

1968: A Global Perspective

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Andrew Belton <andrew.belton@gmail.com>
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

It's a Rap! Misogyny, Homophobia, and a Second Look at Revolutionary Values: Rescuing Hip-Hop's Aesthetics from the Myopic Legacies of Black Liberation

We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or the earth will be leveled by our attempts to gain it. – Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*

In the wake of MSNBC's firing of radio shock-jock Don Imus, African-American political and cultural leaders have again initiated a social referendum on the blatant sexism, misogyny, and homophobia of hip-hoppers, their lyrics, and the radio stations and distribution companies that profit from their destructive rhetoric. Conventional wisdom warns against any real success in restricting these artists, as previous efforts to combat the language of "gangsta rap" in the early 1990s, made famous by leaders such as C. Delores Tucker, left much to be accomplished. Yet, the problem persists as one of critical perspective. Certainly at issue are not simply the lyrics of these hip-hoppers, but more broadly the culture which has allowed for and promoted this type of vitriolic creativity in urban black males. It is a legacy that can be traced back to the "Black Power" and liberation movements of the 1960s. In this paper, I examine a seminal publication of this revolutionary time-period—Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968). Addressing Cleaver's mythology of race and sexuality, I shed light on a pervasive psychosis of the black male's experience of America—an experience of being one constantly under attack. By reevaluating the incorporation of misogyny and homophobia in this ideology, I argue for hip-hop's aesthetic liberation through a reevaluation of the black masculinist ideologies of the 1960s.