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# *Writer's Statement about "Rap Literacy: Its Devolution and a Means for Revival"*

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I do not consider myself a writer. I don't have the confidence to express myself with a pen and paper—but I had to take Composition II because it is required to graduate. When we were introduced to the idea of research in my class, I only had a very vague understanding. But I knew that this project was going to last the entire semester. If I was going to be doing research all semester, it might as well be something I would actually have a passion for. A few academic topics popped up in my head, but none of them made me really excited to learn about them. And then one night my boyfriend started blasting, "All Gold Everything," by Trinidad James, and I yelled at him, saying, "What the hell is this?! This is so stupid." He just laughed and continued playing it—as if it was a joke. And it got me thinking about my views on popular rap and if anyone else shared those views. But I've always loved rap music, why is it that I now groan in disgust at it? That is what sparked my idea on this research. But this topic seemed so ridiculous; no one would take it seriously—especially my professor. To my surprise, he encouraged it and told me to read some sources on the topic. I ended up finding an overwhelming amount of data on rap music! Another huge step I took to develop this project was choosing to construct a documentary-type film. Filming and editing is not easy—it is tedious and very time consuming, but the end-reward is extremely gratifying.

So it began: I started hard at work building up ideas and putting sources together. I got so excited about this project; I would spend hours reading and watching interviews of artists and scholars. And after reading enough articles I decided in what direction I wanted to take my research. None of the articles I read included the difference between what rap music started as and what it has become. So I did textual analysis on the lyrics of old and new popular rap songs. I also did video interviews and online surveys—any data I could get that would add to my project was good data!

I struggled the most during the discussion because I had so many ideas and claims but didn't know how to put it together in a way that my audience would understand. So when I met with my professor, he guided me into thinking about literacy sponsors and what it meant for rap music to be sponsored by big record companies. The change in music reflected the sponsorship it was receiving. That is what guided me to put together the discussion.

Overall, this project taught me the value of research. Research is not just googling something on the internet to find an answer—there is no answer in research, there is only evidence and more questions. It also allowed me to revisit my creative side among my studies in biomedical sciences. Researching this topic led me to discover new artists that have good messages to bring—it taught me how to be more open-minded but critical of the music I listen to. In retrospect, I learned more about myself during this project than I expected to—and that was what was most rewarding.