

Hip Hop and Geography

Learning Objectives

- 1) To incorporate various Hip Hop tracks into a Geography classroom context, investigating and questioning the two-dimensional nature of statistical case studies relating to urban spaces.
- 2) To interrogate the limitations of statistical evidence in understanding urban spaces.
- 3) To give students an understanding of how space and resources are racially organised.

Key Themes, Terms and Questions:

- 1) Perspective
- 2) Interpretation
- 3) Limitation
- 4) "Race and Space" – What effect does one's race have upon where and how they live within a city space? Are services and resources allocated equitably?

Secondary Source:

"... the racialization of space and the spatialization of race... People of different races in the United States are relegated to different physical locations..."¹

Lesson Plan:

This class is intended to be largely discussion based, to get students thinking beyond statistical evidence, not to have them learn the data by rote.

- 1) Either using a handout or a PowerPoint presentation, provide students with a series of statistical data on a city.
For example: overall population, foreign born residents, racial demographics, percentage households speaking foreign languages at home, education levels, employment, poverty, population density, average income etc.
- 2) After students have viewed the data, present the following:
 - Can this data be trusted/ in what way could it be unreliable?
 - What does the data say about the social makeup of the city?
 - What does the data NOT say? (Issues of generalisation etc)
 - Are there any correlations?
- 3) Continuing on the handout or presentation, show students the four lowest income neighbourhoods of the city compared to the four highest income neighbourhoods.

¹ George Lipsitz, 'The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape', *Landscape Journal*, 26.1, (2007), p.10-23 (pp. 12).

Provide data on, for example: average income, population, racial demographics, percentage of foreign born residents, and percentage of occupied housing units being rented compared to owned.

- 4) In relation to this new data, ask the students the four questions presented at stage two.

- 5) Now introduce Hip Hop lyrics to 'interpret' the statistics.
 - For example, in light of statistics that state the four highest income neighbourhoods in L.A. are majority white, introduce "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air".^{2 3}
Potential questions to ask students include: what does the track says about the place? How can these ideas be linked to the statistical evidence? Does the song ignore some of the issues of the place suggested by the statistics? Does the song support or argue against the nature of the space?
 - Being sensitive of the explicit nature of lyrics and content, include a 'counter' track to question and negotiate different perspectives on city space.
 - I.e. "Boyz-N-The-Hood".⁴ Or "Burn Hollywood Burn".⁵
How does this track interact with 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air'?
Does it refute or support the ideas of the initial track?
How does the track relate to the statistics?
What does the track suggest about life in L.A. that the statistics can't tell you?
How do the lyrics reflect a certain perspective on L.A.?

- 6) Conclude the class by soliciting student feedback on how they now understand the often racialized experience of life in cities, this could be in relation to either America or the United Kingdom based on the case study.

Word Count: 522

² Los Angeles Times, *Mapping LA: Median*

Income <<http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/income/median/neighborhood/list/>> [accessed 1 November 2017].

³ DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" (Jive/Zomba, 1992).

⁴ Eazy- E, "Boyz-N-The-Hood" (Ruthless/Macola 1987).

⁵ Public Enemy (featuring Ice Cube & Big Daddy Kane), "Burn Hollywood Burn" (Def Jam/Columbia 1990).

Appendix

Appendix A

**“The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air” –
DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh
Prince**

Now, this is a story all about
how
My life got flipped-turned
upside down
And I'd like to take a minute
Just sit right there
I'll tell you how I became the
prince of a town called Bel Air

In west Philadelphia born and
raised
On the playground was where I
spent most of my days
Chillin' out maxin' relaxin' all
cool
And all shootin some b-ball
outside of the school
When a couple of guys who
were up to no good
Started making trouble in my
neighborhood
I got in one little fight and my
mom got scared
She said 'You're movin' with
your auntie and uncle in Bel
Air'

I begged and pleaded with her
day after day
But she packed my suit case
and sent me on my way
She gave me a kiss and then
she gave me my ticket.
I put my Walkman on and said,
'I might as well kick it'.

First class, yo this is bad
Drinking orange juice out of a
champagne glass.

Is this what the people of Bel-
Air living like?
Hmm this might be alright.

But wait I hear they're prissy,
bourgeois, all that
Is this the type of place that
they just send this cool cat?
I don't think so
I'll see when I get there
I hope they're prepared for the
prince of Bel-Air

Well, the plane landed and
when I came out
There was a dude who looked
like a cop standing there with
my name out
I ain't trying to get arrested yet
I just got here
I sprang with the quickness like
lightning, disappeared

I whistled for a cab and when it
came near
The license plate said fresh and
it had dice in the mirror
If anything I could say that this
cab was rare
But I thought 'Nah, forget it' -
'Yo, homes to Bel Air'

I pulled up to the house about
seven or eighth
And I yelled to the cabbie 'Yo
homes smell ya later'
I looked at my kingdom
I was finally there
To sit on my throne as the
Prince of Bel Air

Appendix B

“Boyz-N-The-Hood” - Eazy-E

Hey yo, remember that shit
eazy did a while back
Motherfuckers said it wasn't
gonna work (word)
That crazy shit, yeah the stupid
shit
Hey yo eazy! (yo!)
Hey man why don't you come
off the piano for a minute
And bust this crazy shit

Woke up quick at about noon
Just thought that i had to be in
compton soon
I gotta get drunk before the
day begin
Before my mother starts
bitchin bout my friends
About to go and damn near
went blind
Young niggaz at the pad
throwin up gang signs
Ran in the house and grabbed
my clip
With the mac-10 on the side of
my hip
Bailed outside and pointed my
weapon
Just as i thought, the fools kept
steppin
Jumped in the fo' hit the juice
on my ride
I got front back and side to side
Then i let the alpine play
Bumpin new shit by nwa
It was "gangsta gangsta" at the
top of the list
Then i played my own shit, it
went somethin like this:

Cruisin down the street in my
six-fo'

Jockin the bitches, slappin the
hoes
Went to the park to get the
scoop
Knuckleheads out there cold
shootin some hoops
A car pulls up, who can it be?
A fresh el camino rolled, kilo g
He rolls down his window and
he started to say
It's all about makin that gta

Cuz the boyz n tha hood are
always hard
You come talkin' that trash
we'll pull your card
Knowin nothin' in life but to be
legit
Don't quote me boy, cuz i ain't
said shit

Down on b's in the place to
give me the pace
He said my man jb is on
freebase
The boy jb was a friend of mine
Til i caught him in my car tryin
to steal my alpine
Chased him up the street to
call a truce
The silly motherfucker pull out
a deuce-deuce
Little did he know i had a
loaded 12 gauge
One sucker dead, la times first
page

Cuz the boyz n tha hood are
always hard
You come talkin' that trash
we'll pull your card
Knowin nothin' in life but to be
legit

Don't quote me boy, cuz i ain't
said shit

Bored as hell and i wanna get
ill
So i went to a spot where my
homeboys chill
The fellows out there, makin
that dollar
I pulled up in my 6-4 impala
They greet me with a 40 and i
start drinkin
And from the 8-ball my breath
start stinkin
Love to get my girl, to rock that
body
Before i left i hit the bacardi
Went to her house to get her
out of the pad
Dumb hoe says something
stupid that made me mad
She said somethin that i
couldn't believe
So i grabbed the stupid bitch
by her nappy ass weave
She started talkin shit,
wouldn't you know?
Reached back like a pimp and
slapped the hoe
Her father jumped out and he
started to shout
So i threw a right-cross and
knocked his whole ass out

Cuz the boyz n tha hood are
always hard
You come talkin' that trash
we'll pull your card
Knowin nothin' in life but to be
legit
Don't quote me boy, cuz i ain't
said shit

I'm rollin hard now i'm under
control
Then wrapped the six-fo' round
the telephone poll

I looked at my car and i said,
"oh brother
I throw it in the gutter and go
buy another"
Walkin home and i see the g
ride
Now ket is drivin kilo on the
side
As they busted a u, they got
pulled over
An undercover cop in a dark
green nova
Ket got beaten for resistin
arrest
He socked the pig in the head
for rippin his guess
Now g is cut for doin the crime
For defence on the boy, he'll
do some time

Cuz the boyz n tha hood are
always hard
You come talkin' that trash
we'll pull your card
Knowin nothin' in life but to be
legit
Don't quote me boy, cuz i ain't
said shit

I went to get them out but
there was no bail
The fellaz start to riot in the
county jail
Two days later in municiple
court
Kilo g on trial straight cold cut a
fork
Distruption of a court, said the
judge
On a six year sentence my man
didn't budge
Bailer came over to turn him in
Kilo g looked up and gave a
grin
He yelled out "fire!", then
came suzi

The bitch came in with a sub-
machine uzi
Police shot the bitch but didn't
hurt her
Both up state for attempted
murder

Cuz the boyz n tha hood are
always hard
You come talkin' that trash
we'll pull your card
Knowin nothin' in life but to be
legit
Don't quote me boy, cuz i ain't
said shit

Appendix C

“Burn Hollywood Burn” – Public Enemy feat. Ice Cube & Big Daddy Kane

[Chuck D]
Burn Hollywood burn I smell a
riot
Goin' on -- first they're guilty,
now they're gone
Yeah I'll check out a movie
But it'll take a Black one to
move me
Get me the hell away from this
T.V
All this news and views are
beneath me
So all I hear about is shots
ringing out
About gangs putting each
other's head out
So I rather kick some slang out
All right fellas let's go hang out
Hollywood or would they not
Make us all look bad like I
know they had
But some things I'll never
forget, yeah
So step and fetch this shit
For all the years we looked like
clowns
The joke is over -- smell the
smoke from all around
Burn Hollywood burn

[Ice Cube]
Ice Cube is down with the P.E
Now every single bitch wanna

see me
Big Daddy is smooth, word to
mother
Let's check out a flick that
exploits the color
Roaming through Hollywood
late at night
Red and blue lights what a
common sight
Pulled to the curb, getting
played like a sucker
Don't fight the
power...(gunshot)..the mother
fucker

[Big Daddy Kane]
As I walk the streets of
Hollywood Boulevard
Thinking how hard it was to
those that starred
In the movies portraying the
roles
Of butlers and maids, slaves
and hoes
Many intelligent Black men
seemed to look uncivilized
When on the screen
Like, I guess I figure you to play
some jigaboo
On the plantation, what else
can a nigga do
And Black women in this
profession
As for playing a lawyer, out of
the question

For what they play Aunt
 Jemima is the perfect term
 Even if now she got a perm
 So let's make our own movies
 like Spike Lee
 Cause the roles being offered
 don't strike me
 As nothing that the black man
 could use to earn
 Burn Hollywood burn

"Now we're considering you
 for a part in our new
 production. How do you feel
 about playing a controversial
 negro?"

"Yeah, I'm wid it. You mean
 somebody like Huey P. Newton
 or H. Rap Brown, right?"

"Well, it's a servant character
 that chuckles a little bit, and
 sings."

"Yo, man, what?? That's
 bullshit."

"Hey Cube, Kane, Flav, listen. I
 hope I ain't wastin' my time.
 You know how I feel about

givin' these movies my money,
 know what I'm sayin'?"

"Yo, man, it's gonna be dope,
 man."

"Chill, man."

"Hey, I'm chill chill, but you
 know what I'm sayin', I just
 don't wanna, I can't go for this
 Steel Magnolia shit, know what
 I'm sayin'?"

"Come on, man, it's cool

*Ladies and gentlemen, today's
 feature presentation: Driving
 Miss Daisy*

"No, no, no."

"Bullshit, just what I'm talkin'
 about, all this Terms of
 Endearment shit. I'm outta
 here, man, it's bullshit."

"Yo, check it out, man I got
 Black Caesar at the crib, man,
 y'all want to go check that
 out?"

"That's the idea. We could
 have rolled with that from the
 get-go!"

"Fuck Hollywood, man."

Bibliography

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