an inferior status of subservience. Europeans and immigrants – who were

certainly oppressed in Europe – were still able to retain and even practice more freely

their cultures here than there (Blauner, p. 65).

While not engaging the on-going debate over Black retention of African culture

(Herskovitz, 1958; Diop, 1992; Ani, 1994; Carruthers, 2000) or whether there exists "an

African culture" (Diop, 1989, 1992) Blauner (1972) acknowledges that African culture

was less erased than reshaped to suit a "colonial dynamic" (p. 66). He rightly explains

that the "colonial attack on culture is more than a matter of economic factors." Differing

from the class oppression within capitalism Blauner argues that for the colonized culture

is used "as an instrument of domination." Because, as described by Killens, that

migration among Europeans was largely voluntary[24] culture was not needed to perform

quite the same function as among the colonized. Blauner continues:

> Colonialism depends on the conquest, control, and *the*
> *impositions of new institutions and ways of thought*. Culture and
> social organizations are important as vessels of a people's
> autonomy and integrity; *when cultures are whole and vigorous,*
> *conquest, penetration, and certain modes of control are more*
> *readily resisted.* Therefore, imperial regimes attempt, consciously
> or unwittingly, either to destroy the cultures of colonized people
> or, when it is more convenient, to exploit them for the purposes of
> more efficient control and economic profit… imperialism exploits
> the cultures of the colonized as much as it does their labor

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[24] I have already discussed some of the complications involved in the use of the term
"voluntary." I recognized the forced migration of many European immigrants to this
nation. However, I am interested in the differences in experience between Europeans and
non-Europeans which remain.

(p. 67, emphasis added).

For Fanon (1964) colonial dynamic "does not" necessitate the "death of the native culture," but in a more ruthless and sinister fashion "the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture" (p. 34). This is a crucial point. The culture of the colonized must survive in some form or fashion so as it create an appearance of validity or "authenticity." Of course, once cultural expression is put to the machinery of capitalist production it loses, as says bell hooks, its "marginal location" and, therefore, is "authentic to what it is," a simple commodity (Jhally, 1996). However, the cultural expression of the colonized must take on an apparent normalcy. It must appear as indigenous, inherent, innate, as things are is as they should be. It should support an image created by the colonizer – "the mythical portrait of the colonized" - so as always to sustain beliefs in a deserved inequality (Memmi, 1965, p. 79). Should it appear too abnormal it might be resisted. Fanon explains further:

> This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, *it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal*. The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking. The apathy so universally noted among colonial peoples is but the logical consequence of this operation. The reproach of inertia constantly direct at "the native" is utterly dishonest. As though it

were possible for a man to evolve otherwise than within the framework of a culture that recognized him and that he decides to assume. Thus we witness the setting up of archaic, inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor's supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions…. *These bodies appear to embody respect for the tradition*, the cultural specificities, the personality of the subjugated people. This pseudo-respect in fact is tantamount to the most utter contempt, to the most elaborate sadism. *The characteristic of a culture is to be open, permeated by spontaneous, generous, fertile lines of force* (p. 34, emphasis added).

And we should not be so quick to dismiss or overlook the importance of this understanding of the use/function of culture within a colonial/imperial context. Consider some recent statements by Zbigniew Brzezinski – by no means a wild-eyed radical. He wrote in *The Grand Chessboard* (1997) first of British rule in Southern Africa intelligently using "cultural superiority" which "successfully asserted and quietly conceded, had the effect of reducing the need to rely on large military forces to maintain the power of the imperial center" (p. 21).   Consider again what Brzezinski says next, in light of Fanon's warning that cultural dominance works to "camouflage" blunt, violent colonial rule:

[Because the population of the United States prefers the idea of America's] pluralistic character… [and] 'sharing' global

power with others… The American global system emphasizes the technique of co-optation… to a much greater extent than the earlier imperial systems did. It likewise relies heavily on the indirect exercise of influence on dependent foreign elites, while drawing much benefit from the appeal of its democratic principles and institutions. All of the foregoing are reinforced by the massive but *intangible impact* of the *American domination of global communications, popular entertainment, and mass culture* and by the potentially very tangible clout of America's technological edge and military reach. *Cultural domination has been an underappreciated facet of American global power*… America's mass culture exercises a magnetic appeal, especially on the world's youth… American television programs and films account for about three-fourths of the global market. American popular music is equally dominant, while American fads, eating habits, and even clothing are exceedingly imitated worldwide. The language of the internet is English, and an overwhelming proportion of the global computer chatter also originates from America, influence the content of global conversation. Lastly, America has become a Mecca for those seeking advanced education, with approximately

half a million foreign students flocking to the united States, with

many of them

never returning home. Graduates from

American universities are to be found in almost every Cabinet on

every continent (pp. 24-25, emphasis added).

For the internal colony of Black America this would simply mean a shift from outright vicious chattel slavery to a more subtle wage slavery buttressed by an *image* of freedom that is cultivated in large part due to an abuse (or proper use depending on perspective) of mass media and the cultural production of the oppressed. Brzezinski's "influence on dependent foreign elites" become for Black America politicians, religious leaders and, more prominently, popular athletes and entertainers. That is, domestically fame and popularity become commodities whose "value" is relative to their ability to encourage acceptance of mythical freedom and buffers – the petty bourgeoisie – between the colonized majority and the colonial power elite. Here, popularity and fame have their nominal value be measured in ability to distract or misinform the communities from which they come and in whose name they are said to be speaking.

COLONIZATION, CULTURE AND POLITICS

If we merge Brzezinski's imperial perspective on culture's function with that of Kenichi Ohmae who two years earlier discussed culture in relation to what he saw as *The End of Nation State* (1995) we, again, see the political implications of controlling the meaning, definition and shape of cultural expression. After describing his view that old

European nation-states, 17th century political constructs meant to facilitate the rule of the true minority, have "lost their role as meaningful units of participation in the global economy of today's borderless world" (p. 11). Ohmae saw then that "groupings based on culture… have already become… the most powerful factors in world affairs" (p. 10). In an age when corporate influence is transnational and supranational - even chapter eleven of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) allows corporations to sue governments in private courts if they enact policies that hurt the profits of that company (Palast, pp. 67- 72) – the impact of cultural export is that much more severe. Not alone in this, more recently, Debra Spitulnik has highlighted studies that explore "how mass media assist in constructing an imagined community of the nation-state" (1993, p. 306). So as the *Lucian James American Brandstand Report* (James, 2004) shows hip-hop's ability to increase corporate global prominence it too demonstrates its ability to serve more along the lines of Ohmae's warning of a "California-ization of taste" which he says "reaches well beyond taste to much more fundamental dimensions of *worldview*" (p. 15, emphasis added). In the end the colonized nation-within-a-nation produces a cultural export which itself is used to maintain the colonial relationship and simultaneously serves to ossify existing colonial relationships.

Huey P. Newton (Hilliard and Weise, 2002) deserves some attention here as well. His expansion of the colonial model adds insight if not necessary complication. George Soros has said recently of American hegemony in *George Soros on Globalization* (2002), that while "the United States cannot do anything it wants... practically nothing can happen without its consent" (p.150). Newton, over thirty years ago, had noted that this kind of power meant that no nations existed only as disparate communities all serving,

one way or another, that singular power or "empire." The world he said was in a "reactionary intercommunalism" where colonialism was no more in that there were no nations to which these people could decolonize. For him it was about the evolution of "revolutionary intercommunalism" whereby these communities all worked with one another for one another as opposed to the current service of empire (1971). That this differs little from Memmi's (1965) view described above allows the colonial lens to remain relevant as a methodical (if not methodological) step toward Newton.

However, colonialism's influence over the culture of the colonized has the intended effect of systemically reinforcing/reinventing itself. Semmes (1992) summarizes the consequence of cultural expression being exposed to the cultural institutions I will discuss further later. He writes:

> ...as Black cultural forms become a powerful vehicle for commodity formation, two problems emerge. First, market forces tend to distill and distort the spiritual and other functional aspects of African American cultural products into a form that only serves market needs, for example, the transformation of spiritual sensuality into vulgar (hedonistic and self-centered) sexuality. Second, a process of deracialization occurs in which the cultural product is detached from a Black referent... [and a lack of]control over mass media institutions alienates Blacks from any cohesive elements of culture (p.130).

Emancipatory journalists Steve Biko and Amilcar Cabral have demonstrated the practice of anti-colonial journalism internationally. Functioning as an Emancipatory Journalist, and writing under the pseudonym of Frank Talk – Biko published countless articles in support of the Black Consciousness Movement he was helping to develop. In a selection of these articles titled, *I Write What I Like* (1978/1996), Biko made clear how "the Anglo-Boer culture had all the trappings of a *colonialist* culture and therefore was heavily equipped for conquest" (p. 41, emphasis added). Then, relating culture to a historical understanding of self Biko would further explain that "colonialism is never satisfied with having the native in its grip but, by some strange logic, it must turn to his past and disfigure and distort it" (p. 95).

Amilcar Cabral, whose guerrilla radio broadcasts helped spark a revolution in Guinea-Bissau against the Portuguese, is another example. He made clear the necessity of the colonizing power to destroy the culture of the colonized. In *Return to the Source* (1973) Cabral explains how in fact "it is not possible to harmonize the economic and political domination of a people, whatever may be the degree of their social development, with the preservation of their cultural personality" (p. 40). In other words, there have always been members of the colonized body clear as to the function and purpose of culture and its use, in fact, necessity, in service of colonial exploitation. As said by Ziegler and Asante (1992), "media institutions are products of the political systems which create them" (p. 102). As described, the political system of the United States is, and has been from its inception, dependent upon the control or management of image – more so than the gun – for a maintenance of order.   This order includes the "colonial pyramid" designed to stratify populations in such a manner that African descendants remain

disproportionately among those at the bottom. This history and standard now established through enslavement continues to make that particular relationship distinct from all others and remains fundamental in today's society.

The two previous examples of emancipatory journalism practiced abroad by those highly aware of a colonial relationship are but a glimpse at the many international examples. They are exemplars of those who both practiced a brand of journalism essential for change and those who recognized the common situation facing African America. These two were also both influential on and influenced by efforts in this country toward that same end. Here too recognition among the colonized has resulted in a resistance media and a practice of emancipatory journalism that seems strange to discuss today in part by a total lack of attention paid these efforts by conventional retelling of the history. This dissertation will demonstrate that there is absolutely no need to look upon *FreeMix Radio* or any other of today's forms of resistance media as being outside an on-going legacy.

RESISTANCE MEDIA: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To echo/paraphrase pan-African sentiments, African descendants have been engaged in media resistance at least since the inception of European enslavement.[25] Though forms of enslavement had long since been in existence, what took place in the Western hemisphere differed: Here was the first instance where phenotype was attached to the status of slave. The reduction of Black human beings (and Blackness) to slave status

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[25] I do not use the term "slave-trade" in agreement with Walter Rodney (1971) that this implies some kind of equanimity or balance. It was no trade. It was theft, trickery, rape. Similarly, I refrain a use of the term "slave" in that these were African or African descended *human beings* who were/are enslaved.

required a variety of methods, not the least of which was the establishment of an image

which supported (supports) this continuing link. Recent examples of this include the

Associated Press picturing of Black "looters" in New Orleans against White "finders"

(Cusido, 2005) and Bill Bennett's comments about aborting Black children to reduce the

crime rate (Barbassa, 2005). In each case, long-held linkages between Blackness and

status/behavior were maintained. These linkages have long been imaged into American

consciousness. African American response to this status has been broader than what can

be described in this sub-chapter and has often been more than simple resistance against a

dominant view. Resistance also is a proactive assertion for what Blackness should mean

and what those colonized should do in response to the subordination of an entire people.

As Blauner (1972) described, the process of enslavement here in the US was part

of a far wider process of Europeanizing the globe. This meant the inclusion of an

academic wing of colonialism that established an intellectual support network for the

process. Charles Mills, in *The Racial Contract* (1997), has described this process within

the context of the Western European social contract theoreticians (1997). This contract

he explains was "epistemological" (p. 9) establishing for whom these contracts would be

meant and intended to benefit. These contracts established in all cases Whites as the

subject and non-Whites the object of these agreements developing the attendant "global

white supremacy" necessary for global dominance. The need to interpret the world

thusly, Mills says, leads to "an agreement to *mis*interpret the world," a world created as a

"consensual hallucination," filled with "invented Orients, invented Africas, invented

Americas" all culminating in "global cognitive dysfunctions." Further, according to

Mills, is that this results "in the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to

understand the world they themselves have made." So today we see misrepresented images reflecting the worldview of their White creators: "Calibans and Tontos, Man Fridays and Sambos" (pp. 18-19, original emphasis) who appear and reappear in popular media, scholarship and to which I will add talk radio, journalism and rap music and video.

American media and press have, despite popular claims to the opposite, largely functioned in support of this contract. Though one would never know by reading popular press histories, the US press has served as one of the most powerful and often used as tools of subjugation. Michael Schudson (1978) is perhaps the most egregious example, considering there is not one word in his book devoted to those excluded from society's benefits. Consider just a few of Schudson's errors and omissions. First among them is his uncritical allegiance to the oft-repeated and historically inept phrase "Jacksonian Democracy" (p. 43, 47). Quoting a "standard pocket history" of the United States Schudson agrees with their summary of that age as having a "creed" of "faith in the common man," "political equality," and "hatred of special privilege." He continues saying that this "creed" along with a "democratic wave [that] swept the country in the form of manhood suffrage… a cheap press [and] public schooling" (p. 43). Perhaps most can agree that "modern journalism, which is customarily and appropriately traced to the penny papers, had its origins in the emergence of a democratic market society" (p. 57). But I would argue that the market in this country was not then, nor is it now, "democratic" or free and that, contrary to Schudson's claims, the penny press only briefly leveled the playing field. For the most part, the penny press ushered in what exists today; an exclusivity based on high costs for the technologies that produce mass circulation, and

the dominance of an advertising-driven/controlled press (Saxton, 1984). Just as is the case today the advent of technology brought about a monopolization that led to a monopoly of popular media (Innis, 1951, Saxton, 1984, Stephens, 1997, p. 194).

Historians such as Schudson overlook several important points; first, as stated earlier, democracy per se has never been the goal or practice of the United States and, secondly, during the 1830s poor Whites were disenfranchised, as were women, enslavement of African people was still the law of the land, Indigenous People were either physically or culturally exterminated; lastly, what Schudson calls "public schooling" meant for Black and Native Americans industrial training and cultural genocide. Jackson himself had as his national mandate the continued enslavement of African people and genocide of the Native population. He spent much of his presidency leading sadistic raids on both populations assuring his policy would be carried out (Zinn, pp. 129-134). Further, in writing of James Gordon Bennett, who in 1835 founded the *New York Herald*, Schudson declares that, before Joseph Pulitzer, "Bennett was the most original figure in American journalism" (p. 50). Not one word of Schudson's tribute is dedicated to Bennett's *un*original use of his newspaper to defend the institution of slavery. And when Schudson discussed the "Moral War" of the penny press newspapers over "indecency, blasphemy, blackmail, lying, and libel" (p. 55), again, there is no mention of the criticism of Bennett by the Abolitionist Press (Perkins, 1943). On the flipside of this total disregard for Black history in most accounts of the US press is that Horace Greely, founder of the *New York Tribune*, is never discussed in terms of his friendship to the Black community including that community's support of his presidential

campaign or his financial support for the purchase of one man's family out of bondage (Aptheker, 1968, p. 321).

It is important to note here another contemporary instance of this foundational Black imagery. Part of Bennett's defense of slavery was his belief that Black people were better off kept as property as this would protect them from the ravages of wage-slavery in the North and better that they be kept on their plantations lest they might decide to encroach upon White society's space or property (Perkins, 1943, p. 27). This is nearly identical to the recent statement made by Barbara Bush that Black survivors of Hurricane Katrina who were being housed in Texas' Superdome were better off considering they "were underprivileged anyway." But what she considered "scary" was that they "all want to stay in Texas" (*New York Times*, September 7, 2005).

James Gordon Bennett, along with David Hale, editor of the pro-slavery *Journal of Commerce*, was also part of the ten-member founder of the Associated Press (AP) in 1848. The AP brought under the control of elite newspaper men the selection/definition of national news via the new technology of the telegraph. James Carey (1989) has discussed this in terms of the telegraph, which by transcending "space and geography," extended "empire" and moved the nation from "colonialism to imperialism" as the new technology allowed for ideology – the product of a consolidated handful – to be widely and easily disseminated (1989, pp. 201-230). The AP now boasts of being the "backbone of the world's information system[26]" and, to the extent that this is true, takes on that much more influence. So when it was they who published the aforementioned White "finder" picture it seems eerily reminiscent of the mentality of the AP's founders and

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[26] The Associated Press website: http://www.ap.org/pages/about/about.html

goals. That is, as a news system, the AP has maintained a national (international) image supporting Black inferiority.[27]

Mitchell Stephens (1998) does more than Schudson to include voices other than the White elite in his press history. Nonetheless, while describing the business nature of early newspapers and the need to have news reach communities extended by the work of the Dutch East/West India Companies, (p. 144), Stephens does not mention that these communities were extended via the expansion of settler colonies and the business of enslavement. Stephens does take time to note that generally the penny presses supported Andrew Jackson and his "Jacksonian Democracy" but he, again, gives no explanation of what this meant or what Jackson's expressed policies were (p. 191). He does, at least, acknowledge what Schudson, again, does not. But he does not give much more than a few pages to the existence or purpose of a Black press which he lists aptly under "Other Voices" in his two-page discussion of the subject (pp. 194-5). These more-or -less conventional scholars who, perhaps innocently, purport a mythological press history that stands in great need of redress. Of course, there exist those who are critical of, or offer alternatives to, dominant histories of the US press or mass communications history but never is Black history the center of their study (Innis,1951; McLuhan, 1964; Carey, 1989; Curran, Gurevitch, 1991; Parenti, 1993; Achbar, 1992; Herman, 1999; Beasley, 2001; Chomsky, 2002; Alterman, 2003). And when Black history or racism in general do emerge as topics for consideration rarely is the intentional nature[28] of the press or

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[27] I acknowledge at least one potential flaw in this argument. Horace Greely was also a founder of AP.

[28] I will return to this issue later. I do not mean by "intentional" that in each case journalists consciously think of misrepresenting or negatively imaging Black people. Nor do I mean there are conscious efforts in general media to do the same. However, as

mainstream media the point of departure for that study (Startt and Sloan, 1989; Carey 1989; Stephens, 1997; Rhodes, 2001; Berry and Theobald, 2006). In all cases, a Western or Eurocentric standard remains unquestioned.

John Downing (1984) explains the "arena of political contest" in which mass media exist (p. 4). He also, citing *New York Times* columnist James Reston, illustrates the popular fantasy held among those in the practice and teaching of American journalism. No Constitutional support for free speech, he notes, can honestly (then or now) be applied to African Americans (women, the Indigenous, poor Whites, etc.) who were from the beginning held as outsiders by the so-called Founding Fathers. These men "had not a shred of serious respect for the civil or communicative rights of a majority of the inhabitants of the U.S.A." (p. 4). Downing continues, "power, culture and communication are indissolubly linked" (p. 5). Both Mills (1997) and Downing (1984) explode the American mythology of "objectivity" as well. For Mills the issue stems from a "peculiar moral and empirical epistemology" that govern "norms and procedures for determining what counts as moral and factual knowledge of the world" (p.17). For Downing the issue is an absence of a "plurality of media voices" in popular reporting (p. 5) which he and Husband later connects to America's "conceptual original sin" of racism (2005, p. 2). In each case it is the dominant will that determines what is news and how it is to be portrayed. Objectivity, therefore, cannot exist due to preexisting codes of normalcy, morals or behavior and the intent of popular media, journalism and image be used to support established "order."

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discussed, there are those who do consciously manipulate press or image for political purposes or outright societal control. But, I am also suggesting that a historical pattern of specific outcomes, again, makes racism the norm and that without a conscious awareness of this pattern there can be no correction.

RESISTANCE TAKES SHAPE

Understanding inequities in the press and public communication, those enslaved began immediately to develop methods of communicating that were meant to overcome differences in language, background and a lack of access to dominant media.   All forms of discretion in communication were employed by those seeking freedom as, for example, via the Underground Railroad. Whether it was inscribing codes in quilt, encoding song with rebellious messages, altering the meaning of church hymns to support resistance or having secret meetings in the woods to communicate strategies the enslaved were in constant development of alternative media (Levine, 1977). Entire "secret orders" were developed and maintained over decades with little to no written records all sustained through communication networks that were mass indeed (Lumpkin, 1967). Though at times disorganized, these networks to assist the enslaved toward freedom are also described as being ever-present (Okur, 1995, p. 543). There must have been some degree of organization considering that six months after Herman Melville published *Moby Dick,* Boston's Committee of Vigilance launched its schooner carrying the same name. The *Moby Dick*, in defense against the recently passed Fugitive Slave Act, began service in the Underground Railroad. Without sanction or the luxury of public discussion, the Committee consisted of over two-hundred members and over a ten year period assisted in the freedom of over three-hundred enslaved African descendants

(Kaplan, 1951). And though these freedom workers were mostly White abolitionists, there would have had to been some kind of sub-level communication among the Black population in order for such a prolonged escape network to thrive. Without an underground communication there could have been no Underground Railroad.

From the beginning underground communication has been essential to African America. Beyond this were sailors/mariners (Black and White) who as "newsmongers" formed among the earliest networks of underground communication networks who would be instrumental in supporting radical attempts to overthrow established order (Downing, 2001, p. 112). Mariners had for some time used their relative freedom to communicate news and plots of rebellion. Rosalind Cobb Wiggins has also discussed "networks among free blacks" that were widely used (1996, p. 33). These networks supported the communication of plans to escape, the distribution of news and by Paul Cuffe to assist in the emigration by ship of those formerly enslaved to Sierra Leone in 1816. These networks, in some cases, became so threatening that the planter class in Georgia would eventually pass a law holding ships with Black sailors in quarantine for forty days (Downing, p. 113).

In 1827 two formerly held in bondage, John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish, published *Freedoms Journal* in part to promulgate a more accurate image of African America. "Too long have others spoken for us" they wrote. "Too long has the publick [sic] been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly…" (Aptheker, 1968, pp. 82-83). And in 1829 David Walker penned and distributed his famous *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* in which he called for the enslaved to violently rebel against those who would hold them in captivity. Walker's *Appeal*, to this

day considered among the finest pieces of resistance literature (Turner, 1997), was distributed via these underground networks of communication to the point where it became so ubiquitous and frightening that to be Black and found with a copy meant death (Aptheker, 1943). Consequences for Walker appear to have been swift and immediate as he was found dead of an "accidental fall" in 1831. However, his pamphlet would be connected to a series of subsequent revolts including the most famous carried out by Nat Turner in 1833. A similar fate would befall Elijah Lovejoy in 1837. Though not himself Black (through no fault of his own), the White abolitionist would fall from grace, literally, to his death.

Exemplified here are those aware that the dominant media of the day were no ally. In fact, quite the opposite. The popular press, both South and North, often defended the institution of slavery (Perkins, 1943; Saxton, 1984). Again, only mythologized American history would allow for confusion here. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 which allowed for the return of those captured in the North to slavery in effect made the entire country a slave-state. Understand also that this Act made *the escape from bondage illegal* where the one in *flight for freedom* was in fact called a "fugitive" (Turner, personal communication, March 16, 2000). The press became part of what Herbert Aptheker has called "the machinery of control" (1943). They would not only publish "wanted" notices for the capture of "fugitives" but would also constantly concern themselves over how much rebellion they should report. There was a conscious awareness that too much reporting would lead to more insurrection and offer more evidence against the institution itself. Here, again, is the contrast between popular image of the press and its actual control of communication as methods of maintaining social

order. Enslavers were highly cognizant and fearful of Black underground communication (Aptheker, 1943, p. 21) and its ability to impact the existence of slavery. Dominant peoples recognized the need to control the image of slavery so as to preserve it. In the end it was clear that the only way to protect against constant "servile insurrection" and "danger from an internal foe" was to manage the end of slavery before the rebellion became too "formidable" (Aptheker, 1943, pp. 18-52).

Part of the management of African descendants in the post-Civil War era involved management of social and political mobility. This, in part, meant management of image. Here, again, alternative media and press would be employed as an assertive defense. Unfortunately, much of this history is lost within the study of mass communications history and the attendant histories of the press or mainstream media in general. Therefore, there is little context in which to examine the relationship between Black America and American media. John Henrik Clarke did include school textbooks as part of mass media (Clarke, 1996) stating that textbooks carry within them societal definitions, symbols, etc., acknowledging the educational aspect or wing of this ongoing struggle over Black image, its relationship to consciousness and, therefore, conscious action. Few other texts have been so documented.

THE COMPLEXITY OF EDUCATION

When Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott (1995) quoted Herbert Marcuse's expansion of the context in which mass media operate they opened an important door. The authors quote Marcuse as saying that "the objection that we overrate greatly the indoctrinating power of the 'media'… misses the point. The preconditioning does not

start with the mass production of radio and television and the centralization of their control. The people entered this stage as preconditioned receptacles of long standing" (p. 105). One piece of this system of "preconditioning" is education. And for African America (and our other example that of Native America) this takes particular meaning. As part of a collection of societal institutions that govern societal behavior through the establishment of norms, codes of conduct, ideology, etc. mass media cannot be judged in a vacuum. Part of what has driven historical imagery that has been disbursed via mass media is the educational system.

First, in general, the post-Civil War or Reconstruction era saw both an unprecedented rise in Black economic and political standing and also a furious White backlash against such advances. This backlash, summarized by DuBois (1935), was in response to the need to "reduce black labor as nearly as possible to a condition of unlimited exploitation." Similarly, to suppress an indigenous population to the point of outright extermination had, like enslaving Africans, became untenable economically or in terms of safety. At that point, manipulation of consciousness via culture had to occur through the mechanism of schools. In 1893 there was a meeting of concerned Whites at Lake Mohonk, New York, to decide how schooling would take place for the indigenous population. And at Capon Springs, West Virginia, in 1898 there was a similar conference held to determine the future course of Black "education." For the former, in the words of the system's founder Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the issue was how to "kill the Indian and save the man" (Churchill, 2004). For the latter a new system designed to teach Africans how to be workers in an industrializing society. In each case the desire/need to recreate human beings in the image and consciousness of the ruling elite

fell perfectly within what the United Nations would eventually call in 1947 "cultural genocide" (Churchill, p. 6).

Were we to properly understand this history we would need, as Churchill does, to put this educational process back in to the context of colonialism. In 1884-85 Western European powers (including the United States) without the invitation or inclusion of Africans, carved up the African continent at the Conference of Berlin to ease intra-European competition and to facilitate their rule. There, the British, whose model the US would follow (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967) established their policy of "indirect rule." This policy had been practiced as a result of their conquering of India where a member of their "Supreme Council of India" described the purpose of such a policy. He said of the importance of educating a "class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Churchill, p. xiii). This would differ little throughout the continent of Africa and here in the United States as well (Frazier, 1957; Rodney, 1972; Ziegler and Asante, 1992; Marable, 1988/2000).

As far as the case of African America these strategies would be to appease Southern Whites who had recently experienced the trauma of witnessing "their slaves – their most valuable and cherished property – taken away and made free" (DuBois, 1992, pp. 670, 673). After all, "Blacks faced a neo-slave system when the Civil War ended. Cotton still had to be picked, tobacco fields needed to be tended, and menial labor was required for industries of the New South" (Spivey, 1978, p. ix). Among the other systems of cyclical oppression which included debt-peonage, sharecropping, convict lease systems, full-blown imprisonment and the terror of lynching (Davis, 2003)

education was established to have the "schoolhouse… replace the stability lost by the demise of the institution of slavery" (Spivey, 1978, p. 17). The desired answer was Industrial Education.

In 1902 Northern industrial philanthropists united with Southern White school officials and established the General Education Board whose purpose it was to install a system of industrial education. Their goal was to have education be part of what would "attach the Negro to the soil and prevent his exodus from the country to the city." (Anderson, 1978, p. 374). Among the greatest supporters of this effort was John D. Rockefeller who, by the end of the 1920s, would contribute nearly $130 million toward this end (Anderson, p. 379). Again, image and education had long been a concern where it came to African people in the United States. The previously stated issue of press defense of slavery and its promotion of slavery-supporting imagery of Black people has to also be understood within the context of Black education. As Carter G. Woodson explained, it was the post-1835 era and the rise of industry that brought about the change in how African people would be taught. Prior to 1835 the Southern way of minimum education was preferred. However, after the countless insurrections and the most notable ones of Gabriel Prosser (1800), Denmark Vesey (1822) and Nat Turner (1831) the decision was for no education at all (Woodson, 1919/1999, pp. 1-2). This would be maintained until the arrival of the needs of post-plantation slavery industrial education.

However, let it not be overlooked that the supposed "confessions" of Nat Turner, as transcribed by a physician named Thomas R. Gray, ran widely in *newspapers* of the day (Clarke, 1968). Gray's introduction to these "confessions" begins with him noting that the event "greatly excited the public mind," then further encouraging the myth of the

docile slave he openly and blatantly lies by saying that this was the "first instance of an open rebellion of the slaves" (p. 95). He continues shaping popular image of the enslaved as "insurgent[29]," diabolical" and "ferocious." In 1968 Vincent Harding began his portion of a book by Black writers responding to one recently published on the subject by William Styron, making an important connection. Referencing an article in *Newsweek,* Harding quotes Styron's description (Clarke, 1968) of the work and demonstrated further the importance of shaping Black image in 1831 and 1968. Styron said, "you can see Nat Turner as an archetypal American tragic hero, but this doesn't make Rap Brown an archetypal American hero, nor does it make what he is preaching capable of anything but disaster" (Clarke, 1968, p. 23). That is, never mistake what many may consider as heroic – the overthrow of a slave master – with contemporary acts of rebellion against newer, on-going forms of abuse.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF RESISTANCE MEDIA

The resistance media developed by Black Americans to address the effects of Industrial Education and popular representation in press included the development of extra-institutional research and study societies, as well as, more print journalism. These began as early as 1828 with the Reading Room Society followed shortly thereafter by the first Black magazine called *Mirror of Liberty*. The latter was created by David Ruggles who, if Harriet Tubman was the mother, he was the "father of the Underground Railroad" (Bennett, p. 132). Of the more famous of the study societies was the American Negro Academy (1897), the American Negro Historical Society (1897), the Negro Society for

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[29] A word still used by popular press to misshape the image of an enemy "other."

Historical Research (1911), and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (1915). Similarly, there were those who developed a tradition of the Black bibliophile and underground bookstores such as George Young's Book Exchange (1915) and The Frederick Douglass Bookstore (1933) in New York City. These groups would produce the male intellectual giants who would be their gender's contribution to what would eventually become the Black Studies Movement of the 1960/1970s (Ball, 2001). These men were met in their efforts by the concomitant Black Women's National Club Movement which, beginning in the 1890s, saw Black women developing extra-institutional methods of dealing with Black community concerns. These covered everything from health-care, child-care, to White sexual abuse to social justice rights (Karenga, pp. 167-168). Out of one of these groups came Ida Wells Barnett (Ida B. Wells) who would launch a press crusade against lynching in the absence of any national press outcry against this form of domestic terrorism.

Wells, who in 1884 refused to give up her seat on a Southern train requiring her forced removal, would later use her *Memphis Free Press* to combat the local and national newspaper coverage of lynching. At the time both local and national newspaper press often became promotional mechanisms to draw White mobs into attendance whose actions would then be described by "special correspondents" to "civilize" the participants (Hale, pp. 212-213). Postcards and photos would be widely and inexpensively distributed often to those who could not afford or who were not fortunate enough to have access to the more highly coveted body parts of the victims. Newspapers, as well as the previously described Associated Press, would happily write invitations to join "lynch parties." One San Francisco paper referred to lynching as "an American institution." This

particular paper went as far as to conclude that "the strangest delusion in connection with lynching is that it is the victim who suffers most. In reality it is the community who is lynched" (Hale, 1998, p. 120). Wells would eventually have to carry her work north as death threats and violence silenced her southern voice. It is her struggle against a dominant media that, again, sought to maintain social order by reshaping Black image – this time into rapists of White women – that is essential.

The resistance media created by African America would continue and take on new challenges as shifts in dominant media technology occurred. While these shifts may have occurred in terms of technology, they certainly did not in terms of function or relationship to Black people. Huey P. Newton gave accurate analysis of the "Technology Question." He wrote:

> Technological advancements have been gained through expropriation from the people, including slavery proper but also chattel slavery followed by wage slavery. With this expropriation, a reservoir of information was created so that Americans could produce the kinds of experimental agencies and universities that created the information explosion (1971, p. 256).

This "information explosion" would be used to develop new technology that would enhance the ability of those interested in maintaining fundamental relationships between those in power and the objects of that power. One of these major shifts occurred in 1915 with the challenge presented by a media attack on Black progress, *Birth of a Nation*.

D.W. Griffith's "classic" was far more than a simple film. It was a popular assault on the national Black image. This image was necessary for the support of the continuing White backlash against Black Reconstruction, the "American institution" of lynching, and segregation. Ultimately, though, this film was part of a pop cultural "theater of racial difference, a minstrel show writ large upon the land" (Hale, p. 284). This "theater" is what has traditionally governed popular understanding of Black reality and continues to encourage disunity mainly through and inaccurate depiction of blackness (Van Dijk, 1991, Downing and Husband, 2005). And it was against this popular notion of blackness that Booker T. Washington attempted to deliver *Birth of a Race* (George, 1988).   His goal was to popularize a more accurate image of Black people; however, his death in 1915 preempted his ability to assure that the film be made in his vision. It was ultimately completed by others more interested in fortune than politics and never lived up to Washington's hopes. This continuing image battle has recently been put back into films. Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* (2000) revisits the traditional appearance of White-imaged Blackness on television where a White executive encourages a Black producer to follow more Black minstrel show formulations. In a slightly earlier film Danny Hoch mimics further mimics this tradition in *White Boyz* (1999). In this film Hoch comically explores young White men from Iowa who aspire to an image to the popularized image of Blackness perpetuated through mainstream hip-hop.   In it, Hoch's character Flip fantasizes himself in an interview with Jay Leno in which he says, "as soon as I get some money I'm leaving Iowa Jay. I'm moving to some real ghetto shit, like Chicago. You know, where all the ladies wear bikinis and people smoke weed and cookout and everybody raps" (2000). Black image, the shaping of which remains essential to

maintenance of inequality, and the concept/practice of minstrelsy, is the country's

original popular culture (Wynter, 2002).

EXTENSION OF RESISTANCE TO POP CULTURE

Leon Wynter has recently traced the rise of American popular culture and its

connection to both Black cultural expression and, perhaps more importantly, White

notions of Blackness (2002).   Wynter explores the rise of American society within the

context of a highly racially stratified society in which "whiteness" was slowly grafted to

the national fabric as a method of developing and maintaining a White (Anglo-Saxon

Protestant) elite. As described above "whiteness" had to be extended, sometimes with

great pain and struggle, to the "heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass' of European

immigrants" as Thomas Jefferson called them (Wynter, p. 16). But more importantly to

my immediate purpose is Wynter's description of how this newly shaping country also

used popular culture and the dissemination of White fantasies of blackness not simply to

entertain but to also assure racial disharmony and the protection of a WASP elite (pp. 11-

39). He says that "from the start, pop culture has been constructed on the facts as well as

white fantasies of nonwhites and their cultural forms" (p. 20).   Wynter also accurately

notes two other important aspects of the rise of American popular culture; the first is that

the cultural expression of Black people has always been at the center and, secondly, that

this centered Black cultural expression has from the beginning to now been marked by a

fundamental "pattern of appropriation, exploitation, distortion, and ultimate

marginalization of black and other nonwhite cultures in mainstream entertainment." And

not only is it that this "remains the same today [but] with the same effect: the reaffirmation of white supremacy." Continuing with Wynter:

> In the beginning the cycle was simple, because it essentially turned in only one direction. Whites could only appropriate – literally – the identity of a mostly enslaved group of people in society, distort it to fit the limitations of their own creative imaginations (or constricting racial self-definitions) and the prevailing racist expectations in the market, and exploit it for gain without ever paying any social, political, or monetary tribute to the source (p. 23).

Wynter begins in his subsequent statements to assert that Black people now are in more control of with more benefit from that image (pp. 23-24). This is contested; however, what remains of most importance is Wynter's correct explanation of America's popular culture beginning with invented whiteness creating an attendant invented blackness suited to the imagination or "fantasies" ascribed to it by the former. He explains the origins of "American popular music" as being "with songs in the blackface style" where the burnt-cork tradition of minstrelsy became this society's pop culture "archetype" (p. 24). While Wynter believes this relationship has become so "complex" that these origins are "barely recognizable" I see these archetypes being obvious and as such the foundation on which today's popular culture stands and continues.

What Wynter describes as having undergone some kind of change has only solidified or improved in its method. The context in which I will place hip-hop has as its

base this archetype and can only be understood in a wider historical context. As Chancellor Williams (1987) has written, doing so will awaken one to a "truth that may slowly emerge, period after period, until it clearly forms itself into a truth impregnable, a fact nowhere stated as such in the mass of data covered" (p. 310). As Wynter did say about the rise of American popular music the history of Black popular music (i.e. music distributed to and consumed by White America) develops right alongside advances in technology, the rise of mass culture and the music industry itself. The "golden age" of the 1920s saw the rise of both technology and, therefore, the music industry which was said to be the "stepchild of the sheet-music business" (George, 1988, p. 8, Wynter, p. 51). Now music could be recorded, records mass produced and shipped around the country and world, and it could also be fashioned around the desires of those in power.

From the beginning, Black-owned independent recording companies had to struggle (often losing and going out of business) with the fact that even by the end of the 1920s most "leading bluesmen" were "under contract" to the recording company "giants" who were distributing "character songs" not "genuine blues" which would not have been as easily digested by White audiences (Southern, pp.505-510). But it was the very success of this model that formed the foundation of a music industry that would in turn expand the transformation of Black culture into a mass produced commodity (Neal, 1999, pp. 17, 27). In fact, it was quickly recognized that the impression of blues as being "too black – that is, too independent of Euro-American cultural experience" that made it difficult, near impossible, "to gain a popular white following... blues has always been a separate, pure black vein that is mined and then alloyed with Euro- American additives to enter the

mainstream" (Wynter, p. 52). Wynter goes on to quote Ann Douglass who explained that as the blues "became rooted in northern cities" (probably a result of the south-to-north Great Migration of African Americans during the 1920s-40s) "their rural and folk nature was altered, refined, whitened. The songs were written down; lyrics cleaned up and elaborated, and the music was... Europeanized [to suit] conventional harmonies and turned into Tin Pan Alley Pop. Black blues and jazz musicians and singers who tended to stay closer to the original 'classic blues' format never sold with white audiences in the numbers their white imitators and peers did" (p. 52).

Writing about jazz, Frank Kofsky (1970), summarized well this established economic relationship between race and popularity. His summary is grounded firmly in the present argument of the supremacy of a colonial arrangement between African America and White power structures. He explained that:

> In its relation with an underdeveloped country (colony), a more advanced industrial economy (metropolis, "mother country") will use its superior technology to ensure that commodity exchange between the two redounds to the benefit of the latter at the expense (in the form of increasing impoverishment) of the former. The metropolis employs its ownership of capital to generate more capital – i.e., profits. The colony, possessing nothing to exchange save the labor power of its citizens and its natural resources, will have its capital slowly drained away to the metropolis... Black

> musicians... labor not primarily for themselves, but to enrich those who own the "means of production" enumerated above (p. 12).

To further show how this relationship influenced cultural expression while not upsetting existing power relations, Miles Davis explained that, "you went to 52nd street to make money and be seen by white music critics and white people. But you came uptown to Minton's if you wanted to make a reputation among musicians" (Davis and Troupe, p. 54). This served to control mass produced and consumed jazz by keeping authentic expressions of it colonized uptown while a more system-serving version could be played downtown allowing for the appearance of racial equality and coexistence but also allowing White critics to shape and disseminate accepted versions of the culture. Ian Carr asserts that co-existence controlled expressions of resistance in order to maintain existing structures. Carr writes that, "all qualities necessary for jazz – individuality, spontaneity, autonomous control, trust in one's chosen associates – have always been anathema to totalitarian regimes" (Carr, 1998, p. 405). Even Lisa Simpson, during the famed opening of *The Simpsons*, is banished from her elementary school band for improvising.

It is perhaps through discussion of improvisation and jazz that connections between rap and its musical progenitors are most apparent. Along with the 20th century boom in technology came the radio, through which Black cultural production could be appropriated and made into agents of Black marketing. Radio also offered a means through which White people could now access Black music without having to actually traverse Black space (Barlow, 1995, pp.325-328; Neal, 1999, p.17, 27). This would

increase White awareness of and, therefore, the ability to mimic or perform a preferred musical style that has been a point of contention ever since.

This technological and industrial phenomenon in popular music did not originate but helped to develop an old and cyclical pattern of White performance of Black culture that some have dated back to 19th and 20th century minstrel shows (Wynter, 2002, Tate, 2003) and to what Eric Lott has called a tradition of "love and theft" (1998, p.118). It has meant that appropriated cultural expressions of African America that are developed and exported to serve the economic and cultural order do so in this instance by creating, supporting and distributing White performers of the culture who: 1) do not originate in the conditions that produce the cultural expression and 2) are able to perform, benefit materially from and claim ownership of a culture without having to accept or explain any of the burdens associated with those cultural origins. Many Black blues musicians had to wait until the art form was popularized by Whites before they were acknowledged or able to derive financial benefit (George, 1988; George, 1998; Lipsitz, 1998; Neal, 1999; Wynter, 2002; Neal, 2003). However, beyond issues of who gains material benefit is the larger one of concealing colonial relationships and systemic economic and cultural conditions. For examples of this we can look to the three similar cases of Eric Clapton, Paul Simon and Eminem to show how this phenomenon occurs across generations and across particular African American cultural expressions.

Wynter (2002) explains that pop music examples will help to illustrate both the previously established cultural-economic foundations and also, that from the days of black-face and minstrel shows to the beginnings of true mass culture in the 20th century through to today, that there exists a "pattern of appropriation, exploitation, distortion, and

ultimate marginalization of black and other non-white culture in mainstream entertainment [which] remains the same today, with the same effect..." (p. 23). Eric Clapton has long been known as a talented White guitarist who has never wavered from his respect for Black musicians and music. He has helped to solidify this impression by continuously paying homage to blues legend Robert Johnson. However, "this romanticism contributes to the possessive investment in whiteness by maintaining the illusion that individual whites can appropriate aspects of African American experience for their own benefit without having to acknowledge the factors that give African Americans and European Americans widely divergent opportunities and life chances" (Lipsitz, 1998, p. 120). Clapton, while venerating Johnson and making comparisons between their experiences and struggles not only darkens the view of reality that "on his best day Robert Johnson caught more hell than Clapton could ever imagine" (p.121). More importantly Lipsitz (1998) to existing power relationships, noting that Clapton makes no mention of the contemporary struggles of these same Black people. Instead, Clapton has had more to say against aggrieved populations than in their defense supporting the 1976 campaign of a White supremacist parliamentary candidate and making disparaging anti-immigrant comments (pp. 122-123).

A less egregious example of appropriation is that of Paul Simon and his *Graceland* tour (1987) and album (1997). While achieving great commercial success and taking credit for popularizing South African music Simon was able to, again, appropriate African culture without assuming any of the burdens of their experience and without highlighting the on-going struggles of those very people. Simon brought existing power relationships to bare on this project, maintaining copyright authority and through his

"superimposition of lyrics about cosmopolitan postmodern angst over songs previously situated within the lives and struggles of aggrieved Black communities..." (Lipsitz, 1994, p. 57). More importantly his performance with South African musicians in a South Africa still engaged in apartheid "provided positive propaganda about alleged black-white cooperation," thus ignoring the continuing struggle or the boycott of performances in that country by both local activists and the United Nations (p. 57). White rapper Eminem performs a similar appropriation within rap music. He appears as the latest in a long line of White artists performing Black culture to appease an "American music industry's never-ending quest for a white artist who can perform a Black musical impersonation" (Tate, p. 4).

I have attempted to outline the need for this in its ability to co-opt resistance, appeal to mass markets, increase profit and, therefore, increase social control. Considering the levels to which rap has risen in world influence and its ability to do so given the US dominance over mass media industries, it could be argued that Eminem's participation in this cycle of appropriation and its result in concealing power relationships is at its most heightened and dangerous point. The danger in Eminem, describes Rux, is that he is not readily identifiable as a "cultural bandit" (Tate, p. 27). In a strange twist Eminem appears authentic though he represents a purposefully created "Black, Nigga" persona whose intended purpose is to create an oppressed identity and, therefore, behavior desired by a White colonial cultural elite. That is, Eminem is a creation of the existing culture industry who, by possession of a high skill level, the support of rap music's biggest Black producer (Dr. Dre), and his blistering attacks of White pop stars is able to carry the power structure's preferred Black image to its highest heights – as performed by an

"authentically" Black-performing White man. As Rux (Tate, 2003) explains, just as the industry-created Blaxploitation film stars, mafia gangster actors, White cowboy macho men and modern gangster rappers Eminem appears as a "gun-toting... radical with supreme sexual prowess and unsurpassable talent" all offering us what appears as real but is actually "surreal" (Tate, p.22). Rux's argument is that, as Fanon once described, "the oppressed must identify an oppressive archetype in order to overcome historical oppression," and that without such an archetype Black people accept a "dream of identity" that "in reality the oppressed are free" and, therefore, do not struggle against that concealed oppression (Tate, p. 19).

This extinguishing of struggle is explained elsewhere in the Nigrescence Models of Cross, et al (Jones, 1991, pp. 319-338). These authors outline the psychological shift that must occur within a colonized mentality before a consciousness of change can develop. In stage one (of four) an individual accepts the view of her/himself as it is offered by the dominant society. Second is the "encounter" which serves to upset the initial self-image and begins the process of questioning. The third stage involves that "agony, comedy, tragedy and metamorphosis" that an individual experiences where she/he vigorously attempts to "become more Black," searching for ways out of the existing identity. Stage four represents the "internalization of the new identity" where one changes her/his associations, politics and conscious behavior (Jones, pp. 326). These shifts in identity, seen by the authors as absolutely necessary for social change and struggle, are impeded by the established culture industry and further complicated by performers such as Eminem.

Because many African Americans remain in stage one, they accept, as Rux

explains, Eminem's performance of their cultural expression as authentic because he speaks to the "wayward descendants of Fanon's Negroes: Niggaz" (Tate, 2003, p. 27). "Niggaz" represent the dominant society-prescribed identities of Black or African people in America who now have in Eminem a blond, blue-eyed "authentic" version of themselves who as Rux summarizes:

> ...learned Nigga culture – and the integrity of his performance does not overtly attempt mimicry... [and who] has proven to the oppressed that he is not one of us, but he is down for us – and has proven to the oppressor that he is not one of them, but he is the product of their *extreme* idea of "us" –and, by virtue of neutralizing the nebulous medium, Eminem becomes us with supernatural powers beyond us. Ultimately, he replaces us, paying homage to an old abstract idea (Tate, 2003, pp. 27, 28 original emphasis).

Therefore, much like Clapton and Simon (not to mention countless others), Eminem is able to convince of his authenticity while preserving false and deleterious identities and cultural-economic structures. More to the point, by being a White, blue-eyed, blond male who performs "authentically" a Black cultural expression whose global popularity has no historical or contemporary rival he extends his power in today's mass culture.

Within this context of Black and White consciousness American culture industries emerged and later co-opted and promoted hip-hop. These industries (or

industry) are those businesses involved in the production and dissemination of media as defined above; that is, those who produce and disseminate societal definitions, norms, texts, images, etc. They are generally described as those businesses in advertising, marketing, radio, television, film, internet, music, print, video and computer games (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) assess the problem saying, "Under monopoly all mass culture is identical," as they wrote, where "wants" and "needs" lose their authentic origin within individuals or communities but are instead determined by the those in control of these industries (1944, see also Hesmondhalgh, p. 83). Media have a "pervasive ideological character" that is based in the corporate commercial market model of commodity formation (Schiller, p. 33).

This commodity-making facet of the American cultural industry is explained by its order under capitalism. It is commodity-formation that Marx has called capitalism's "original sin" (Kamenka, 1983, pp. 462-463). Greg Tate (2003) explains how America's original "commodity-fetish" were the enslaved Africans "auctioned here as slaves" (p. 4). More recently Downing and Husband (2005) have discussed the "conceptual original sin" of forcing "race(s)" into "distinct categories defined by bi-polar extremes" and the "mental economy" generated once these core concepts are set to media (pp. 2-3). These industries grew in direct proportion to their ability to shape and control Black cultural expression based upon these archetypal relations between "race," popular culture and the press or dominant media. As in a colonial context, the socially-constructed categories of "race" are being used to narrowly define the colonized in the image of their colonizers and normalizes the standard by which popularity is determined. The mechanism through which this process is transmitted – the cultural industry – is controlled, that is colonized,

so as to enrich the owners who are then further able to determine that the cycle is maintained. And the purpose must never be misunderstood: social order, that is, maintenance of the elite.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH AND COLONIALISM

Because I am combining the rap music mixtape with journalistic theory and practice I am interested in a consideration of culture's function within, and in service of, a colonial relationship. I am also interested in how colonized people might respond to that situation in terms of cultural expression and journalistic practice. As I will discuss them rap music and its medium, in this case the mixtape, are expressions of culture. Dominant or conventional forms of media theory and historical study ignore these kinds of under-girding relationships making many of them insufficient in their applicability to the conditions of the colonized.

As I will also further discus these myths are fundamental to theories and methods which equally ignore, reduce in importance or deny altogether the specific and colonial relationship between racialized groups (in this case Black America) and the dominant society. For Memmi this is the dilemma of the "colonial" v. "the colonized" where the former has it rough but not as bad as the latter. For him it was his being a Jew in the French held colony of Tunisia. As such he was by no means free but he was also "not a Moslem" (p. xiii). For Lusane it is the realization that "multiracial societies in which racism is a major factor generate multiple racisms…" (2003, p. 5). The denial of colonialism denies the normalcy of racism and exploitation (Fanon, 1964). That is, that "racism in a racist society is normal" (Semmes, 1992).

CHAPTER III
***FREEMIX RADIO* AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF HIP-HOP, CULTURE AND JOURNALISM**

As discussed in Chapter I, *FreeMix Radio* incorporates hip-hop tradition (the mixtape), rap music mixes (music or cultural expression) and emancipatory journalism. Therefore, it offers a clear and perfect example of the nexus of all the themes thus far described. Hip-hop's history as an extension of African forms of cultural expression, its rise in the late 1970s in New York City (the Bronx specifically) and its reduction to commodity have been discussed thoroughly (Rose, 1994; George, 1998; Kitwana, 1999; McCleod, 1999; Powell, 2000; Barsamian, 2001; Crouteau and Hoynes, 2001; Negus, 2004; Watkins, 2004; Kitwana, 2005). It has also been discussed in its relationship to historical cultural movements (Gladney, 1995) and its ability to create space for counter-hegemonic struggle (Gladney, 1995; Krims 2000). Continuing from that is hip-hop's history as a music of opposition, "rebel music," as once said by Bob Marley. Hip-hop began in many ways as a method of curbing violence (Chang, 2005) and offering new methods of political organizing and gang reformation (DaveyD, 2005). But what has happened to hip-hop has best been summarized by a recent Frontline expose' on the music industry in which rap music is described as "the last great art form" to *come into* the industry. What is now *coming out* is decidedly different (Michael Kirk, "The Way the Music Died," *Frontline*, 2004). What was once called "Black people's CNN" (Chuck D) has now, well, become Black people's CNN.

A new form of hip-hop emerges out of the wreckages of post-Civil Rights, Black Power eras where repression against these movements had left much of Black America reeling. Further disintegration of not only the Black family but also the "apprenticeship

training" that had cultivated many artists over the years (West, 1996). Out of this emerged the more individualized development of music without bands, as Run-DMC would say, "the DJ can rock without a band." Turntables, drum machines, samplers, all took the place of bands and the need to learn to play, not to mention afford, a variety of instruments and here came a new genre of music. The traditional African "loop" where a beat would be repeated over and over again became for hip-hop dancers, "the break beat," or the moment in a song where the drums are left to themselves and a groove emerges. And according to the makers of *The Way the Music Died* hip-hop came into a music industry somewhat "saved" by the new technology of the compact-disc which encouraged people to re-purchase music once held on record albums. But though these purchases took place and offered a perception of industry rebirth it left unattended the larger structural concerns (Kirk, 2004).

So enter hip-hop which, again, developed as underground communication that some, like Chuck D, compared to an underground press.[30] The industry knew not what to do with this new form so artists were encouraged to create whatever they could. This allowed for the entrance into the business the likes of Russell Simmons who acknowledges his ability to exploit a vacuum left open by the ignorance of "White men" (Kirk, 2004). But by the early 1990s major companies, who had renewed interest in the industry due to the presumed rise in sales as people shifted to CDs, now new how to manage the art form. They bought up the smaller companies and began to shape and distribute their own brand of what was to be popular (Kirk, 2004). What had been called the rap music "Golden Age, 1985-1996" where a variety of hip-hop could be heard from

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[30] His original meaning of the comparison to CNN.

the militant politics of Public Enemy, X-Clan and KRS-ONE to the more subtly political De la Soul, to the violently gangster rap of NWA was over. From then on the rap music landscape has been dominated by the latter form and has now degenerated to little more than pimps, hookers, drug dealers and killers. Perhaps worst of all is the recent "Hot97 Smackfest" hosted by Emmis Communications' number one hip-hop radio station in New York City's number one market. This contest consisted of two women representing different New York boroughs who would alternate smacking one another until one gave in or was ruled to have lost. Though public outcry finally ended this "show's" run the role hip-hop is to be allowed to play is clear. Below I will discuss this in terms of the cultural industry, specifically, the music industry and how these histories of hip-hop are lost in today's mass of what is popularized. I will also discuss the intentional nature of this reshaping of the popular form of hip-hop and place it within the appropriate context of managing fame, image and perception.

Problems with the other aspect of *FreeMix Radio*, its journalistic function, have also been discussed thoroughly. Journalism practice within a consolidated ownership environment and the limitations created on what is produced, considered news or made popular has been well documented (Klein, 2000; Alterman, 2003; Bagdikian, 2004; Goodman and Goodman, 2004; McChesney, 2004; McChesney, Newman and Scott, 2005). The on-going nature of racist representation, a "conceptual original sin" (Downing and Husband, 2005) within media has too been thoroughly explained (Van Dijk, 1991; Entman and Rajecki, 2000; Alterman, 2003). However, where I differ from most of these authors is in my desire to connect *FreeMix Radio* to the well documented

(if not popular) histories of those who, unlike most mentioned, abandoned hope in reforming popular media without there first being a movement to reform society.

Even among the previously mentioned critics of journalisms current dilemma none offer as their suggested mode of response the development of an underground press. Their goals are media reform. For instance, Barsamian, after a strong analysis of the decline of public broadcasting, offers as his "alternative media" suggestions a heavy emphasis on internet press and further White liberal-based work in radio such as Pacifica (pp. 63-82). Not only is this a problem considering no more than forty-percent of the country has high-speed internet access (Russell Newman, personal communication, September 18, 2005) but in terms of African America nobody is checking for Pacifica. Like most press critics their efforts are grounded largely in Eurocentric or at best White middle-class liberal perspectives few of which will help or are meant to reach Black people. But part of what is lost by these narrow views held strongly within the worldview of loyal-opponents is not only the history of Black media resistance but also the White underground press. While that cannot be properly detailed here I want to at least acknowledge the work of David Armstrong, *A Trumpet to Arms* (1981), which similar to Downing's work described earlier, does focus on this aspect of America's press history. Armstrong too chronicles the lost history from the forgotten "Founding Father" Tom Paine (probably forgotten due to his opposition to slavery) to the rise of the Black and White abolitionist press to the socialist publications and writers such as Upton Sinclair, Eugene V. Debs and John Reed (certainly an emancipatory journalist). And he does this including in his context those efforts of both the international and internal "Third World" from the Mexican-American paper *El Marcriado* to *The Black Panther* he

offers a history that seems to disappear even within the discussion among the "progressive" Left. The disappearance from the historical record seems to coincide with the real-time disappearance of the underground press. So, just as "many underground newspapers were put out of business when they were abandoned by advertisers who had been pressured by the FBI" (Constantine, 2000, p. 15) so too would they disappear from press histories by those too anxious to avoid or altogether unaware of their existence, role and potential effect. However, as described above, what is mostly lost is an understanding of the particulars of colonialism or that within any society dominant media cannot be anything but in support of the dominant power (Altschull, 1984, pp. 85-141). They cannot as Malcolm X once noted, "be a chicken who lays a duck egg. For that would be one revolutionary chicken."

It is toward this point that Gladney (1995) approaches when comparing hip-hop to its historical antecedent the Black Arts Movement. For this is part of the history lost in the general narrative of journalism history as told by both the conventional and left-wing scholars, that is, the development of resistance media in the hope to establish "autonomous" spaces for production and dissemination of cultural expression (p. 4) to avoid commercial co-optation. This has ever been a problem for a colonized African America. The vaunted Harlem Renaissance has too been criticized for its short-sightedness and lack of political astuteness (Lewis, 1995; Bourne, 1996). This criticism came in part from the Harlem Renaissance' success being owed to and dependent upon White patronage. The aforementioned historical pattern had again reared its ugly head. Harold Cruse (1967/1984) explained that not recognizing Black America's relationship as

a colony or "nation within a nation" (i.e. colony) led to a misunderstanding of what its

goal should have been.   He wrote:

> …the Harlem Renaissance, in its creative form,
> content, and essence was paying a high price for being
> allowed, now, to contribute to "the nation's common
> cultural store" and to "form American civilization." The
> price was that in exchange for the patronage gained from
> Carl Van Vechten and others among the downtown white
> creative intellectual movement, the Negro's "spiritual
> aesthetic" materials were taken over by many white artists,
> who used them allegedly to advance the Negro artistically
> but actually more for their own self-glorification (Cruse,
> 1967, p. 35).

And it is this same ability for hip-hop to now be seen as a major contributor to "the

nation's common cultural store," as opposed to the body of cultural work in support of an

anti-colonial overthrow, that is creating more trouble for the art form. A quick summary

of my concerns and the importance of this work can be found in recent unprecedented

levels of hip-hop's popularity and use in the furtherance of corporate capital. In the fall

of 2003, history was made when the *Billboard Top Ten* registered nine rap songs

(Wapshott, 2003).   Hip-hop culture and rap music specifically is now a worldwide

phenomenon and among North America's top cultural exports. And as such it has

become the major venue for commercial brand representation. At year end 2004,

according to the *Lucian James American Brandstand Report* (James, 2004), rap music

not only accounted for a majority of pop culture brand name exposure[31], it also showed

the potential to make or break brands[32]. The *James* report is important in that it is from

an influential marketing company whose goal is to maximize corporate advertising

potential. They caution those who would ignore the power of hip-hop rightly noting that,

"hip-hop is not just about rapping. It's a whole lifestyle, related to music, to style and to

attitude. It is the defining youth movement of our era – and it's global" (p. 4). As the

makers of the documentary *Money For Nothing: Behind the Business of Pop Music*

explain, "artists are no longer sought for their talent as much as they are sought for their

ability to sell products" (Jhally, 2002).

The journalistic version of this has been expressed by Enoch Waters (1987) in his

description of the dilemma that has historically faced the Black press. Whereas today the

issue is the use of popular entertainers to sell products historically the same has been the

case for the press in general and the Black press specifically. As Waters explains, "White

newspapers studiously avoided advertising in the black press for fear such action would

be interpreted as endorsement of the black press' militant editorial policies." So White

papers who had already aligned themselves with the "majority of their advertisers and

readers, thus surrendering their editorial independence" (p. 221) and through lack of

support of the Black press sought to create the same result there. Herein lies my concern

and the significance of this work. How does a cultural expression of a nation's exploited,

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[31] The top five brand name drops of 2004 were all rappers: 1. Kanye West (19 brand
names), Twista (16 brands), Lil' Jon (15 brands), Chingy (10 brands) and Ludacris (10
brands).
[32] According to the report, "Hip-hop - in today's culture - can make or break a brand.
TOMMY HILFIGER grew to a $1B company with the aid of hip-hop, and when hip-hop
style outgrew the Hilfiger style, the brand suffered a steep decline" (p. 4).

cordoned off, poor and underdeveloped population – those colonized - function to

perpetuate that condition? How does rap music's popularity and marketability relate to a

cultural expression of the nation's Black colony and, in the words of the James report,

lead the way in "driving renewed interest in... luxury mainstream culture" (p. 2) and then

what purpose does this serve? Similarly, where can a colonized population find the

freedom to make news of their condition given the structural impediments described

above? And further, can a journalistic practice fashioned to suit existing cultural

production become an impetus for positive change?

My intent here has not been, nor can it be, to retell the entire history of the Black

press (Waters, 1987; Wolsely, 1989; Senna, 1994; Pride and Wilson, 1997; Barlow,

1999; Burroughs, 2001), the cultural/music industry (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944;

Schiller, 1989; Throsby, 2001; Hesmondhalgh, 2002), the history of hip-hop (Rose, 1994;

Forman and Neal, 2004; Chang, 2005) or the relationship between Black image and

social inequity (Fanon, 1964; Memmi, 1965; Cesaire, 1972; Semmes, 1992; Ani, 1994;

Kelley, 2002; Wynter, 2002; Allimadi, 2002; Forman and Neal, 2004). However, I have

wanted to establish a pattern of misrepresentation of Black image and history as a method

of justifying an existing colonial relationship and to show the mainstream press'

complicity in this. Concerning the diaspora, again to situate African America within the

broader colonial context, is *Heart of Darkness: How White Writers Created a Racist

Image of Africa* (2003). Here Milton Allimadi details how *The New York Times, Time,

Newsweek* and *The National Geographic* have created an African image suited to

European imperialism and South African apartheid and spread this image around the

globe. In fact, he says, "these journals were the original media responsible for

perpetuating the racist representation of Africa [in support of] powerful entities that benefit from the deep-seated prejudices that have historically distorted Western media's representation of [the continent]" (p. 3).

Domestically, we must not forget how the American press system worked in support of demonizing Black actors/entertainers such as Hazel Scott, Canada Lee and Paul Robeson who supported civil and human rights struggles (Barbour and Banks, 1999, McChesney, 2004, p. 198) or the depiction of Black activists as deserving the imprisonment or assassination they would suffer as explained by former Black Panther Dorhuba bin Wahad (Lee, 1996). We must not also forget the role played by the American press in the ignoble FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) whose stated goals included using the press to "prevent the rise of a black messiah who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement" where everyone from Malcolm X to Martin Luther King, Jr. were listed as a "threat" (Churchill and Vander Wall, 1990, p.110). We have also the example of the leaked Senate Intelligence Committee (1976) memo in which the aim of managing the image of those entertainers (Black or White) who would engage in political or anti-war movements was made clear as was at least one method of doing so that involved a susceptible press. The purpose:

> Show them as scurrilous and depraved. Call attention to their habits and living conditions, explore every possible embarrassment. Send in women and sex, break up marriages. Have members arrested on marijuana charges. Investigate personal conflicts or animosities between them. *Send articles to the newspapers* showing their depravity.

Use narcotics and free sex to entrap. Use *misinformation* to confuse and disrupt. Get records of their bank accounts. Obtain specimens of handwriting. Provoke target groups into rivalries that may result in death (Constantine, 2000, p. 9, emphasis added).

The works of Senna (1994), Barlow (1999), Burroughs (2001) are perhaps most appropriate to my immediate purpose here as they focused specifically on the relationship between Black press/media and Black struggle which is where I am attempting to place *FreeMix Radio*. Thus far, I have merely wanted to highlight certain aspects of the historical relationship between the American press, popular culture and Black image so as to show context in which to argue for an underground mass press of today. Before looking more specifically at hip-hop and then the potential of the mixtape to serve this function I would like to briefly show other ways in which we might view music's relationship to social/political struggle and organization. This is, after all, the area in which *FreeMix Radio* exists.

SOUND, MUSIC AND SOCIAL/POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Throughout this literature review, I have attempted to illustrate relationships between the mixtape, emancipatory journalism, its need and history. But how – if at all - can the content of the mixtape, some commentary and news but mostly music, translate into material change? This question is central to my interest in having the mixtape be used as an underground press whose goal is to assist change. Many, in a variety of fields, have focused on the relationship of sound (music most specifically) and societal struggle.

In nearly every corner of the world music has been seen more or less to be related behavior. But the specifics of this continue to be debated. Several areas, nowhere near exhaustively, will be examined to make familiar some of the arguments. One: music as community-builder or as a means to develop of free space. Two: music as a communicative medium. Three: music as part of mass and/or popular culture. And lastly, as my specific focus is on African America and the particular relationship this community has with the United States and its own cultural production the fourth point of departure will be how music as cultural expression functions.

Much has been written about music's ability to create community and free space for oppressed groups to express themselves. John Mbiti (1971) and Marimba Ani (1994) have written about the community-building aspect of music in the context of African societies (Mbiti, 1971, Ani, 1994) although not in the sense of a need to create free space among oppressed people. But for those considered to be in varying states of lacking freedom the importance of music in addressing such conditions has been a primary focus. Music is said to be "fundamental to creation of an alternative public realm" (Cohen, 1993, p.4). Within this exists a debate summarized by the positions of Frith and Pratt where the former (not unlike Lang) argues that pop music (in this case rock-n-roll) is "capitalist" and, therefore, reifies an existing structure. Pratt, taking the opposite view, argues that music counters such structures as it is a "means of psychological release through substitute imagery" (Cohen, 1993). This is similar to the claim that music as "an impulse of opposition" creates "enclaves of autonomy" by helping to create an "alternative psychological reality" which then in turn "becomes a different kind of public space" (Sanjek, 3). Cohen himself takes the position more closely related to that of Pratt

claiming that music, and specifically, "pop music is not merely background Musak but an integral part of our social, cultural, economic and political change" (p.8 and also Cruz, p. 3 –529).

Included in this notion of the creation of space and psychic freedom is the use of music to carry out insurrection. Many have written about enslaved Africans using spirituals (not to mention non-audio communication in form of quilts, etc.) to communicate rebellion, as previously noted. In his discussion of this in the West Indies, Craton (1979) notes that many rebellions were conceived, planned and carried out under the guise of "permitted festivities" (p.4). In oral expression, music and sound have been seen as methods of maintaining secrecy, something fundamental to struggles against dominant forms of any kind, as oral communication leaves no written trace (Lumpkin, 1967). Interestingly, this reality – popularized in the United States during African enslavement – holds true to this day. Malcolm X (1965) noted this in his autobiography as essential to his work as a numbers runner for West Indian Archie and is discussed on street corners and to this day. As this relates to hip-hop and the prowess of an emcee, the ability to "freestyle" or rhyme extemporaneously is one of the primary markers gauging one's talent. "The rhymes I *don't* write are among the illest in the game, word to the hyphen in my name" (Jay-Z, 2000, original emphasis).

In terms of the contemporary African diaspora George Lipsitz has argued that music has been essential to its maintenance (1994). Lipsitz, paraphrasing Paul Gilroy, talks about the "diasporic intimacy" created through hip-hop music as it borrows and influences other African music traditions. He borrows from the idea of Tricia Rose that hip-hop music has created a "'second orality'… for the deployment of oral traditions in

an age of electronic reproduction" and the continued "diasporic dialogue" between North America and the African continent maintained through music (pp. 22-41, Lipsitz, 1994).

Further, rap music has been examined for its ability to create community and a space for the development of a "poetics of 'revolutionary' identity" (Krims, 2000) and has been related to the preceding Black Arts Movement in its space-making ability. Both rap music and Black art have been important to the establishment of autonomous institutions able to support cultural production (Gladney, 1995, p.7). Which is important because it relates to an understanding of the artist as essential and entirely involved in the struggle of her/his people (Henderson, 1996). This can be compared to the relationship of music in other countries to people experiencing similar conditions as cultural minorities in the United States, for example in the uses and functions of music in Andalusian Flamenco in Spain, Tango dance and music in Argentina, and Rebetika in Greece. In each case music served as cultural incubator, identity definer and creator of if nothing else, a psychological freedom for those in need and a cultural expression in need of defense from the cultural imperial, co-optive designs of dominant societies (Washabaugh, 1998, pp.1-24).

Again, similarities exist between the role of music in the struggles of African America and others around the world. Though speaking of indigenous communities Chile and Louisiana, Mattern's work focuses on "'the ways in which music can be used for community-based political action'" (Ritzer, 1999, p. 320) much in the same way this has been discussed in works concerning the efforts of Black Americans (Jones, 1963; Louis, 1997; Karenga, 1991/2002; Rose, 1994; George, 1998; Powell, 2000; Kitwana, 2002; Kitwana, 2005). And again, similar to the African diasporic view that culture is

essential to any political struggle (Cabral, 1973; Biko, 1978; Semmes, 1992) Eyerman and Jamison have said of the use of music that its "tradition is a process of connecting to a selected or 'visible' past with the present" (Frith, 1999, p. 579).

Music's relationship to community-building has been studied in contexts both involving different (or opposing) aspects of "social change," namely in the disparate worlds of Christian Rock and the rise of Nazi Germany. In both cases music is seen as key to the establishment of movements not already in full bloom. The former has its own "art world" as Howard Becker described it; the community that produces the art of a particular group and has developed in much the same way as punk, rock and rap – taking existing genres of music and developing them along non-mainstream cultures (Tsitos, 2000, p. 389). The latter, similar in its development, saw music and the performance of music as methods of defining the Third Reich. In fact, it was seen as "essential to the rise of a fascist state" (Muhlberger, 1996, p. 801). This relationship has led another author to ask "what has high culture contributed to barbarism?" (Marchand, 1998, p. 109).

MUSIC, SPEECH AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

J. Smith (1943), an esthetician, has written about music as being on par with speech in terms of substance and of the need for study but entirely separate from verbal language. He explains that words have only "instrumental relevance to music… music's meaning is purely musical" and that music is "no less than verbal reasoning a form of thought" (p.2). Some have argued for a specific "sociology of sound" because music is itself a "unique form of communication" (Danaher, 1998, p.276). This idea has been taken up in at least one instance – though to challenge some prevailing notions that music

is a powerful communicator (Cruz, 1988, p. 528) - by Peter Martin whose defense of a "sociology of music" is meant to "study how people make meanings through their involvement with music" so as to critically examine the "faulty and repugnant ideas about music's ability to manipulate us" (Walser, 1999, pp.321-323). To be noted also are the challenges made to the power of music over society by Stanley Crouch (2002) and John Tomlinson (1991). Crouch (2002) has argued against any idea of manipulation through cultural imperialism saying that to offer such positions is to engage in "victimization" Kitwana, 2002, p. xx1). And Tomlinson (1991) posits a more benign relationship where there is "reverse appropriation" as even groups in unequal positions of power have an equal cultural exchange from dominant to oppressed. For Tomlinson this is evidence suggesting no ultimate influence of music over society since the balance of exchange offers the less fortunate as much opportunity to affect the elite.

However, remaining for a moment more on the issue of linguistic versus sonic emphasis, Danaher (1998), excoriates those who put too much focus on language calling for a "semiology of music" to help escape the "tyranny of language" (p. 276). Epperson (1972), applying an existential tradition to music, takes up Danaher's call suggesting that there are levels of music communication – psychological, analogical and emotional response – and continues by leaving open possibilities saying that multi-levels "mechanisms of the brain make communication on many levels not only possible but probable" (p.405-406). And again, specifically relating to African America and also related to the notion of music as a source of community-development, music is often viewed as method of "signifying," or passage of "hidden transcripts" (Neal, 1999, p. 2).

Perhaps the very emphasis on written communication is a Western notion tied up and bound to imperialism. Folb (1975) argues that there is too much focus on language and not "discourse" and that we become "confined by the boundaries of the sentence" which leads to "ethnocentric" studies of Black methods of communication (pp. 243-247). Others have argued that the former be examined and moved "beyond empiricism to discussion of ideology in music" (Hagberg, 1994, p. 254) while still others have (while being less critical of Western culture) been concerned with the capitalist tendency to produce a "culture industry" that "homogenizes" popular culture for commodification, dissemination and ultimately a weakening of cultural expression (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1994, p. 115, Jameson, F., 1990, pp. 130-148).

Music has also been viewed within this larger Western imperial context as a sustainer of the internal Black colony (Jones, 1963; Kofsky, 1967). Marimba Ani, in a more applied view of existing scholarship which considers Western classical music as constrained and devoid of emotional expression (Budd, 1989, pp. 128-129). Ani (1994) extends this view historically by connecting it to a long-standing tradition in Western society where music was so constrained, or "rationalized," by the church in order that it be a source of social control. In one example this idea of controlling music as a means of controlling society, it has been said that, "all qualities necessary for jazz – individuality, spontaneity, autonomous control, trust in one's chosen associates – have always been anathema to totalitarian regimes" (Carr, 1998, p. 405). The summary offered earlier by Clovis Semmes (1992) is worthy here of repeating:

> …as Black cultural forms become a powerful
>
> vehicle for commodity formation, two problems emerge.

First, market forces tend to distill and distort the spiritual

and other functional aspects of African American cultural

products into a form that only serves market needs, for

example, the transformation of spiritual sensuality into

vulgar (hedonistic and self-centered) sexuality. Second, a

process of deracialization occurs in which the cultural

product is detached from a Black referent… [and a lack of]

control over mass media institutions alienates Blacks from

any cohesive elements of culture (p.130).

The field of ethnomusicology offers greater depth to the discussion of music as a

cultural artifact or expression. In his look at the uses and functions of music Merriam

(1964) described the purpose of ethnomusicology to, through the study of music and

culture, "know what a thing is, but more significantly what it does offer people and how

it does it" (p.209).   The infusion of anthropological study into that of music –

particularly considering the central focus of an internal colony – offers more potential

direction for the study of the mixtape. It will become increasingly more important to

study the functions music has within diasporic African communities (i.e. the Tumbuka

people of Malawi and the study of their use of music and sound a medicine, spirituality

and healing (Friedson, 1987) and between the dominant societies in which they find

themselves. Geertz (1973) explains that, "for a state to do more than administer privilege

and defend itself against its own population, its acts must seem continuous with the

selves of those whose state it pretends it is, its citizens – to be, in some stepped-up,

amplified sense, their acts" (1973, p. 317).

STUDY OF THE MIXTAPE

There is ample evidence suggesting that music is essential to social and political

struggle, the dissemination of ideas, symbols, definitions and the establishment of

liberated space. However, there are areas of concern in the specific case of trying to

measure the mixtape's potential to perform an emancipatory journalistic function.

Everett Rogers touches on some of these concerns in his work on *Diffusion of*

Innovations (2003). He explains that *Diffusion* is:

> the process in which an innovation is communicated
> through certain channels over time among the members of a social
> system. It is a special type of communication, in that the messages
> are concerned with new ideas… Diffusion is a kind of *social*
> *change*, defined as the process by which alteration occurs in the
> structure and function of a social system (p. 5, 6, original
> emphasis).

Rogers establishes other important aspects for the consideration of *FreeMix Radio* by

explaining that an innovation need not actually be "new" but "perceived as new" and that

"innovation need not just involve new knowledge" (p. 12). In each case *FreeMix Radio*

is exemplified. The use of the mixtape is certainly not new nor does any new knowledge

exist in the project. Rather, *FreeMix Radio* is often perceived as new, a point to which I

will return, which does affect community receptivity. As we move into a discussion of

methodology and results this topic will be revisited. But a look at the specific cultural

industry structure of radio and the music business will help show further structural

impediments against which *FreeMix Radio* is forced to struggle.

RADIO AND THE MIXTAPE

Building on the previously discussed topics of hip-hop and the cultural industries

I will now more concretely explain the need for an alternative and/or underground

medium for the dissemination of culture within a colonized setting. Given that *FreeMix*

Radio takes as part of its name "radio" and removes it from its terrestrial origins I will

focus specifically on radio and its relationship to the music industry, that is, its colonizing

function. Since its inception, and as with any technology, radio has taken on a different

function within colonized communities than those in either higher in Memmi's pyramid

or the colonizers themselves. Black radio has gone the way of many of the community's

production. It went from nonexistent, to a brief flourish of relative autonomy then to

managed existence.

The first Black-owned radio station WERD came to be in 1949. Initially Black

radio did not maintain the same sense of urgency as had emerged with the foundational

Black printed press. It existed, again, in a vacuum with relative autonomy as White radio

had not yet decided to "integrate." Also there was no immediate need to challenge the

Black printed press in terms of that original mission or in serious news coverage (Pride

and Wilson, 1997, pp. 255-256). Though this would change as the Civil Rights and

Black Power movements influenced Black radio into more radicalism and serious

engagement in Black political and social reality (Pride and Wilson, 1997; Barlow, 1999)

the 1996 Telecommunications Act allowing further media consolidation would return

Black radio to its apolitical beginnings. I will describe the impact of this on cultural

expression below but there is also a journalistic one as well.

Despite the existence of Black-owned Radio One listed among the top twenty

radio owners (see chart below) this has had little effect on the Black radio landscape as

far as news or music is concerned. Payola and play lists, discussed later in this chapter,

have limited everything we hear on radio. This includes Radio One where what is heard

is determined not by its Black owner Cathy Hughes but by Mary Catherine Sneed

(Williams, 2004). Sneed, who is in charge of all programming on Radio One, is a 52

year-old White woman from Alabama whose background in music in country radio

(Williams, 2004). However, as Glen Ford has explained, Radio One, the largest owner of

"urban radio" with 66 stations (Clear Channel the nation's largest radio owner owns only

49 targeted to Black people) has used this positioning to *cut* the number of reporters

reporting to Black people in order to pipe in ABC News (2003). Washington, DC is

emblematic of this turn for the worse where, as Ford says, "no news is bad news" for a

community in desperate need of real news. So in DC where once, in 1976, there were 21

reporters at three stations there are now four reporters at two stations. Of those 4 none

work for a Hughes-owned station and this is a pattern she has set throughout the country

(Ford, 2003).

Consider some other basic facts about today's Black radio and hip-hop as

provided by the media think-tank Industry Ears:

- A $10 billion dollar a year Hip-Hop industry that claims to reflect black life and culture; but 80% of it is consumed by whites[33]
- Over 90% of radio stations, record labels, magazines, TV stations, and retailers that disseminate hip-hop and associated products including music, clothes, movies, and games -- are white-owned
- African-American teens ages 12-17 listen to more than 18 hours of radio per week on average, compared to 13.5 hours for all teens (Radio Advertising Bureau, 2002)
- Thirty percent of African-American teens are among the most frequent TV viewers (the top TV-viewing quintile) versus 21.1% of non-African-American teens (Simmons Market Research Bureau Adult Fall 2002 and Teen 2002 National Consumer Surveys) (http://industryears.com, 2005).

In addition, generally speaking, while radio is still third behind television and newspapers as overall provider of news (McChesney, Newman and Scott, 2005, p. 169), for Black and poor Americans it remains the primary source (McChesney, 2004, personal communication). Despite an increase in Black radio ownership Black radio news has diminished over the last 30 years, moving from strong investigative reporting to an emphasis on uninformed "talk" (Ford, 2003). Taken from the 2004 *Annual Report on American Journalism* the following graph illustrates more clearly the kind of consolidation that exists in radio:

> If we look at the top three owners over the last
>
> several years we see that, in 1999, Clear Channel, Cumulus
>
> Broadcasting and Citadel Communication Corporation, combined,
>
> owned fewer than 1,000 stations. Today they own just over 1,600,

---

[33] Bakari Kitwana, author of *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop,* argues that these statistics are without empirical backing (Kitwana, personal communication, 2005) though Lisa Fager of *Industry Ears* has defended them as being substantially accurate based on more evidence (Fager, personal communication, 2005).

with Clear Channel owning 1,207 of them. Much of this gain can be attributed to a change in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which eliminated the rule that capped the number of stations one company could own at 40. That change allowed Clear Channel to acquire the 460-station AMFM Inc. in June 2000. Before that change, Clear Channel owned a mere 43 stations. As of 2002, 21 companies own more than 40 stations each.

Number of Stations Owned by Top Broadcasting Companies

Owner	All Stations	News	Other
Clear Channel Communications	1207	135	1072
Cumulus Broadcasting Inc	268	23	245
Citadel Communications Corporation	218	24	194
Infinity Broadcasting	184	20	164
American Family Association Inc	107	0	107
Entercom	105	13	92
Salem Communications Corporation	91	6	85
Regent Communications Inc	76	8	68
Cox Broadcasting	76	7	69
ABC Radio Inc	74	5	69
Saga Communications Inc	71	9	62
Educational Media Foundation	64	0	64
Radio One Inc	63	4	59
Univision Communications Inc	61	0	61
NextMedia Group	58	6	52
Entravision Holdings LLC	57	0	57
Waitt Broadcasting Inc	54	3	51
Triad Broadcasting Company	46	6	40
Forever Broadcasting Inc	43	5	38
Beasley Broadcast Group	42	4	38

Combined, the top 20 companies own more than 20 percent of all domestic radio stations. The top-five

companies own more than 14 percent of the total number of stations. Clear Channel has stations in 191 of the 289 Arbitron-rated markets. The second-largest organization, Cumulus, only operates in 55. Compare this with the fifth-largest owner, the American Family Association, which owns the Christian radio station group American Family Radio in 36 markets (The State of the News Media, 2004, http://stateofthenewsmedia.org).

The impact of a media pervasiveness that comes from a highly concentrated ownership and is largely devoid of any substantive news helps to reduce the capacity for developing sound strategies aimed at improving the lives of Black Americans and other highly exploited groups. Radio is also but a portion of a larger cultural industry and as such is a major segment of a super-structural media environment. The cultural industry (or industries) derive their name from their function being "the industrial production and circulation of cultural material." This cultural industry includes television, film, advertising, marketing, internet, music, publishing and video games (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.12).

The trend toward consolidation of ownership briefly described above in radio applies equally across the media and cultural industry board. Four corporations[34], all of them with massive international holdings, distribute ninety-five percent of all the music in the Western world forming what Greg Palast has called a "musical OPEC" (Palast, 2003, p. 65). In just 20 years, from 1983 to 2003, all the media once run by 50

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[34] Time Warner, Sony/BMG, EMI and Universal

corporations were under the control of five men, four of them White, all elite. These

men; Richard Parsons (CEO Time Warner)[35], Michael Eisner (Disney)[36], Sumner

Redstone (Viacom), Reinhard Mohn (Bertelsmann/Sony/BMG) and Rupert Murdoch

(News Corp.), have a historical edge over previous rulers of empire considering that, "no

imperial ruler in past history had multiple media channels that included television and

satellite channels that can permeate entire societies with controlled sights and sounds"

(Bagdikian, 2004, p. 27). All media owned by Rupert Murdoch are able to reach 4.7

billion people or three-fourths of the world's population (Greenwald, *Outfoxed*, 2004).

Because they lack a colonial/intercommunal context, analyses of radio fall short.

A wider array of theoretical analyses now are available which help to explain

contemporary reality. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) explain that under the oligarchic

cultural industry, "all mass culture is identical… the people at the top are no longer

interested in concealing monopoly; as its violence becomes more open, so its power

grows… movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art" (p.121). This fake art,

commodified and shaped to commercial form results in an "imitation [that] finally

becomes absolute… [exposing the] secret: obedience to the social hierarchy" (1944, p.

131).

And Adorno (1938/1982) described the development of an inauthentic "like" of

cultural products as a result of their massive reproduction. Consolidation in radio

ownership, music distribution, record label ownership, payola and Top 40 play-lists (to

be discussed below) have led to, for instance, commercial hip-hop radio playing the same

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[35] The lone Black member. Although, as will be discussed below re: Cathy Hughes and
Radio One, this is of little or no effect.
[36] Eisner has been replaced by Robert Iger as of 2005.

song 115 times a week, according to Lisa Fager of IndustryEars.com (McGlaughlin, 2005). This force demands recognition which for Adorno means that for a "commercial piece… liking and disliking are inappropriate to the situation." What is instead relevant is "the familiarity of the piece [which] is a surrogate for the quality ascribed to it. To like it is almost the same thing as to recognize it" (Adorno, 1938, p. 270). The same point was recently expressed, albeit a bit differently, by DMX as part of an explanation for his return to music. DMX noted that the over-promotion of untalented artists was ruining the craft. "Y'all making and creating artists and shit and saying, 'if I play the record a thousand times a day muthafuckas will like it… It's like if you give a muthafucka nothing but bullshit to eat, he's gonna learn to enjoy it" (Diva, 2005, p. 6). The aforementioned media ownership consolidation and cookie-cutter reproduction results in the reduction of "diversity of cultural goods in circulation" (Golding and Murdock, 1991; p. 23). A closer look at industry as colonial mechanism will help add a necessary lens through which to view the intention and effect of this system.

COPYRIGHT AND THE LACK OF MEDIA DIVERSITY

The cultural industries of radio and popular music are also referred to as "intellectual property enterprises" (Thall, 2002, p. ix) or "copyright industries" (McChesney, Newman, Scott, 2005, p. 244). Intellectual property rights, where we find copyright, are of no small consequence as they now comprise more of the U.S. "gross national product than the airplane industry, more than the automobile industry and, yes, more than the agricultural industry" (Thall, p. ix). The history of copyright begins in 18th century England and not coincidentally right in line with the development of modern

capitalism. The first copyright law was passed in London on April 4, 1710 and was

designed to protect the intellectual property rights of an author granting exclusive rights

to the author for 21 years with a potential of an additional fourteen if the author survived

the initial term (Ross, 1992, p.1). In recent years congressman Sonny Bono did his part

to assure that there be an increase to 95 years in the case of corporate owned copyright

(McChesney, Newman and Scott, 2005).

The issues of copyright relate to mass media in the United States and most

specifically to the music industry. According to Robert McChesney (2004) copyright is a

"core media ownership policy" that he argues began as a means to support the production

of cultural expression but has degenerated into a "tax on knowledge" and a means of

supporting "the interests of the largest media companies" (2004, pp. 232-233). The

British model of copyright (the idea of which would be adopted in the United States

much like the model of indirect colonial rule) was that by protecting the right of a

producer of culture (author, musician, etc.) they would be encouraged to create more.

There would be an incentive for them to produce what would generate substantial

personal income while enriching the society at large. However, a problem emerged

where copyright ownership moved from the specific artist to her/his contracted

distributor, that is big companies. As McChesney summarizes, "copyrights are now a

tradable commodity" where "[o]ur cultural heritage has been privatized" as recent laws

extending copyright ownership indefinitely (McChesney, Newman and Scott, 2005, p.

245) have resulted in a corporate monopoly over the rights to cultural expression and

ultimately a state of "corporate welfare" that has resulted in a decrease in the amount of

artistic creation available to the public (pp. 234-235). In other words, what we hear, see

and read is only a fraction of what is produced and is owned by en ever-shrinking number

of companies. In but one example Sony/BMG, one of the previously mentioned Big 5 in

global music distribution, owns more than 700,000 copyrights (2005,

http://freepress.org).

Copyright, in terms of recorded music, generally operates on two levels. Whereas

the individual artist may own the right to her/his lyrics or music rarely do they own the

rights to the recorded copy of that song (Jasci, personal communication, 2005).

Ownership of copyright (sometimes referred to as publishing rights) is transferred to the

record labels upon the artist signing a contract. This colonizes the artists on multiple

levels. On the one hand they lose ownership of the recording and on the other they are

locked into what are often five to six album deals and into having to appear for

performances per company orders (Krasilovsky and Shemel, 2000). Because radio play

is the great determinant of success (Thall, p. 133) and radio play has been mostly

determined by promotional payments (payola) made to radio stations (Dannen, 1991,

Krasilovsky and Shemel, 2000; Rose, 2004), an artist is entirely dependent upon the label

to generate her/his success. Further, if the first album does not sell well the artist is

dropped or shelved by the label with multiple albums still owed the company. This

means that an artist's career can be ended or permanently stalled simply by losing support

from their label. Should they produce further albums anyway and one or all become

successful – by fluke or belated promotion – it is their label who continues to benefit.

Hip-hop artists rarely get through "half of their first contract… so the record company

locks you up for a significant portion of your career" (Rose, 2004, p. 548). To have that

song promoted, i.e. played on radio and video, artists must relinquish their ownership of

their copyrights or publishing. The point is best summarized by Jay-Z in his verse against Nas, "yeah I sampled your voice, you was using it wrong. You made it a hot line, I made it a hot song. And you ain't get a coin Nigga you was getting' fucked. I know who I paid god Searchlight Publishin" (Jay-Z, 2001). Nas as an artist had no control over his song's rights, therefore, all monetary value for it went to a company.

There is also a cultural effect here as well. Chuck D (McLeod, 2005) has talked about the change in the sound of hip-hop as the result of consolidated copyright ownership and changes in law and policing of sampling. Sampling, where rap music producers extract pieces of existing songs for use in the newly produced track, has been forced to undergo a change since the mid 1990s explosion of the genre's popularity. Whereas artists in the early days of the art could freely take samples from a variety of songs all used to create a new sound the new crack-down meant that rap music producers could no longer afford the enormous fees attached to the use of each sample. Tracks could no longer carry the same sound and producers were forced, by the cost of each individual sample, to reduce the number used, leading to the rise of today's heavily keyboard and one-sample-based hip-hop production. The entire genre of rap was reshaped to suit the colonial will manipulated through the mechanism of copyright.

PAYOLA

To further ensure that radio (as well as television and book publishing) serves its colonial function, payola, the system of pay-for-play, is introduced. As explained, money is the socially constructed means of forcing compliance in trade and general behavior. The average artist signs a record contract which often locks them into multi-album deals.

Advance payment is offered, all of which must be paid back through album sales, touring and other public appearances. Sales are directly related to the promotion of the artist and album most of which occurs through radio air-play and all of which is paid for by the artist's earnings. Payola demands that payment be received by radio programmers in exchange for play. Technically, the practice is legal if the radio announces to the audience when a song it is playing has been paid for.   This rarely happens and has led to decades of fraudulent popularity. And in the end it is the artists who sign away their rights, have the profit of their art siphoned off the a dominant society and then charged for the right to do so.

   When, recently, Sony/BMG offered to settle a payola law suit with a $10 million fine (FMQB, July 25, 2005) some expressed surprise. However, payola in one form or fashion has been around as long as the industry itself.   But for a number of reasons this is no cause for celebration. A pre-radio form of pay-for-play met with some resistance. "In 1916, the Music Publishers Protective Association noted that publishers were paying as much as $400,000 a year to artists for their songs" (Krasilovsky and Shemel, 2000, p. 408). Though the MPPA attempted to fine publishers ($5,000) the practice evolved. Payola went from publishers paying artists for the rights to their music to record companies owning artists' publishing and using independent promoters to pay radio stations to play – thus promote – those songs. The practice has involved colorful characters, mobsters and collectives with ominous titles such as "Hit Men" (Dannen, 1990) and by 1986 it was said to cost as much as $250,000 to get one song onto the Top 20 chart (Krasilovsky and Shemel, 2000, p. 411). In 2005 Paul Porter of Industry Ears has said that by his own experience as a record promoter Radio One quoted him the price

of $20,000 to get one record into their rotation (Porter, daveyd.com, 2005). According to Eric Boehlert:

> There are 10,000 commercial radio stations in the United States; record companies rely on approximately 1,000 of the largest to create hits and sell records. Each of those 1,000 stations adds roughly three new songs to its playlist each week. The indies get paid for every one: $1,000 on average for an "add" at a Top 40 or rock station, but as high as $6,000 or $8,000 under certain circumstances. That's a minimum $3 million worth of indie invoices sent out *each week* (2001).

Of course, this prevents artists without major label support from ever getting the kind of popular exposure they would need to generate decent sales. The use of Top 40 lists and shows such as MTV's *Total Request Live*, BET's *Top Video Countdown* or even VH1's never-ending series of "Most this…" or "Best that…" serve as orchestrated funnels of culture that appear as if an independent, informed audience is selecting its favorite songs (Jhally, 2002)[37]. This, in practice, is how the paucity of "cultural goods in circulation" discussed earlier becomes real. The capitalist trend toward monopoly (or at

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[37] Not to mention that all three companies are owned by Viacom which also owns Infinity Broadcasting, a major "urban" radio company.

least oligopoly) manifested in the realm of payola as well. After scandals in the 1950/60s and 1980s threatened the practice of payola record labels moved to the use of independent promoters, or "indies," to create the necessary buffer for plausible deniability (Dannen, 1990, Boehlert, 2001-2005). What emerged over time were powerful mini-companies one of whom in 2001 was rumored to be making a landmark deal with Clear Channel (Boehlert, 2001). Such an alliance would mean one company is deciding what songs make the 1200 plus play lists of the largest radio owner. This is how, as Melinda Newman of *Billboard* explains, "there are 30,000 albums released each year… only 100 become hits" (Kirk, 2004). Again, owners of industry are able to take the mass of what is produced culturally and largely reduce it to their will.

And even as we are witnessing a revival of the "attack" on payola led by New York District Attorney Elliot Spitzer, the game is unlikely to change. As has happened before, and again given the overall function of radio, the procedure will find new light. Due to an industry fear of anything new it has already been argued that radio stations and record labels will stick to the existing formulae and "proven" artists (Boehlert, 2005). That, combined with the play list inspired heavy rotation, will maintain us in the cycle of "liking" that which we are forced to become familiar. In fact, Boehlert suggests the end of payola will have an even more adverse affect on independent labels and artists who, through payola, could at times come up with the necessary pay scale rates to get at least some air time (2005). In the end companies own the music, control the ability to popularize and increase sales, benefit most from those sales and have consolidated to the point that between those few companies whose power is magnified through a network of

interlocking board of directors[38] (Allen, 1976, Mizruchi, 1996) those in power have little

trouble shaping the popular landscape or the art and ultimately consciousness and then

action. Oh, and by the way, this "fine" charged to Sony/BMG can be recouped from

artists' contracts as "promotional costs."

There is yet another aspect of this trend that need be brought out. American

radio, following the established pattern above, had made itself a major player as a cultural

industry through the selection of White announcers who would engage in "racial

ventriloquy." Mel Watkins explains that, "Following a pattern established by minstrelsy

and blackface actors on stage and screen, whites played Negro roles in nearly all the early

radio shows" (Barlow, 1999, p.1). This method of maintaining social (racial) order

carried over into the history and development of payola. The Top 40 play list was

installed to bring the graft upwards from lowly disc-jockey to station owners or program

directors. The play list would then be turned in for on-air hosts to simply talk up and

play, the list having already been paid for. But this system of mechanized colonialism

through payola also served to maintain that racial ventriloquy which required the

separation of Black and White people in order that one could be re-imaged and

disseminated to the other in a form acceptable by the performer/shaper/owner. This

adherence, or lack thereof, to social segregation – colonial maintenance – would prove

the difference in how disc-jockeys engaged in payola practices would be treated.

Both Alan Freed and Dick Clark were enormously popular personalities in radio

and television. Both took money to play certain records and, for Clark, who owned stock

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[38] Another underappreciated aspect of all of this are the political and economic
ramifications of a handful of companies many of whom share common board of directors.
This further ensures a greater projection of elite interests.

in the artists for which he was paid to play, made a ton of money. But Clark also

followed the laws of the social order and never played Black records and never allowed

for his *American Bandstand* crowds to be mixed. Freed, on the other hand, broke those

social mores. He played Black music and organized major concerts that would play to

mixed audiences. As the 1960s began and the old payola scheme of payment to disc-

jockeys was exposed followed by Congressional investigations took place and people

punished it was Freed not Clark who paid the price. He lost jobs, money and eventually

drank himself to death (Barlow, pp. 186-193). Ventriloquoy requires separation for the

re-imaged image to have the intended effect. People in proximity to one another,

intimately exchanging space and culture are far too impervious to such efforts.

Substantive exchange among groups targeted for separation is anathema to a society

dependent upon such stratification. Freed, not Clarke, broke that basic principle and paid

for it. Clark? When not running from Michael Moore[39] he can be seen at least once

every new year.

Having outlined the historical context and theoretical framework supporting both

a need and context for a 21st century new mass medium there remain several practical

research questions which were the basis for the following focus group study. What

follows is the focus group aspect of the methodological process already begun above

through an explication of literature and theory related to resistance media and an analysis

of the history and current use, relationship of the mixtape to both popular culture and

specifically the hip-hop community. The following focus group study was intended to

ultimately assist in gauging what is the central question of this research: What is the

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[39] *Bowling for Columbia*, 2002, Clark runs from Moore's attempt to question him about his harmful employment practices.

potential for the rap music mixtape to become a viable underground mass press and

source of emancipatory journalism?

CHAPTER IV
THE FOCUS GROUPS

Having described the historical context and contemporary need for a new underground mass press, what remains to be determined is the viability of *FreeMix Radio* to take hold. Can *FreeMix Radio* overcome existing structural impediments and, perhaps more importantly, the challenges of diffusion as described by Rogers (1995/2003)? If I may relate the mixtape as emancipatory journalism to media as Rogers related sanitation to illness in his example of a Peruvian village (p. 2) what may be of some concern is if people now can see that media can pollute and does need cleansing. To investigate this parallel I conducted three focus groups over a one-month period. Each group varied in size (minimum six and the largest consisted of eighteen) and included people aged 18-34 and of varying "races" and socio-economic statuses. I chose this method primarily because to study the potential effectiveness of mixtape radio I needed at least some degree of ethnographic study to which I could apply a textual analysis of the collected results. From the videotape recorded focus groups, I developed a text to be analyzed comprised of participant answers grouped by theme including news and media intake and the identity, location and relationship of each to hip-hop.

Focus groups were selected for their ethnographic qualitative gazes into the lives of those who do and would use mixtapes. This form of study is most appealing to me and, I believe, best suited to this kind of investigation. It also allows for my own placement within the study as both an avid fan of mixtapes and the producer/practitioner of *FreeMix Radio* and emancipatory journalism. Furthermore, I am able to build upon Memmi's "colonial pyramid" and the anti-colonial theory described above to counter the

historical legacy of ethnography and the study of the "other." That is, as the immediate descendant of a Russian-descended Brooklyn Jew and an African descended Black man from Washington, DC, by way of Ohio by way of Kentucky who was raised in a low-income, section 8 suburb, I can attempt to place myself relative to a colonized inner-city Black-inspired cultural expression. So, to further borrow from Memmi, I may not be within the class of the colonizer but I remain, somehow, distinct from those most colonized. Given the very specific racial categories developed within the United States I am Black, but as a world traveler I have also been White, Russian, Puerto Rican, Egyptian and from Zanzibar. So at what point is this ethnographic gaze from within versus without? How does my personal cultural expression via mixtape relate to those who I consider my target audience? Does it matter that I want to talk about Fanon when many in my core constituency want to hear from 50 Cent? Who then, in this study, is the "other?"

But as one who counts himself among the colonized, or who at least recognizes a colonial situation, this particular methodology allows for me to inject anti-colonial views, "oppositional consciousnesses" into what has historically be an imperial exercise (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Perhaps then, "if the other can be understood only as part of a relationship with the self," I too can "suggest a different approach to ethnography and the use of qualitative methods." This approach, especially considering my somewhat nebulous positioning in that colonial pyramid, "conceives the observer as possessing a self-identity that by definition is re-created in its relationship with the observed – the other, whether in another culture or that of the observer" (Denzin and Lincoln, p. 56). And considering my goal of re-defining existing signs in order to have *FreeMix Radio*

assist in the development of Sandoval's "differential movement" which is based in a desire to "produce a 'love' in a decolonizing, postmodern, post-empire world" (Sandoval, p. 83) it would stand to reason that I select a methodology that would allow for a "re-created relationship" with those conventionally defined as separate from me.

My reason for the selection of textual analysis is that it addresses various concerns with research legitimacy that arise in any project. While not entirely agreeing with Alan McKee's (2001) statement on research that "there is no such thing as a single 'correct' interpretation of a text," (p.140) I do agree with his base premise that there is also "no such thing as 'objective' knowledge," that "every methodology is partial, producing particular and quite limited kinds of information" (p. 138). Just as I as a writer and journalist have certain predispositions, biases and points of view, so do all other writers, journalists and even those in control of dominant media. So, again, as McKee has explained, quantitative research is of no more value to understanding the world in which we live than qualitative methods because statistics alone will not help us understand how people view the world or others in it and the formulation of quantitative research questions, as well as, interpretation of data all involve bias, cultural and otherwise. My interest is in definition of signs and symbols as understood by those with whom I intend to engage with *FreeMix Radio*. In this case a mere quantitative study would not go far enough in helping us determine how well mixtape radio may or may not become part of a regular media environment just as quantification alone would not address topic definition or how its meaning was generated by those observed.

Similarly, per my recent interview with Robert McChesney on the issue of race, class and newspaper readership (personal communication March 12, 2004), I felt that a

textual analysis would be of more value here because acknowledging the existence of some coverage of a given subject does not address any *intended* definition or meaning meant for readers. However, a textual analysis can, as McKee has stated, help determine how certain topics are represented in a society (p. 144) which may give certain clues as to how a society (or at least its potential *FreeMix Radio* audience) may respond to specific issues.

Respondents were solicited via mass emails sent out through my existing *FreeMix Radio* e-list, through open invitations made during my WPFW radio show and by flyers placed in cafes and record stores that carry *FreeMix Radio* in Washington, DC. The first two groups met at Café Mawonaj (624 T ST NW, Washington, DC) Saturday and Sunday July 9 and 10, 2005. The third and final group consisted of students taking my summer course at the University of Maryland at College Park, "Hip-Hop as Mass Media" August 11, 2005. The groups were run and videotaped by my wife Nelisbeth Ball. The questions were designed to illicit from participants their relationship to, use of and interest in mixtapes. Questions included general inquiries into their backgrounds, ethnicity, gender or all around self-identification. Other questions were concerned with participants' news intake and overall media habits, while other questions were particularly concerned with mixtape use. Follow up questions were then asked after segments of FreeMix Radio were played, about respondents reactions, likes, dislikes and interest in this particular mixtape becoming a regular part of their news and music intake.

From these responses I was able to create the "text" used for the analysis and conclusions described below. Analysis of those comments follows the question and answers all of which is conducted in chapter V.

CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS: THE MIXTAPE AND THE FOCUS GROUPS

Is the mixtape a viable potential source of emancipatory journalism? This is not easily answered. Mixtapes have, following the general trend of all that is produced within a colonized, capitalistic society, gone from being entirely underground to being corporate promotional tools. While a variety of mixtapes continue to exist and make waves there still remains a dominant popular form that largely mimics commercial radio in terms of musical content. *FreeMix Radio* remains seminal and alone in its determined political goal and use as a form of journalism. No other mixtapes are produced with the same kind of regularity (monthly) with the same journalistic function as its goal. *FreeMix Radio* does meet the tenets called for in the definition of emancipatory journalism. It rejects politicized Western notions of objectivity, is designed to carry content supportive of anti-colonial community (nation) building, and involves activism and activists in its reporting and overall content.

However, despite this goal and effort, *FreeMix Radio* exists within a media environment designed to keep its work marginal at best. Waves of popular messages weaken audience ability to understand or accept this new concept and function of the mixtape. Unsolicited responses have over the last two years reflected the predictable responses of some focus group respondents described below. Some have called to complain about uncensored lyrics questioning the claims to radicalism made by *FreeMix Radio* due to the inclusion of "foul" language. I have since begun censoring those words in response despite my own frustration over an audience criticizing *FreeMix Radio* while allowing commercial radio to thrive playing songs censored of "cuss" words but

maintaining an overall reactionary or abusive message. Take, for example, the recent hit from the Yin-Yang Twins *Wait* (2005) (euphemistically called the "Whisper Song" due to its performance in a whisper). The fact that commercial radio censors the actual lyric "wait until you see the size of my dick" has no final effect on the overall context of the song. Those who purchase the song will hear that word and those who only hear the song on radio are not likely to miss the general point. But my inclusion of songs that might say "fuck George Bush," (Immortal Technique, 1999) have drawn the ire of some listeners missing the point that individual words are less an issue than overall content or context. What dominant media and discussion of censorship have done is to remove from center the issue of content and message replacing that with the issue of individual word selection.

Furthermore, the use of copyright law infringement by dominant powers to limit and shape what is legal for sale and distribution have helped to weaken access to mixtapes (though *FreeMix Radio* being free of cost helps circumvent this problem) and have criminalized more of the colonized. This has, in effect, turned attempts to engage in free communication a crime not unlike the previously mentioned example of the Fugitive Slave Act making the *flight from bondage illegal*. This, along with the larger battle over internet downloading, has provided further constraint against which mixtapes must continue to struggle for their place. These were among the central concerns behind the questions asked of focus group participants. In the three groups conducted there totaled twenty-five people.

FROM THE BASEMENT TO THE STREETS: *FREEMIX RADIO,*
MIXTAPE PRODUCTION THE HOWS, WHYS AND WHOS

Since beginning the show in April 2004 I have slowly begun turning our basement into a mini-studio. Selective spending of student loan money has allowed me accumulate a lap-top computer, cd-turntables[40], a 7-stack (7 at-a-time) cd duplicator, microphones and some audio editing soft/hardware. The *FreeMix Radio* production process involves conducting original interviews, pre-recorded mostly via portable microphones and a mini-disc recorder, and the selection of other audio-bytes, speeches and music. Music is selected based on my own particular likes as the DJ but also based on the political nature, content and likelihood that the song will not be heard on commercial radio or video.

What constitutes the "underground" status of an artist can take on a variety of meanings. In this case we define the underground as those whose talent has not be recognized or sanctioned by the major record labels and primarily whose political content is likely to keep that artist from being allowed popular representation. As will be described below ideological needs mechanized through an institutional structure meticulously shape who is to be known and what views are to be popularly expressed through music. *FreeMix Radio* seeks those abandoned by that design, those we call "underground." Long-time rapper and legend KRS-ONE has summarized our views on this in his own song "Underground" (2004). He explains:

> If the cops be eyein you, cause survive is what you
>
> try to do Yo I'm wit you, you UNDERGROUND
>
> If it's justice you want, and you protest the ice they flaunt

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[40] Turntables that operate like traditional record-album-vinyl decks but use cds instead.

You want skills that's UNDERGROUND

Yo it's not about a rugged rapper, or an actor

It's about your subject matter that's UNDERGROUND

You could be a classy lady or a whore

But if you protest the war, for sure, you UNDERGROUND

If the government can't see you, or deceive you

You love your people, believe you UNDERGROUND

If you refuse to play the game, you go against the grain

You ridin the train, you UNDERGROUND (2004).

Once all the elements of the show have been selected production is conducted via cd-turntables, a laptop computer and audio editing software. This technology is used to digitally, via computer, lay out the show, mix it with music creating a seamless blend of music and journalistic reporting (and sometimes comedic or political sound-bytes) which is then burned or copied to cd. From there that original is loaded into a 7-cd stack duplicating tower and copied in mass. By collecting as much money as our collective can muster we make and distribute as many copies as possible usually reaching between 600 and 3000 per month. By bulk-rate supply shopping we are able to bring the cost of copying, labeling and putting in sleeves 100 shows (cds) at a cost of $20. This makes mixtape radio a relatively affordable method of creating and disseminating a relevant journalistic and cultural mass medium.

The funding for *FreeMix Radio* currently consists of six members of our collective, Organized Community Of United People (COUP),[41] each putting in $20 per month. The money is stretched by tracking down roving computer road shows where bulk-rate prices on cds, labels, sleeves, printer ink, etc. are offered. At these rates 100 copies of each show costs just about $20 on the nose. None of us take salaries and all supplement the work with our "day jobs." All work is done on a volunteer basis.

After spending a month collecting audio, interviews and music I spend one solid day recording a mix (blend of music and instrumentals which form a musical bed for audio), making final edits to interviews and then using computerized audio editing equipment to put it all together. From there I burn a base copy to cd then load that into the 7-stack (or 7 at a time) cd burner/duplicator and begin making copies. In one or two days worth of duplicating I then label, sleeve, stack and make available all copies. At times we get individual donations or ourselves put in more so our monthly circulation is anywhere from 600 to 3000 copies per month.[42] We do make the show available online but, as described above, this is not seen as enough of a viable entry into our target audience.

At that point the collective works to make copies available at a number of local Black barbershops, cafes, community centers and to individuals via street corner/metro–subway distribution. In this last sense we take up the time-honored and inherited tradition of the street corner orator that has influenced the work of so many from Hubert

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[41] For more information on this grassroots organization, including history, mission and work visit http://voxunion.com

[42] We then get word of individuals making copies and distributing more on their own so total circulation is unknown.

Henry Harrison to Marcus Garvey, from Queen Mother Moore, and Carlos Cooks to Ella

Baker and Kwame Ture (Jackson, 1987, Ture, 1996, Ball, 2001).

Again, we began this work in April of 2004 and, for the most part, have remained

on schedule and will continue to do so indefinitely. One function of this work is to

provide ourselves and others with a model and some studied analysis as how to better

make this mixtape venture of increasing impact on the lives of Black and Latino

Americans in particular, but ultimately, all hip-hop enthusiasts. Building on some of the

literature described above which discusses the political organizing and autonomous

space-making capabilities of music one piece I continue to find absent in the hip-hop

scholarship that talks about the organizing potential of that sub-grouping is the infusion

of a press designed to help that organization develop. Here once again we need more

what George Jackson called for, "an increasingly pervasive underground press with new

emphasis on a 'mass style'" (1971, p. 43).

THE MIXTAPE, POLITICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the summer of 2004 thousands of hip-hop enthusiasts and activists

gathered at the first Hip-Hop Political Convention in Newark, New Jersey. Though

claiming a philosophical lineage that dated back to the 1972 Black Power Convention in

Gary, Indiana this one was more concerned with the more conventional prevention of

another four years of George W. Bush as opposed to the radical independent Black

political party building of Gary. However, as an attendee of the convention I was moved

by the amount of people who worked so hard and traveled so far to participate but also

concerned over what seems to be a general problem at conventions or conferences. Too

much time spent educating, informing and debating views as opposed to concrete, clear and agreed upon active motion forward.

I kept thinking how much we needed a national press, a political one, one that informed and created some sort of consensus on which we could build once in proximity to one another. While there is no shortage of hip-hop "journalism"[43] beyond internet audio journalists like DaveyD (daveyd.com) and JR and Rashida of The Block Report[44] there is not much that encourages an emancipatory journalistic philosophy. To help facilitate all organizing efforts even those advocating involvement in largely mainstream political activity we are attempting to enter the mixtape into that arena. We are clearly far from this but as organizers gear up for another convention in 2006 perhaps *FreeMix Radio* can be announced as part of a methodology of recognizing a colonial situation which then translates into other new, perhaps "strange," ways of addressing that reality.

We have the scholarship that in a variety of ways suggests that the hip-hop community already posses the ability to be that new galvanizing force of new 21st century political movements (Wimsatt, 1994, Kitwana, 2002, Ards, 2004, Brown and Wimsatt, 2004, Rockeymoore, 2004). However, these analyses ignore or are unaware of the aforementioned described colonial legacy, function, purpose and power of dominant media or their mechanized structures (i.e. music industry, processes of consolidation, payola, etc.). For example, in her political manifesto, Maya Rockeymoore suggests that "Of all the strengths belonging to the Hip Hop Generation, perhaps one of the most important lies in its power of analysis" (2004, p. 3). And this is/would be true which

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[43] Magazines such as *The Source* and *XXL* and any number of websites from allhiphop.com and sohh.com.

[44] Bay-area journalists whose audio appears on *FreeMix Radio* and whose transcripts are published online at bayview.com

explains why the artists she uses to support her claim are either no longer well known (Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and even KRS-One, Goodie Mob or Public Enemy to lesser extents) or are in an out of the music business (Lauryn Hill), totally irrelevant as far as politics go (Queen Latifah, Ice T, Ice Cube) or are compromised by marginal fame and their own use as corporate pitch-men (Dead Prez, Mos Def and Talib Kweli).

A similar misunderstanding is made by Todd Boyd (2003). Given the historic relationship between popularity, image and social control described above, Boyd's suggestion that more politically conscious artists such as Common who become spokespersons for corporate goods (in this case Reebok and Coca-Cola) benefit from increased exposure and, therefore, increased power to submit ideas into the marketplace (p. 101). Boyd, not properly addressing the model and analysis provided here, does not take into account that given the already uneven balance of power between major corporations and an artist such as Common an a commercial appearance by the latter does nothing to close that gap.

Boyd's analysis, an unfortunately popular one, presupposes equal footing regarding political power between the individual artist and the corporation for which she/he works. This is far from the case. The power garnered by those in power by having their image linked to that of a "radical" like Common (or others mentioned) does nothing to level the playing field. If anything an artist's gives popular sanction to the product, its corporate parent and the behavior described in that commercial. The money generated by that ad is then but icing on the cake. The image, carried far and wide, helps to undermine whatever political content that artist might incorporate in her/his music.

The profit, garnered through money and image, can then be reinvested in what are likely to be varying webs of corporate influence, much of which was described above.

Further, the machinery and context I have described above forces these artists into obscurity as concerns anyone outside hip-hop's hardcore community. They pale in comparison (unfortunately) to the popular dominance of thugs, pimps and hookers. Kanye West is perhaps an exception but, as described already, his name sells more corporate product than anyone and his once-upon-a-time statement against Bush is largely subsumed by his far more consistent references to sex, money and conspicuous consumption. Again, if these artists reach the highest levels of popularity they do so as they are able to appease the image and economic needs of their sponsors, therefore, weakening most of the counter-hegemonic impulses in their music. This is why, below, I will return to the argument already discussed that mixtape distribution has another important role to play in popularizing artists outside their being connected through image to ideals in opposition to their own claims of desiring change.

The colonizing function of dominant media, press or cultural industry production must reflect specific images and symbols describing and defining the colonized so as to weaken their potential to struggle efficiently. To do so communicative channels must be opened and/or increased. In other words, none of those seeking to make hip-hop a cite for struggle offer suggestions or ideas for developing an underground mass press that would be essential for the kind of organizing they call for and with which I agree. Just as the movements discussed above have all felt it necessary, quite rightly, to evolve a new press I am offering the mixtape a 21st century form.

A QUICK WORD ABOUT THE WHITE LEFT

I listen to Amy Goodman and *Democracy Now!* nearly every morning. I too listen in on FAIR's[45] *Counterspin* and to Robert McChesney's *Media Matters* radio program *every week*. When I miss them live I either watch/listen online or download their shows and listen via mp3. I love them. They are some of the best news radio/video out there and when I miss them I fiend like those missing a drug. I have met the producers and hosts, have interviewed McChesney twice[46] and Noam Chomsky once[47]. I also have been interviewed on Air America Radio and participated in Free Press conferences and any number of other White-liberal-dominated media reform gatherings, meetings and have even been involved in some of their organization. I mentioned briefly above some concerns with the White left media reformists and they are exemplified even among those shows/gatherings I love most.

Another reason, aside from the analysis offered above, for being interested in a Black-centered, hip-hop-styled, journalistic venture is that these groups; a) fail to think beyond reformation in media ownership and b) rarely involve news told from the perspectives of African or Latin American communities. The first is mostly a non-starter, again, for the reasons stated above. Given the function media play, reorganizing media ownership cannot occur outside a revolutionary change in the larger society. As for the second concern, these media have not or cannot do more to address the domestic concerns of the African and Latin American communities.

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[45] Fairness And Accuracy In Reporting at http://fair.org
[46] The audio and transcripts are available online at http://voxunion.com
[47] But who hasn't? Chomsky is the ideal scholar-activist and never turns down an interview request, particularly those from underground presses and activists. He is remarkable in that respect.

A quick visit to McChesney's website will show (for those who, unlike me, are

not regular listeners) that no guests are Black or Latino and when the topic is about race

or White supremacy the guest "expert" is always White

(http://www.will.uiuc.edu/am/mediamatters/). Twice now I have heard, in the show's

discussions of race, reference made of my friend and mentor Glen Ford of

blackcommentator.com as one whose online commentary is essential to an understanding

of these issues and yet Ford himself has never been asked to appear. Even the annual

Censored (2006) report from Project Censored[48], which yearly offers coverage and

discussion of "the top 25 censored stories," does not count any story affecting African

America to be worthy of selection. I found race or racism to be mentioned as a factor

only twice and that is done as backdrop to some "larger" concern – though one of those

being a discussion of the importance of alternative media to the development of the Civil

Rights and Black Power Movements (Phillips, (ed.), 2005, p. 195).

And considering that it is doubtful how anyone could or would deny Amy

Goodman's leadership in this reform movement a quick study of her show *Democracy*

Now! demonstrates a similar example. For instance, of the 176 possible shows

(weekdays) for the calendar year of 2005 prior to the levy flooding following hurricane

Katrina only 21 (or 12%) had a focus on Black America. Of that small number, 10 were

historical references to the Civil Rights era with 2 about Emmitt Till, whose killing while

tragic and important history did occur in 1955. 4 of the 21 had Damu Smith[49] as guest,

this is not of itself a problem other than it gives inordinate amounts of time to only one

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[48] Whose masthead reads "media democracy in action."

[49] Longtime Washington, DC-based activist, friend and mentor. Smith is founder of
Black Voices for Peace and has worked endlessly and tirelessly despite his having been
diagnosed with cancer.

man, and only 4 shows were of some contemporary issue

(http://www.democracynow.org/browsebydate.pl). In other words, the best that the

White-liberal-left can offer in terms of news has little direct impact or relevance to

African or Latin America and nearly as little for the entire hip-hop community.

Again, the *FreeMix Radio* example is meant to bring out these contradictions,

both within hip-hop scholarship and political activism and in highlight existing problems

across racial and class lines that offers some kind of solution or method for developing

solutions to a lack of political consciousness and problems of media access and/or reach.

THE ECONOMY OF FREE EXCHANGE

In October of 2005 I participated on a panel about the politics of hip-hop during

the 38th annual African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) conference at the Africana

Studies and Research Center at Cornell University. After outlining and discussing the

views described here a brother of comparable age engaged me in discussion of the

manipulation of artists by pay. I suggested that our *FreeMix Radio* distribution model

(free!) was an idea to be expanded so as to assist in the promotion – and hopeful future

financial support – of artists whose politics would likely keep them from mainstream

popularity. By having the mixtape take the place of conventional radio, that is highly

consolidated in ownership and cost prohibitive in its financial and political inclusiveness,

we can create an autonomous distribution network that offers these artists the exposure

that leads to sales that would insulate them from having to compromise expression for the

sake of big company pay. Considering the previously described industry function and

process it is not likely that artists can expect big pay days regardless of political

viewpoint. So here we can develop something new, something more conducive to mass delivery and maybe financial gain.

His point was that "we need to go back to a time where artists [in hip-hop] did it for the love" in order to discourage this popular trend of shaping an image of negativity to become "marketable." I am not sure that such a return is immediately possible but aside from avoiding copyright infringement penalties our primary reason for the free distribution of *FreeMix Radio* is to encourage community-building in terms of financial support through donations, as well as, to encourage the development of alternative outlets from underground and dissident-voiced rappers. Above I discussed the colonizing effects and purposes of money.

Like Parenti has said about corporations, "While [they] are often called 'producers,' the truth is they produce nothing. They are organizational devices for the exploitation of labor and accumulation of capital" (2002, p. 8). So too is the function of the four-corporation "musical OPEC" previously discussed. Their function is simple promotion, distribution and eventual accumulation of the lion-share of generated wealth. In this, again, they perform their colonizing function. So too is this the function of "news" companies. They organize what is to be "news," and then popularize and disseminate that product. The mixtape has the ability and existing infrastructure, history and cultural attachment to provide circumventing space for the hip-hop community, particularly Black America. There is further evidence that such a plan has potential for success.

In a recent study by Harvard University and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill the authors, seeking and succeeding in empirically demonstrating that

absolute "zero" net loss of cd sale profits as a result of online pirated downloading, suggest also that this "illegal" and free distribution of music actually has financial benefit to a wider array of artists (Oberholzer and Strumpf, 2004, p. 4). Because the social act of online searching and chat room discussion lead people to music and artists they likely would have never encountered via traditional and commercial forms of radio or video the likelihood that these artists will see sales that would otherwise have been unlikely to occur increases immensely. This also demonstrates an anti-colonial function of the process of bootlegging or music piracy. Given the paucity of high-speed internet access mentioned above the mixtape again shows greater potential for anti-colonial service. Mixtapes reach people not likely to be on the web and also reaches an audience heavily inundated and seriously impacted by negative imagery via music video and commercial radio displays of African American debauchery and narrow-minded thought (Dyson, 2001; Kitwana, 2002; Beachum and McCray, 2004).

This historical and mixtape analysis suggests that the model illustrated above represents a contemporary updated representation of an underlying and continuing dialectic. Dominant media in any society represent the will and ideals of that society's dominant or ruling elite. To expect that they will ever reflect the views of the dissident is to misread the historical record. Again, equality has been reduced to "diversity" and "diversity" does not necessarily address the issue of ideological or political variety. If Black journalists participate in the false or misrepresentation of Black reality or concern such as Armstrong Williams accepting Bush administration payola or Jayson Blair participates in journalistic fraud what good is diversity? But even that already narrowed goal is being threatened and Black representation in popular journalism is declining

(Callahan, 2004) just as it is in the executive wing of the music business (July 30, 2005 http://billboard.biz). My suggested model only needs timely updating to reflect the most current manifestation of this dialectic of dominant media needing to socialize its colonized and the attendant resistance to that process attempt. The mixtape has been suggested here as our moment's method of increasing or adding to existing resistance media.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE STUDY

Fourteen participants self-identified as male, sixteen as "Black," one as "Afro-Latino," one as "bi-racial," one as "Jamaican," one as "Semitic," another as "Jew," one as "Palestinian-Iraqi," another as "Black-Indian," and two as "White." Ages ranged from 18-34 and included all those born in the United States save for one who was from Guyana. Of those who participated only one stated that hip-hop was not a favorite genre or at least highly consumed as preferred music. Below I will restate each question asked of the participants and then summarize the kinds of responses given. From there I will move into my conclusions, discussions and final recommendations.

Responses are reported here in groups indicating patterns of discussion after participants listened to portions of the mixtape and to questions asked during the focus group. Of course, not every individual response is recorded here, however, those selected represented widely held views.

FOCUS GROUPS RESPONSES

Among the first questions asked, aside from general autobiographical inquiries into age and occupation, were those about news consumption by amount and form. That is:

- How many hours per week do you spend taking in news?

- What are your primary sources for news and information?

Responses to the question of weekly intake of news ranged from less than two to nearly thirty. The average time spent taking in news per week was roughly four to eight. The bulk of these hours come from "the internet, radio and television." Within that responses generally were that this news intake was primarily through what would be considered "mainstream" outlets such as *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times.* Others added that they did go to some of the more popular hip-hop websites such as AllHipHop.com and three respondents were sure to include that they listened to other more independent outlets such as WPFW Pacifica in Washington, DC, or Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*. There were also four participants who said they were already regular listeners to *FreeMix Radio* and had that as part of their regular news diet.

- How would you describe your overall relationship to or the overall function and purpose of the rap music mixtape?

Of the twenty-five responses to this question only one said she had no relationship and no experience with mixtapes. One said he had little experience with them and only

has one that he can remember ever getting despite knowing of their existence. The majority of the remaining responses centered around the mixtape's function as a promotional tool where artists and DJs would use them to alert hip-hoppers to their existence and talent.

To many of the respondents, mixtapes represent an alternative source for music. In the case of those familiar with *FreeMix Radio*, the mixtape was acknowledged to be an alternative source of both current and historic news, speeches, music and commentary. Equaling this kind of response was another popular notion that the mixtape is primarily a source of "entertainment." Here respondents also added that the entertainment value of mixtapes included that often the mixtape involved DJ-ing techniques, a wider range of content including clips from popular film and comedic routines, etc.

Some focus group members noted that it was on mixtapes that you would hear ingenious blends of the beats of already popular songs recast with lyrics of underground and, in one case revolutionary, lyrics. The latter had been noted to occur on an edition of *FreeMix Radio* where the popular hit "We Need a Resolution" by the late Aliyah was reworded by the revolutionary group Dead Prez into "We Need a Revolution." Though this track had originally been released on a Dead Prez underground mixtape this particular participant had not heard it until he had picked up a copy of *FreeMix Radio.*

- How do you procure mixtapes? How often do you purchase, listen or copy mixtapes?

Very few of those who participated in this study said they purchased mixtapes, and none said they did so with any regularity. Again, only one said she never got or

listened to mixtapes. The rest said they bought mixtapes sporadically, and most said they

would get them for free from artists, promoters or as copies from friends, family, etc.

Online downloading was another popular method described by participants for the

procurement of mixtapes. Some expressed that what was once an easy process – the

collection of mixtapes – has been complicated today by new laws restricting street

vending. So what used to be a visit to "street entrepreneurs" has now become either a

more difficult hunt for small record stores or youngsters selling mixtapes on blankets.[50]

Some participants still get mixtapes from barbershops and beauty salons, while

others mentioned what was discussed earlier, that they are now available in some cases

through mainstream record stores, including some of the largest outlets. Several

expressed that they regularly visited cafes and small record stores that carried the freely

distributed *FreeMix Radio* mixtape.

- Having heard segments of *FreeMix Radio,* what can you say stands out while

  listening? What do you like about *FreeMix Radio?*

What was nearly unanimous in the responses to having heard portions of one

edition of *FreeMix Radio* was the powerful impact of the included speech segments (in

this case the voice of Black Power hero Robert Williams). Some of the comments

included that this was good because "it reminds Black people that there is still a

movement." "It didn't sound like any other radio station." "The rhythmic tones" were

"uplifting" offering a "positive vibe" that "centered around Black life."

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[50] Mixtapes are at times sold on blankets placed out on the street (mostly in New York
City) which allows for them to be quickly wrapped up and taken in flight from police.

The fact that *FreeMix Radio* is freely distributed led one respondent to connect this to the "resurrecting of a culture of resistance, mental if not physical resistance" that "plants a seed of rebellion" that reminds "us that we are not meant to be here, this is not for us."

Similarly, there were a number of respondents who spoke to an appreciate for *FreeMix Radio*'s absence of objectivity. "I like that the show seemed unafraid to express and defend a clear position," was a statement indicative of how several felt. Though, one woman did also say that the politics were "too much, too heavy."

Overall, the "eclectic" mix of news, speeches and hip-hop not heard on commercial outlets was a commonly expressed appreciation of the show. Others said they appreciated the stories specific not only to Black people but to poor Black residents of Washington, DC, who they felt were rarely represented in their normal news or media landscape. Similarly, another respondent expressed excitement over the difference in events covered or promoted on *FreeMix Radio*. "*FreeMix* covers events that I just can't get to or don't know about."

One participant commented, "I liked hearing both revolutionary and reactionary songs," which he felt offered a more honest balance as opposed to those who overdue it with "conscious backpack, dreadlock rap." He continued that "I hear of things or organizations I've never heard of before, like Downhillbattle.org[51], [*FreeMix Radio*] is a vehicle for different perspectives."

While most comments about what set *FreeMix Radio* apart centered on the political content, there were those that spoke specifically (as just mentioned) to the

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[51] An organization dedicated to challenging copyright law and record label control over cultural expression.

musical aspects of the show. Several commentators showed appreciation, as did one local Maryland artist in the focus group, for "local, underground hip-hop" being played. He said that for him, as an artist, it is very difficult to get radio play. Most local artists in any setting are not heard from in local media so *FreeMix Radio* for him, as well as another artist participant, was an exciting option. They both, being artists, actually liked that *FreeMix Radio* "circumvents copyright laws" and allows more of their and others' music to be heard. Both of these underground artists expressed an excited willingness to give away their music, bootleg their music as a method of increased promotion.

None of the respondents expressed having a problem with the musical content. All seemed, one way or another, to enjoy the difference in sound, kind of hip-hop, the aforementioned content balance contained therein and even a willingness to expand beyond just hip-hop into some funk and soul.

- What did you not like about *FreeMix Radio*?

Listeners did not all blindly or entirely love the show. Only four of those involved in the study said there were "no problems" with the show. While some expressed appreciation for the lack of objectivity, several did suggest that there need to be some debate, some back and forth, some break to the monotony of such a one-sided argument. This was not just in terms of politic commentary, news coverage or speech-making, but also in terms of musical content. "Commentary comes down one avenue, there are other genres and artists that need to be heard as well," was one response.

Another participant said, "there is no debate, listeners are assumed to be the converted like on FOX. It would be more interesting and intellectually honest to have

more people talk to each other rather than an espousal of ideas." Another response was, "there is no discourse; any position stated should have an opposing view offered."

Other participants said they felt there was "too much commentary," but one said that there was not enough and that there needed to be "less music." One respondent felt that the inclusion of speeches was "worse than commentary," while others simply wanted the total exclusion of speeches altogether. And, again, one woman said she simply did "not like some songs. I am not a rap fan."

Musically there were some concerns with too much DJ scratching on one track, but most dislikes involving the music or overall sound were problems with the quality of production. One felt "the introduction was boring," and that the opening speech by Robert Williams "sounded dull, like a fake Dr. King." Some of these responses, four to be exact, came from those who had described themselves as artists or producers whose ears were more tuned to issues of recording levels, quality of transitions, the absence of "drops" or "slugs"[52] and overall quality of sound, compression techniques, etc. One summarized this problem as a need to correct "production peak levels" to normalize or level the audio as to prevent sharp spikes in volume that are disruptive to the ear.

- What would the show need to sound like in order for it to become a necessity in your life? What does the show need?

This question allowed for respondents to expand upon their dislikes. Two said that the show "already is a necessity for me." One went on to say that, "I have been

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[52] Industry terms for the use of sound-bytes designed to attract a listener to the name of the show or to a central theme of the show that also break monotony and focus the audience on what is coming next.

listening to *FreeMix Radio* for one year and three weeks. I didn't really like the first one I heard, it was rough. [There has been] huge progression in terms of the overall quality and the information presented. My question is about Black leadership, is it to brainwash people or encourage people to think critically? It's not 1965, it's 2005."

This same participant expressed a common concern over the uncensored lyrics, saying that, "language is a problem, I can't give it to kids." Another said, "It may not be a necessity but it is high on my list." What he and most others felt was more of what was mentioned above. For *FreeMix Radio* to become a necessity in their lives, respondents said that the production quality would have to improve, that there would need to be more balance in terms of political points of view and a broader range of music, beyond hip-hop.

Another participant said, "It would have to be in a lighter mood, [more] laughter." The was echoed by another who wanted more "humor" and another wanted "to know the person putting it together, to know if they are credible." Another felt that it would be a necessity if "it were on radio or satellite." Summarizing concern over the overall direction of the show, one response was that "the show needs to decide between talk or music or entertainment."

- Would you ever pay for *FreeMix Radio*?

Twelve respondents said they would be willing to pay for *FreeMix Radio*. Of those, however, only three did not qualify that answer with it needing to address the previously mentioned concerns. One participant added to her complaint list that she

would be willing to pay, "but not as it is. There is no label on the CD, only on the sleeve" addressing a concern with overall look or packaging. Another said the he would absolutely pay saying that "you pay for a CD and out of twelve tracks I might like only five or six and it's a waste of money. So with the costs of those CDs I know I'll get more for my money with *FreeMix Radio*." And some who said they would not pay said so based on current levels of poverty and, in one case, poverty brought on by costs of college.

- With whom would you share the show and how would you go about doing so?

Responses to this question were relatively narrow in scope. That is, most said that they would share the show with all those they knew who loved hip-hop, with family or friends. The issue, again, of language resurfaced in these responses as well. The "profanity makes me not want to share it with young people," was one response. Another again said, "I worry about the parents who come to me about the language." But this latter respondent did also express that these parents need to check the uncensored versions of the songs played on popular radio that once purchased in-store or acquired through downloading or copying offer the same kind of adult wording but in a decidedly different context.

- How would you describe *FreeMix Radio* to someone who never heard it before?
- How would you compare *FreeMix Radio* to other sources of information?

- Is there anything else you would like to say about this new medium?

The responses to these questions were similar and related so they are grouped together and separated only by quotation marks alerting to a change in speaker.

"It is a lot like NPR, WPFW, KYS and college stations all put together, the eclectic nature of the music and news, it's an audio Source [magazine], XXL, hot beats, speeches, and everything you never thought you needed to know."

"It is an independent source of media, made for a different population, involves hip-hop and message, valuable information that you need to know."

One simply said, "check it out." "It's great and has such a wide range of subject matter. It's something they should listen to."

"It's organic, with a variety of contributors."

"It covers the person-to-person methods of dispersing news, which is underused today. It just lacks reach."

"It's like one drop. You not just getting information but also interviews and underground stuff, freestyles from random cats who are good. It helps those who aren't into every little crevice of the music world."

"It's honest. There are no corporate sponsors. [It's] honest opinion and news. It's part of African people's interesting way of communicating. Person-to-person is important."

"It's a lot less frequent. I have to listen more than once. I look forward to getting the next one. I can watch TV news whenever I want versus having to seek out *FreeMix Radio*."

"It knows its audience so it's like *The Daily Show*." "It's enlightening."

"Despite criticism, FreeMix is excellent. The vision, the energy is great. It fills a need for alternative media designed for Black people. Other than FreeMix this is nonexistent. FreeMix should tackle some other issues. There is no tenderness in hip-hop or love in hip-hop, FreeMix should help bring that out."

"I appreciate it and wish it success."

"I am excited to have been involved from the beginning and now watching it grow." "It's unique and group-specific." "

It is a more interesting way of pointing out issues."

"It is a more interesting way of getting information [out]."

"News media is not objective, is biased and focused on the same story, but FreeMix structure is raw and in your face, really interesting."

"[There is] no false objectivity, I like that from the beginning it took a stand. It wasn't all this 'progressive, conscious' hip-hop that can be nauseating. It had Scarface and M.O.P. I'd like to see it expand, doing it in different languages, other disadvantaged communities that could benefit, reggae, salsa, etc."

"It needs to get off the ground and into the public."

"It caters to me as a Black person. I can relate better than most other stations even Black talk because it includes music. I'd spread the word. It should be national, most Black people don't have Sirius or satellite or XM. If it were on the radio it would make changes in the world, or it would be banned for being so in your face."

GOING FORWARD FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

The last statement relayed above speaks to the most central of the claims made herein. The call in 2005 for an underground mass medium that addresses the underlying

concerns within African America is both needed and unable to be popularly offered.

Something like the mixtape, as I have attempted to argue here, is called for because its

ability to operate within the spaces left open by dominant technology and media being

focused elsewhere to the exclusion of challenging media. Terrestrial or satellite radio

will not be made available to those seeking to use popular press or forms of mass

communication to make substantive change.

The focus groups comments raised issues noted by Brzezinski (1997): Mass

media, control over the world's systems of communication and the ability to shape

popular image is what will allow for US empire to maintain itself unlike empires of the

past. Respondents who, for example, thought it necessary the *FreeMix Radio* be aired on

conventional or satellite radio for it to have impact miss the point. Brzezinski's point is

that this is not an option considering what he considered was the "underappreciated

facet" (199, p. 25) of cultural imperialism in the maintenance of power. For him, and

those in power, this is not a simple matter of more than the same ten hit songs being

played over and over again. For him the issue is how can we ease the manipulation of

tremendous populations. The cost prohibitions involved in military solutions, not to

mention the cultural prohibitions, make cultural imperialism that much more inviting.

The last respondent understood this point. FreeMix would be "banned" if ever

made a regular component of the popular media landscape. Dominant media are so due

to their support of the dominant. Brzezinski's statements on this issue need to be placed

in the context of his own book's larger message. The book is titled *The Grand*

Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives (1997), that is the

planet. We are all the pieces he is suggesting need to be manipulated in such a way to

assure American hegemony. His statements on controlling mass media are to be taken in the context of his book's point which is how to control the world. Media are part of, not isolated from, other societal institutions all of which are put in service to those in power. Media, in a popular sense, cannot contain messages and symbols contrary to the goals of those in power.

THE COLONIAL PSYCHE

I previously touched upon the psychology of the colonized. Focus group responses have made it necessary to revisit the topic albeit, again, in brief. I discussed Frantz Fanon – himself a trained psycho-therapist –as he described the need of the colonizer to employ a mass culture that would confuse the colonized into thinking their pathological behavior was natural and authentic (1964). Both the challenges and imperfections in colonizing attempts were demonstrated in the focus group responses.

First, highlighting the imperfection of colonialism, most respondents both liked and perceived as necessary *FreeMix Radio*. Second, those who were concerned about the show's bias can be seen more as understandable victims to dominant media and the constricted norms as to what is acceptable discourse, in other words, colonialism. This false notion that there are to be two sides given (as if there are only two) to any story regardless of the prescribed boundaries those two may represent is a powerful one in need of much and constant redress. I often think how these kinds of respondents would have wanted to see coverage of plantation slavery or the Nazi Holocaust. Must a journalist balance a story about the enslaved by getting the perspective of the slave-driver? Would we go back to Buchenwald and look to give equal time to both a Polish Jew and a

German officer? At what point can a journalist simply state that what she/he has covered, studied, reported, etc. is just wrong and must be changed?

Thirdly, there is this concern over aesthetic. A difficult challenge for *FreeMix Radio* and other mixtapes is the established popular norm of high-tech look, glossy images, retouched or air-brushed photos and fancy packaging that often belies a deleterious content. Similarly, is a fourth issue brought to illumination, that of the technological aspects of the mixtape. How closely can the mixtape, *FreeMix Radio* specifically, mimic or overtake popular technologically-inspired sonic aesthetics? Commercial radio has a specific sound that has conditioned its audience to find that format appealing or as the established standard– not unlike the inauthentic "like" described above by Adorno (1944). As described above for Blauner (1972) and Semmes (1992) this is part and parcel of colonialism's "imposition of thought" (Blauner, p. 67) onto the colonized. Methodologically, the colonizer must make adjustments to the psychology of the colonized. This is, again, why Fanon (1964), Cabral (1973) and Biko (1978) all made cultural reclamation central to their journalism and overall analysis of anti-colonial struggle and why, again, Brzezinski (1997) was sure to include cultural imperialism as central to his analysis of media's role in maintenance of US global hegemony. So, as Biko explained, "we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage" (p. 49).

This self-consciousness is inhibited by a colonized media environment which prescribes the norms and acceptable ideological and aesthetic parameters some of my focus group respondents were unable to overcome. It is to this that Memmi speaks in his chapter on the "Mythologized Portrait of the Colonized" (pp. 80-89). These portraits

become necessary to both justify the treatment of the colonized but also to encourage

inculcation of the colonizer's view of the colonized by the latter. Says Memmi, "these

images become excuses without which the presence and conduct of a colonizer… would

seem shocking" (p. 79). And much like Fanon's previous description of a

"polydimensional [colonizing] method" that is first brutal in physical force and then more

subtle involving a colonizing of culture (1964, p. 35) the result for Memmi is that the

"ideology of the dominant class is adopted in large measure by the governed classes…

the dominated classes practically confirm the role assigned them" (p. 88). This maintains

the colonized within the first stage of Nigrescence described earlier where the individual

accepts both the view of her/himself as determined by the colonizer but also that this is

natural or normal (Jones, 1991, pp. 319-338). It is not recognized as a condition against

which struggle or resistance is necessary.

James Baldwin, in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), offers among the most powerful

media criticisms known and speaks brilliantly to the issue of the psychology of not only

the colonizer but the colonized. He speaks of a White supremacy that has a reciprocal

effect that is based in the need of Whites to justify and balance their existence against

what they are not, that is, Black. This is not unlike the "consensual hallucination"

described earlier by Charles Mills (1997). Baldwin spoke of America's historical origins

that set in motion a need to create an image of the "Negro in America" one that "does not

really exist except in the darkness of our minds" (p. 18). This created image

"dehumanizes" Black people which in turn, says Baldwin, leads to the "American image

of the Negro" living independently "in the Negro's heart; and when he has surrendered to

this image life has no other possibility" (p. 30). He continues by, again, making a point

developed earlier that we have inherited "the very warp and woof of the heritage of the West, the idea of white supremacy" which has made it impossible "for Americans to accept the black man as one of themselves, for to do so [would] jeopardize their status as white men." Then, summarizing the issues described thus far, Baldwin says, "the white man's motive was the protection of his identity; the black man was motivated by the need to establish an identity" (pp. 146-147).

Again, controlling image has and continues to mean that Africans in America remain, out of necessity, frozen – colonized – in both in body and image allowing for a mostly White-male-elite to remain distinct by professing what it is not: Black. New methods have been grafted to the existing dialectic, i.e. what is described below in the colonial media diagram (fig. 6.1). My point here is simply that because the process of production, dissemination and promotion of Black America's cultural expression is colonized the latter can determine what forms of that expression are acceptable. This leads to a seemingly natural performance of what is known to be welcomed. This is the cultural expressive equivalent to the practice of self-censorship among journalists (McChesney, 2004). Dominant ideas of what is acceptable become normative and relinquish the colonizer of the need to expose the colonial relationship through brute forms of violence to explicit and direct statement. And, again, here it can be better understood why and how the previously mentioned concerns over the effectiveness of diffusion arise. Colonialism explains the means by which the colonized are often unable to recognize their condition, reasons and historical context for that existence and/or methods of overturning them.

These responses simultaneously demonstrate the power of the dominant media spell cast on its audience but also the imperfection of the system. There remains room for resistance. What follows are some concluding thoughts on how that resistance might take shape.

CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSIONS

The organizers of the White left media power structure, Free Press (http://freepress.net), describe themselves in these words: "Free Press is a nonpartisan organization working to involve the public in media policymaking and to craft policies for more democratic media." This goal cannot be reached in the society and media system described in the previous chapters. Why not? The chart shown in Figure 6.1 analyses the media system apparently operating in the US today and situates resistance media within it.

The diagram that follows (Figure 6.1) is meant to illustrate the process I have to this point been describing. It offers in symbol the theory of media practice and resistance on which I have based this study. It centers the colonial reality and those colonized. This is essential to prevent losing sight of who become the subject and whose perspective is to be used as an analytical tool. The process of decolonization must be undertaken by theories and experiences of those colonized and cannot depend entirely on the concepts, signs and symbols of the colonizer.

Though at the center the colonized remain largely under the domain of the dominant media and that media's two primary mechanisms; journalism and cultural industries. The dominant media have as their functional DNA three basic concepts described above. In capitalism commodity-formation is as Marx noted its "original sin" (Kamenka, 1983). Simply put, this means that any and everything from paperclips to music must be reduced, therefore controlled, to commodities whose production, dissemination and promotion are controlled by those in power. They operate within the historical origin of Africans and their descendants as this country's "original commodity-

fetish" (Tate, 2003). This has forced Downing's "conceptual original sin" or racism (2005) to take hold as the fundamental determinant which governs how this society interacts with its Black internal colony.

The rest of the diagram demonstrates how these foundational relationships are mechanized. Cultural expression from the colonized is extracted as any other raw material, natural resource. It is then packaged, reshaped and sold back to the colony (and world) in a form acceptable to those in control of that process. In this case, music, has its ownership via copyright transferred to corporations who can then choose whether or not to promote their new product. Should they choose to the process is filtered through a system of payola and play-lists which again determine the amount of air play and general promotion leading to popularity and album sales. This is aided by a consolidated radio ownership structure which reduces the amount of people in need of convincing or influence over in order to promote and have played what artists those corporate record labels have seen fit to make successful.

This all creates a cycle, partially described in focus group responses, that instills among the colonized what forms they should allow their cultural expression to take in order to become "successful." If I know songs about revolution won't be played I am more likely to create music about thuggery or violence or abuse of women. This is the politics of popularity. What is popular sets the tone for those looking for the same. This in turn feeds back into the colony the kinds of acceptable cultural expression deemed acceptable.

Journalistic practice and education perform the same function. What is considered news or education in turn shapes the consciousness of those colonized and
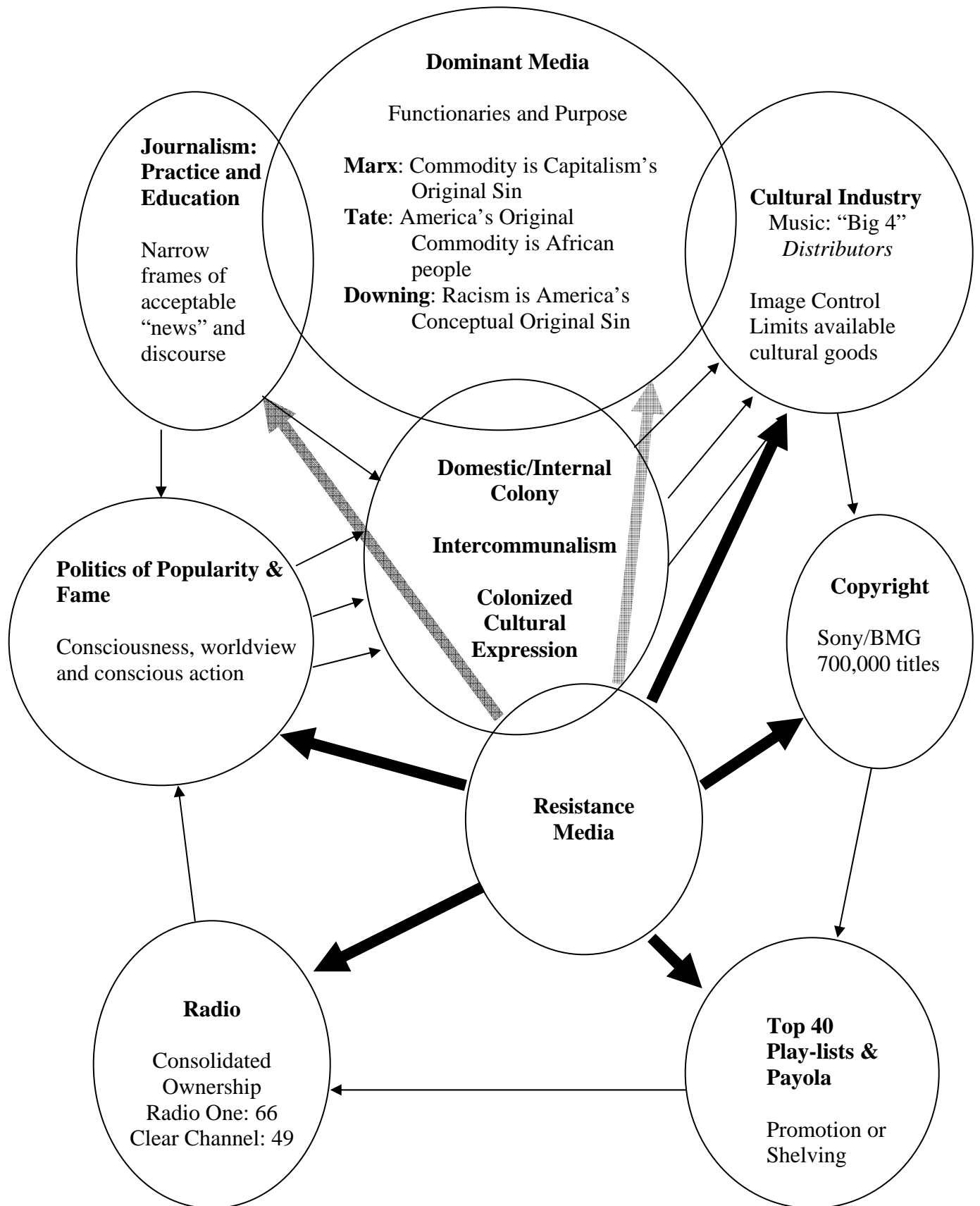
then what kinds of information on which the colonized base their actions. The cycle

would be complete and perfect were it not for the continued existence of resistance media

itself struggling to find ways of addressing each facet of the colonial model of media

practice and function. Resistance media too interact with the colony and can only be said

to find its 21st century foothold within a shifting media environment and dominant image.

Potential for success will be discussed below.

The model demonstrates both the media problems facing the colonized but also

ways in which the mixtape addresses them. As resistance media the mixtape, and

particularly *FreeMix Radio*, performs several counter-hegemonic functions. Mixtapes,

operating outside Federal Communication Commission (FCC) guidelines, corporate

influence through recording contracts, costs, etc. and with the freedom to be shaped by its

creator(s), are able to contain content not sanctioned by established, institutionalized

power. Free distribution (to be discussed further below) allows for the mixtape to

circumvent the power held by the cultural industry to fully control popularity by offering

an alternative distribution method. Similarly, the use of underground artists' music given

with permission and/or the free distribution of copy-written material use without

permission allows for the distribution of artists and their popularization without corporate

– colonial – control.

This assists in the avoidance of the highly concentrated ownership of radio and

cost-prohibitive inclusion in Top 40 play lists, themselves designed to limit and shape

what becomes popular. And not unlike its music component a mixtape like *FreeMix*

Radio is free to contain journalism in form and content that is specifically designed to

address particular community needs, in this case emancipatory journalism, in a relatively

inexpensive way. As shown in the model the mixtape resists, assertively, each aspect of the colonizer's mechanism for journalistic and cultural control/dominance. As described above this is of particular concern and importance considering the history of press and dominant media's role in maintaining an image conducive to Black exploitation. The mixtape, particularly as used by we creators of *FreeMix Radio*, is suited to further expand 21st century resistance media efforts.

Figure 6.1 Resistance Media Location Within Dominant Culture

Dominant Media

Functionaries and Purpose

Marx: Commodity is Capitalism's Original Sin
Tate: America's Original Commodity is African people
Downing: Racism is America's Conceptual Original Sin

Journalism: Practice and Education

Narrow frames of acceptable "news" and discourse

Cultural Industry
Music: "Big 4" *Distributors*

Image Control Limits available cultural goods

Domestic/Internal Colony

Intercommunalism

Colonized Cultural Expression

Politics of Popularity & Fame

Consciousness, worldview and conscious action

Copyright

Sony/BMG 700,000 titles

Resistance Media

Radio

Consolidated Ownership
Radio One: 66
Clear Channel: 49

Top 40 Play-lists & Payola

Promotion or Shelving

This visual representation (fig. 6.1) is a major outcome of my dissertation's research. The other outcome is the following list of major concerns and conclusions that suggest future areas of research and struggle.

- The mixtape provides a model for what needs to happen both within the microcosm of media studies and journalistic practice but also within the larger society.

A source of information and cultural expression is sorely needed. Existing structures, both ideological and in mechanization, prevent such forms from appearing in popular media. The mixtape, produced autonomously and depending largely on extra-institutional forms of dissemination and promotion offer both the challenge facing mixtapes but also their brightest hope and greatest potential to serve such a function.

- Media and media education must open doors for further discussion of new forms of mass communication.

Those involved in media education must take it upon themselves to broaden the scope of their study and experience. Media power must be met with sound and critical media education and those attached to universities are in the peculiar and particular position of luxury to do just that. Existing canons must be challenged and expanded to include the thought of the world's majority (i.e. female, poor and non-White) and the experiences of those colonized must be forced into the discussion.

- Future discussion of new forms of mass communication should include critical explorations into the role of technology in maintaining inequity so as to allow for

consideration of encouraging media technological "slow-down" or a return to more "primitive"[53] forms of mass communication.

As discussed briefly above, there is little to no evidence that "advance" or "progress" in technology has led to improved material conditions of a majority of the country's (certainly the world's) population. As described by Mattelart (1995), technology and mass communications research have often been about surveillance and maintenance of order as opposed to anything else.

- This leads to a fourth issue raised by this study, that is a need for a revisiting of the approaches employed in journalism and mass communications study and teaching.

Journalism and media studies education must be completely restructured out of the morass of job training and into critical thought as to the role journalism plays in supporting or exposing gross mistreatment of an overwhelming majority of this or any other society. The fact that I, as a Ph.D. student in this field, should have only by happenstance (or divine intervention if that is your inclination) discovered the emancipatory journalism theory of Hemant Shah as copies of the *Communications Theory* journal were being stacked for discard is an appalling indictment of journalism education itself. It is absurd to suggest that graduate programs in the field of journalism should be focused on practice absent any further study into the history and relationship of journalism to any society's other institutional structures or goals.

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[53] This term needs to be rescued from its pejorative connotation. It simply means "first" which quite naturally would have to be re-defined as a negative by those coming later claiming to be "advanced," or "civilized." The "First World" is actually the last to enter into what might be called "civilization."

The focus group responses offer some telling hopes and obstacles. This speaks to a problem described earlier in my look at journalism history. The technology to mass produce audio and more so labeling and packaging is cost prohibitive. Glossy covers, full color artwork, mixing techniques and the hard/software to carry out these steps are expensive, for some difficult to learn and more difficult to disseminate once done. Perhaps more of a problem than this is the issue of popular consciousness that is constantly being shaped so as to establish ideological barriers to even the consideration of new mass media or certainly the need for such. Some in this study and many more outside this particular study feel well served by existing media. What Kwame Ture cautioned against many years ago, that is, "Black visibility is not Black power," remains a primary obstacle. As said above, how can I criticize Oprah if few see a need today for a Harriet?

Here again the problem was described by those studied who suggested a need to choose between news or music. *FreeMix* is intended to address both needs, much as I would argue radio should now (and has at times been in the past). The lack of news and a balance in music work in tandem to limit perceived life-choices and possibilities among the colonized. Just as journalism education cannot seek to teach journalism in a vacuum or media as being in an institutional vacuum neither can alternatives seek only to provide news or only to provide music.

Hanno Hardt (1992) has done well to explain this describing a situation where the study of mass communications is often done outside a context of competition for power, control and dominance. Cesaire (1955) and Connell (1997) have made similar claims in terms of the field of anthropology and sociology. But little of this seeps into journalism

education and far less into public discourse. In other words, societal institutions are largely successful in producing accepting subjects as opposed to those who would critically oppose or seek to overthrow them. Here again our "media reform movement" is led mostly by those who are loyal-opposition or who have given up any notion of societal change (Robert Jensen, personal communication, May 15, 2005).

Some respondents demonstrated this lack of understanding in their desire for *FreeMix* to be put on radio, or that were it on radio it would be popular. This is precisely my point: Existing structures recognize and work to limit popularity to what is acceptable to existing centers of power. This is precisely why I have argued for the development of the mixtape as a source of emancipatory journalism. It does not require the acceptance or willingness of those who wield power of sources of mass communication. Furthermore, the mixtape already exists as an underground mass medium. It only requires organization and politicization. "Only!" In our present society it is likely that these essentials could only be granted by an elite who would also subvert the goals of the mixtape. It appears that wide spread resistance media will struggle to exist in today's media mix.

NORTHEAST WASHINGTON, DC

Having found it impossible to afford housing in the Northwest section of the city my wife and I have become "Black gentrify-ers." What Fred Hampton, Jr. has appropriately called "a colonial land-grab" (personal communication, October 24, 2005) gentrification has shown itself to have a Black side as well. We bought a small row house in the Deanwood section not far from the Maryland border. We are far from the

beaten path and few who do not live there or need to go there do so. There are no shops, walk-way storefronts. There are not Starbucks or similar styled cafes and there are almost no White people outside of police. I describe the area as being working class, friendly, and though not the "ghetto" it does have "ghetto-like tendencies." While having conducted no empirical study, my work and interaction with young people in that community has further spurred my desire to expand this *FreeMix Radio* project.

Little in mainstream press is targeted to these communities. The young are still largely left to the caretaking (undertaking) of commercial radio and local news. Hip-hop to them is real when violent, filled with hyper-sexuality and very narrow politics. They best represent the statement made by law professor Derrick Bell that "If the nation's policies towards blacks were revised to require weekly, random round-ups of several hundred blacks who were then taken to a secluded place and shot, that policy would be more dramatic, but hardly different in result, than the policies now in effect, which most of us feel powerless to change" (p. 806). Here all that has been described above takes its heaviest toll and few, if anyone at all, determine to make media designed to reach and enhance the lives of those in this community. Black "leadership" that calls for individual artists to be held responsible for the kinds of music they generate (Paul Scott, personal communication, November 3, 2005) or those who belatedly join demonstrations against individual radio stations, ala Al Sharpton (Bayles, 2005), engage in many of the same misguided and narrow criticisms of those on the White left. That is, absent attempts to develop media for these communities there can be little hope for change.

My own work at the local Pacifica station, WPFW 89.3 FM also demonstrates the incompleteness of these attempts at change. Nobody under 25 in my neighborhood

knows this station exists and similar polls taken among my university classrooms yields the same results. How can new media must be created with dissemination models that reflect the realities of these communities? The internet levels nothing. A lack of equal access to the internet and the enormous gaps in ability to promote (not unlike the example provided above of the music industry) have had nearly no impact on internet usage versus that of television as a source of news (McChesney, Newman and Scott, 2005, p. 17 and p. 88). The mixtape, however, is part of the existing social structure in the Black and Latin American poor and young communities. Its delivery methods still offer some potential avenues for increased listenership but it must be updated to accommodate this new ideological, political function.

The colonial reality/model offers hope. As Marx has noted, the same relationship that causes the colony offers its hope for resistance. That is, the colony, to the extent that it is underserved and left to its own device does leave room for new forms of not only entreprenuership but also development of mass media. However, what Marx did not see what that today's media reach does, to a strong extent, limit the need to reach intimately into these colonized communities. Commercial radio and television do the job without direct or close contact causing serious damage to the ability of a counter-hegemonic media to exist and thrive, or take hold. But as has been the described view of Sartre (1943) success is irrelevant to freedom. In an African-centered sense this has been described recently by Charles Finch (personal communication, 2005), "freedom is in the recognition of one's cause and her/his acceptance thereof. Therefore, a warrior can be imprisoned and still be both free and in the struggle for freedom." More specifically, George Jackson has said that, "the role of the revolutionary in a reactionary time is to

make space or room for future revolution to occur" (1970/1994). It is my hope that *FreeMix Radio* and its successors can do just that.

THE MIXTAPE AS HOPE'S 21ST CENTURY REPRESENTATIVE

I am acutely aware that the problem outlined above to some seems ominous. I am also aware of the challenges and difficulties facing even the suggestion that the mixtape can somehow be a force of change. However, the aforementioned literature describing the use and influence of music offers evidence that organized struggle can be encouraged through the use of music as a medium of change. That literature suggests that even in an era such as this where identity formation is so highly affected by dominant imagery that music can offer the necessary refuge for those in need of an alternative consciousness. So when Gladney (1995), Sanjek (1996) and Krims (2000) spoke of hip-hop as being a part of what provides space for the development of alternative identity and organization they were offering more than hope per say but instruction. The "hip-hop community" then can perhaps be politicized. as others have argued in terms of mainstream politics (Upski, 1995; Rockeymoore, 2000; Ards, 2004), in more radical ways and the mixtape may be able to serve as their cohesive press.

There is a historical legacy that, again, offers room for optimism. In his chapter, "Habermas in the Hood" Marc Anthony Neal, putting an African-centered spin on the (in)famous media theoretician, reminds us of the African world tradition where "music (think juke joints, speakeasies, dance halls, house parties, and 'two turntables and a microphone' in the park) formed an important dynamic in the success of those spaces" (2003, p. 64). Neal describes these "commons" as essential in the creation of counter-

hegemonic struggle or, as previously noted with Said, cultural "battlegrounds" (1994, p. xiii). Todd Boyd (2003) too, though misunderstanding the relationship of popularity fo politics and movement, does make an important point about hip-hop that the mixtape may be able to positively exploit in order to politicize and organize. He notes that despite a popular more-or-less homogenous form of rap music a specific locality of the art remains powerful. Boyd writes:

> hip-hop is such that it has crossed all sorts of boundaries yet remains specific to its immediate context. The history of hip-hop will forever by rooted in the local, for this is the fundamental part of its identity, but its movement forward allows any and all to place their own spin on it and, at the same time, connect to its overall emphasis (p. 48).

And this, again, is how and why I am attempting to connect the mixtape to a well-established tradition of emancipatory journalism that has caused fear among those in power. If those interested in maintaining the economic and social relationships of slavery thought it necessary to kill people found reading David Walker's *Appeal* (Aptheker, 1943), if fear of the spread of liberationist thinking caused the quarantine of Black sailors (Downing, 1981) and if federal agencies thought it necessary to stamp out underground presses (Armstrong, 1981; Rips, 1981; Constantine, 2000) then we can infer that there is real potential for an underground press, even a mixtape, to provide the kind of organization that creates fear among the elite. In other words, while there may be no

empirical date demonstrating a connection between music, underground press and organization struggle, there does exist enough circumstantial evidence suggesting the possibility. It is here that I am trying to place and find room for the mixtape and the practice of emancipatory journalism.

SUGGESTED USES OF THIS ANALYSIS

Returning to the initial statement at the outset about polemics I would like to come back to points of unity. The pain I intended to bring herein does, I hope, have value to those within academia and those practitioners whose views or practice would fall more in line with what would be considered the conventional. I have often spoken with friends and colleagues in the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) that I want to be a reminder that we have not overcome and that I lovingly want to fight with them in order to challenge complacency and the myths of "success" or "advance." If they are not complacent, I contend (hope), small dents can be made by them in the journalistic infrastructure. More likely might they be to push editors and each other to bring a critique that is supposed to have been what separated them from their White counterparts in the first place. As Dr. James Turner[54] has said to me on a number of occasions, "racial equality has been reduced to racial diversity." This country's struggle has not been to have more Black faces reading the news or reporting the weather, it has been about wider inclusion so that the needs and concerns of Black America would get wider representation and redress.

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[54] Founding Chair of the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University.

In the academy I am hopeful that such an analysis will challenge well-meaning professors to expand their own notions of a sociology of knowledge and that of their students. We in the academy are all afforded the absolute rare luxury of at least entertaining debate. We have the time and access to such a range of materials that the classroom should be a place for lively exchange of divergent worldviews and, particularly at the Ph.D. level, arenas of debate that far exceed any narrow function as classroom prep for mainstream media jobs. There is no reason why histories and ideologies of the underground press should go unlearned by students of journalism at any level other than in the service of colonial maintenance. I am sincere when saying that should these kinds of debates occur the incredible intellects that pass through academic halls may come up with ideas and methods for improving the fields.

I also, when speaking with NABJ friends, encourage their assistance – even if in quiet – with the training or funding of grassroot, underground journalists. I have tried to learn from my own study of the history of underground press not only about its unified "disdain for authority… and mocking mistrust of conventional wisdom" (Peck, 1991, p. iii) but also of its sometimes unromantic lack of professionalism, poor quality and tendencies described at times as "puerile, devotedly adventurist, stupidly sexist and childishly giddy about the revolutionary potential of drugs and the druggy potential of revolutions" (Rips, 1981, p. 23). Not wanting to follow any of these trends I have invited (and to some degree gotten) mainstream support and anonymous assistance in the production of *FreeMix Radio.* I do not mean for this aggressive critique to further divide divided people. It is important to me that this analysis be offered as a mechanism to not only explain more clearly the impediments to the proper practice of journalism and

journalism education but also to the prevalence of narrowly-ranged images of African America that assist in societal stratification and exploitative justification.

Similarly, by our example of mixtape radio others may be encouraged to creatively and group-specifically develop methods of journalistic practice that become more likely to take hold where they are. A simple willingness to include such thought and practice in the teaching or discussion of journalism history and education could only help to expand potential viable responses from similarly placed communities. We need not only rely on Western notions of acceptable journalistic practice and education.

RECOMMENDATIONS/FUTURE STUDY

My immediate recommendation is for journalism and media studies programs to infuse in their curricula courses on the history of the underground or dissident press. Even were they stripped of any overt political agenda it is a "*tradition*" (Kessler, p. 16, original emphasis) that is as deserving of scholarly focus as any other in American journalism. To add depth to these studies I suggest an immediate move to enlist the services of those who come from outside the practice of mainstream work or education who can bring wider analyses and experiences to the academic community. Media and journalism education must incorporate the work of those in Africana, women's, Latino, cultural, ethnomusicological studies (to name a few). Less dependence on White male elite perspectives is the only hope for these settings to ever bring about necessary change.

I do recognize, however, the inherent flaw of suggesting that part of a system be turned against itself. Journalism schools were created to produce journalists for mainstream presses. They were not created to instill ideologies of change in their

students. Perhaps the trend of seeking out perspective graduate students from popular

press outlets could be managed if not extinguished so as to allow for greater debate. I

often tell my students that we are in positions of privilege to be able to come to

classrooms and debate topics most will never consider. This should occur in journalism

and media studies programs as well. If for no other reason this would help challenge the

assumptions we take for granted and may assist in the practice of even the mainstream. I

recognize also the general problem of education in a society that profits roughly $10

billion annually by not educating its own citizens and by importing labor that has already

had their education, healthcare costs, etc. incurred by the home country (Palast, 2000).

So there are larger inherent structural inhibitors to this idea. However, I need to at least

add my name those who have called for such changes in the past or who are calling for

them now.

Further study should likewise pick up on some of the shortcomings of the present

effort to provide emancipatory journalism. Perhaps mixtapes are too regional an idea, too

New York or east-coast-centric. My focus has been the Washington, DC, area which is

less a hotbed for mixtape activity than other parts of the eastern parts of the United

States, perhaps there is more to be learned by more focus on other locations. So too is the

mixtape limited by its inability to overcome issues of time and space. Mixtapes are pre-

recorded and not, at this point, able to be produced and widely disseminated so as to be

viable daily-type news sources. I had thought of this during the recent events

surrounding hurricane Katrina when initially officials discouraged activists interested in

setting up low-power FM radio to broadcast to those being held in stadiums in New

Orleans and Texas. Part of the initial resistance was due to fears that gangster rap would

be played inciting the audience into rebellion. I thought how empowering it would be to have the infrastructure already up to mass produce mixtapes and disseminate them.

I would also like to submit that this be considered a beginning or a piece of a larger press history study akin to Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. We are in desperate need of an updated version of this for the study of journalism. *A People's History of the Press in America*. A book that tells the history of journalism from the perspective of the majority, people of color, women, the poor, the radical. A major comprehensive study that collects the histories of these various forms of underground or dissident presses would be of great help, especially if incorporated into institutional studies of journalism history.

Finally, I am reminded of the recent work by Angela Davis (2003) on the prison system in which she talks about not needing to see clearly an optimistic end. She talks about those held in plantation slavery who could not have imagined a world where such a condition did not exist. Davis relates this to ending the prison industrial complex. I would add to this a substantive change in how media function or are made mass. Something must be done. I have hopes that a look at the rap music mixtape in this fashion can help generate that positive change even in the absence of my own ability to confidently say as much. I am convinced of the need and of the potential of the mixtape to serve as emancipatory journalism functionary and I will have to leave it there and hope that my inability to "see" the victory is absolutely unnecessary to the success of the project.

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