

The [Ferguson] Files

A Sonic Study of Racial Violence in America

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Preface, Dedications, and Requiems

Some people march in the name of justice. Others desire to, but are not able. Yet, both can listen...and read. “The Ferguson Files: A Sonic Study of Racial Violence in America” is an exploration of the killings of unarmed Black people in America by police and vigilantes from the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014 to the massacre at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17, 2015 that took the lives of Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders, Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Myra Thompson, and Rev. Daniel Simmons Sr.

In particular, the study combines academic analysis with poetry and rap to produce “sonic scholarship,” musically examining critical topics surrounding these events in the form of lyrical lectures. While drawing on government documents, news reports, and activists’ productions, the study is narrated by several different real actors and fictional characters. Topics examined include police brutality and vigilantism against Black people, representations of activists and victims by mass media, the underrepresentation of Black women victims in anti-police brutality campaigns, the military industrial complex and power of the state, white supremacy, and ongoing violence against Black people’s bodies, citizenship, and humanity. As this study is conducted sonically, what follows is the text of the sonic study, fusing these sonic and textual forms of knowledge production together. Ultimately, the chief goals of this study are to continue bringing critical attention to violence against Black people and help instruct the public on these issues, contribute to critical writing *and* a growing soundtrack for anti-police brutality activism (coming from artists, such as J. Cole, Bree Newsome, Janelle Monae, Sounds of Blackness, Sounds of Black Lives Matter, Kendrick Lamar, and Beyonce), and with music, help keep that activism inspired and moving.

This study is dedicated to the litany of Black people, who have recently lost their lives to police brutality and vigilante violence, the people who knew and loved them, and the people who continue fighting to resist the forces that took these lives, and still may take others.

Yet, it is still never enough to just offer a dedication at a critical time like this, in the face of the loss of real people’s real lives. This litany of gone Black people, as well as the people, who knew and loved them, need more to really honor them. They also need real change.

Introduction

*Set to: Katherine Dorsey, Jay-Z, *Jay-Z Can I Live Instrumental*, YouTube video clip, 3:12, February 9, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXQAgYA13tE1996>.

Featured clip: NBC News, *Michael Brown Shot to Death by Police*, YouTube video clip, 2:00, August 11, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEvOAax9pz0>.

Welcome to the Ferguson Files:

A study on how to murder a child—

Or murder a woman—murder a man—

Whatever you pleasure, let the learning begin.

DH, November 2015

I: “[Ferguson] State of Mind”

*Set to: Antonio, *New York State of Mind, Piano Moods of Billy Joel*, Orange Leisure, 2011, MP3 file, downloaded September 21, 2015, iTunes.

Verse I:

Do illuminati conspiracies apply here?

Any idea?

Cuz I’m laying right chea—lifeless¹—

If the all-seeing eye sees all,

Then the eye ball had to see what happened to me, right?²

Cuz I am confused,

Or maybe they keep hiding the truth,

And this logically proves illuminati runs everything,

Plus this deadly scene from cop’s shotty guns,

Leaving Black bodies done.

I never thought they had me marked for my walk in the park to end in white chalk.³

*Many thanks to family and friends that lent their critical ears and feedback: Walter “World Class” Cunningham IV, Shelden “Enigma” Hendricks, Dr. D. Soyini Madison, Treva Cunningham, Walter Cunningham III, Tresur Cunningham, Dante Haywood, Davida Haywood, DeVon Grant, Brian and Dalia Flannagan, Alvin Singh, Joenell Davies, and Christopher Alexander at Sockit Studio. There are not enough words or time in this life or beyond to thank my muse, sounding board, creative director, and wife, Temple Cunningham. Finally, and most importantly, all thanks are due to the Most High God, His Son and my Lord, Jesus Christ, and the ancestors, for permitting me to serve as their scribe.

¹ After Darren Wilson shot Michael Brown, Brown’s body laid on the street for about four hours. See, Julie Bosman and Joseph Goldstein, “Timeline for a Body: 4 Hours in the Middle of a Ferguson Street,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 2014, accessed October 3, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/us/michael-brown-a-bodys-timeline-4-hours-on-a-ferguson-street.html?_r=0. The Department Of Justice Report states that Brown was “on his stomach with his right cheek on the ground, his buttocks partially in the air. His uninjured left arm was back and partially bent under his body with this left hand at his waistband, balled up in a fist. His injured arm was back behind him, almost at his right side, with his injured right hand at hip level, palm up.” See, “Department of Justice Report Regarding The Criminal Investigation Into The Shooting Death of Michael Brown By Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson,” PDF, March 4, 2015, pg. 17, justice.gov., http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj_report_on_shooting_of_michael_brown_1.pdf, accessed May 24, 2015.

² The Department of Justice’s report seems to explain what happened. See, “Department of Justice Report Regarding The Criminal Investigation Into The Shooting Death of Michael Brown By Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson,” PDF, March 4, 2015, pg. 17, justice.gov., http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj_report_on_shooting_of_michael_brown_1.pdf, accessed May 24, 2015.

³ The idea of the Illuminati, the supposed omnipotent, secret organization that controls the world, and the recent explosion of discussions around the group, begs the question here of what realms of human activity they are supposed to control. Assuming that they control everything, as most commentators on this subject claim, would mean that everything from foreign affairs to incidents of police brutality result from their machinations. What ideas like this suggest is that people, or individual historical actors, are without the agency ultimately to make and shape historical events, for their actions are always governed by the Illuminati. For Black people in particular, these ideas work to dismiss Black freedom struggles by invoking longstanding stereotypes that Black people are incapable of thinking for themselves, acting independently, organizing, producing intellectual thought, and finally suggesting that their efforts to organize or even live are all for naught in the face of powers that be. In the context of police brutality and violence against Black people, these ideas erroneously suggest that the Illuminati are behind the killing of people like Michael Brown, rather than the police officer, Darren Wilson, who shot him. Wilson’s deadly encounter with Brown began with him asking Brown and his friend, Dorian Johnson, “why don’t you guys walk on the sidewalk?” See, Darren Wilson’s testimony before the grand jury, “Case: State of Missouri v Darren Wilson, Transcript of: Grand Jury Volume V,” documentcloud.org., September 16, 2014, pg. 208, <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1370494-grand-jury-volume-5.html>, accessed June 2, 2015. Black people, who are “unusually” successful in business and politics, for example, have had to contend with ridiculous charges of having achieved their success and influence from the help and/or machinations of the Illuminati, including Jay-Z. This idea

I don't get it,
But it don't make no difference yo—
Since its “beyond the walls of intelligence that life is defined;
I think of crime when I'm in a [Ferguson] state of mind.”⁴

Verse II:

I don't know much about illuminaties, but I do know a lot about—
Taking mobsters out that do ungodly things;
“I have dreams of killing gangsters, drinking Moets,
Holding teccs,”
Determined to serve and protect, “then I step”⁵—
Dash, leaving—
For fast briefings—
On the latest situation with these Black heathens⁶—

suggests that Black people cannot achieve such success without the help of some powerful, evil super group. Jay-Z rightly refuted these baseless charges in *Heaven*. See, #Jay Z, Jay-Z, *Heaven (Edited)*, YouTube video clip, 4:03, October 17, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSdD4htGv_Q.

⁴ A1a3r199, Nas, *Nas NY State of Mind*, YouTube video clip, 4:54, May 7, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKjj4hk0pV4>.

⁵ Ibid. The Department of Justice's investigation of the Ferguson police department puts this oft-said motto of police in serious question. See, “Investigation of Ferguson Police,” PDF, March 4, 2015, pg. 1-2, justice.gov., http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf, accessed May 26, 2015. Through hundreds of interviews with police, residents, and law officials, the review of thousands of records, and on-site observations, the report found “a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct within the Ferguson Police Department that violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and federal statutory law...Ferguson's law enforcement practices are shaped by the City's focus on revenue rather than by public safety needs. This emphasis on revenue has compromised the institutional character of Ferguson's police department, contributing to a pattern of unconstitutional policing, and has also shaped its municipal court, leading to procedures that raise due process concerns and inflict unnecessary harm on members of the Ferguson community. Further, Ferguson's police and municipal court practices both reflect and exacerbate existing racial bias, including racial stereotypes. Ferguson's own data establish clear Racial disparities that adversely impact African Americans. The evidence shows that discriminatory intent is part of the reason for these disparities. Over time, Ferguson's police and municipal court practices have sown deep mistrust between parts of the community and the police department, undermining law enforcement legitimacy among African Americans in particular.”

⁶ Though, according to the Department of Justice's report, Michael Brown attacked former officer Darren Wilson, instigating the shooting that led to his death, Wilson's comments to the grand jury that Brown had “the most intense aggressive face,” and was “like a demon,” who, during the attack, made him feel like “a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan,” still begs a lot of questions about his perception of Brown in particular, and of the Black community he policed. His comments here have drawn a great deal of criticism and rightly so. For Wilson's testimony to the grand jury, see Darren Wilson's testimony before the grand jury, “Case: State of Missouri v Darren Wilson, Transcript of: Grand Jury Volume V,” documentcloud.org., September 16, 2014, pg. 208, <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1370494-grand-jury-volume-5.html>, accessed June 2, 2015. For my selected quotes here, see pages 225 and 212 of his testimony. In an interview with the *New Yorker*, Wilson insisted that race was not a factor in his policing, that “I never looked at it like ‘I'm the only white guy here.’” But in the same interview, Wilson continued to frame Brown as a non-person: “Do I think about who he (Michael Brown) was as a person? Not really, because it doesn't matter at this point.” He also stated that he “liked the black community,” because “had fun there...There's people who will just crack you up.” See, Jake Halpern, “The Cop,” *The New Yorker*, August 10, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>. Wilson's comments speak to a longstanding and ongoing perception of Black people as anything but real people and/or comic versions of real people. For scholarly treatments of these points, see for example, George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind, The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1971); John Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult and Imitation in American Popular Culture*, (New York: Tarcher, 2006).; James R. Nestey, *Black Images in American Films, 1896-1954: The Interplay Between Civil Rights and Film Culture*,

That keep crack streaming;
I'm strapped, trapped deep in enemy lines,
Grateful I survived last season.
Sometimes I get flash being on "COPS"—
With this gift from the state that I'm keeping on cock.
"Life's parallel to hell," plus I serve and protect.⁷
"I never sleep, cuz sleep is the cousin of death."⁸

Verse III:

I never sleep either,
Between the protesters and police screaming—
I thought blessed were the peace keepers.
And I feel bad for what happened to Mike Brown,
But by 10 sharp, can ya'll please pipe down?
Cuz come sunrise, I'm off to work,
Get the kids on the curb for the camp school bus—
Can never get too much of a dollar earned.
"I was living where the nights were jet black,"
But now they're set back by the bright lights of news crews.
And its cool, ya'll got a fight for rights—I do too:
The right to work cuz the rent's still due.
Look, "I aint the type of [sister] made for [yall] to start testing"⁹
Tell all the police, all the protesters—quite down!

Verse IV:

Quiet down? Never! "If they refuse to hear us, we will make them feel us"¹⁰
Sniping pied pipers trying to take our children,
So I cant pipe down, Ima ride out til I make a difference—
Change the system—
Implement legitimate regime changes!
I don't care if its Illuminati, free masons—
I swear by the Almighty Creator,
I'll save every babe, every teenager—"Children far too young."
"Theories...pondered by the pundits" bubble up,
Addressing rifts between police and public trust,

(Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1982), Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, ed., *Skin Deep Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002).

⁷ See especially the "Ferguson Law Enforcement Practices Disproportionately Harm Ferguson's African-American Residents and Are Driven in Part by Racial Bias" and "Ferguson Law Enforcement Practices Erode Community Trust, Especially Among Ferguson's African-American Residents, and Make Policing Less Effective, More Difficult, and Less Safe," in "Investigation of Ferguson Police," PDF, March 4, 2015, pg. 1-2, justice.gov., http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf, accessed May 26, 2015.

⁸ A1a3r199, Nas, *Nas NY State of Mind*, YouTube video clip, 4:54, May 7, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKjj4hk0pV4>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sybrina Fulton, "If They Refuse to Hear Us, We Will Make Them Feel Us," *Time*, August 18, 2014, accessed September 3, 2014, <http://time.com/3136685/trayvon-sybrina-fulton-ferguson/>. Fulton is the mother of the slain Trayvon Martin, and, along with his father, Tracy Martin, has co-founded the Trayvon Martin Foundation.

But still fail to account for stand your ground laws vigilantes running up.
Like Mike, my son was walking too,
And never made it to where he was walking to,
Moments when you feel God's the only one who can walk you through,
So you pray He be merciful enough to walk with you.
Now me and Him walk...walk it out en route to a "new normal," "my continuing journey."
There remain things I can't explain fully:
Why my son "barely had a chance to live" in his gray hoodie;
Why America broke all the promises it made to me;
Why Sanford, Florida moved to Missouri.
But Ima stand my ground proud—
To honor every Michael and Trayvon child.
"It makes me back track to earlier times when I'm in a [Ferguson] state of mind."¹¹

¹¹ A1a3r199, Nas, *Nas NY State of Mind*, YouTube video clip, 4:54, May 7, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKjj4hk0pV4>.

II: Who's Afraid of the Big Black Man?

*Set to: MakerOfAllMusic1DS, Jay-Z, *Public Service Announcement Instrumental*, YouTube video clip, 3:04, April 26, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9WPDRReBfkA>.

Verse I:

“Allow me to reintroduce myself”:¹

I’ve mastered target practice,

A marksman at it,

Smart assassin,

“original gunclappa,”²

Whether its enemies or non-combatants,

I got shots that knock blocks right off they axis.

So when I take aim, I aim straight,

In a straight plane,

Intersecting with your mainframe.

Bigger they are, harder they fall.³

Ambulance got your candy ass, hauling you off.

“Who shot ya”?!—Me Nigga!⁴

¹ Jonah Wright, Jay-Z, *Jay Z Public Service Announcement*, YouTube video clip, 2: 53, June 25, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug3bS8HnkZw>.

² Ass3678, Smif-N-Wessun, *Smif-N-Wessun-Buktown*, YouTube video clip, 4:11, July 7, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw5V2k_SMh0.

³ The size of Black people in general, and Black men in this case in particular, have been commonly used to explain, if not justify, violence against them. What this suggests is that so-called large Black bodies pose an imminent threat to social order, and thus must be contained. If longstanding stereotypes have shaped popular ideas and perceptions of Black masculinity that project Black men as always already menacing, criminal, aggressive, hyper-masculine, and violent, then to add size to the equation only amplifies these qualities. Within this framework, large Black men become grizzly brutes with supernatural strength and insensitivity to pain, who will unleash untold violence unless effectively brought down. References were made about Eric Garner’s physical size and weight, for example. The city medical examiner ruled Garner’s death a homicide, but because the examiner’s report stated that his health problems were contributing factors to his death, some have commented that his weight and unhealthiness were the leading causes of his death, not the officer, who applied the illegal chokehold. Eleven times, Garner cried out, “I can’t breathe,” as the officer compressed his neck and chest. See also, Olga Khazan, “Fat-Shaming Eric Garner,” *The Atlantic*, December 4, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/12/fat-shaming-eric-garner/383416/>. Garner’s family and friends interpreted his size differently. Many called him “Big E,” that he was “like a big teddy bear,” “a gentle giant,” a deep contrast to how officers seemed to have seen him that fateful day. See, Soraya Nadia McDonald, “Friends: Eric Garner was a ‘Gentle Giant,’” *Washington Post*, December 4, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/12/04/friends-eric-garner-was-a-gentle-giant/>. Consider also that Michael Brown’s size was a part of the narrative surrounding his death. The Department of Justice’s report states that “Brown used his physical size” against the store clerk of the convenient store from which he stole packages of cigarillos, and later Darren Wilson. Wilson reported also that Brown was like “Hulk Hogan” and “like a demon.” See, “Department of Justice Report Regarding The Criminal Investigation Into The Shooting Death of Michael Brown By Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson,” PDF, March 4, 2015, pg. 6, 13, 14, justice.gov., http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj_report_on_shooting_of_michael_brown_1.pdf, accessed May 24, 2015. According to these stereotypes, “Big” Black men in public space are deemed problematic, unless they are athletes in sports arenas where their size is appreciated, disciplined, harnessed, and channeled properly into a controlled environment for public entertainment. Otherwise, the only thing that remains unafraid of large Black men, at least figuratively, is the bullet from a gun. For an examination of the size of Black women in this regard, see for example, Trimiko Melancon and Joanne M. Braxton, eds., *Black Female Sexualities*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

⁴ Prophit02, Notorious B.I.G., *Who Shot Ya?—Notorious B. I. G.*, YouTube video clip, 5:20, March 17, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7yQwQtSN7M>. For other examples of sonic analyses of gun violence by and

Tell everybody that you know, who be niggas,
That that existential question of the era—finally answered.
Trace me all the way back from the consequences.
I'm "silent weapons for quiet wars;"⁵
I'm stockpiles of projectiles loud as lion's roars;
And when I fire off,
Dress your Sunday best dog—you 'bout to meet that higher force.

Hook I:

Who's afraid of the big Black man—not me!
Blocka, Blocka—let them shots ring,
Aloud, Kaplow all through your body,
Til it drops dead on the concrete.

Verse II:

I gets hard just to see niggas dead,
To see thoughts spilling out of niggas' heads,
To see them all tangled up,
Draped in blood,
S&M peep show before I start making love;
Make it rough,
"50 Shades" and stuff,
"Christian Gray" it up,⁶

against Black people: OldSchoolHipHopHD, KRS-One and Boogie Down Productions, *Stop the Violence Movement-Self-Destruction [Official Video HD]*, YouTube video clip, 6:01, August 6, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTsIpZ_Si3A; JohnnieWalker23, West Coast Rap All-Stars, *West Coast Rap All-Stars-We're All in the Same Gang*, 7:26, June 25, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCGI_R36oVc; HipHopHead187, Nas, *Nas-I Gave You Power*, YouTube video clip, 3:52, April 10, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUwJ8WcZ6RY>; Gabor Belak, Canibus, *Canibus-What's Going On (1998)*, YouTube video clip, 3:51, January 21, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dXZBnVD9So>; Underground Hip Hop, Pharoahe Monch, *Pharoahe Monch-When the Gun Draws ft. Mr. Proter*, YouTube video clip, 4:29, April 25, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fV6zsrhjeU>; Netsyanks2510, Pharoahe Monch, *Pharoahe Monch-Damage*, YouTube video clip, 4:00, September 26, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2h4jOId8eSg>. It should be noted too that *Self-Destruction* formed the soundtrack for the Stop the Violence Movement, an effort initiated by KRS-One in 1989 to stop violence in Hip Hop and Black communities. For more recent analyses, especially in terms of anti-police brutality and anti-gun violence, see for example, Noissey, Snoop Lion, *Snoop Lion ft. Drake and Cori B.-"No Guns Allowed" (Official Video)*, YouTube video clip, 3:59, April 2, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqo9gPxT6A8>; Lyrics & TV, J. Cole, *J. Cole-Be Free (Lyrics On Screen) I Mike Brown Tribute I HD I*, YouTube video clip, 3:31, August 16, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9XJRSp3Xtg>; Bree Newsome, *#Stay Strong: A Love Song to Freedom Fighters*, Soundcloud, <https://soundcloud.com/breenewsome/staystrong>, accessed January 5, 2015. Soundcloud.com; Janelle Monae, *Hell You Talmbout (Say Their Names)*, Soundcloud, Wondaland Records, 2015, accessed September 10, 2015, <https://soundcloud.com/wondalandarts/hell-you-talmbout>. Soundcloud.com; G Herbo, Twilite Tone, featuring Common, King Louie, and Lil Herb, *Put the Guns Down*, YouTube video clip, 4:25, October 13, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mCuIcZPWVU>; and Vita Elizabeth Cleveland, *Hell Y'all Aint Talmbout*, Soundcloud, <https://soundcloud.com/vita-elizabeth-cleveland/hell-yall-aint-talmbout>, accessed November 29, 2015. Soundcloud.com.; D'Angelo, *Black Messiah*, RCA, 2014, compact disc.

⁵ Killarmy, *Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars*, Wu-Tang/Priority/EMI, 1997, compact disc.

⁶ Christian Grey, of the blockbuster film, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015), based on E. L. James' book by the same name, represents a pleasure economy that in part promotes sexualized or eroticized violence that many enjoy participating in as viewers. This pleasure economy also extends to violence against Black people. There is a sexual pleasure that people derive through a pornography of violence in the brutalization and/or killing of Black bodies, even in watching it or hearing about

So I can get the greatest nut!
Ahhh! Dead niggas, my biggest turn on,
The porno to my jerk off—
Uhhh! I might cum in my pants,
Just from the sight of a gun in your hand,
Exploding knowing I'm 'bout to penetrate,
Deep, deep, deep into your inner space.

Hook II:

Who's afraid, who's afraid? Not me.
Who's afraid, who's afraid? Not me.
Who's afraid, who's afraid? Not me.
Who's afraid, who's afraid? Not me.

Verse III:

Lately, its crazy:
The backlash;
Bodies in trash bags,
Black Power flags at—
Half staff,
Dash cams,
Snapchats,
Hashtags “Black Lives Matter,” still I get the last laugh—
On these lab rats.
“Hands Up Don’t Shoot”?⁷

it, if not directly participating in it. To see or hear about violence done to Black bodies through different medias, including film, news reports, personal cameras, social media, and/or real life, is to obtain some form of sexual satisfaction in knowing that perhaps the most sexual and sexualized body, the Black body, out of which emanates an irrepressible, insatiable sexual appetite, so it is thought, just got “fucked.” For scholarly treatments, see, for example, Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷ “Black Lives Matter” and “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” have become the most prominent rallying cries for the anti-police brutality movement. Recently, both slogans have come under undue criticism. Since the Department of Justice’s report on the shooting of Michael Brown argues that forensic evidence does not support the argument that Brown had his hands up in surrender to Darren Wilson, some commentators have charged that the movement is “built on a lie,” as Johnathon Capehart put it. Capehart insists, however, that while “wrong” and a “lie,” “this does not diminish the importance of the real issues unearthed in Ferguson by Brown’s death. Nor does it discredit what has become the larger ‘Black Lives Matter.’” See, Johnathon Capehart, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot’ Built on a Lie,” *The Washington Post*, March 16, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2015/03/16/lesson-learned-from-the-shooting-of-michael-brown/>. For a rebuttal, see Christian Farias, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot’ Was Not Built on a Lie,” *New Republic*, March 18, 2015, <https://newrepublic.com/article/121322/doj-ferguson-report-doesnt-mean-hands-dont-shoot-was-lie>. For the Department of Justice’s report, see “Department of Justice Report Regarding The Criminal Investigation Into The Shooting Death of Michael Brown By Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson,” PDF, March 4, 2015, pg. 8, http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj_report_on_shooting_of_michael_brown_1.pdf, accessed May 24, 2015.

As for “Black Lives Matter,” its advocates have been criticized for using the slogan to assert racial chauvinism, privilege inter-racial conflicts over intra-racial conflicts, provoke violence, disrupt social order, and reap financial profits by marketing the death of victims. Some critics have countered with “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter.” On the surface, these slogans appear to speak to the value of all human life and/or that of police officers, but their advocates deploy them particularly to dismiss and delegitimize “Black Lives Matter,” even as Black people have been the overwhelming victims of police misconduct and brutality and vigilantism. Advocates of “Blue Lives Matter” assert the

You don't know what I go through—
To lynch with no noose,
To select the perfect set of niggas to wet;
Introduce them to death,
Then do it to death.
Got it down to a science, Algebra,
Powerful "Niggonometry," calculus;⁸
And numbers don't lie—
View the stats,
Do the math,⁹
Then run and go hide.

importance of the lives of police officers by invoking the color of their uniforms, a move that conflates race with an article of clothing, and reduces skin, and the lived experiences that go along with it, to mere colors. A uniform can be removed, skin cannot. The difference between wearing an article of clothing issued by the state and living as a raced person in America is tremendous, especially when historically and today Black people have faced attacks on their bodies, citizenship, and humanity because of the color of their skin.

⁸ Outer Thought, Canibus, *Cannibus-Niggonometry.wmv*, YouTube video clip, 3:15, April 4, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5WNNCDycw>.

⁹ For statistical information on gun violence in America in general, and against Black Americans in particular, see the Department of Justice's website at: <http://www.justice.gov/>.

III: Justice Contemplates (Revolutionary) Suicide¹

*Set to: Outkast, *Hold On, Be Strong, Aquemini*, LaFace, 1998, MP3 file, downloaded September 10, 2015, iTunes.

All it took was nine months,
Now I'm signed up for this thing called life I can't resign from til my time's up.
Could speed it up, speed it along,
Have death set a meeting up, stop my breathing I'm gone—
To regions beyond where demons and gods live,
Past what I know here—
I see it so clear—
Hell-bound, take myself out before the cops do,
Or some kid or vigilante sends a shot through my skull,²
And my whole mind spews—
All on these hot shoes—
This aint suicide—this is justice!
Life sucks and this is how I'm gone fix it up man!
Call God, tell Him I've failed him—
I'm headed home!
The greatest life, never known,
Dead and gone,
Tombstone:
Who knows—
Lived his life like a day job—
Wait, what you say God?
There's something you need me to do?
You need me to keep breathing; you're leading me through—
All this drama but armored for this combat I'm fighting,
And my life is your point of contact on earth?
This aint life—this is justice?
The world's a cesspool and I'm the tool you're gonna use to fix it up with?
But they killing Black folk, so I know I'm next, 'proably!
Cast to the mass grave with Black bodies.
But I'm not a man—I'm a concept?

¹ See, Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

² It is supposed to be the case that only trained police can police, though their policing has rightly come under criticism. Yet, vigilante violence against Black people has shown that virtually anyone can assume the role of police under the “right” circumstances. Perhaps policing is not just what actual police officers do, but also what every day, ordinary people, who have full access to the rights of citizenship can do when they see a Black person, who looks to them to be threatening. Here, policing becomes both an act of the state, as well as any citizen thought to be good and conscientious, who wants to contain what seems to be a Black threat. Perhaps the most well-known example of this recently was the vigilante killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. Yet, on November 23, 2015, vigilantes shot and wounded five Black Lives Matter protesters in Minneapolis, Minnesota. That anyone, under this definition, can make the effort to surveil and/or contain Black bodies that appear to be menacing according to the spectator and then have their illegal actions protected by the state, seriously challenges concepts, the enforcement, and protection of justice, citizenship, freedom, and privacy as they pertain to Black people. The combination of police violence and vigilante violence compounds attacks on the citizenship, bodies, and humanity of Black people.

Though like man, there's the chance I'm next—
To be lifeless?
Am I justice in human form?
Hammurabi codes,
Through my body flows bodies of law in cuneiform?
Wait, I'm not even human?
This is getting confusing...
So however you want me, I pass from soul to soul,³
When the world's zero below,
Frozen cold,
And you need it unthawed,
You get me to come?—Ah—
I think I know my role!
Where's my portfolio, let me get to work—
No time to die, business first!

³ Emimusic, Soul II Soul, *Souls II Soul-Back to Life*, YouTube video clip, 4:04, March 6, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TB54dZkzZOY>.

IV: We Outchea! (Or the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)¹

*Set to: Garret V, Kanye West, *Flashing Lights (Instrumental)* By Kanye West, feat. Dwele, YouTube video clip, July 15, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZOrXzebCX4>

*Featured clip: TIME, *'Am I Next?': Ferguson's Protest Through the Eyes of a Teenager Time*, YouTube video clip, 5:27, August 18, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuqV1FwMws4>

Verse I:

I made the news Ma!

Turn right now—channel two Ma!

There I go: black shirt,

Black cap, black shoes, Black thought,² all black, explaining how black hurts—

Articulate, you would have been so proud,

Pronounced pronouns correctly, setting the genesis,

Come so far from watching Ridiculousness,

To watching legal ridiculousness.

Me and friends,

CNN,

Don Lemon, Talib “Chakwi,” J. Cole, and folks police pick on.³

“We Who Are Dark” skin tones,⁴

Breaking down, saying loud “New Jim Crows,”⁵

Nigger syndromes.

¹ Part of the title here is taken from the Oscar-winning film *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*. See, Alejandro G. Innarritu, Nicolas Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris, Jr., Armando Bo, *Birdman or (the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*, Film, directed by Alejandro G. Innarritu, LA: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2014.

² For my use of “Black thought” here, see for example, Nick Bromell, *The Time Is Always Now: Black Thought and the Transformation of US Democracy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Melissa Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Michael Hanchard, *Party/Politics: Horizons in Black Political Thought*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk-Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). “Black Thought” is also the stage name of Tariq Trotter, the lead emcee of the popular hip hop band, The Roots.

³ These artists were involved in protests that took place in Ferguson, Missouri in response to the killing of Michael Brown. Talib “Chakwi” refers to the introduction to Talib Kweli and Hi-Tek’s 2000 hit, *The Blast* from Talib Kweli and Hi-Tek, *Train of Thought (Reflection Eternal Album)*, Rawkus/ UMVD, 2000, compact disc. See also the intense interview between Talib Kweli and Don Lemon, host of *CNN Tonight with Don Lemon*, at YouHotNews, CNN, *Talib Kweli Threatens to Quit CNN don Lemon Interview Over Ferguson Protest*, YouTube video clip, 7:24, August 21, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ktv6IcDaozk>.

⁴ See, Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007).

⁵ See, Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York: The New Press, 2012). See also, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Michael Javen Fortner, *Black Silent Majority: The Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Politics of Punishment*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Orlando Patterson, ed., *The Cultural Matrix: Understanding Black Youth*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Brandon L. Garrett, *Convicting the Innocent: Where Criminal Prosecutions Go Wrong*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012). William J. Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); David Garland, *Peculiar Institution: America’s Death Penalty in the Age of Abolition*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

The alienators gave me the microphone.⁶
I was like what the fuck, but struck like lightning bolts,
Striking notes like xylophones in righteous tones,
Right or wrong,
Til violence broke out—
We did it too, signaled to power brokers:
We're tired of the ridicule—
The hour's over!
It's the dawn,
A renaissance—
Of the "Rights of Man," Enlightenments, Timmy Hobbes,
Jefferson and Locke⁷—
If democracy's a mess of a process, then get the mops,⁸
Lets get it on,
We begin to march,
Tactics of massive civil disobedience.⁹

Hook:

We outchea!
We outchea!
We outchea!
We outchea!
Call all the news reports and news outlets, and tell 'em (that) we outchea!

Verse II:

Had to call my girl, tell the guys—
The revolution will be televised.¹⁰
Courtesy of me, yours truly,
Rotation, every station, your boy, Pookie!
Reporters had recorders and let them play,
Didn't hesitate,
Set the record straight,
Section 8's declaration of independence resonating—

⁶ On the selection of words for this particular rhyme scheme, see Chiefshawn, Outkast, *Outkast-ATLiens*, YouTube video clip, 3:50, April 28, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NywdVBwzurU>.

⁷ See, Robin D. G. Kelley, "Looking Extremely Backward: Why the Enlightenment Will Only Lead Us Into the Dark," in *Yo Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

⁸ See also, Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 8. Coates brilliantly writes that the "banality of violence can never excuse America, because America makes no claim to be banal. America believes itself exceptional, the greatest and noblest nation ever to exist, a lone champion standing between the white city of democracy and the terrorists, despots, barbarians, and other enemies of civilization. One cannot, at once, claim to be superhuman and then plead mortal error. I propose to take our countrymen's claims of American exceptionalism seriously, which is to say I propose subjecting our country to an exceptional moral standard."

⁹ See, Martin Luther King, Jr., "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," in Jameson M. Washington, ed., *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther Kings, Jr.*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1986).

¹⁰ Spuddy83, Gil Scott Heron, *Gil Scott Heron-The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (Full Band Version)*, YouTube video clip, 3:08, August 7, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGaoXAwI9kw>.

In your public sphere,¹¹
We up in here,
We won't running scared.
We was in it for the long haul,
Despite national guards on call to force us to bow to they false gods,
But we aint submit we was coming raw dog,
Til we was all hauled off.
Reporters had recorders, let them play—
Without a second wasted, set the record straight.
Grabbed the other “black steel in the hour of chaos”¹²:
The power of cameras!¹³

Hook

Verse III:

For two weeks straight, replays, nothing but me;
Week three, no repeats? What do I see?
The new news cycle?
The new title of lead tonight'll go to them dudes Isol?
Cut cold turkey—
Don't worry, you still got it,
Still problems, real topics need articulation while Fox is talking Benghazi,
The rise and fall of Bill Cosby—
Damn—All before Fat Al up in Philly—
Could explain how cops is really killing?
What ya'll cooking in the news room?
Voodoo?
News crews cut it up, distribute it til we're addicted with that new-new?
Editors measuring in trapping houses.
Correspondents boil water.
Rabble-rousers served with a hit,
Once burners are lit:
The alchemy of current events,
Til the next current event blows the roof off.
And its all news til the news moves on.
Its all news til the news moves on.
Its all news til the news moves on.¹⁴

¹¹ See for example, The Black Public Sphere Collective, *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). See also, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BLACKLIVESMATTER to Black Liberation*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

¹² PublicEnemyVEVO, Public Enemy, *Public Enemy-Black Steel In The Hour of Chaos*, YouTube video clip, 4:06, April 27, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM5_6js19eM.

¹³ See for example, David A. Graham, “The FBI Director’s Troubling Comments on the ‘Ferguson Effect,’” *The Atlantic*, October 26, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/the-fbi-directors-troubling-comments-on-the-ferguson-effect/412351/>, accessed November 20, 2015.

¹⁴ Historically, Black people have had a precarious relationship with news media. On one hand, oftentimes it was news coverage that exposed the struggles of Black people to broader society, attracting attention that helped lead to public sympathy and governmental action. The protest efforts of Civil rights activists, for example, strategically appealed to the

V: Black Lives Matter (?)

*Set to: Tury Beats, Rihanna, *Rihanna-Bitch Better Have My Money Instrumental+ Free Download*, YouTube video clip, 3:02, March 29, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCX8jH_mWAI

Black lives matter? Shit, this nigga owe me dough,
Doing the dosie-do,
Taking me for a fucking joke.
I'm trying to decide if this nigga should die,
Or if I should try,
The broken bone—
Treatment, breathing, but he comatose.
In deep a couple stacks;
My instincts to fuck this cat—
Up with a Louisville slugger bat.
Lead pipe? Nah, crowbar?
Sets of weapons of mass destruction: Saddam—
The loan shark;
Find a spine to unload on,
Like Aloha,
Go hard,
Then go home,
And take a motherfucking load off,
Sike, I aint a dictator—just a teacher:

media for these reasons. On the other hand, oftentimes it has been news coverage that has helped maintain stereotypes of Black people. News cycles rotate quickly, beholden to the emergence of new stories, as well as time slots and news holes, soundbites, commercial interests, the financial support of advertisers, viewerships, and events that can be made into current events through constant coverage. Given that mainstream media attention can come and go, and given that many activists are young and social media savvy, anti-police brutality activists should serve as organic embedded citizen journalists, recording events and their activism with their own personal cameras, smart phones, and other devices. Indeed, it has been people's use of these devices that have been instrumental to recording and exposing police brutality as of late. Here, activists can supplement commercial media coverage, keep coverage going when other news stories emerge to dominate the news cycle, provide fair and unbiased reporting of their activism, democratize news coverage, and promote more of an engaged, critical, and democratic public sphere. As organic embedded citizen journalists, activists should hold news agencies, their correspondents, and the stories they report accountable. In recent years, the integrity of some journalists has been called into question for embellishing or misrepresenting the facts of their coverage. With social media and more and more ways to share information and share it quickly, ordinary citizens can create systems of checks and balances through social media that keep commercial media outlets accountable and provide alternative sources of factual information. For more on the often contentious history between Blacks and the media, see for example, Everette E. Dennis and Edward C. Pease, eds., *Mass Media and Race Relations*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Catherine Squires, *African Americans and the Media*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); and Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011). For musical treatments, see for example, *Revolucion With Music*, Dead Prez, *Dead Prez-Propaganda*, YouTube video clip, 5:13, December 17, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77THtzZVfW0>; SwagR, Nas, *Nas-Sly Fox [New Untitled Exclusive]*, YouTube video clip, 4:03, July 2, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNCjB1G15IQ>; Spuddy83, Gil Scott Heron, *Gil Scott Heron-The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (Full Band Version)*, YouTube video clip, 3:08, August 7, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGaoXAwI9kw>.

Street professor teaching lessons to all of these unbelievers,
These know-it-alls,
These dumb niggas,
Forgot protocol, come get ya—
With that one hitter quitter,
Been snapping, breaking legs,
Lacerating backs,
Decapitating heads,
Way before Isis was trying to eradicate the West.
On TV, screaming Black Lives Matter—
How ‘bout I pull out these Dub-MDs and make them Black lives scatter?¹

Bridge:

This nigga better have my money.
Just seen this nigga on TV—better have my money.
Black Lives Matter—Shit, better have my money.
Pookie—better have my money.

¹ The slogan and organization, Black Lives Matter, have recently come under undue criticism for allegedly ignoring “Black on Black crime,” or gun violence against Black people by Black people. The term, “Black on Black crime,” remains a persistent and powerful phrase, socially and historically constructed since the 1980s in order to shame Black people. While it is true that some Black people commit crimes against other Black people, it is also true that most crimes happen intra-racially, though crimes against white people committed by other white people are never framed as “white on white crime.” Much of this criticism has come from conservative corners, charging the movement with hypocrisy for attempting to confront police violence over Black violence. Many of these critics do some ignoring of their own that obscures, among other things, protests and initiatives against gun violence and gang violence in Black communities, along with numerous mentoring programs designed to keep young Black people away from violence. Many of these programs have been operating for years in many Black communities across the country. One such organization is CeaseFire, founded in Chicago, Illinois in 2000. Yet, the efforts of such organizations tend to get scant attention from mainstream media outlets. Critics harp on what they see as a contradiction, and, as they argue, the illegitimacy of the movement therefore, though they seem to avoid viewing police misconduct, corruption, and brutality as contradictions of the oath of police to serve and protect. Critics, who raise the charge of hypocrisy against the movement also tend to invoke the longstanding conservative slogans of “personal responsibility/ accountability” and “self-help” against the movement. Seemingly, critics would rather Black people not report or expose the violence they face, internalize it, and suffer in silence or in private spaces in their homes among family. Their logic is Blacks must first address and solve intra-racial violence before they can demand that police brutality be addressed. Having long faced both forms of attacks on their bodies, Black people have organized to address and confront both for decades. Yet, insisting that people must first determine which of their needs for safety and protection under the law are to be prioritized, or insisting that they mount a justice system of their own to address injustices within their own communities before they can appeal to the ‘real’ justice system of broader society, reveals the limits of justice, citizenship, and democracy in America, especially as they pertain to Black people. See also, Steve James and Alex Kotlowitz, *The Interrupters*, Film, Steve James, New York: Cinema Guild, PBSd, Dogwoof, 2011. See also, David Wilson, *Inventing Black-on-Black Violence: Discourse, Space, and Representation*, (Syracuse University Press, 2005).

VI: “A Blues for [Rekias]”¹

*Set to: Nova Production, Drake, *Drake-Over My Dead Body Instrumental*, YouTube video clip, 4:30, November 19, 2011, 4:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfozYACztu8>.

*Featured clip: Cynicalese King, ABC 7 News, Innocent Black Woman (Rekia Boyd) Killed By Chicago Police Officer, YouTube video clip, 3:05, March 25, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAeP4FUXSuY>

Verse I:

Mothers save your sons—slap sense in them²—
We gotta build iron men out of this ghetto environment.
Your daughters—that’s different—raise them til that special day comes,
And she’s given away, but—
For boys, there’s ‘wars going on no man is safe from.’³
No obvious threat to the opposite sex;
you’re good with a vagina and breasts,
Just don’t go hopping in beds with every Harry, Dick, Thomas so just practice locking your legs,
Til marriage unless—
Some off duty officer lets—
Off rounds and you’re found shot in the head—Rekia Boyd.⁴

¹ Part of the title comes from a poem performed by Darius Lovehall, one of the characters in *Love Jones*. See, Theodore Witcher, *Love Jones*, Film, Theodore Witcher, LA: New Line Cinema, 1997.

² See, for example, Stacey Patton, “Why is America Celebrating the Beating of a Black Child?,” *Washington Post*, April 29, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/29/why-is-america-celebrating-the-beating-of-a-black-child/>, accessed April 30, 2015.

³ MobbDeepVEVO, Mobb Deep, Mobb Deep-Survival of the Fittest, YouTube video clip, 3:44, May 3, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIq4UTgqDac>.

⁴ Dante Servin, the Chicago officer, who fatally shot Rekia Boyd while off-duty on March 21, 2012, was acquitted April 20, 2015. For more on this, see for example, Steve Schmadeke and Jeremy Gorner, “Anger Follows Acquittal in Rare Trial of Chicago Cop,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-chicago-police-detective-manslaughter-trial-0421-met-20150420-story.html>. There are forms of prescriptive literature and orally shared wisdom that circulate in Black communities intended to teach Black men in particular how to properly handle being stopped by police, among other things. Black men are instructed on how to police themselves so as to prevent ever having to be policed by police in the first place, and if before police, the “do’s” and “dont’s” while in their presence, all of which are measures thought to save their freedom and life. In general, this literature and wisdom serve also to teach Black people the power the state has over Black lives and bodies. Some examples of this literature include, Jabari Asim, ed., *Not Guilty: Twelve Black Men Speak Out On Law, Justice, and Life*, (New York: Amistad, 2001); Robbin Shipp and Nick Chiles, *Justice While Black: Helping African-American Families Navigate and Survive the Criminal Justice System*, (Chicago: Bolden, 2014); Kevin Powell, ed., *The Black Male Handbook: A Blueprint for Life*, (New York: Atria Books, 2008). For examples of this oral wisdom, usually couched as “the talk,” see, Jazmine Hughes, “What Black Parents Tell Their Sons About the Police,” *gawker.com*, <http://gawker.com/what-black-parents-tell-their-sons-about-the-police-1624412625>, accessed October 10, 2015. Yet, this literature and wisdom do not seem designed for Black women so that they may also learn how to prepare for encounters with police. These narratives overwhelmingly assume that civilian-police encounters occur exclusively in ‘man to man’ contexts. Instead, Black women receive a set of wisdom concerned with their lives, bodies, and freedom in a different way. This wisdom tends to instruct Black women on properly handling romantic relationships, warning them especially to resist pre-marital sex, as well as physical and sexual abuse. Examples of this include, Hill Harper, *Letters to a Young Sister: DeFINE Your Destiny*, (New York: Gotham Books, 2008). While this literature helps to educate Black women on protecting their bodies, sexual selves, and psyches, they remain unprepared before police abuse and brutality in ways that Black men have at least been somewhat educated. On the relationship among race, gender, class, and violence for Black women, see for example, Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of

Hook:

“Yes, yes, y'all and you don't stop,
To the beat y'all and you don't stop,
Yes yes, y'all and you don't stop,
1, 2, y'all and you don't stop,
Yes, yes, y'all and you don't stop,
And to the beat, [blast heat] to be the sure shot, come on.”⁵

*Featured clip: InnerStanding Isness, Democracy Now, *Say Her Name: Police Brutality Against Black Women*, YouTube video clip, 4:32, May 20, 2015,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvTko4vYhp4>

Verse II:

Let's mobilize for the lives of Black men—
Fuck mobilizing for the life of some Black bitch!⁶

Color,” in Kimberle Crenshaw, et. al., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, (New York: New Press, 1995).

⁵ Johnnie Jade, Common, *Common-I Used to Love H. E. R.*, YouTube video clip, 4:22, October 11, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C99iG4HoO1c>.

⁶ Many activists have criticized anti-police brutality campaigns for their underrepresentation of Black women victims, as well as trans-gender victims, and rightly so. For this reason, among others, the #SAYHERNAME movement has emerged to address and resist this absence from campaigns. “Say Her Name,” the movement declares, “begins to shine a light on the ways that Black women are policed in ways that are similar to other members of our communities—whether it’s police killings, ‘stop and frisk,’ ‘broken windows policing,’ or the ‘war on drugs.’ It also pushes open the frame to include other forms and contexts of police violence—such as sexual assault by police, police abuse of pregnant women, profiling and abusive treatment of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gender nonconforming Black women, and police brutality in the context of responses to violence—which bring Black women’s experiences into even sharper focus.” In addition to Rekia Boyd, this movement elevates numerous Black women, whose encounters with police resulted in their deaths, including, Shelly Frey, Miriam Carey, Kayla Moore, Michelle Cusseaux, Alberta Spruil, Tanisha Anderson, Kyam Livingston, and Shantel Davis. See, “#SAYHERNAME: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women, A Social Media Guide,” released by the African American Policy forum and Andrea J. Ritchie, <http://www.aapf.org/sayhernameareport/>, <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53f20d90e4b0b80451158d8c/t/555e2412e4b0bd5f4da5d3a4/1432232978932/SAYHERNAME+Social+Media+Guide.compressed.pdf>, accessed October 12, 2015. See also, Black Lives Matter, which has started the #EveryBlackGirlMatters campaign, available at: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/everyblackgirlmatters/>. See also, Ivie Ani, “Black Lives Matter—And That Means All Lives, Including Those of Women and Girls,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2015, <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/06/11/black-lives-matter-and-that-means-all-lives-including-those-of-women-and-girls/>; and Marcia Davis, “Black Lives Matter, Including Black Women’s, Activists Remind Nation,” *Washington Post*, May 20, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/black-lives-matter--including-black-womens-activists-remind-nation/2015/05/19/e155a514-fe43-11e4-833c-a2de05b6b2a4_story.html. See also, Janelle Monae, *Hell You Talmbout (Say Their Names)*, Soundcloud, Wondaland Records, 2015, accessed September 10, 2015, <https://soundcloud.com/wondalandarts/hell-you-talmbout>. Soundcloud.com; ChicagoIdeasWeek, Twilite Tone, featuring Common, King Louie, and Lil Herb, *Put the Guns Down by the Twilite Tone ft. Common, King Louie & Lil Herb*, YouTube video clip, 4:25, October 13, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mCuIcZPWVU>; and Vita Elizabeth Cleveland, *Hell Y'all Aint Talmbout*, Soundcloud, <https://soundcloud.com/vita-elizabeth-cleveland/hell-yall-aint-talmbout>, accessed November 29, 2015. Soundcloud.com. I would argue that one reason for this absence is that historically, Black politics and mobilizations have often turned on uplifting Black men over Black women because of patriarchy, ideas of proper gender and racial roles, and the attending problematic belief that by uplifting Black men first, Black women, children, and communities are also uplifted by default. Another reason for the absence, as this verse argues, includes the historical and social construction of the “Black bitch,” a problematic longstanding trope and stereotyping frame projected on to actual Black women, who try to claim and/or demonstrate their humanity, self-worth, or citizenship. In other words, anyone, who wants to dismiss the value of any Black woman can call simply call her a “Black bitch.” I do not personally subscribe to this framing, to be sure. But many people do, applying it in order to render the lives, value,

No Mau Mau revolt—
 For those wild style,
 Eye rolling, neck twisting bitches with loud mouths.
 “Nails done, hair done, everything did,”⁷
 Big ass, big mouth, everything big.
 Mammy, Aunt Jamamy, pickaninnies,
 ‘Yo mamma’s so fat,’ she eats the whole Piccadilly’s,
 So dumb she thought chicken philly—
 Was another fricken city—
 In Pennsylvanny,
 Like nigga really?
 “Nappy-headed hos,”⁸ cocksuckers,
 Spreading like crop dusters,
 Taking blocks under, blockbusters,
 Carrying anything from a disease to box-cutters.
 Back-talking,

and voices of actual Black women meaningless, and their bodies dispensable, for, as this verse suggests, the “Black bitch” is an undesirable element that people *want* dead. As #SAYHERNAME asks, “State violence killed 313 Black people in 2012, men AND women. So why does police violence discourse only include men? #HerDreamDeferred.” To be sure, this framing shapes policing too. See, for example, the “Investigation of the Ferguson Police,” pg. 80. The report states that “During our investigation, dozens of African Americans in Ferguson told us of verbal abuse by FPD officers during routine interactions, and these accounts are consistent with complaints people have made about FPD for years...In April 2012, officers allegedly called an African-American woman a ‘bitch’ and a ‘mental case’ at the jail following an arrest.” For scholarly treatments of these subjects, see for example, Kimberle Crenshaw, “Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew” in Diana Tietjens Meyers, ed., *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1997); Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, ed., *Skin Deep Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002); Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, (New York: Dial Press, 1979); Michelle Wallace, *Dark Designs and Visual Culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks it Down*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Trimiko Melancon, Joanne M. Braxton, Melissa V. Harris-Perry, eds., *Black Female Sexualities*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Trimiko Melancon, *Unbought and Unbossed: Transgressive Black Women, Sexuality, and Representation*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014); Cheryl L. Neely, *You’re Dead So What?: Media, Police, and the Invisibility of Black Women as Victims of Homicide*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015). For musical treatments, see for example, New music right here, Nas, *Black Girl Lost*, YouTube video clip, 4:25, October 16, 2007, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiWNjIhHjg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiWNjIhHjg;); Mississippi7414, *Outkast-Outkast-Jazzy Belle*, YouTube video clip, 4:25, October 19, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW-9eOPAWdA>; 2Pac Music, *Tupac, 2Pac-Tupac Wonda Why They Call U Bitch*, Youtube video clip, 4:18, March 11, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgvMpm9z0TI>; Atlantic Records, *Missy Elliot, Missy Elliot-She’s a B**ch [Video]*, YouTube video clip, 3:43, October 26, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opkRF3UZSjw>; Jay-Z, *Bitches and Sisters*, Soundcloud, <https://soundcloud.com/andresmusicmario976/bitches-sisters-jay-z>, accessed October 20, 2015. Sounclcloud.com.; and Lupe Fiasco, Lupe Fiasco, *Lupe Fiasco-Bitch Bad [Music Video]*, YouTube video clip, 5:34, August 23, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3m3tPxiUI>. In recent years, hip-hop culture and music have turned to new variations of the Black Bitch through the growing usage of “THOT.”

⁷ Music is Life, Drake, *Drake-Fancy (Ft. T. I. & Swizz Beats)-HQ Full Song*, YouTube video clip, 5:19, October 6, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZenXuQBgbgk>. For scholarly treatments, see for example, Regina E. Spellers and Kimberly R. Moffitt, *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/ Body Politics in Africana Communities*, (New York: Hampton Press, 2010); Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Blain Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth Century South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain’t I a Beauty Queen: Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁸ Don Imus, the popular host of *Imus in the Morning*, directed these insulting comments at members of the Rutgers University women’s basketball team in 2007. After mounting criticism, Imus was suspended and then terminated.

‘Lac-pushing welfare queens,’⁹
Nail-care clean,
Minus self-reliance Booker Taliaferro dreamed—
For racial uplift,
Which doesn’t begin with Venus Hottentot being shot—dumb bitch.¹⁰

Hook

*Featured clip: Thad76, Theodore Witcher, *Brotha to the Night*, YouTube video clip, 2:56, January 25, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CttBHlnnMxE>.

Verse III:

My heart is red hot with a “Blues for Nina,”¹¹
Nothing I wouldn’t do to reach ya,
Through hellfire, through the heavens to the ether,
A true believer,
Nothing I would do to leave ya,
Except when bullets fly—
My Black queen, my “Oshun,” my “Yemeya.”
“I must admit girl” I’m a piece of shit girl cuz I’m ‘digging your grave.’
I’d defend you if its rape¹²—
If your pussy’s killed—pass the ammunition please!
But when its your non-sexual body in its place—
I don’t care where the threat penetrates.
“Brotha to the night” wasn’t there in the day,
That’s cuz brotha to the night is very afraid—
His woman’s body matters—

⁹ This quote is usually attributed to Ronald Reagan during his campaign for the 1976 Presidential nomination. As some writers have revealed, Reagan did not coin the term, though he and conservatives have certainly helped initiate and popularize the implications it still raises today in public discourse and against Black women. See, for example, John Blake, “Return of the Welfare Queen,” January 23, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/01/23/politics/welfare-queen/>; Josh Levin, “The Welfare Queen,” Slate.com, December 19, 2013, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2013/12/linda_taylor_welfare_queen_ronald_reagan_made_her_a_notorious_american_villain.html, accessed September 25, 2015.; and Gene Memby, “The Truth Behind the Lies of the Original ‘Welfare Queen,’” December 20, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/12/20/255819681/the-truth-behind-the-lies-of-the-original-welfare-queen>.

¹⁰ See, for example, Natasha Gordon-Chipembere, ed., *Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Consider the ways in which Black women have had to organize themselves for themselves and their issues because racial organizations and white women’s organizations have usually dismissed their leadership, issues, and contributions. For more on these points, see for example, Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999). See also, Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance, A New History of the Civil Rights Movement From Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); and Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin, eds., *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

¹¹ See, Theodore Witcher, *Love Jones*, Film, Theodore Witcher, LA: New Line Cinema, 1997.

¹² See, Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Ironies of the Saint: Malcolm X, Black Women, and the Price of Protection,” in Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin, eds., *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

As much as his in facing this invasion of body snatchers,
Scared body cameras will show Black women wounded warriors,¹³
Diminishing attention on all of us.
So you gotta be sacrificed,
Just being honest, “is that alright?”¹⁴

Hook (X2)

¹³ For recent examples of videos of police officers’ use of excessive force on Black women, see for example, the actions of a McKinney Texas police officer, at YouFirstNews, *2nd Texas pool Party Video: Another Angle When Officer Slams Black Girl’s Head on Ground Knee On Her*, YouTube video clip, 4:14, June 9, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDIWWkjj7IQ>; and the actions of a school resource officer at Spring Valley High School in South Carolina, at NBC News, *FBI to Investigate Video of Female Student Body-Slammed by Cop* NBC *Nightly News*, YouTube video clip, 2:58, October 27, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3B6fB5iVwBE>. For the testimony of some of these women victims, see Fusion, *Black Women Speak Out on Experiencing Police Violence*, YouTube video clip, 3:51, July 1, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWK9m2Tfr8w>.

¹⁴ Thad76, Theodore Witcher, *Brotha to the Night*, YouTube video clip, 2:56, January 25, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CttBHlnnMxE>.

VII: Warmongers

*Set to: ODi Productions, Lil Wayne, *Lil Wayne-Believe Me ft. Drake (Instrumental) (Best Version)* *Free Download, YouTube video clip, 4:37, May 7, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYx7wRdKJgk>.

*Featured clip: NBC News, *Michael Brown Shooting: Tensions High in Ferguson NBC News*, YouTube video clip, 2:06, August 13, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afVtjoAYEU>.

Verse I:

There's been a lot of talk of holy wars,
Masked men resurrecting old Jihads.
They must not really know me dog—
I have the only force—
In this world comparable to Obie Wan's:
Legions of Jedis,
Pledging allegiance to the white and red stripes to bring you to your deadline—
Your Seinfeldian denouement,
Paid and brought—
To you by kids culled from ghettos and trailer parks.
We clean them up,
Teach them stuff,
Get them trained for war, camouflaged, invisible men,
Sticking you with tanks and bombs.
No light sabers,
Though we got blue prints moving towards the day when we might make them.
In the interim,
We've got a business designed with ya'll in mind,
And when our interests collide:
Inventions, dividends, and consequences is all limitless.
I wish mofos want a war—
Believe my team loves showing off.
They love when the ground's covered with boots.
Ya'll love busting your guns—we love busting our Nukes.
Geniuses my jingoist friends, who know the price of freedom.
Malcolm X said it was death¹—
I say its whatever check we want to invest²—

¹ For this quote from Malcolm X in 1964, see ANTIHOSTILE, *Malcolm X: The Price of Freedom is Death*, YouTube video clip, 0:32, April 30, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2S3ShBexMs>.

² There is a strong relationship between capitalism, private corporations, policing and criminal justice, and the state. Consider, for example, “FERGUSON LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES VIOLATE THE LAW AND UNDERMINE COMMUNITY TRUST, ESPECIALLY AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS” in “Investigation of Ferguson Police,” PDF, March 4, 2015, justice.gov., http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf, accessed May 26, 2015. It states that “Ferguson’s strategy of revenue generation through policing has fostered practices in the two central parts of Ferguson’s law enforcement system—policing and the courts—that are themselves unconstitutional or that contribute to constitutional violations.” Further, after struggling to find job opportunities, Darren Wilson applied to the Eastern

Its economics,
Direct deposits in helicopters,
Stealth bombers and drones, transform like Megatroners;
We'll have news anchors reading teleprompters:
'The US just destroyed your boy's terrorist cell with rockets.'

Hook:

We the Warmongers,
At your door knocking,
With them door knockers,
"Kick in the door, waving the four-four" partner,³
Blow you back to your forefathers,
You're all goners,
We the Warmongers.
Repeat

Verse II:

When we aint at war, we go to the range and practice:
We aim at Black kids,⁴

Missouri Police Academy. "He reasoned," according to one interview, that "being a police officer...was a recession-proof career." See, Jake Halpern, "The Cop," *The New Yorker*, August 10, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>.

³ TheMrRapmusic, Notorious B. I. G., *Notorious B. I. G.-Kick in the Door*, YouTube video clip, 3:34, July 24, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRfnWpV4i7E>.

⁴ It is possible to construe and treat police brutality, coupled with the increasing use of militarized weapons and tactics in some police departments, as a form of terrorist action against American citizens that especially targets communities of color, communities that already face longstanding political and economic violence. Communities of color marked as crime-ridden spaces tend to have a greater police presence, which leads to an over-policing of those communities. The combination of over-policing and the targeting of people of color, police misconduct and brutality, ex-military members of police forces, and militarized weapons can produce terrorism. Consider the Department of Justice's investigation of the Ferguson Police Department that reported that their "approach to law enforcement, shaped by the City's pressure to raise revenue, has resulted in a pattern and practice of constitutional violations. Officers violate the Fourth Amendment in stopping people without reasonable suspicion, arresting them without probable cause, and using unreasonable force. Officers frequently infringe on residents' First Amendment rights, interfering with their right to record police activities and making enforcement decisions based on the content of individuals' expression." The report later states that "another concern we heard from many African-American residents, and saw in the files we reviewed, was of casual intimidation by FPD officers, including threats to draw or fire their weapons, often for seemingly little or no cause. In September 2012, a 28-year resident of Ferguson complained to FPD about a traffic stop during which a lieutenant approached with a loud and confrontational manner with his hand on his holstered gun. The resident, who had a military police background, noted that the lieutenant's behavior, especially having his hand on his gun, ratcheted up the tension level, and he questioned why the lieutenant had been so aggressive." For my selected quotes, see, "Investigation of Ferguson Police," PDF, March 4, 2015, justice.gov., pg. 15, 80, http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf, accessed May 26, 2015.

For Darren Wilson, for example, these spaces were places to practice and hone one's police training. According to one interview, "Wilson felt that working in a tough area would propel his career." "If you go there and you do three or five years, get your experience, you can kind of write your own ticket," he shared. See, Jake Halpern, "The Cop," *The New Yorker*, August 10, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/the-cop>. And residents of Ferguson experienced the marking of their community as crime-ridden in real and lived ways. The Department of Justice found "that the disconnect and distrust between much of Ferguson's African-American community and FPD is caused largely by years of the unlawful and unfair law enforcement practices by Ferguson's police department and municipal court

Targeting anonymous Black faces in white spaces,
Yards out,
Let loose, produce nuclear fall outs.
Eagle-vision precision,
Or step to your boy's face point blank,
Then close ranks.⁵
How 'bout a back shot for moving targets,⁶
Moving til you're moved to the coroner—
To look at your entry wounds; regardless,
Bobbing or weaving, nothing you can do to stop us.
When I got the squad with me,
We transform any hood into dodge city.⁷

described above. In the documents we reviewed, the meetings we observed and participated in, and in the hundreds of conversations Civil Rights Division staff had with residents of Ferguson and the surrounding area, many residents, primarily African-American residents, described being belittled, disbelieved, and treated with little regard for their legal rights by the Ferguson Police Department. One white individual who has lived in Ferguson for 48 years told us that it feels like Ferguson's police and court system is 'designed to bring a black man down . . . [there are] no second chances.' We heard from African-American residents who told us of Ferguson's 'long history of targeting blacks for harassment and degrading treatment,' and who described the steps they take to avoid this—from taking routes to work that skirt Ferguson to moving out of state. An African-American minister of a church in a nearby community told us that he doesn't allow his two sons to drive through Ferguson out of 'fear that they will be targeted for arrest.'" See, pg. 79. See also, Michael Hanchard, "State Violence Against Black and Brown Youth," *Huffington Post*, April 9, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-hanchard/state-violence-against-black-and-brown-youth_b_7000210.html. See also, James Baldwin, "A Report from Occupied Territory," *The Nation*, July 11, 1966, <http://www.thenation.com/article/report-occupied-territory/>. "The law is meant to be my servant and not my master, still less my torturer and my murderer. To respect the law, in the context in which the American Negro finds himself, is simply to surrender self-respect," Baldwin wrote about over-policing in Harlem at that time. Three months later in October 1966, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense to combat police brutality in Oakland, California, among other things.

⁵ Too often, "close ranks" cultures exist in many police departments across the country, in which police departments resist explaining their actions to the public, or even withholding information and/ or records from the public as a silence and inertia crystalizes within the department, all of which work to protect the illegal actions of police. This culture mirrors "no snitching" cultures that prevail among many of the criminals that police intend to confront and contain. Along with other detrimental cultures that promote race-based policing, "close ranks" cultures compromise police accountability and transparency in the justice system, and as a result, compromises the public's trust of police in particular, and the state in general. For examples of this, see Monica Davey, "Officer's Statements Differ From Video in Death of Laquan McDonald," *The New York Times*, December 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/us/officers-statements-differ-from-video-in-death-of-laquan-mcdonald.html>, accessed December 5, 2015.

⁶ Michael Slager, a white North Charleston police officer, fatally shot Walter Scott, an unarmed Black man, on April 4, 2015. Slager, who stopped Scott for a non-functioning brake light, fired several shots at Scott as he ran away. On June 8, 2015, a grand jury indicted Slager for murder.

⁷ Discussions of the "Ferguson effect," the idea that police around the country have retreated from doing their jobs for fear that they will be recorded and/or find themselves embroiled in a scandal for policing Black people, suggests that, as David D. Graham of *The Atlantic* points out, "many law-enforcement agencies have come to rely on abusive or questionable practices, rather than developing other crime-control strategies that could be successful under public scrutiny...The implication of the Ferguson-effect argument is that police can't provide safe streets and low crime rates without massive civil-rights violations—aggressive use of physical force, racial profiling, searches that fall into legal gray areas, and so on—and without alienating black communities." See, David A. Graham, "The FBI Director's Troubling Comments on the 'Ferguson Effect,'" *The Atlantic*, October 26, 2015,

We find ‘MLK Drive’ and ride—
The one street certain to take us inside—
The wormhole.
We get there and make the place a motherfucking warzone!
If ‘streets be the court, [court’s] holding trial,’⁸
We swearing on solemn shit to enforce “stop-and-frisk,”
“Zero tolerance” politics.⁹
Get body cams,¹⁰
Watch us do our thing in slinging all these body bags.

Hook

Verse III:

Scream Girl Power, People Power, Black Power—They’ll never compare to state power!¹¹

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/the-fbi-directors-troubling-comments-on-the-ferguson-effect/412351/>, accessed November 20, 2015.

⁸ Pacoki08, Nas, *Nas Is Coming-Nas (Prod. Dr. Dre)*, YouTube video clip, 5:41, September 5, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkrr3tfnn4oA>.

⁹ Consider, for example, the memoranda on stop-and-frisk in the case of *Floyd v The City of New York*, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/750446/stop-and-frisk-memoranda.pdf>, accessed November 1, 2015.; and Joseph Goldstein, “Judge Rejects New York’s Stop-and-Frisk Policy,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/13/nyregion/stop-and-frisk-practice-violated-rights-judge-rules.html?_r=0. See also, reports and analyses of stop and frisk practices in New York by the New York Civil Liberties Union, <http://www.nyclu.org/issues/racial-justice/stop-and-frisk-practices>, accessed November 1, 2015. They report, for instance, that “the NYPD’s stop-and-frisk practices raise serious concerns over racial profiling, illegal stops and privacy rights. The Department’s own reports on its stop-and-frisk activity confirm what many people in communities of color across the city have long known: The police are stopping hundreds of thousands of law abiding New Yorkers every year, and the vast majority are black and Latino. An analysis by the NYCLU revealed that innocent New Yorkers have been subjected to police stops and street interrogations more than 4 million times since 2002, and that black and Latino communities continue to be the overwhelming target of these tactics. Nearly nine out of 10 stopped-and-frisked New Yorkers have been completely innocent, according to the NYPD’s own reports.”

¹⁰ The delayed release of dash-cam video footage, showing the shooting of Laquan McDonald by officer Jason Van Dyke on October 20, 2014, has begged questions of the usefulness of dash-cams, body-cams, and other such visual aids to policing when the footage is released long after the killing. The video was released thirteen months later. This case illustrates how dash-cams and body-cams, while helpful, should only complement sound policing; they should not substitute for sound policing or wholesale fundamental changes to problematic policing and failures in the justice system that have resulted in the wrongful deaths and mass incarceration of Black people. For more on this, see for example, Monica Davey, “Officer’s Statements Differ From Video in Death of Laquan McDonald,” *The New York Times*, December 5, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/us/officers-statements-differ-from-video-in-death-of-laquan-mcdonald.html>, accessed December 5, 2015.; Rahm Emanuel, “Rahm Emanuel Op-Ed: I Own the Problem of Police Brutality, and I’ll Fix It,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 5, 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-rahm-emanuel-laquan-mcdonald-police-perspec-20151204-story.html>, accessed December 5, 2015.

¹¹ For musical analyses on the relationship between police and the military industrial complex, policing as an extension of it, and the super-policing of Black people, see for example, Ladybret, Gil Scott Heron, *Gil Scott-Heron, Work for Peace*, YouTube video clip, 7:41, May 29, 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7vSEBR_T5o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7vSEBR_T5o;); Chrisrap4ever, KRS-One, *KRS-One-Black Cop*, YouTube video clip, 2:59, May 19, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKypkj9Ggpo> and KRSOneVEVO, KRS-One, *KRS-One-Sound of Da Police*, YouTube video clip, 4:20, June 5, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZrAYxWPN6c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZrAYxWPN6c;); Jessica Bander, *Dead Prez, Dead Prez-“They” Schools*, YouTube video clip, 5:08, August 14, 2008, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpipOqP_1C0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpipOqP_1C0;); TrampyGoodness, *Dead Prez, Dead Prez-Police State*, YouTube video clip, 3:40, June 13, 2008, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuKNhPEllk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuKNhPEllk;); Protesthiphop, Talib Kweli, Tiye Phoenix, Breezly Brewn, Dante, El-P, Imani Uzuri, Jah-Born, John Forte, Main Flow,

And when state power joins green power,
 We'll never cede power so the powerless can seize power.
 When war's going on no man's safe from,¹²
 We'll have all the ammo, even the ray guns.
 Sci-fi artillery-ed killing sprees,
 For guerillas or civilians, world-war trilogies,
 For juntas,
 Grand Pubas,¹³
 King Coopers,
 King Kuntas,¹⁴
 From Ferguson to Fallujah,
 Iran,
 Afghanistan,
 Baltimore,
 Armored cars, martial law arsenal,
 For bottom feeders,
 Onamonapias—
 'Click-clack, where your men's at,'¹⁵
 We got war-machiners, iron men stationed in ghettos and North Koreas.
 Baltimore's burning while we're sipping margaritas,¹⁶
 With the lime on the side,
 Take our time and recline,
 Laughing til we're dying inside,
 'Baltimore's burning' while we're sipping margaritas!

Hook

Bridge:

And if you hide, we'll smoke you out.

Mr. Khaliyl, Mr. Len, Nine, Punchline, *Hip Hop for Respect-Protective Custody (Music Video)*, YouTube video clip, 5:42, October 27, 2010, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QTjAaTfQcs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QTjAaTfQcs;).; TalibKweliVEVO, Talib Kweli, *Talib-Kweli-The Proud*, YouTube video clip, 5:08, June 16, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFSiM874Jxg&list=RDHFSiM874Jxg>.; Maziuta, Lupe Fiasco, *American Terrorist*, YouTube video clip, 4:41, October 13, 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7Y_r\]hjCLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7Y_r]hjCLM).; Lupe Fiasco, Lupe Fiasco, *Lupe Fiasco-Words I Never Said ft. Skylar Grey [Music Video]*, YouTube video clip, 5:53, April 29, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22l1sf5JZD0>.

¹² MobbDeepVEVO, Mobb Deep, *Mobb Deep-Survival of the Fittest*, YouTube video clip, 3:44, May 3, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIq4UTgqDAc>.

¹³ This line refers to Grand Puba, one of the well-known members of rap group, Brand Nubian.

¹⁴ KendrickLamarVEVO, Kendrick Lamar, *Kendrick Lamar-King Kunta*, YouTube video clip, 3:57, April 1, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRK7PVJFbS8>.

¹⁵ NasVevo, Nas, *Nas-Made You Look*, YouTube video clip, 3:35, April 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhPtRA7zieE>.

¹⁶ See for example, Nathan B. D. Connolly, "Black Culture Is Not the Problem," *NY Times*, May 1, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/01/opinion/black-culture-is-not-the-problem.html>, accessed September 30, 2015.; and Evan Serpick, "Why We Should Call Recent Baltimore Events an 'Uprising,'" *The Baltimore Sun*, September 24, 2015, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-baltimore-uprising-20150924-story.html>, accessed September 30, 2015. See also, "Preserve the Baltimore Uprising: Your Stories. Your Pictures. Your Stuff. Your History.," <http://www.baltimoreuprising2015.org/>, accessed December 3, 2015.

Til you can't breathe, choke you out—¹⁷
If we don't choke and steal your air,
We'll just take you to the precinct, kill you there.¹⁸

¹⁷ Eric Garner was strangled to death by New York City police officer, Joe Pantaleo on July 17, 2014. His eleven cries, “I Can’t Breathe,” as he pleaded for his life led to the slogan for protests that followed his death.

¹⁸ Sandra Bland was stopped for a traffic violation on July 10, 2015 in Waller County, Texas, and arrested for an alleged assault against the arresting officer, Brian Encinia. Just a few days later, on July 13, 2015, she was found hanged in a jail cell. Recent reports on Bland’s death allege that Bland was despondent over her family’s failure to bail her out, and as a result, committed suicide. If this was indeed the case, though developments continue to unfold, then Bland’s death still speaks to the trauma that Black people experience after encounters with police and experiences of incarceration. Bland was one of the few Black women to receive national attention from media and protesters in what has otherwise been the obscuring of Black women victims by both.

VIII: Isaiah 54:17

*Featured clip: ABC News, *South Carolina Church Shooting Suspect Reportedly Confesses*, YouTube video clip, 4:54, June 19, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkPbE3cCGk>.

Does anyone deserve to die?
Never ask a murderer.
Never ask the justice system.
Never ask anyone who aint loving living—
Black and white facts of life? Manichean?
No way to stand between them,
So you're standing, leaning at the edge,
Reporters recording, lights and cameras beaming—
You feel like you want to jump to land on freedom?
But I can show you a different freedom,
Though it still involves a little bit of leaping,
Past inner demons,
Past nether-regions of doubt to the one and only, living breathing God,
Where all jumps become jumps for joy,
A bright light fills up the void, and you feel healed—
Too romantic for you? Well, I invite you in,
See for yourself where new life begins,
People's God-like likenesses,
The righteousness of Christian discipleship—
Still too romantic for you? Ok, Well, what brings you in the mix here?
It aint much we cant discuss with all these crucifixes.
Oh, you're here to show us the way?
Oh, you're here to blow us away.
Confederate flags,
Southern heritages,
Leave us dead where we stand,
Tag toe us away?
You came for a race war point blank just to see niggas bleed,¹
To let that trigger squeeze White Supremacy²—
So you can reclaim your place atop the totem pole on this golden globe,
Everyone with Aryan chromosomes, huh?
Well, theres some things you ought to know:
First, one's heritage is inherited from the genetics of one's parents and not from a piece of fabric—
'Cut from the same cloth' is just an expression man.

¹ Vasilache Dragos, Biggie, *Niggas Bleed*, YouTube video clip, 4:51, January 10, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YePH5YYgQNK>.

² See also, Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 10. Coates makes the very important and powerful point that “all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth.”

You remained tied, if not enslaved to a “lost cause” narrative,³
 In search of where it went in Charleston,
 You’ve become the “original gunclappa”: an American terrorist.⁴
 Second, you should know these nine lives,
 Our beauty, persistence in living right—
 Despite ‘falling down; we get back up’ time after time on the timeline;⁵
 Our determination in gaining access to that Divine line,
 The great things the Great King has planned for our lifetimes,
 Right on the horizon.
 Lastly, you should know: I understand man, being married to a symbol—
 That shapes the shape of the world you assemble.
 The difference is, for yours you’re willing to kill; for mine, I’m willing to live,⁶
 Better yet, willing to save.
 I’m for church gatherings—
 you’re for church massacres, church bombings,⁷
 Warmongering,
 Convinced of myths of some Hametic curse on us.⁸
 You’re still waiting for your cause to rise again, while mine already rose.⁹
 See, we were straight sinners til we were changed with His blood,
 And drank living water full of thanksgiving and eternal life—we were saved with it—
 So if its race wars, holy wars, or spiritual wars,
 Attacking our physical forms,
 We live in the Lord,
 So the weapons really can’t kill us!
 And even when they do the autopsies,

³ See, for example, W. Scott Poole, “Killed by a Damned Rebel: The Lost Cause Militant,” and “The Maintenance of Honor and Manhood: Southern Conservatives and the Agrarian Revolt” in *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

⁴ Ass3678, Smif-N-Wessun, *Smif-N-Wessun-Buktown*, YouTube video clip, 4:11, July 7, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw5V2k_SMh0.

⁵ MusicJams 18, Donnie McClurkin, *Donnie McClurkin: We Fall Down, But We Get Up*, YouTube video clip, 4:53, January 21, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3ewPHaPBfA>.

⁶ See, W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

⁷ Perhaps the most well-known instance of an attack on Black churches was the bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church on September 15, 1963. The bombing killed four Black girls, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Carol Denise McNair, ranging in age from eleven to fourteen. For more on this subject, see, for example, Frank Sikora, *Until Justice Rolls Down: The Birmingham Church Bombing Case*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988). See also, Spike Lee, *4 Little Girls*, Film, directed by Spike Lee, New York: HBO Documentary, 1997. Dylan Roof’s massacre of the pastor and eight members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17, 2015 is the latest instance in what should be considered a history of violence against Black churches as actual structures, institutions of theological and Black theological thought and practice, religious centers and spiritual homes, and communities of Black bodies. See also, Arden Dier, “FBI Foils Va ‘Race War’ Plot to Bomb Black Churches,” Newser.com, November 11, 2015, <http://www.newser.com/story/215903/fbi-foils-va-race-war-plot-to-bomb-black-churches.html>, accessed November 12, 2015.

⁸ For more on the so-called curse of Ham, see Sylvester Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God*, (Palgrave: MacMillan, 2004).

⁹ See, W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

Shamat-aya they gone find a lot of agape!¹⁰
So though you've decided this is our day to go—
I've decided to ask God to save your soul.

¹⁰ See, Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Nonviolence,” in Jameson M. Washington, ed., *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther Kings, Jr.*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1986).

IX: The Souls of Black Folk¹...Who's Next?

*Set to: Floppy Productions, A\$AP Rocky, *ASAP Rocky-Angels (Instrumental)* FREE DOWNLOAD, YouTube video clip, 3:47, December 31, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt3q4BF-5Ts>

¹ See, W. E. B. DuBois' groundbreaking 1903 work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the midst of ongoing violence against Black people's bodies, citizenship, and humanity at the turn of the twentieth century, DuBois proposed a profound theory that has since become foundational to defining and understanding the experiences and desired goals of Black people in America. In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" he wrote that the African American "ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife...to merge his double self into a better and truer self. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible...to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation." The "warring," the internal and physical struggle to avoid being "torn asunder" on the part of Black people, and the "blood" of which DuBois wrote invoked a violent imagery that no doubt reflected the racial violence of his particular historical moment. DuBois asserted that there remained "no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes." Yet, African Americans' ability to live free of violence from without *and* within so that Blacks can share their "ideals" with America would present "a concrete test" for the country's own professed ideals of democracy. He encouraged us all to "listen to the striving in the souls of black folk."

Conclusion

*Set to: Katherine Dorsey, Jay-Z, *Jay-Z Can I Live Instrumental*, YouTube video clip, 3:12, February 9, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXQAgyA13tE1996>.

You've just heard the Ferguson Files:
A study on how to murder a child—
Or murder a woman, or murder a man,
Now that you've heard, let the murdering end.