Embracing Hip Hop as Their Own: Hip Hop and Black Racial Identity in Brazil

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Roupas caras de etiqueta, não valem nada. Se comparadas a uma mente articulada. Contra um racista otário é química perfeita Inteligência, e um cruzado de direita. Será temido, e também respeitado. Um preto digno, e não um negro limitado. (Raconais MCs: Negro Limitado)

Brazilian Hip Hop: Between Entertainment and Community Activism

This article seeks to demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between listening to Hip Hop music and racial consciousness among younger generations of Afro-Brazilians. To test the robustness of this link, we use survey data collected in 2006 in Salvador, Bahia. We find that Brazilian Hip Hop culture has maintained a strong role in shaping political and racial consciousness. In order to offer some tentative causal explanations for this phenomenon, we explore some of the reasons why Brazilian Hip Hop has been able to maintain such a strong political role, especially among urban youth. Among the factors that shape local responses to global phenomena are the strength of local markets, as well as the strength of local civil society organizations opposing market forces. Strong ties to local civil society organizations, we argue, can work against the commodifying force of globalized markets. Brazilian Hip Hop culture, and especially Hip Hop music, provides evidence for the validity of this argument. Thus the second part of the article is explorative and intends to contribute to the formulation of new hypotheses for further testing. Our main finding in this section is that important sectors of Brazilian Hip Hop culture have maintained strong links to grassroots activism. These links have contributed to the fact that many Brazilian Hip Hop activists have remained strongly politicized community activists, able to resist the potentially commodifying forces of the entertainment industry.

The Black Atlantic

One of the most influential cultural forms of Black Atlantic self-expression is Hip Hop. Although it can be argued that Hip Hop culture and rap music in particular reached Brazil from the US and therefore represent a Brazilian attempt to copy the US original, such an approach rests on poor theoretical assumptions and is ultimately unable to explain the different developments of Hip Hop culture in the US and Brazil.
Instead of tracing back cultural forms to their origin, which is a potentially endless endeavor and varies according to the time-frame the analyst prefers (10 years ago / 100 years ago / 1000 years ago), Paul Gilroy suggests that slavery and African diaspora, both profoundly modern experiences, have produced a worldwide web of mutual inspiration and similar cultural responses to extreme hardship. The cultural expressions of the African Diaspora are therefore best understood, not as isolated phenomena and part of parochial “folklore,” but as intimately connected responses to the modern experience. In the words of Gilroy: “The distinctive kinesics of the post-slave populations was the product of these brutal historical conditions. Though more usually raised by analysis of sports, athletics, and dance, it ought to contribute directly to the understanding of the traditions of performance which continue to characterize the production and reception of diaspora music (75).” Nevertheless, cultural expressions fare differently in different environments.

MTV was certainly not the beginning of Brazilian reception of foreign music. African music had long been “brazilianized” and Brazilian cultural elements had found their way to influence African culture, carried by transnational agents and returning ex-slaves. This in turn contributed to establish the predominance of Yoruba culture on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, slave traffic between different colonies and eventual stops of slave merchants in the Caribbean allowed for the flow of information and culture between Africa and different colonies, but also facilitated the maintenance of an international African Diaspora network.

A good example of the establishment of such international networks is provided by Robert Stam (1997), who has reported that, “Afro Brazilians, also arriving with the Dutch from Brazil, were among the very first black people to arrive in New York City (27).” The creation of this early Afro-Diaspora network was facilitated by the fact that the Dutch had colonial possessions in parts of Africa, Brazil and North America during the 17th century, easing commercial flows between these three continents and Europe, much in the same way the Portuguese had done earlier and the British would do later.

Much more recently, North American cultural and political movements inspired and influenced Afro-Brazilians. The North American Black Power movements and the aesthetics associated with it, such as the music of James Brown, were digested in Brazil during the 1970s, just as Cuban music was, during the 1950s and 60s. Cuban, Jamaican, and African-American culture provided examples for Afro-Brazilians and their search for aesthetic models that fit their own intentions and desires for genuine expression.

Vovó, director and founder of one of Brazil’s most visible Black Power groups, Ilê Ayíé, tells the story that during the late 60s and early 70s, he and his group of friends, all from the Liberdade neighborhood in Salvador, were fans of James Brown and listened to his music while sporting Afros. Carlinhos Brown, one of the most innovative contemporary Afro-Brazilian musicians and composers, was obviously equally influenced by James Brown (his real family name being de
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Freitas). He tells the story of how his musical master, Mestre Pintado do Bongó, took him along to his nightly Mambo and Salsa sessions, then popular in the city and attracting a great deal of aficionados, thereby initiating him to Afro-Caribbean music. But even before they had heard of Mambo and James Brown, both Carlinhos Brown and Vovó had long been exposed to African drumming through Candomblé, the religion that African slaves brought to Brazil. Vovó’s mother is an Ialorixá (Candomblé priestess) and Candeal Pequeno, the neighborhood where Carlinhos Brown grew up, like most popular neighborhoods in the city of Salvador, has several Candomblé terreiros (cult houses) which makes it very hard for anyone living there to escape the nightly African drumming during feast season.

Cultural cross-fertilization, in short, is not a new phenomenon and cannot be reduced to the formula of A copying B. Brazilian cultural critic Roberto Schwarz points his finger at the problem of copying foreign ideas. Schwarz alerts us to the possibility of a local recreation of ideas that originated elsewhere when he argues:

A commonplace idea suggests that the copy is secondary with regard to the original, depends on it, is worth less, and so on. Such a view attaches a negative sign to the totality of cultural forces in Latin America and is at the root of the intellectual malaise that we are discussing. Now, contemporary French philosophers such as Derrida have made it their specialty to show that such hierarchies have no basis. Why should the prior be worth more than the posterior, the model more than the imitation, the central more than the peripheral, the economic infrastructure more than cultural life, and so forth? In their view, it would be more accurate and unbiased to think in terms of an infinite sequence of transformations, with no beginning or end, no first or last, no worse or better (6).

It is this possibility that had become the core of the idea of Brazilian modernism as articulated by Oswaldo de Andrade in his “Manifesto Antropófago” (1929). Seen from this angle, the idea of copying misrepresents the ways how cultural forms travel and are constantly re-interpreted and adapted to specific problems. Accordingly, the fact that Hip Hop has been able to travel with such ease across national borders is best explained by its ability to provide a form for the expression of similar problems, namely racism, police violence, life under substandard conditions, and the like. Gilroy quotes the Caribbean poet Edouard Glissant to highlight this point. Glissant explains that “for us music, gesture, dance are forms of communication, just as important as the gift of speech. This is how we first managed to emerge from the plantation (75).”

In sum, cultural forms travel and reverberate differently in different places and very few genuinely “new” forms are in fact created. A more sophisticated understanding of cultural expression in general and of Hip Hop’s international dimensions in particular includes the understanding that new combinations are constantly tried out by artists all over the world, in their personal search for
expression. David Toop, for example, explains that he heard DJs around Africa Bambaataa play Kraftwerk in the South Bronx. In Brazil during the 1980s, when American Rap music first reached Brazilian radio stations, it not only encountered Jamaican Reggae and Toasting that had reached Brazil a decade earlier, but also much older forms of spoken word improvisation, long carried out by “repentistas” from the predominantly Afro-Brazilian Northeast of the country. The idea of copying thus falsely suggests that cultural expressions belong to one person or group in one place and are then transferred to another person or group, be it through an act of voluntary giving, theft, or imitation. Cultural expression is not a clearly discernable good and treating it as such can ultimately not explain how ideas can develop, grow, and change. Hence, it is more plausible to assume that cultural forms continuously evolve, grow, and are adapted to new circumstances and that Hip Hop provides a viable channel to express similar concerns. Brazilian Hip Hop has thus developed its own way of dealing with the everyday realities of the mostly marginalized youth that produces Hip Hop. But before we explore what accounts for the difference between Brazilian and US American Hip Hop, we will first discuss our empirical findings that point to a positive relationship between listening to Hip Hop music and being political and racially aware.

**Hip Hop and Black Racial Group Identity**

As stated in the beginning, there is a relationship between listening to Hip Hop music and black racial identity. Hip Hop has become an important vehicle to express the struggles faced by poor, urban Afro-Brazilian youth, whose voices are often excluded from the mainstream. Darek Pardue’s (2004) ethnographic work in São Paulo provides an example of how blackness or negritude is articulated in Hip Hop music. In an interview, Hip Hop artist Thaide states that “negritude has become part of thousands of Afro-Brazilians’ ‘consciousness’ due in great part to hip-hop culture (277).” Pardue is not the first author claiming that Hip Hop culture contributes to racial consciousness among Afro-Brazilians, based on ethnographic fieldwork. However there has been less systematic, quantitative analysis to test the robustness of the relationship between racial consciousness or black racial identity and exposure to Hip Hop culture. Our aim is to fill this gap and provide a more reliable and systematic analysis of the relationship between exposure to and consumption of Hip Hop culture and racial consciousness, based on a quantitative analysis of data obtained through a survey, conducted in 2006.  

We examine racial consciousness in terms of racial group identity. Thus racial group identity is operationalized using the survey question regarding black racial identity. More specifically we examine whether Afro-Brazilians believe that Afro-Brazilians of various colors are “black” (negro). Given the history of race relations in Brazil, this question is appropriate to examine racial consciousness, as self-identifying as “black” was actively discouraged by the Brazilian state since Getúlio Vargas’ first presidency in the 1930s, when Gilberto Freyre’s proposal of portraying the country as a racial democracy became official state
During the extended military rule, racial categories were indeed eliminated from the census in an effort to further undermine the formation of social movements able to transform their collective grievances into active claims against the state. Only after re-democratization in the 1980s did identity-based social movements grow strong enough to challenge this official version of Brazilian nationalism, offering a different model of imagining the nation, one more open to the recognition of difference. To promote this new model of Brazilian multiculturalism, Brazilian black power movements actively sought to promote racial consciousness. The Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU), Brazil’s most salient black power organization, launched a campaign in the late 1980s, especially addressing the under-representation of Afro-Brazilians in demographic statistics that resulted from symbolic whitening. They used the slogan “Não deixe sua cor passar em branco,” which had the clever double meaning of “Don’t leave your color blank,” and “Don’t let your color pass for white.” This campaign aimed at convincing Afro-Brazilians to self-classify as black (“negro/a”). Self-classifying as “negro/a” therefore became a political statement indicating race-consciousness. In addition, this and other campaigns, such as the “Black is Beautiful” movement, using slogans such as 100% Negro, and Proud to be Black, has led race-conscious Afro-Brazilians not only to self-classify as “negro,” but also to speak openly about race issues, whereas average Brazilians typically deny their African descent and avoid race-related topics. From the traditional and still hegemonic perspective, recognizing and talking about race is perceived as “racist.” Self-declaring as “negro/a” and openly discussing race is therefore an indicator for counterhegemonic race-consciousness and political awareness. In the case of Salvador, self-identifying as “negro/a” is a political option open to almost all Bahians. By the same token, not self-identifying as “negro/a” implies denying one’s African descent for at least 70 percent of the population of Salvador, which is the percentage of “Afro-Brazilians” given by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE). In other words, for the overwhelming majority of Bahians, avoiding the classification of negro/a signifies engaging in symbolic whitening. Whitening is an extremely pervasive strategy among Afro-Brazilians as it provides the most promising channel to achieve upward social mobility.
and blackness because they do not challenge the idea that darker colored people do not have to be whitened. Social whitening can occur when a black or brown person reaches a high economic class level or a certain status. When this happens others may no longer consider this person black. Pelé, the famous soccer player, is an example: after he gained international recognition he became socially whitened, which means he was sometimes called a mulatto rather than black because of his social status. Although he was not seen as white his color was whitened by people referring to him as other than black. Discursive whitening, physical whitening through miscegenation, and social whitening of color identification are oftentimes interconnected. Not engaging in any kind of whitening is thus a strong indicator of a politically grounded racial consciousness, as it reflects a political identity explicitly connected to the Brazilian Black Power movement. The main hypothesis we sought to test was thus that Afro-Brazilians who listen to Hip Hop music are more likely to recognize black group identity than those who do not listen to Hip Hop music.

Survey Results
The survey was conducted in three neighborhoods in Salvador, which includes the neighborhoods Itapoã, Federação, and Peri Peri. The sample is randomized and made up of 346 respondents. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in households where every third or fifth house was selected. Interviewers identified respondents as Afro-Brazilian and in cases where they thought a respondent was not Afro-Brazilian, they asked if anyone of African descent lived in the household. In the survey, interviewers classified respondents into a census color category and respondents self-identified in an open-ended question and identified in a census color category. In our analysis we used the color category respondents self-identified as in the open-ended question rather than the color category they were forced to choose in the closed-ended question, which was made up of census color categories.

Stating that, “all Afro-Descendents are black,” is therefore a strong indicator of racial consciousness. To test our hypothesis, we asked “Do you listen to Hip Hop music?” The question regarding black group identity was “Do you think all Afro-descendents of different colors are black (negro)?” As explained, we selected the association of Afro-Descendents to “blackness” as an indicator of racial consciousness, because of the long history of whitening in Brazilian society and the struggle of the Brazilian Black Power movement to forge a “negro” racial identity. Thus the dependent variable is black group identity and the independent variables are listening to Hip Hop, gender, age cohort, color, and income.

Accordingly, we regressed the dependent variable with the independent variables listening to Hip Hop music, gender, age, color, and income. We found that the independent variable “listens to Hip Hop” was statistically significant. Thus, we found that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between people who listen to Hip Hop music and people who believe that Afro-Brazilians
of different colors are black (see Table I). Put simply, this means that Afro-Brazilians who listen to Hip Hop music are more likely to believe in black racial group identity than those who do not listen to Hip Hop. We note that in our sample only 38% of Afro-Brazilians listen to Hip Hop music. As age increases, the percentage of people who listen to Hip Hop music decreases. Whereas fifty-three percent of Afro-Brazilians age 6 to 25 listen to Hip Hop music, the same is true for 41% in the age bracket of 26 to 40 year olds. However the percentage dramatically drops to 16% for the age cohort of 41-54 and to 9% for Afro-Brazilians ages 55 and older (see Table II). Thus most listeners of Hip Hop music are Afro-Brazilians ranging from age 16 to 40.

Table I: Regression Analysis of Black Racial Consciousness and Independent Variables
(listen to Hip Hop, gender, age, color, and income)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hip Hop</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.12***</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=290</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A simple cross tabulation of the data shows that of those who listen to Hip Hop music, 89% believe that Afro-Brazilians of different colors are black and of those who do not listen to Hip Hop music 71% believe that Afro-Brazilians of different colors are black. Although the percentages are both quite high there is a difference of 18 percent. Furthermore the regression shows that listening to Hip Hop music is a statistically significant variable.

This finding demonstrates that those Afro-Brazilians who listen to Hip Hop music are more likely to classify all Afro-Brazilians as black than those who do not listen to Hip Hop music. Because Brazilian Black Power movement activists have long pushed for a valorization of blackness by claiming that all Afro-Brazilians are negro against the very traditional and very widespread avoidance of disassociating African descent with blackness, this finding allows for the conclusion that listeners of Hip Hop music are more racially conscious than non-listeners.
Furthermore, listening to Hip Hop music is an important predictor of racial group consciousness even considering differences in age cohort. Among respondents in the 16-25 age cohort who listen to Hip Hop, the predicted probability that they believe Afro-Brazilians of all colors are black is .90; however this drops to .69 if they do not listen to Hip Hop. For those in the oldest age cohort of 55 years and older who listen to Hip Hop their predicted probability of black racial group identity is .91, compared to only .76 for those who do not listen to Hip Hop (see Graph I). Thus, listening to Hip Hop is a strong predictor of racial consciousness across all age cohorts.

### Table II: Age Groups and % of Each Group that Does or Does Not Listen to Hip Hop music

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Listen to Hip Hop</th>
<th>Do not listen to Hip Hop</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-25</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=338

### Graph I: Probability of Recognizing Black Group Identity and Age Cohort

- **Listen to Hip Hop**
- **Does Not Listen to Hip Hop**
Possible Explanations
Brazilian Hip Hop carries political messages that seem to draw racially conscious Afro-Brazilian listeners or, alternatively, Brazilian Hip Hop influences Afro-Brazilian listeners to become more racially conscious. Using the data we cannot discern this difference and we are therefore unable to determine the direction of the causality of this link, namely if listening to Hip Hop causes Afro-Brazilians to become more politically and racially aware, or if more aware Afro-Brazilians tend to listen more to Hip Hop music than their racially unaware counterparts. However we do know that there is a positive relationship between the two. Why have Brazilian Hip Hop artists remained so strongly politicized? In the following section, we intend to provide some tentative answers that are subject to further investigation.

The Double-Edge of the Market: Between Commodification and Dissemination
One component to this answer lies in the relative weakness of the Brazilian entertainment market. Much of Brazilian rap has not been commercialized in its entirety and, as a consequence, many rap artists have maintained most of their original protest messages, not having to worry about sales — as prospects for sales are minor for most groups in the first place. A corollary of this argument lies in the relative size of the Brazilian market vis-à-vis the much stronger US market. Difference in magnitude impacts the direction of globalized flows of goods and ideas alike. The dominant North American market creates new clients all over the world, following a simple rule, which dictates that once the domestic market is saturated, new niches have to be explored and that every supply creates its own demand (Say’s Law).

The vehicles of this market expansion are well known: MTV was launched in Brazil in 1995, becoming a major factor in shaping the Brazilian taste for international music. By comparison, the Brazilian music market has much less power to penetrate and influence US musical tastes. Compared to the US music industry, the Brazilian music business is small and much less able to launch products into the international scene. As a result, it was the US music market that reached Brazil and introduced rap music, and not vice-versa.

Yet the market has an innate force to transform artistic expression, initially aimed at criticizing and protesting against a given status quo, into a mere product that is then just as easily sold and consumed as any other product. Typically, artistic expressions created to criticize the system can be bought one year later in the next mall — stripped from any of its initial menacing meanings. The same is true for many protest cultures. The force of the market is such that it swallows up and transforms by taking away critical edges, or it marginalizes and keeps those products unsuited for unproblematic consumption outside the doors of commercial success — condemning the artist to oblivion. Rastafarianism was picked up by smart entrepreneurs and became a fashion statement. In the US, rap music has
become a style of ostensive consumption that allows its consumers to tap into the imagery of over-eroticized black maleness and a certain habitus and lifestyle.

Similarly, the commodification of certain manifestations of Afro-Brazilian culture has already softened its potentially sharp and critical edges. After President Getúlio Vargas officially recognized Capoeira as Brazil’s national sport in 1953, it was Capoeira Regional, the less traditional form, which gained national and international recognition. Downey (2005) demonstrates that this success became possible after Capoeira Angola, the original form of this African-Brazilian cultural expression, was stripped from its political and racial content (9).

The commodification of black culture is double-edged. On one side, it softens criticism and turns attack into fashion. At the same time, it offers the opportunity to bring marginalized cultural expressions into the mainstream, even if in changed forms. This is what can be observed with Hip Hop in Brazil. Despite the relative weakness of the Brazilian music market, Hip Hop is developing into the newest commodity on the Brazilian music market. Like other forms of protest, Hip Hop music gets swallowed and integrated into the system. Yet because of its incomplete absorption into the entertainment industry, much of Brazil’s Hip Hop culture remains more connected to local communities and to protest culture than to the entertainment business. A great part of Brazilian Hip Hop culture remains a vehicle and voice of the poor spreading the word from the favelas (slums) to the broader Brazilian society. Evidence for this prevailing connection to local communities comes from the lyrics of the artists themselves. Many Hip Hop artists remain connected to political issues and are steeped in efforts at helping and educating their communities, as well as spreading the word about the life conditions in Brazilian favelas. Many groups actively promote a new awareness of class and race relations, the role of the media, and “bourgeois ideology.” A good example is provided by the very influential Racionais MCs — one of Brazil’s first and most influential rap bands.

60 percent of the youth in the periphery without criminal record have suffered from police violence.
Three out of four people killed by the police are black.
In Brazilian universities, only 2 percent of the students are black.
Every four hours, a young black male dies violently in São Paulo.11

Another example is equally influential Rio-based rapper MV Bill.

I want to accuse the social contrast
while the rich live well, the poor folks live badly
the “marvelous city” is a big illusion
unemployment, poverty, misery, dead bodies on the floor
politicians only speak but don’t act
the health center is an indecency
they only attend if the case is an emergency (...) 
capitalist society with an open wound (...)
they want blacks in prison (…)
they take a drug corner and the dealer is arrested
the cops are happy because the dealer is black
he will spend a long time in prison
if he had money he would get a just trial
in a country where money rules (…)
discriminated in the street, at the beach, behind the wheel
the TV forgets about poverty
forcing the playboy-world on us as the aesthetic model
that’s why a lot of guys get mad
with a system that leaves the poor in chains
it must be very easy to talk from the penthouse
down here where I am reality is much harder
down here there’s no playground, no new car
there’s no swimming pool full of playboys
there’s no shopping mall, no disco
but there are soldiers in blue playing “swat”
there’s sewage water running open in the street (…)
once we took the lashing tied to a post
now we take them in the street
we keep quiet because we don’t want to die (…)
they send into the hole in a plastic bag
this is the modern world
twelve shots and a machine gun and they have ended
the life of one more brother that claimed for his rights
the wounds from the lashings we took on the posts have not healed
if you haven’t understood it’s time to understand
nothing has changed
if you think I am wrong
come down from your penthouse and join me (…)

In Brazil, a long tradition of oral history, amplified by thousands of community radios and other informal networks that interlink historically excluded groups, found a new, modern equivalent in Hip Hop. The messages of many artists are very didactic, helping to analyze and understand Brazilian reality and because of the workings of the market, these messages are not contained within favelas, but reach other, more affluent neighborhoods.

By listening to lyrics like those of MV Bill and Racionais MCs, more and more young poor Afro-Brazilians are becoming aware of the ideologies and normalizing powers that hold them down. Rap and Hip Hop music have become political tools and vehicles for the dissemination of racial consciousness and ideas of racial injustice within the life worlds of the excluded and — through the market of distribution — beyond. As the country is moving toward recognizing racism as an important factor of Brazil’s reality, Hip Hop and rap music must be seen as an indicator (and cause) that the traditional ideology of Brazil as a racial paradise is tumbling.
The Community Link: **Pluralidade Doida**

Why has Brazilian Hip Hop been able to preserve so much of its protest culture and escaped the commodifying forces of the market? As already stated, we argue that in addition to not being a highly valued and commercialized product (as yet), Brazilian rap and Hip Hop have another, related, feature that adds to their characteristics: many community groups have used rap and Hip Hop early on as a tool to communicate to young urban youth and find a way to keep them involved in their educational programs. **Afro-Reggae**, a Rio-based NGO catering to urban favela youth, for example, is using rap music to raise critical consciousness of favela dwellers, to showcase police brutality, and to seduce youth away from drug-dealing and towards going to school. **Viva-Rio**, another big Rio-based NGO, supported a project that brought together several rap artists in order to produce a CD against smoking.

A leading Rio de Janeiro rapper, Def Yuri, explains that he was invited by **Viva Rio**, to coordinate its effort in launching educational campaigns targeted at urban youth. **Viva Rio** has hired Def Yuri in order to become the link between this rather formal and very influential NGO and one segment of its audience: urban youth living in favelas. Yuri explains:

> I joined *Viva Rio* in 2001. I am a rapper, but right now I am more into production, working on those initiatives. I was one of the first, if not the first one, to link the theme of public security, education, and human rights in my lyrics. Right now I manage the partnerships of *Viva Favela* [subdivision of *Viva Rio*] including the four main web portals of Hip Hop in Latin America, two of them are amongst the biggest of the world. I create initiatives and political campaigns. We discuss our issues here, like security. We also did a project called Hip Hop or vote. I believe that Hip Hop in Rio de Janeiro, just like in the rest of Brazil, has something to say about different questions, questions of domestic violence, questions of drug abuse, of health, environment, and other important issues. We also launched a campaign against nicotine addiction and we made a CD together with an NGO called Sêmina, with the support of *Viva Rio* and the World Health Organization. We used Hip Hop to mobilize individual rappers to participate around health issues.

Accordingly, as the statement of Def Yuri demonstrates, Brazilian community-based organizations such as Viva Rio have been quick to invite Hip Hop artists in order to join them in their advocacy and struggle for social justice. Instead of looking for the music market as a place for survival, many Brazilian Hip Hop artists found in community organizations and NGOs institutions that were willing to take them on payroll or at least to support their musical projects and careers. As a result, for a significant number of Brazilian Hip Hop artists, especially for those that have not reached international or even national exposure, working with or even for local civil society organizations has become a viable alternative to promote their songs and further their musical and artistic careers.
Conclusion: The Subaltern Speaks Up

The difference of Hip Hop music to other genres of popular Brazilian music lies in its strong political and almost educational character of its messages. Hip Hop artists are educating Brazilians about racism and injustice. This is a qualitatively new phenomenon in Brazil, because until now, political art was the exclusive domain of elite intellectuals, who are predominantly white. The paternalism that resulted from the absolute division of Brazilian society maintained a system where the included spoke for the excluded, because they were supposedly not mature enough to speak up for themselves. Hip Hop music is changing this now. In Hip Hop, the historically excluded have found a voice and what they say is very relevant to urban black youth to the point where their lyrics have become one of the central vehicles to disseminate racial consciousness among Afro-descendents. Our statistical analysis shows that in Salvador, Bahia, although Hip Hop music is most listened to by younger Afro-Brazilians ages 16 to 40, its relationship to those who believe in racial group identity goes beyond that age cohort. Racial group identity is operationalized in the survey as a person who believes that Brazilians of African descent of different colors are all black. We use this as a proxy for racial consciousness and we find a positive, and statistically significant, relationship between listening to Hip Hop and racial consciousness. Across all age cohorts the predicted probability of racial consciousness is higher for respondents who listen to Hip Hop music than it is for respondents who do not. Not only have Afro-Brazilian Hip Hop and rap artists embraced this cultural art form as their own, but their political messages help to further raise black racial consciousness among their listeners.

Notes

1. Gladys Mitchell. Political Opinion, Racial Attitudes, and Candidate Preference. This survey was conducted in Salvador and São Paulo, Brazil (2006).
2. As argued by Martori.
3. Stam explains that “Portuguese Jews fleeing the Inquisition went to Brazil with the Dutch, ended up fleeing the Inquisition once again in Recife in 1636 and going to New York, then called New Amsterdam, where they founded the first Sephardi Synagogue (27).”
5. Interview conducted in 1997.
6. This survey was conducted in 2006 by Gladys Mitchell in the cities of Salvador and São Paulo.
7. As demonstrated, for example, by Thomas Skidmore.
8. As demonstrated, e.g. by Melissa Nobles and Bailey and Telles.
9. Frances Winddance Twine (1998) has documented the common tendency to avoid race issues in her ethnographic work conducted in the state of Rio de Janeiro.
10. This focus of the survey is on the Afro-Brazilian electorate so only people of voting age were interviewed.


13. “Pluralidade Doida” translates into “Crazy Plurality” and is a weblog of *Viva Rio*-based rap artist Def Yuri. It is part of the web portal “Vivafavela” <www.vivafavela.com.br>.


**Works Cited**


