Rationale for "Rap Literacy: Its Devolution and a Means for Revival"

ARELYS ZAMORA
Produced in Scott Launier's Spring 2013 ENC 1102

Link to "Rap Literacy: Its Devolution and a Means for Revival": **http://youtu.be/IPTnlfkzA1s**

Introduction

While I began doing the introduction, I chose to first write down everything I wanted to include. I had many sources that I wanted to use but didn't know how to mention them all throughout the video. I thought it was crucial to give a brief background on hip hop and how it began. While writing this brief background on hip hop, I immediately thought of including videos of people freestyle rapping, but I ran into a clip of Nina Simone singing "Revolution" and I immediately decided to include it in the video. I think it perfectly described the times of the late 60s and 70s— the times right before the birth of hip hop. I wanted to then transition from the background of hip hop to what many sources have been saying about the topic of hip hop and decided to change the mood of the video to a more sinister one by adding a more serious song in the background.

Methods and Results

The textual analysis section had the possibility of being at least thirty minutes long. I analyzed more songs than I included in the video. Also, I would have liked to include small excerpts of more songs in the 2000s, but the lyrical content was very explicit. In retrospect, I should have included the songs from the late 2000s because it would have made a bigger statement. Instead, I summed up the themes of later songs in the 2000s with one stretch of multiple music video clips stitched together. My thought behind this was that if I didn't have enough time to insert excerpts of songs, I should include the music videos of those songs— this was an attempt to visually demonstrate what these songs were about. I think that method was efficient given the circumstances.

The survey section is something that I still doubt because not many people took the survey. And the survey was not very efficient at extracting the information that I wanted from participants, so I decided to categorize the responses I received. I first asked questions like, "what are your thoughts on popular rap music?" and then I listed the top five songs on the rap billboard charts. To my surprise, most people that answered had something negative to say about it. Most responses summed up to be, "It's dumb. There is no meaning behind the lyrics." And I thought that this information was important to include, so I decided to keep the survey and analyze the results based on how the person responded be it negatively, positively, or neutral (meaning they said they don't really care, or stated both positive and negative aspects, such as, "The music is fun, but the lyrics are meaningless"). Also, another flaw with this survey was that not everyone who took the survey

answered all the questions. For the short-response questions, only a handful of people answered. Also, at the end of the survey, I asked participants if they would mind being interviewed. Most people gave me their contact information to do an interview, but I chose to do interviews with the people who had most to say about the topic. For example, some people didn't answer all the free response questions and gave very short, one-word answers. This led me to believe that this person did not have much to say about the topic and would not make a good interviewee.

The interviews and focus groups were fun to do because people got excited about being filmed and they were eager to say more on the topic. While I was conducting an interview with Matias, it was almost like we were having a conversation. I would ask him a question; he would answer it and then go off on a tangent (an informative one) which would lead me to think of other questions that I previously didn't plan. I had a set of questions that I would eventually go back to, but I wanted to see where the conversation would take me. So, I let him just talk through subjects as I would come up with questions to them. The entire interview was 24 minutes and it took me about a day and a half to cut and edit all the parts of the interview that were irrelevant, inspiring, and informative.

Discussion

The discussion was probably the most thought-out part of the project. Before starting the discussion part of the project, I typed everything that I thought and that I wanted to include. When I finished the first draft of the discussion, I had someone hold up the words and I would pretend to be looking at the camera. Recording the discussion was the most strenuous part of the project because I re-did it about five times. Each time, I didn't like my hair, or my outfit, or my voice—it was very hard to record myself. Thinking that this was going to go on a video that everyone was going to see was nerve-racking; I was very self-conscious about this part. And I still am, but this is what I envisioned of doing in the first place and I wouldn't change much about it. I would have liked to originally be walking through a hallway or outdoors while saying the discussion, but I would have had to memorize it and have more than one person to help me. In retrospect, I think it is fine just the way that it is. As for the content of the discussion, I had been editing until the very last day we had to work on it. I felt that there were so many different things I wanted to include but didn't know how to word it. To come up with what I did in the discussion, I talked to many people and revised it more than twenty times. I would read it to people and ask what they got from it. If it was not what I had in mind, then I would revise it until it was. I also spoke with my professor many times to make sure that I had everything just the way I imagined it.

In retrospect, I would not have changed much in the way I did this project. I would have liked to randomly video record people from UCF while I asked them questions, but I would need to have at least one other person help me. I would also be embarrassed to ask strangers and video record them. Another thing is that I ran into so many technical difficulties throughout this project that I realized I need to get a new computer. There were countless times when my computer froze and I lost some of the work I did, or when the internet was so slow I would have to look up pictures or information on my phone and email it to myself. I also learned a lot about technology throughout this project. I learned how to download and convert videos to any format, which is what really saved my project and made it that much better.

The most fun part of this project was picking and choosing all of the songs to play in the background. I wanted people to enjoy watching it, but also be informed about the research I was doing. This is why I decided to add many popular rap songs from today and old school popular rap songs as well. Overall, I am proud of the work I did and, even though the transitions and volume levels are not perfect, I really gave 100% of my effort to make the best out of the resources (i.e. "dinosaur laptop") that I had.

Works Cited

Bashir, Samiya. "Hip Hop: A Lost Revolution? Once an Underground Soapbox for Urban Youth, Hip Hop has Grown into a Commercial Industry More Focused on Personal Gain than Collective Upliftment. What Happened?" *Hues* Jul 31 1998: 42. *ProQuest*. Web. 13 Feb. 2013.

Bottero, Kevin. "Conscious Hip Hop in a Commercialized World." *Canadian Dimension* 42.4 (2008): 38-40. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 16 Apr. 2013.

Bradley, Adam, and Andrew Dubois, eds. *The Anthology of Rap*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 2011. Print.

Brandt, Deborah. "Sponsors of Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 49.2 (1998): 165-85. Print.

Hunter, Margaret, and Kathleen Soto. "Women of Color in Hip Hop: The Pornographic Gaze." *Race, Gender & Class* 16.1/2 (2009): 170-91. *Alternative Press Index*. Web. 13 Feb. 2013. Dyson, Michael Eric. *Know what I Mean?: Reflections on Hip-Hop*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2010. Print.

Rebollo-Gil, Guillermo, and Amanda Moras. "Black Women and Black Men in Hip Hop Music: Misogyny, Violence and the Negotiation of (White-Owned) Space." *Journal of Popular Culture* 45.1 (2012): 118-32. *FRANCIS*. Web. 16 Apr. 2013.

Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 1994. Print.

Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005. Print.

Wambu, Onyekachi. "Inner Vision: Afrocentric Blues; Is It the End of the Road for the Hip-Hop Revolution?" *The Voice*: 14. 2 Apr. 1996. *ProQuest*. Web. 13 Feb. 2013.

Whitburn, Joel. *Billboard Book of Top 40 R&B and Hip-Hop Hits*. New York: Billboard, 2005. Print.

Arelys Zamora

Arelys was born in Venezuela and moved to South Florida (where she was raised) at the age of six. In high school, she starred in many musicals, but also took an interest in the biological sciences. This interest led her to major in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Central Florida. During her first two years at UCF, she has been recognized on the President's Honor Roll and Dean's List. She has volunteered in the nursing unit and the surgical center at Florida Hospital of Altamonte. She is currently working in a biochemistry research laboratory at UCF as well as volunteering as an anatomy teaching assistant.