# Tupac’s Music Relating to Race, Class, and Gender

## Summary

The paper documents the manner by which Tupac's music relate to issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, or other definers of identity. Historical documents revealed that the life of Tupac Shakur only spanned 25 years and at a young age, he was able to compose music that documented and communicated his personal view on what people of his race was traditionally and stereotypically known for. A research on Tupac’s musical profession revealed that, “he began his music career as a rebel with a cause — to articulate the travails and injustices endured by many African-Americans, often from a male point of view. His skill in doing so made him a spokesperson not just for his own generation, but for subsequent ones who continue to face the same struggle for equality” (A&E Television Networks, LLC, 2017, p. 1).

In the essay, there were songs such as ‘Life Goes On’, ‘Keep Ya Head Up’, ‘Staring at the World through my Rearview’, ‘Trapped’, which documented the manner by which his music related to issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other definers of his identity as a member of the African American society

For instance, the following songs contained messages that focused on African Americans being victims of racial prejudice and divisiveness. In the song ‘Life Goes On’, the lyrics mentioned ‘nigga’ as being victims of violence in the street. Tupac mentioned that ‘how many brothas fell victim to tha street, rest in peace young nigga… my niggas, me that last ones left, but life goes on’ (Tupac, 2005). In another song which is entitled ‘Trapped’, Tupac emphasized how members of the African American community felt confined as a social class and ethnic community. The lyrics of the song indicated that ‘cause they never talk peace in the black community… too many brothers daily heading for the big penn, Niggas commin out worse off than they went in… they can’t keep the black man down, they got me trapped’ (Tupac, Trapped, 2015). Moreover, the song also exhibited the stereotyped belief that African Americans are prone to be incarcerated and have tendencies to commit crimes: ‘can barely walk the streets without a cop harassing me’ (Tupac, Trapped, 2015).

Likewise, in Tupac’s song entitled ‘Keep Ya Head Up’, the focus is African American women’s travails and challenges faced, not only in terms of being perceived as an inferior gender, thus, the message of uplifting their spirits. The lyrics include stating that ‘I wonder why we take from our women, why we rape our women, do we hate our women’ (Tupac, Keep Ya Head Up, 2015). The song enables women of the same race and ethnicity to keep their heads up despite the challenges encountered.

In sum, Tupac’s music served as a medium to communicate the struggles of the African American people, those he considered his brothers. Aside from documenting what was traditionally and commonly seen, Tupac was able to provide opportunities for them to recognize that they are being acknowledged and that the challenges faced are shared by people of the same race, social class, gender, and those stigmatized by contemporary societal beliefs.

Tupac Shakur, born on June 16, 1971, had reportedly led a short life spanning only 25 years (A&E Television Networks, LLC, 2017). He had the reputation of having composed rap songs that document his personal view on what people of his race was traditionally and stereotypically known for. As emphasized, “he began his music career as a rebel with a cause — to articulate the travails and injustices endured by many African-Americans, often from a male point of view. His skill in doing so made him a spokesperson not just for his own generation, but for subsequent ones who continue to face the same struggle for equality” (A&E Television Networks, LLC, 2017, p. 1). For instance, his songs entitled ‘Life Goes On’, ‘Keep Ya Head Up’, ‘Staring at the World through my Rearview’, ‘Trapped’, are just some of the composed music which related to issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other definers of his identity as a member of the African American society.

In many of his songs, he kept referring to the members of the African American race as ‘nigga’, a slang for ‘nigger’ which actually means “an ignorant person” (Hanson, 2016, p. 1). In the song ‘Life Goes On’, the lyrics mentioned ‘nigga’ as being victims of violence in the street. Tupac mentioned that ‘how many brothas fell victim to tha street, rest in peace young nigga… my niggas, me that last ones left, but life goes on’ (Tupac, 2005). In another song, ‘Trapped’, Tupac emphasized how members of the African American community felt confined as a social class and ethnic community. The lyrics of the song indicated that ‘cause they never talk peace in the black community… too many brothers daily heading for the big penn, Niggas commin out worse off than they went in… they can’t keep the black man down, they got me trapped’ (Tupac, Trapped, 2015). Moreover, the song also exhibited the stereotyped belief that African Americans are prone to be incarcerated and have tendencies to commit crimes: ‘can barely walk the streets without a cop harassing me’ (Tupac, Trapped, 2015).

Concurrently, in Tupac’s song entitled ‘Keep Ya Head Up’, the focus is African American women’s travails and challenges faced, not only in terms of being perceived as an inferior gender, thus, the message of uplifting their spirits. The lyrics include stating that ‘I wonder why we take from our women, why we rape our women, do we hate our women’ (Tupac, Keep Ya Head Up, 2015). The song enables women of the same race and ethnicity to keep their heads up despite the challenges encountered.

Finally, Tupac’s music served as a medium to communicate the struggles of the African American people, those he considered his brothers. Aside from documenting what was traditionally and commonly seen, Tupac was able to provide opportunities for them to recognize that they are being acknowledged and that the challenges faced are shared by people of the same race, social class, gender, and those stigmatized by contemporary societal beliefs.

## References

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