

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

African Americans, otherwise known as Black Americans or Afro Americans, are a group of ethnic Americans with partial or total ancestry from Africa's black racial groupings. The term is used to describe the descendants of enslaved black people in the United States (Rastogi et al.,2011). A crucial aspect of comprehending their struggles, whether it is in the present day, or the past, is to fully understand their history, which is deeply entwined with slavery.

The history of African Americans starts when people from West Africa were forcibly transported and are taken as slaves to Latin America in the 16th century. Meanwhile, West African slaves were transported to English colonies in North America during the 17th century. After the discovery and independence of the United States, black people from Africa were still enslaved, however after the Civil War in 1865; the last four million black slaves were eventually freed. After the civil war ended, black people in America are considered free men, but black people were considered second-class citizens due to white supremacist beliefs. The journey that black people had to take to be fully realized as American Citizens took a long time. Starting in The Naturalization act of 1970, where American Citizens are limited only to white people. People could only vote in America if they were white and owned property. This, in turn, results in reconstruction, the expansion of the black community, and involvement in the major military wars of the United States such

as the Vietnam War, the abolition of racial segregation, and civil rights movement that sought political and social freedom that eventually transformed these unfortunate circumstances for the black people. A historic milestone that the United States finally achieved was to elect Barack Obama as their President in 2008, who was the first African American to be the President of the United States (Cobb, 2016).

The previous paragraph highlights that since the country's inception, African Americans has pervaded racism in every aspect of their life, including policies, places, economic structures, and social conventions. This is due to the founding colonies of the United States descended from European religious and capitalist foundations have utilized and invented racial identities to preserve an economic system based on enslavement and bond labourers as capital (Allen, 2012). The rich elite utilized race to impose social control on the population of the English colonies while also displacing and killing indigenous peoples, resulting in the development of the future US's hegemonic social reality. Although it may appear that racial segregation and the growth of awareness for African American People have been astronomically reduced and increased in comparison to the 1800s (McConahay et al., 1981), racism remains pervasive to this day. Racist acts, particularly by white people, are numerous, ranging from simple oppression to police brutality, racial profiling, as well as many other examples.

One of the most prominent issues of racism from the prior paragraph is police brutality and injustices against African-Americans and Hispanics; this can also be

considered one of the most recent civil rights problems in the United States at the time this study was written. Minorities in the United States are being brutalized and murdered by those who promised to protect and serve them. It appears to be a new problem, particularly for millennials and Generation Z, because the education system and mainstream media have failed to show proper history that unfortunately comes with all the horrors of injustice against African Americans and the dark history of racism (Heim, 2019). Problems between minorities and police officers may be traced back to the transatlantic slave trade in 1619. The problem has been brought to light as a result of contemporary technology's exposure to it. Not only does social media take significant credit to expose police brutality to a wider demographic (Apuke, 2016) but also music. Hip-Hop in this regard is especially prevalent, as most Hip-Hop artists are born from the minority group in the United States, African American people.

These acts of racism that the African American's face in living their everyday life is no stranger to the public eye, especially in the year 2020, where the trouble-riddled year is dotted with numerous cases of police brutality against African American people. An especially glaring issue in recent times can be seen in the rebirth of the Black Lives Matter movement, or simply known as BLM, that takes place all over the world, especially in the United States. The murders of Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and many others alike paint a vivid picture that African Americans face systematic inequality. According to The Centre of American Progress, wealth in the United States is distributed unequally by race,

particularly between white and black households. African American families have a fraction of the wealth of white families, which leaves them more economically insecure and with far fewer opportunities for economic mobility. (Devakumar et al., 2020)

Even considering some positive factors, such as the growth of education levels in the United States, African American people still have less wealth compared to white people. Lesser wealth, not only in the United States, have always translated into fewer opportunities in economic mobility that results in fewer chances to build wealth or pass accumulated wealth down to future generations (Hanks et al., 2018). This decreased chance of economic mobility, in turn, increases the crime rate of the African American people. Lesser opportunities in gaining income always translate to higher numbers of crime (Florida, 2017); this can be proven in many instances with examples that can be gathered from many places, including Indonesia (OSAC, 2020). However, this lesser opportunity in gaining income is not the only reason that African Americans receive unequal treatment from the government. This problem had rooted far deeper in history, back when slavery was still a normal thing in America, which results in deep racial segregation, even back in the time of the founding fathers.

According to Marger (2012, p. 25), "racism is an ideology, or belief system, meant to explain and rationalize racial and ethnic inequalities," and "discrimination, at its most fundamental level, is conduct targeted at denying members of certain ethnic groups equitable access to society advantages." Both of these notions must be

defined from the start because they provide the viewpoint through which we may examine law enforcement's racist and discriminatory behaviours. We can trace this back to times of slavery when Africans were forcibly brought to America; from the start, they have been victims of violent, racist and discriminatory acts that are encouraged and validated by those who establish and enforce the law

These acts of violence and racist behaviours include Eric Garner in 2014, where he was tackled and choked to the ground by police officers in New York City on mere suspicion of illegally selling tobacco products, which resulted in major protests, Michael Brown who was killed in the same year by a Ferguson Police officer who responded to a call on a stolen object, Walter Scott who was shot five times by a white police officer in 2015, Philando Castile who was shot by a police officer even after explaining that he had a license to conceal carry a weapon, and eventually Breonna Taylor and George Floyd who was killed in 2020, Breonna being shot 8 times while she was sleeping and George Floyd who died after an officer knelt on his neck for 9 minutes straight. These are just a few of the public examples where African Americans have been assaulted and murdered by police officers.

After establishing the history and evidence of racism, it is simple to assume that African Americans are assaulted and discriminated against because they were formerly slaves. Even when they were liberated, they were still considered non-citizens, and they had to work their way up to be recognized as full members of the American society. However, according to a book titled *Punishing Race* (2011), a law professor by the name of Michael Tonry conducted research, in which the

findings conclude that African Americans were subjected to violence due to a problem more deeply rooted than mere historical context. White people or Caucasians tend to excuse and even initiate police brutality against people of colour, especially black people due to the racial hatred or ill will that they hold against them.

This indicates that, according to Tonry's findings, White people regard Black individuals as deserving of severe punishment, whether in ordinary life or in the criminal justice system (Peffley, 2013). This may appear unusual, but there is a substantial body of evidence indicating that Black Males are viewed as a "prototypical criminal," and that this impression is perpetuated by the media and the broader public. Blair et al. (2004) found that Black males with more Afrocentric traits (e.g., dark complexion, broad noses, big lips) are more likely to get lengthier sentences than Black men with fewer Afrocentric traits (e.g., lighter complexion and straighter hair) (Eberhardt et al., 2006).

In his book *Criminological Theories on Race and Crime* (2010), Shaun Gabiddon developed the notion of "Negrophobia," which Armour explored in further depth (1997). Negrophobia is defined as an irrational fear of being harmed by a Black person, leading to White people killing or hurting an African American based on criminal/racial stereotypes (Armour 1997). The aforementioned racist stereotyped notions can be harmful since Whites can use them to justify shooting a Black person under the most improbable circumstances (Gabiddon 2010). Finally, African-American males are a population that has been heavily vilified in society.

In spite of their history with racism and how they are perceived by white people to be criminals due to their physical attributes, an African American author by the name of Richard Wright reflects how the seemingly opposing races can find a median ground;

“We black folk, our history and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experiences of America. What we want, what we represent, what we endure is what America is. The differences between black folk and white folk are not blood or color, and the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us. The common road of hope which we all travelled has brought us into a stronger kinship than any words, laws, or legal claims.”

This statement by Wright in the 1940s during the Harlem Renaissance is a prominent example of when black and white people in the United States may, in fact, set aside their differences, despite the historical background and deeply ingrained segregation. What Richard Wright's comment also represents is that the history of African Americans is one of ups and downs, but in this case, the ups outnumber the downs. Aside from that, it cannot be denied that today, black Americans make significant contributions to many segments of American society, such as business, arts and entertainment, science, literature, and politics and law. Though issues of discrimination remain, African Americans endure, achieve, and lead.

African American contribution is not to be underestimated; in recent years, the African American people have always been the ones driving movements in pop

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culture all over the world, particularly in music and fashion. Consider Kanye West, a Grammy award-winning producer and rapper who has also had a significant influence in fashion with his experimental fashion styles that incorporate components from military clothing and more avant-garde forms that have taken the globe by storm. West generated a shock wave throughout the world and influenced how people dressed, even in third-world nations, through a butterfly effect that flowed down from high fashion labels to fast fashion brands that are more accessible internationally. What this means is that people all around the world are reaping the benefits of the hard work and effort put in by African Americans without even realizing it.

From the preceding paragraphs, acknowledgements could be formed that culture derived from the African American people trickles down to a global scale and affects a significant portion of the world; this is where the second part of the equation, Kendrick Lamar and Anderson. Paak's musical work, comes into play. This study will analyze three songs from Kendrick Lamar's fourth studio album titled *To Pimp A Butterfly*. The three songs that will be analyzed are titled *Wesley's Theory*, *Alright*, and *The Blacker the Berry*. On the other hand, Anderson. Paak has two songs that are analyzed in this study titled *Lockdown* and *King James*. These two artists have been chosen for this study due to their significance in contemporary Hip-Hop and their strong messages in regards to the issue of racism in the United States.

Lamar, in particular, has a prominent message about racial politics. Not only does Lamar play an important role as an advocate and supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement, but his fourth studio album, *To Pimp A Butterfly*, has dominated academic papers.

The novelty of this study comes into play in the form of these academic papers; For example (Fulton, 2015; King, 2016; Lawrie, 2019; Sillyman 2017). These scholarly discussion tackles many subjects from many aspects of the critically acclaimed album. King (2016) discusses how public critique towards Lamar's social media presence did not hinder Lamar in creating an album that engages in political discourse. Fulton (2015) researches how Kendrick Lamar and D'angelo are considered as "Performer as Historian" and how Lamar and D'angelo exemplify the recent, politically charged wave of cultural historicism in African American popular music. Lawrie (2019) provides proof on how the album acts as a catalyst on protest art, Sillyman (2017) looks at how Lamar's musical, lyrical, and sonic choices reflect his internal turmoil as a consequence of the imperfection of his role in black politics as a consequence of his notoriety and wealth. This study will take a different approach in analyzing Lamar's music. The lyrical content from Lamar will be analyzed in regards to issues of racism in the socio-political and cultural climate at the time the album was written. This will then be compared to the lyrical content from Anderson. Paak's work regarding the same issue albeit in a different period of time. The analysis will utilize Julia Kristeva's design of Intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a key feature of memorable popular music (Burns, 1987), and is effectively leveraged by African American artists in their lyrical and musical work.

Julia Kristeva's design of Intertextuality was a response to the structuralism era, in which Julia explores the plurality of meaning. Intertextuality is used for this study due to its very adaptable notion that has been the focus of several, often contradictory theories. This concept is traditionally defined by theorists who have researched it as the way a text must be read in relation to other texts. As a co-presence relationship between two or more texts, intertextuality enables the sender of a message to draw a parallel between their own text and a previously published one and address themes, imagery, and symbols that the recipients will recognize if they are familiar with the original text. This concept ties in with Hip-hop perfectly, as Hip-Hop is known for its heavy usage of "sampling" which is discussed in later chapters. Far more could and should be written about the expressive functions of intertextual references in Hip-Hop songs, since they are one of the most effective techniques for conveying meaning in a short period of time, such as a song.

In order to analyze the data of this study with intertextuality, the lyrical content of both Lamar's and Paak's work will be seen in the form of poetry, where the structural elements of the song (verse, chorus, bridge, etc) will be analyzed in likes of a stanza in a poem. However, analyzing Hip-Hop as a form of poetry might raise a question, which is whether Hip-hop is defined as a form of poetry or not. According to *Rhyme's Challenge: Hip Hop, Poetry, and Contemporary Rhyming Culture* (Caplan, 2014) Hip-Hop is seen as a grey area in the literature world, in

Caplan's word: "To call hip hop "poetry" is to praise it, to commend it as insightful or artful. To reject hip hop as poetry is to condemn it as shallow or poorly written. On both sides of the debate, then, "poetry" often acts as an honorific term."

A closer examination shows that poetry varies across culture and periods of times, and it has no clear definition. Contemporary poems, such as free verse use little to no rhyme, and doesn't follow the typical conventions of rhyme and meter, meanwhile rap artists utilize rhyme structures that can be as long as 15 lines or more. A definition from Cambridge dictionary explains that a poem is a piece of writing in which the words are arranged in separate lines, often ending in rhyme, and are chosen for their sound and for the images and ideas they suggest. This idea of poetry being flexible with no obvious boundaries is the perspective that the author uses in order to analyze the lyrics of the song as a form of poetry.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do the lyrics of Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly* album voice racism in the United States?
2. How do the lyrics of Anderson. Paak's *Lockdown* and *King James* voice racism in the United States?
3. How are intertextual references utilized in Kendrick Lamar's lyrics?
4. How are intertextual references utilized in Anderson. Paak's lyrics?
5. How is the socio-political and cultural context of racism in the United States represented in Kendrick Lamar's lyrics?

6. How is the socio-political and cultural context of racism in the United States represented in Anderson. Paak's lyrics?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This research aims to:

1. Describe how Kendrick Lamar voices racism in the United States in the lyrics of his *To Pimp a Butterfly* album
2. Describe how Anderson. Paak voices racism in the United States in the lyrics of his *Lockdown* single and *King James* song
3. Identify and analyze the utilization of intertextuality in Kendrick Lamar's lyrics
4. Identify and analyze the utilization of intertextuality in Anderson. Paak's lyrics
5. Analyze the socio-cultural context of racism in the United States in Kendrick Lamar's lyrics
6. Analyze the socio-cultural context of racism in the United States in Anderson. Paak's lyrics

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the songs made by Kendrick Lamar and Anderson. Paak, respectively:

- *To Pimp A Butterfly*, A 2016 Studio Album by Kendrick Lamar, released on March 15, 2015. By Top Dawg Entertainment, Aftermath Entertainment, and Interscope Records. There are three songs from the album that are analyzed in this study; *Wesley's Theory*, *Alright*, and *The Blacker The Berry*
- *Lockdown*, A 2020 Single by Anderson. Paak featuring Jay Rock, released on June 19, 2020. By Aftermath Entertainment and 12 Tone Music.
- *King James*, A 2019 song from the fourth studio album titled *Ventura* by Anderson. Paak. Released on April 12, 2019. By Aftermath Entertainment and 12 Tone Music.

The selected songs are chosen due to their significance in the culture of Hip-Hop, how both of the bodies of work voices racism in the United States, and also as a catalyst for many studies and cultural movements.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to be useful for the readers, and those who are interested in researching and analyzing culture in Hip-Hop music. Below are the significance of the study theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically

This study hopefully can contribute to cultural study in the realm of music, especially in the Hip-Hop genre. Therefore, this study can be used as a reference for those who wants to explore a similar topic

2. Practically

Hopefully, this study can help the readers gain a better knowledge about racism in the United States. By reading this study, hopefully the readers are convinced of the significance of the Hip-Hop genre as a source of unfiltered cultural phenomenon that mainstream media does not show. By conducting this study, it will hopefully uncover the significance of the racism issue in the United States. By conducting this research, it will also solidify that Hip-hop itself can be a source of unfiltered cultural phenomenon that mainstream media does not show.