

Putting *Mano* to Music: The Mediation of Race in Brazilian Rap

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In this article I demonstrate how Brazilian hip-hop participants mediate marginality through discourses and practices of negritude. By taking a historical approach, I analyse the competitive processes with which São Paulo hip-hoppers articulate sound and story to a dynamic sense of personhood and social collectivity. The article contributes to general theories of music and identity as well as to the present literature on the “reterritorialization” of hip-hop culture throughout the contemporary world.

Keywords: Brazil; Hip-hop; Negritude; Historiography

if you pay attention to what is being said in rap music, then you’ll know that there is something wrong going on out there, because rap is reality.

(CC, a resident of FEBEM youth correctional facility and a student of hip-hop street dance, 1999)

“Reality” in the quote above indicates a complex set of conditions, including race, class, gender and geography, that hip-hoppers mediate through the use of narration and music. This process is one of performance and order as hip-hoppers profess a desire to transform “reality” by opposing *o sistema* (“the system”).¹ In this manner, local hip-hoppers emphasize the dynamic aspects of musical mediation, i.e. music not simply as a conduit for expression but also as a mode of representation through which performers can potentially change their sense of self and suggest alternative models of social stratification and value. In this article I focus on how hip-hop participants understand Brazilian society as a particular kind of racialization, one that

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motivates hip-hoppers to link sound and story to a dynamic sense of personhood and collectivity.

Hip-hop has been one of the most influential forms of cosmopolitan youth culture for the last decade. I use “culture” to refer to a set of practices which generates meaning and power for a dynamic group of people. “Culture” is what hip-hoppers do to comment on daily life or “reality” and in so doing create their own “system”. In general, hip-hop culture in Brazil is an ideology of representation and personhood positioned in relation to a cluster of primarily national hegemonic discourses and practices embodied in the following local terms: cordial society,² racial democracy,³ progress⁴ and poverty.

There are four basic elements to hip-hop, which act as areas of expression: rap music, DJ sound production, graffiti art and B-boy/girl or street dance.⁵ In Brazil, hip-hoppers are particularly aware of these four elements and stress their integration during performance rhetoric and informal conversation. The overwhelming majority of participants in Brazil are Afro-Brazilian teenage boys and young men from the shantytown suburbs,⁶ for whom style is emerging as a personal agenda. Through it, these young people conjoin individual maturity, expressive arts and empowering rhetorics of the self, community and social change. They commodify these practices and relations through their hip-hop products and make hip-hop culture in Brazil an effective social force.

In this article I focus primarily on rap music and draw from fieldwork experience and paradigmatic lyrical and sonic “texts” to take account of competing processes of mediation in the articulation of diasporic sensibility and general identity formation. I am wary of the fact that lyrical interpretation tends to decontextualize rap’s effective and affective meanings (Forman 2002, 40; Kelley 1997, 16–17; Schloss 2000, 40–4). Unless otherwise marked, phrases enclosed by quotation marks refer to either repeated conversation pieces in fieldwork or repeated parts of recorded lyrics. Simon Frith rightly warns that content analysts “treat lyrics too simply: the words of all songs are given equal value; their meaning is taken to be transparent” (Frith 1988, 107). However, it is my intention to analyse hip-hop critically by turning on the very banality they themselves employ. Informed by localized experience and post-fieldwork conversations with particularly reflective consultants, I aim to persuade the reader in a methodological and epistemological fashion not unlike so many São Paulo hip-hoppers. In São Paulo rappers propagate and create mantras that centre on collectivity and oppositionality. In academia, social scientists create and propagate mantras of representation and explanation. Hip-hoppers and I take turns in the iteration of the recognized essentials of hip-hop culture.

Furthermore, I historicize *negritude* and hip-hop in the Brazilian context into four “moments”. I connect hip-hop’s major narrative and aesthetic components to the long-standing overarching themes of *periferia* as a socio-geographical concept and *negritude* as a diasporic and potentially resistant racial discourse. I argue that such keywords become particularly salient upon consideration of the current divide in local hip-hop culture. Namely, over the past five years a new trend called “rap

positivo” has emerged within hip-hop and stands as an alternative to the more prevalent “*marginal*”⁷ hip-hop. I conclude the article with an analysis of “positive rap” in relation to *periferia* and *negritude*. It is in the present moment that hip-hoppers join blackness and universal spirituality in contradistinction to the extreme locality of *periferia* reality.

Race and Rap: Ethnomusicology Walks Gingerly

Understanding hip-hop’s constructions of “reality” gives key insights into persistent and unresolved issues of authenticity, especially as it relates to music and race. During 2002 an interesting debate occurred among members of the Society for Ethnomusicology list serve population concerning the definition and analytical value of terms such as “black music”. The positions taken during this virtual conversation reflect the recurring uncertainty about race as it relates to musical practice. As Philip Tagg explained almost 15 years ago, the musical content of what have been labelled “black”, “Afro-American” and “European” musics overlaps to such an extent that, as musicological tools of analysis, the labels are worthless. Yet, in my opinion, there are particular “articulations” of sound that practitioners uphold in musical communities as stylistic distinction. These articulations refer to social, historical and political objectives, thus making the music black. The legacy of “whiteness” as unmarked, especially in popular music performance and scholarship, motivates “other” performers to distinguish their performances as “black”, “Afro-Latin”, etc. In the US, these lines of demarcation are reinforced in media structures as music, culture and film channels continue to be organized along categories of race, e.g. BET (Black Entertainment Television) and Black Starz Movie Network. In reference to Tagg, Frith writes:

the difference in value judgments espoused by music analysts concerning African and European (and “derivative”) musics is still rooted in “ideology rather than musicology,” (Tagg 1989) that is racial formations in musical practices are understood less through musical principles as such and more via the uses of such principles.

(Frith 1996, 133)

Music, understood as a mode of human discourse, has always been intimately tied to theories of human difference and social hierarchy. Race has been fundamental to the “ontologies of music”, that is, the very conception of what music is (Radano and Bohlman 2000). Likewise, people have repeatedly used music to demonstrate hierarchical differences in human capabilities with regard to sound production and conceptualization.

The problem with race and music, whether silently presumed or explicitly deconstructed by consumers, critics or commodifiers, is that the fit never sits still (Potter 1999). Discourses of musical authenticity, which rest on racial arguments, are always a struggle because persuasion must come in matching cultural authority to biological essence. The leaps are too far and it is for this reason that ‘race and music’ necessarily implies ideology. Yet, scholarship, as has been well known for decades

now, cannot profess an end of ideology.⁸ Ideology is not the business solely of politicians and evangelical priests. Scholars are all invested in certain larger ideological formations through theory-making, pedagogy and other public activity. The danger lies in engaging in ideological arguments without reflection and debate.

To return to Tagg's observations concerning the weak hold musicology has on the representation of race in musical understanding and explanation, I would argue that musical principles of race involve ideological investments, because musicians, consumers, critics and recording engineers want certain social connections to manifest themselves in the process of musical exchange. Musicology and ideology should not converge on presumed evidence. For example, musicologists have used evidence of polyrhythm, call-and-response, and improvisation to support claims that a particular musical practice is essentially African and thus constitutes a matrix of black diasporic musicality (Tagg 1989, 288–92). Rather, reflexive musicology on race should concern the historical formations and pragmatic consequences of music as social acts. That is to say, productive analysis should consist of clarifying how participants connect a dynamic historicity of race, i.e. conceptualizations of the past and temporality, to current daily activities and collective organization processes through the expressive medium of music.

Negritude or blackness is a heterogeneous set of experiences, rememberings and styles that persons create, reinvent, repeat and put to sounds, words and moves. What makes it black is an aggregate of cultural particularities, such as the Brazilian formation of nation around the concept of *mestiçagem* (racial mixture), as well as translocal or cosmopolitan commonalities in general experience and contemporary imaginations of community. Blackness and music is part of what Carvalho termed a “mythopoetic” (1994, 187) articulation of identity and aesthetics within sound structures. While certainly not fixed or even predictably consistent, black music is a viable category because it translates personhood into an effective discourse. Black music, just as white music (though rarely named as such), does things; it reminds those who do not feel it already that race matters.

Bastardo, one of the rappers in the group SNJ (Somos Nós A Justiça: “We are justice”), explains his nickname:

Bastard is a shadowy form (*vulto*) that lingers importantly over history ever since slavery. Bastard is the experience of growing up in a fragmented family without a father figure. Without sponsorship, but with a warrior-like mother, I Bastard studied the dictionary, the book, and the Word [of God]. Bastard is the shadow of fortitude (*vulto*) who is here to cause controversy.

(SNJ 2000)

The SNJ rapper reinvents his name “bastard” to represent his view of Brazil's racial history from a critical perspective as opposed to a position of conventional celebration.

Hip-hop Culture and Racial Configurations in Brazil

Hip-hop culture in Brazil is a form of politics and pleasure, which reveals the solidarity (*união*) and the conflicts within the making of race and working-class blackness. As is the case throughout Latin America, in Brazil race is strongly associated with blackness while ethnicity indexes indigenous cultures and more recent immigrant communities.⁹ In São Paulo, a metropolitan area of over 17 million residents located in the south-eastern region of Brazil, blackness as a significant cultural concept emerged during the middle of the 20th century as massive waves of domestic migration from north to south occurred to provide a labour force for the intensified industrialization project. Consequently, new forms of urbanization and racialization took place as São Paulo emerged as an economic and cultural centre of Brazil and South America as a whole. In addition, the increased access to US, Caribbean, and West African social, cultural and artistic movements beginning in the late 1960s greatly influenced the manner in which Afro-Brazilians, particularly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, saw themselves and conceived of music-making.

The concept of *negritude* has taken hold in a number of diverse ways in urban Brazil over the past 30 years. The “fact of blackness”, to resituate Fanon’s famous phrase (1967, 109–40), is in its very utterance and conceptualization remarkable considering Brazil’s assimilationist society (Fontaine 1980, 133). Hip-hop culture stands at the centre of how black working-class persons apply *negritude* as individual attitude, collective philosophy, diasporic imagination and political strategy.

The “making of race” in hip-hop culture involves becoming *consciente* (conscious) and enjoying togetherness. While in the US scholars and rappers alike have argued that hip-hop’s rearticulation of the “ghetto” is a central and essential factor in the identity formation of “nigga” (Kelley 1994; McLaren 2000; Dyson 1993; Ice-T 1991; Spice-1 1993), in Brazil the centrality of *periferia* has influenced the currency of *preto*, *negro* (both meaning “black”) and more recently, *mano* (“brother”) as alternatives to traditional notions of blackness in Brazil. Part of the “making of *periferia*” involved a “blackening” of São Paulo during the mid-20th century as millions of domestic immigrants flocked to São Paulo from the north-east. In particular, the second and third generations began to blacken the São Paulo *periferias* culturally and aesthetically through consumption and performance. Urban Brazilians refer to this as *estilo black* (black style).¹⁰

One test to gauge the relative scope of race in hip-hop culture is to track how participants deploy race to signify more general situations of place and condition.¹¹ And, while significant groups within US hip-hop have succeeded in making such articulations through the term “nigga”, the expansion of race within Brazilian hip-hop culture is best depicted as a series of ebbs and flows.



Figure 1 Remnants of slave quarters on a fazenda (plantation). São Carlos, São Paulo State. Photo by Derek Pardue, April 2002.

Putting *Mano* to Music

The word *mano* (brother) is a ubiquitous term among hip-hoppers. It is the essence of hip-hop collectivity, a delicate and often misunderstood process of recuperating marginality into positivity. *Mano* as a concept works to transform the exclusion indexed in the above markers (“senzala” and “C. S. Mateus”) into a sense of inclusion and distinction. As a technique of thematic foreshadowing, I introduce my argument concerning *negritude* and music-making by historicizing one of the basic keywords of hip-hop culture in São Paulo.

The historicity (a collective sense or representation of history) of *mano* begins with Afro-Brazilian political activist Solano Trindade (1908–1974). My inquiry into *mano* emerged from a coincidental meeting with Nino Brown, a long-time fieldwork consultant and highly respected figure within both the soul/funk and hip-hop movements in the São Paulo metropolitan area, at a neighbourhood hip-hop event in the São Paulo industrial suburb of Diadema in July of 1999. On that day Nino was wearing a t-shirt with a picture of Solano Trindade on the front. He confessed that he knew little about Trindade other than a couple of his short poems and complained about the difficulties in gaining access to his literature. Nino quickly changed the topic to Eldridge Cleaver, since he had recently finished reading a translation of *Soul on Ice*.

Years before there were soul or funk movements in Brazil and decades before the concept of hip-hop proliferated through the *periferias* of São Paulo and Brasília,



Figure 2 Ubiquitous street sign pointing towards the East Side neighbourhood (C)idade (S)ão Mateus. Photo from De Menos Crime album, 1998.

Solano Trindade talked of *mano* as an achievement marked by difficult and tense negotiation. For Trindade, the Renaissance black activist from the north-eastern state of Pernambuco, whose texts cut into the eyes and ears of his audiences through a caustic language of reflection and critique, to circulate *mano* requires a labour of forging commonality and not simply assuming it.

What have you done brother (*mano*) to talk so much like that?
I planted sugarcane in the Northeast
And you brother, what have you done?
I planted cotton in the southern fields
For the blue-blooded men
Who paid for my labour
With whippings and lashings
That's enough, brother,
So that I don't cry, and you Ana
Tell me your life story
In the *senzala* in the *candomblé* spaces (*terreiro*)...¹²
Whoa black man!

Who was it who said
That we are not people?
Who was this demented soul,
who has eyes and doesn't see.

(Trindade, from "Conversa" 1961, 40–1)

The tone of Trindade appears 40 years later in the voice of pioneering hip-hopper Thaíde. Solano Trindade remains virtually unknown in the hip-hop community. Apparently, only those hip-hoppers who move in activist, scholarly or literary circles are aware of Trindade's importance. Here I assert a dialogue between Trindade and Thaíde, two leading figures of rhetoric and racialization in popular culture.

For me it's not enough to have a dominant [skin] color
No, no there's no way to escape what we are
Either you accept it or you're an eternal slave
Inside the bus, I'm gonna tell you one time
I confess I've had to count to three many a time to not go crazy
A black girl (*pretinha*) says to her friend:
Eeeee! Date a black guy (*preto*) never, not even as a joke. . .
I'm right in what I say
My intention to offend you
Step off! I'm too black for you

(Thaíde e DJ Hum, from "Sou negro D+ Pra Você", 2001)

Moments of Blackness in Hip-Hop: The "Ebbs and Flows" of *Negritude*

In this section I delineate four periods of rap music with respect to *negritude*. These moments refer to historical periods of discursive trends within rap music. Of course, there is significant overlap and there are exceptions within each *negritude* period. Through an informal periodization I show that *negritude* is dynamic in its formulation and I provide a more specific tracking of the force of the "racial democracy" ideology. The critical voices of rapper Thaíde and poet Trindade are rare and fall in and out of favour among hip-hoppers.

My analysis of the first two periods is based exclusively on documents (lyrics and recordings) and consultants' memories. For the final two periods I offer a perspective informed by personal experience in addition to consultants' remarks, and documents. In moments 3 and 4 I fold in more detailed explanation of the relationship between *negritude* and *periferia*.

Becoming "Informed": Early Efforts at Rap and Negritude (Moment 1)

Today hip-hop in Brazil is a form of mass culture with thousands of practitioners and millions of consumers.¹³ Hip-hop culture arrived in urban Brazil in the early 1980s. In particular, São Paulo and Brasília were the early centres of Brazilian hip-hop. As mentioned above, since the late 1960s diasporic cultural channels widened and intensified as a result of development in informational technology, especially with regard to media sources. These included cassettes, vinyl, magazines and Hollywood

movies. By 1990 Brazilian television had established MTV Brasil and by 1998 internet access had reached a level of functionality with regard to popular culture dissemination and consumption.

Consequently, urban Afro-Brazilians reckoned hip-hop culture as a contemporary link in the new Brazilian category of *estilo* and *cultura black* (black style and culture). While the first local, commercial recording of rap music in Brazil occurred in 1984 (Black Juniors, CBS), it was not until 1987 and 1988 that rappers and DJs joined forces with graffiti artists and B-boys to create a hip-hop “movement” with socially oriented objectives. Rappers in Brazil¹⁴ were known as *tagarelas* (babblers, yappers) in the early days, for they elaborated on the basic points of identification – the arrival of Brazilian hip-hop as well as “who you are and the place to be”.

In addition, the years of 1987 and 1988 were important in national history: 1988 marked the centennial celebration of the abolition of slavery. A great deal of literature, scholarly and popular, was published and the federal government and state agencies subsidized conferences, symposiums, cultural events and other public events to take account, at least rhetorically, of *o negro no Brasil* (the black man in Brazil).

Hip-hoppers began to establish a working infrastructure of performance venues and commercial production. Just as a decade earlier, when *periferia* nightclub managers hosted weekend parties featuring local funk and soul performance groups and dance troupes, a similar circuit emerged in the late 1980s with regard to hip-hop culture. Club managers employed a common strategy of sponsoring contests, which ultimately resulted in a series of vinyl compilation recordings.

The combination of hip-hop “attitude” and general style during this period of national remembering of abolition inspired some rappers to make their own inquiries into hip-hop as a form of *negritude*. Yet, hip-hop in Brazil has always upheld an ideal of *união* (unity) and most early hip-hoppers, as did most Brazilians, interpreted the centennial discussions as productive with regard to African heritage. The issues of racism or a race-first perspective on identity were overlooked in favour of “racial democracy”.

Rapper Thaíde began as a B-boy in the mid-1980s and later joined Humberto, his B-boy partner turned DJ Hum, as one of the pioneering hip-hop groups in Brazil. While Thaíde grew up in Cambuci and Vila Missionário, *periferia* neighbourhoods on the south side of São Paulo and DJ Hum came from a more middle-class neighbourhood of Mooca, the two came together as consistent B-boy performers in the downtown public space outside São Bento subway station.

In particular, Thaíde has consistently discussed Africanity as a constitutive part of hip-hop culture. In the excerpt below Thaíde includes deities from the Afro-Brazilian religion *candomblé* and refers to his own strength in the *candomblé* terminology of having a “closed body”. It is important to note, however, the change in Thaíde’s tone as the years progressed. In the early years Thaíde and DJ Hum were more conciliatory and tended to emphasize community-building and syncretism over direct critique as represented in “Negro D+ pra você” above.

For their part, Código 13, a group included on the first major rap compilation (1988) along with Thaíde e DJ Hum, and the Neps, a pioneering rap group from São Bernardo do Campo, demonstrate a more conventional perspective on hip-hop as a culture that includes the common knowledge of “racial democracy” as integral to *periferia* camaraderie. The lyrical excerpts from Código 13 and the Neps reveal that most rappers configured race in urban Brazil as essentially about mixture (*mistura*). The legacy of “racial democracy” is reinforced here as rappers reduce *negritude* to fate and victim status. *Negritude* thus loses any sort of traction as a self-sufficient discourse; it presumably exists as a temporary problem that *miscegenação* (“racial mixture”) ultimately will remedy.

With regard to sound production, the early rap DJs were not yet interested in signifyin(g)¹⁵ on local or cosmopolitan blackness. Early Brazilian rap contained no references to the great soul or funk stars of Tim Maia, Toni Tornado, Black Rio or even Gilberto Gil, the now world famous MPB (Popular Brazilian Music) artist who had popularized reggae and *samba rock* during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nor did early DJs and producers utilize much of international funk stars James Brown or Funkadelic and Parliament.

Instead, most early rap consisted of stripped-down beats from drum machines, occasional scratch sequences and unidentifiable bass lines. In rap music engineering technology influences the range of potential timbres for a particular song. This helps explain discernible differences in bass drum, snare and hi hat patterns between the two songs by Thaíde and DJ Hum. The timbre quality has increased exponentially over the past decade due to increased memory of sampling equipment. In addition, sound producers use software such as Acid, Sound Edit and Pro Tools to adjust a wide range of levels of the “original” sonic information with regard to pitch, attack, sustain, among other aspects and finally obtain a distinct sound.

Early Brazilian rap production reveals a gap in what would become a strong musical-ideological connection. By the mid-1990s hip-hop sound engineers explored and fine-tuned the crucial links between sound and idea as performers explicitly “designed” (Pardue *et al.* 2002) shantytown identities and diasporic imaginations. Due to a lack of resources and technological knowledge early Brazilian hip-hop producers rarely employed melodic samples, thereby leaving the rapper to provide the primary melodic contours of any particular song through his vocal rhetoric. The result was a limited presence of musical counterpoint and an underdeveloped sense of musico-cultural “signifyin(g)”. DJs in live performances and rap music producers in studio recording included samples as innocent “hooks”. For example, in “Corpo fechado” a sample of a child’s toy acts as the introductory melody from which Thaíde begins his rapping. Hip-hop was simply a nascent cultural form and producers treated it as, in fact, a novelty item. By contrast, in “Sou negro d+ pra você” a sample of a guitar with sound compressor or “wah wah” pedal effect provides the melody. DJ Hum, the main producer of all of Thaíde and DJ Hum’s later releases, demonstrates a sensitive ear for sample counterpoint, historical knowledge of soul and funk, and a rhythmic sensitivity in beat programming.

The demons protect me and so do the gods
 Ogum, Iemenjá and other saints as well¹⁶
 I've already told you my name
 My name is Thaíde
 My body is closed and repels all retaliation, Thaíde. . . .
 (Thaíde e DJ Hum, from "Corpo Fechado", 1988)

Everything that exists is inevitable
 Aggressive manners, dirty and heavy-handed
 Hip-hop style as it is called
 Blacks (*negros*) and whites on the same side
 [exchanging] ideas around the same topics
 Living in a mass-commodified world
 Watch out, you could be used
 Without knowing how or why it happens
 Just watch your back, disappear. . . .
 (Código 13, from "Código 13", 1988)

I want to live without discrimination
 Because the black man is a flower
 That emerges from the union of two strands
 What is called *miscegenação* ("miscegenation" or "racial mixture")
 That is why I say
 We are all brothers
 Forget the violence against the black skin
 Which shows the racism for he who seeks it. . . .
 (Neps, from "Ritmo Negro", 1991)

The first historical moment of hip-hop culture in Brazil (1987–1992) is characterized by a conventional critique of racism and celebration of racial mixture as part of the overarching discourse of *união* (unity). In the first historical moment of Brazilian rap music, *negritude* appeared only an inescapable fact of self. The very utterance of *negro* was significant as these young men attempted to articulate experiences of marginality to a new sense of collectivity in the form of a new "hip-hop movement". Yet it would take time before local hip-hoppers became *informados* ("informed") about what sort of identification processes and performative strategies were possible in hip-hop culture. Thaíde and other older hip-hoppers acknowledge the significance of differences in sound sampling, for example, as part of what they call *evolução* ("evolution"). This process of "improvement" entails a greater knowledge of "black" sounds and history as well as a gradual recognition that hip-hop performance is about *ficar sério* ("becoming serious").

Afro-centricity and Nation: Moving away from "Racial Democracy" (Moment 2)

The second historical moment of hip-hop development involves an expansion of the term "black" (left untranslated in Brazilian Portuguese) to include a greater and more

descriptive level of social critique. This period from 1992 to 1996 marks a relatively high level of consciousness symbolized in more systematic involvement with MNU (United Black Movement) and other black political groups in addition to a more acute sensibility to diaspora and Pan-Africanism.

Beyond the influence of the US hip-hop and notions of Black Power, Brazilian hip-hoppers engaged West and Southern African cultural identities. It is important to note that after 1980 the rate of immigration from Angola, Mozambique and Nigeria to São Paulo specifically increased significantly. Nigerians had begun to establish local, commercial strongholds in São Paulo's underground economy as well as important ties to local cultural institutions in areas of language (predominantly Yorubá), expressive arts and Afro-Brazilian religious practices. For their part, Angolans and Mozambicans looked towards Brazil as a relatively comfortable place in terms of language¹⁷ and a viable haven away from their homeland's civil wars. The majority of these immigrants dispersed into the suburban hinterlands of the São Paulo *periferia*.

Their influence was made manifest in the growing movement within hip-hop culture called *posses*, many of which included references to Bantu, Hausa, Zulu, Jamaica, Negritude, X and other Pan-African symbols. Posses are hip-hop social organizations, which vary in size from approximately 10 to 200 members. Posses act as cultural intermediaries between the neighbourhood and the various levels of government. Posses cultivate the formation of hip-hop performance groups as B-boys, rappers, DJs and graffiti artists exchange experiences and strategize to promote public events and effect social change in the *periferia*. Membership fluctuates usually in accordance with event schedules and ideological tendencies. The latter come to the fore in my discussion of Posse Hausa located in the industrial São Paulo suburb São Bernardo do Campo.

Structurally, initiatives of the departments of Culture and Education under the term of Mayor Luiza Erundina (PT – Workers' Party) from 1989 to 1992 laid an important support system for NGO and hip-hop posse work. In addition, a few recording compilations of the late 1980s sported names like Consciência Black ("Black consciousness"), volumes 1 (1989) and 2 (1991). This style of nomination was taken personally as dozens of black teenagers took on simply "black" as their name.¹⁸ In the following I contextualize the musical efforts of Posse Hausa, Posse Mente Zulu and mid-period recordings of Thaíde e DJ Hum.

In order to appreciate the second historical moment, one must recognize the significance of the MNU (Unified Black Movement). Brazilians have continuously organized themselves into groups of black militancy and race politics. Throughout the 20th century groups have invested in a number of projects revolving around the place of Brazil within the larger scope of Africanity and the place of Brazilians of African descent in the Brazilian nation-state.¹⁹ The MNU is important to understand in some detail, because it remains an organization of some influence on a sector of the São Paulo hip-hop community.

The MNU, originally named MNUCDR (The Unified Black Movement against Racial Discrimination), was founded on 18 June 1978 in response to a wave of police violence against blacks. In particular, the death of Robson Silveira da Luz, a black taxi driver, on 28 April served as a rally cry for the nascent organization. He was tortured to death in the 44th District Police Department in Guaianazes on the East Side of São Paulo municipality.

MNU members took advantage of the so-called *abertura* (“opening up”) period of Brazilian politics (1979–85) to organize “black consciousness” groups at the local level. According to Damasceno (1988), by 1987 there existed 138 organizations that identified themselves as part of the *movimento negro* in the state of São Paulo. However, the overwhelming majority of these groups were short-lived and suffered from an inability to connect with the black, working-class masses, whose interests they purported to represent. Especially in terms of providing popular forums of culture and community, the black political movement has had its difficulties in demonstrating any considerable amount of capital (Silva 1998, 107). As Andrews (1992, 169) summarizes, the “gap” between the middle-class militants and the poor and working-class blacks has been a common problem of “black consciousness” since the First Republic in Brazil.²⁰

The dispersal of black militancy into isolated pockets of the São Paulo *periferia* did not spell a disappearance or an end to activist *negritude* by the mid-1990s. Hip-hop posses in the São Paulo neighbourhood of Cidade Tiradentes have had a tradition of Marxist reading and organizational practices. In field conversations (1999), Ice-Boy, a member of Força Ativa and CEDECA hip-hop advocacy groups, explained to me that a number of rappers and DJs read Marx in order to grasp the “class struggle”. Interestingly, Ice-Boy argued that Marx’s own knowledge of class came from readings about African histories and forms of social organization. In this way, Ice-Boy attempted to link class with race as foundational to “consciousness” and to avoid the pitfalls of what rap group *Sistema Negro* (Black System) called the “mistake of sociologists who forget us”, i.e. class explains all social difference and power relations (*Sistema Negro* 1997). Similarly, in São Bernardo do Campo, there has been a tradition of community-based activism and labour union organization.²¹ This environment proved hospitable to the MNU and hip-hop culture and created a rare moment of working-class blackness engaged in political militancy, local community and diasporic aesthetics.

Posse Hausa

In São Bernardo do Campo, the Posse Hausa emerged from the events sponsored by the municipal department of culture during the early 1990s. The above excerpt from the Neps rap group (“moment 1”) comes from ABC Rap, a collection of rap lyrics published by a group of department officials and researchers. Activists circulated this book around São Bernardo and Posse Hausa members repeatedly recalled the

importance of “ABC Rap” events in the conception and realization of Posse Hausa (Borges 2001).

Posse Hausa was founded in April of 1993. In 1995, it consisted of 20 members at the time including performers from four rap groups, two graffiti artists and one B-boy. Nino Brown and Marquinhos Funky Soul presided over meetings, occasionally offering historical information about musical references and personal experience regarding negotiation with government agencies. Both Nino and Marquinhos were born in the state of Pernambuco in the north-east of Brazil in the early 1960s and migrated to the suburbs of São Paulo in the early 1970s. In fact, they exemplify a small but important sector of hip-hoppers, who represent the transition from earlier funk and soul musico-cultural movements in São Paulo to the present era of hip-hop.

When I first attended a Posse Hausa general meeting in December of 1995, I realized that there were multiple interests present among posse members. In part, these differences were cultivated through relations between members and the State, local community radio stations and the local chapter of the MNU. Such alliances would eventually lead to the fragmentation of Posse Hausa along ideological lines of representation and administration; however, for a few years Hausa hip-hoppers organized events jointly and proposed a more radical perspective on *negritude* together.²²

An important ally of Posse Hausa was the São Paulo-based rap group Posse Menté Zulu (“Zulu mind”), featuring the charismatic rapper Rappin’ Hood. The name “Zulu” refers to the first recognized hip-hop organization founded by Afrika Bambaataa in November of 1973 in the South Bronx of New York City. According to both Nino Brown and Rappin’ Hood, “zulu” connotes a warrior attitude, on which black and other subaltern resistance depends. Posse Menté Zulu was rare in that they were able to produce a CD recording with songs that emphasized diaspora, blackness and the trope of *quilombo*.²³ The following lyrical examples represent *negritude* in São Paulo rap. The first excerpt comes from Mira Direta (“Direct Aim”), a rap group of Posse Hausa organization.

Brazil, a divided country that others formed
and because they were white,
they think my people have to pay the bill.
Clowns.
We are the essence of this country, black women and black men are the essence of
Brazil. . .
A question mark on top of the black man’s head has been sighted. . .
questions without answers. . . .
These fights between whites and blacks.
They just remain in the category of “why?”
For over 400 years, no one knows how to respond. . . .
Stop, think, wake up, act. . . . With a strong will,
We can change all of this.

(Mira Direta, from “A supposed racial democracy”, 1996)

Most importantly, rappers from Mira Direta actively question racial unity as a problem not as an assumed position of fact. This marks a significant conceptual difference between historical moments 1 and 2. Mira Direta never recorded any of their music beyond a demo-tape format; however, they did perform quite extensively throughout São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema cities during the mid-1990s. During a commemoration event for the Posse Hausa organization in April of 1996 I caught their act.

Mira Direta's performance was effective and appreciated, because they demonstrated an important hip-hop style of the period. As Brazilian hip-hoppers considered themselves more "informed" about what hip-hop knowledge and performance entailed, they began to explore more into hip-hop aesthetics. By the mid-1990s many Brazilian rappers experimented with the high-speed rhetorical delivery akin to Das EFX or even early Busta Rhymes in the US balanced with an authoritative voice modelled on Chuck D from Public Enemy. The explosive and fast-paced sound production of The Bomb Squad (production team of Public Enemy) inspired mid-1990s hip-hoppers in São Paulo to become more animated in performance and *asumir* ("assume") a didactic posture of relating experience and showcasing knowledge. Mira Direta embodied this spirit as they screamed at the audience on that day in April to "stop, think, wake up, and act. . .with a strong will, we can change all of this."

For their part, Posse Mente Zulu recorded the song "Sou Negão" ("I'm [really] black"). They garnered important attention, but it would not be until 2001 when Rappin' Hood remixed and re-released the song as part of his first solo album that the song's popularity would contribute to a recent move to incorporate hip-hop into the national cultural canon along with *samba* and soccer.

Blacks!! We are black!!
 You can call me whatever you want, I don't care
 I'm not a rebel racist and I know that.
 I belong to an oppressed, resilient race
 That believes
 That there's still peace
 That smiles to life
 Who digs rap, samba, blues and more
 Afro-Brazilian culture [we] never give it up
 Be yourself, a black warrior
 Posse Mente Zulu!!!
 100% Black
 November 20th, we need to rethink it
 The freedom of blacks who have fought hard. . . .
 In the past it was funk, now it's rap.
 That's carrying the movement as "black"
 The legend is that only smiling blacks are nice
 But as Jorge Ben says, "blacks are beautiful"
 And because of all of this, we're here on point
 If y'all put down blacks, I'm not even hearing that.²⁴

(from "Sou Negão", Posse Mente Zulu, 1994, Rappin' Hood, 2001)

While he maintained the words in the two versions of “Sou Negão”, Rappin’ Hood, the leader and main rapper of Posse Mente Zulu, changed significantly the tone and context of the song. The more recent recording is part of a solo effort, in which Rappin’ Hood attempts to link his stories not only to São Paulo but to Brazil as a unified nation. He calls out places and people from many states of the republic; Rappin’ Hood includes various musical genres such as *samba*, MPB,²⁵ *reggae*²⁶ and *embolada*.²⁷ In addition, Rappin’ Hood consistently works *futebol* (soccer) as a metaphorical mine for introductory sound bites and sing-a-long refrains. I have argued elsewhere (Pardue 2002) that *futebol* is a powerful hegemonic formation in terms of Brazilian nationalism not only in the form of institution but more effectively in the form of discourse. Rappin’ Hood and others have recently invested greater efforts in linking hip-hop to *futebol* as a form of national culture and legitimate narration.

Futebol is not the only national frame involved in “Sou Negão”. As part of the 2001 version, respected *sambista* Leci Brandão from Rio de Janeiro introduces rap as a new “*partido*” and Rappin’ Hood as a new “*partideiro*”. These terms relate directly to *samba de partido*, an informal style of *samba* made famous by Bezerra da Silva and the group *Fundo de Quintal* in the early 1980s. The instrumentation of the “Sou Negão” is typical of *samba de partido alto* with the *cavaquinho* providing melodic, harmonic and finally settling into rhythmic support for the battery of percussion including *pandeiro*, *tam-tam* and *repique de mão*.²⁸ Rappin’ Hood, in fact, begins the song with a tribute to *samba* form Rio de Janeiro with a few verses of sung rhymes directed to the *malandros e pivedada dos morro* (“the hustlers and the little schemers in the shantytown hillsides”) with intermittent chanting by the instrumentalists of “rap ah, rap ah”.

All of this *samba* fanfare stands in significant contrast to the original version from 1994. Posse Mente Zulu then laid down a sparse “jazzy” groove with a sample of repeated piano chords moving from tonic to dominant providing both rhythm and a general pulse. The mild counterpoint can be heard in the strategic placement of the bass line and the bass drum pattern against the hi hat pattern and 1970s’ soul brass samples used during the refrain sections.

Posse Mente Zulu’s original sound production for “Sou Negão” reflects a general trend during the second historical moment. Hip-hop producers began to experiment more with the distinct timbre of *capoeira*, the Afro-Brazilian form of martial art, dance and ritual. In an unprecedented moment of Brazilian hip-hop, Thaíde and DJ Hum produced the song “Afro-brasileiro” (1996). In their attempts to articulate hip-hop identity to a complex set of histories and cultures indexed in the term “afro”, Thaíde and DJ Hum acknowledged both the fairly recent *negritude* of Rio/São Paulo soul movement (1970s and early 1980s) via the brass horn samples and the long-standing *negritude* of Brazilian slavery resistance by sampling the distinct sound of the *berimbau*, the characteristic instrument involved in *capoeira*. Two years prior, the rap group Potencial 3 from Diadema, another suburban city within the São

Paulo metropolitan area, produced an album using the *berimbau*. The introductory cut, “In3dução” frames the album and the group’s ideas as a ritual experience.

Caught between Death and Invisibility: Violence and Marginality (Moment 3)

The third historical moment (1996–9) emerged as part of the rising prominence of Racionais MCs, a group of three rappers and one DJ. The group first appeared during “moment 1” on the compilation vinyl release *Consciência Black* in 1988 with two songs “Pânico na Zona Sul” (Panic on the south side) and “Tempos Difíceis” (Hard times). Racionais members have historically emphasized their loyalty to the south and north sides of São Paulo, respectively. Their 1990 release *Holocausto Urbano* (“Urban Holocaust”) and 1993 album *Raio X do Brasil* (X-ray of Brazil) set the stage for their remarkable commercial success *Sobrevivendo no Inferno* in 1997. The 1997 release, literally translated as “Surviving in hell”, sold more than a million copies, which is indeed remarkable considering that Racionais MCs refused to appear on any mainstream media and did little formal promotion. Mano Brown, the enigmatic front man, became a *periferia* idol in part because he focused his stories on the extreme locality of shantytowns. He honed his considerable narrative skills to depict the *marginal* and the *crente*.²⁹ In addition, with the decline of posse and NGO influence, the São Paulo hip-hop community began to figure race as ultimately secondary to socio-geographical realities of the *periferia*. To some extent, *periferia* and the *marginal* have always been dominant in hip-hop, but during these years the shantytown report of violence and poverty (*denúncia*) became the unshakeable paradigm of hip-hop narratives. Hip-hoppers explained *negritude* as part of the banal nightmare that is “reality” and replaced a focus on Afro-centricity with brief qualifiers of discrimination, thus depicting blackness as a mere side-effect of the *sistema* (“system”).

The dominant faction within São Paulo hip-hop uses a “culture of violence” frame to make themselves and their concerns visible and recognizable. “Crime offers a language for expressing the feelings related to changes in the neighborhood, the city, and Brazilian society more generally” (Caldeira 2000, 31).³⁰ Hip-hoppers maintain the *marginal*, the historical figure ascribed to residents of Brazilian urban *periferias*, as the narrative protagonist and the aesthetic style of performance. Curiously, hip-hoppers seem to achieve resistance to stereotypes associated with the *marginal* by the general Brazilian population only through its very utterance. In my discussion of “moment 4” I analyse this in detail.

The ubiquity of talk intersects with social practice. As a proliferating discourse, talk about crime both tries to resolve fear and reproduce it (Caldeira 2000). In São Paulo hip-hop, rap’s central focus on crime and violence exposes the essential basis for *periferia* reality manifested in crime syndicates, police activity and the miseducation of *o povo* (the people). Violence and crime are results of living under the “system” in the *periferia*. To change the system requires a kind of violence that disrupts or, in common talk, “revolutionizes” normal social relations. Hip-hoppers express this

sentiment both in purely metaphorical terms by taking on individual or group names with “crime” (translations: Of Little Crime, Targets of the Law, Criminal Command, Point of Trafficking) or “violence” (translations: Verbal Violence, Rhythm Trauma) as part of the actual name. The explicit adoption of “criminal” is evident in everyday greetings among hip-hoppers. To call someone “*ladrão*” (thief) is not necessarily negative; in fact, it can be construed as positive and inclusive. In this way, Brazilian hip-hoppers’ use of *periferia* as a discourse of criminality is similar to US rhetorical tradition of recuperating derogatory terms of race. For example, US hip-hoppers have recuperated and popularized the terms “nigga”, “negro” and, in relation to the slander of equating African-Americans to animals, “dog”.

More commonly, rap groups and hip-hop cultural posses mark their “criminality” nominally in opposition or in relation to “the system” (translations: Rational System, Black System, Faction Anti-System). According to Bob Jay of local rap group RDM, “the *periferia* is totally affected by the system. . . . The system hides; the rhyme denounces” (Jay 2001). Even C. O. T. Fusão (Fusion of Original Concept in Triplicate), a so-called “positive rap” group, frequently refer to themselves as the “squadron of peace” (C. O. T. A Fusão 2002). Rather than trying to establish distance from discriminatory stereotypes, São Paulo hip-hoppers actually embrace them and emphasize an intimacy with criminality.

In the early 1990s the Racionais MCs invested greater effort in explicating daily life as “black drama”. At that time the rappers Mano Brown, Edi Rock and Ice Blue still experimented with *negritude* as a comparable force along with banal violence. In the early 1990s song “black drama” they juxtapose explicitly *o preto* and *negro* with both positive and negative connotations of violence; in *Sobrevivendo no Inferno* the term “negro” disappears and “*preto*” is reduced to just its assumed impoverished banality. In the hit song “Rapaz Comum” (Common kid), Racionais rapper Edi Rock tells a story in first person of a young man who experiences elevated anger and violent rage. He realizes that he and his situation of conflict are completely commonplace. Even his imagined death, like so many he has seen, is banal. The fact that he, just another “*preto*”, would end up in the cemetery is “serious” (*sério*) but mundane.

The sound production matches the banality of narrative. In “Rapaz Comum”, just as with much of Racionais MCs music, there are no catchy melodies or even attractive, bouncy bass lines. Rather, the group engineers an everyday soundscape through what I call “dramatic” composition. *Periferia* ubiquity is a drama of violence; therefore, many songs contain droning high pitches from synthesizers or repeated close-voiced piano chords to provide the feel of horror and impending tragedy. “Rapaz Comum” foregrounds a relatively high-pitched piano chord shot through with minor seconds, which occasionally and only fleetingly resolves after Edi Rock finishes a verse.

In rap production the rhythm section (drum and bass patterns) is normally the centre of the groove. This is the objective of sound engineering and along with the rapper’s voice the focus of audience participation. In “Rapaz Comum” it is not the refined timbre that shines through but rather a muddled but “quantized” groove.

Quantization refers to the process used by sound engineers of aligning rhythmic patterns of multiple tracks. This is a basic but debated topic of hip-hop production. Quantizing is basic because the sampled and/or digitally composed tracks must line up rhythmically to produce a cohesive unit. Quantizing is also quite variable and thus becomes part of production style. Too much quantizing gives the sound a robotic or overly mechanized quality. If the producer doesn't quantize at all, the sound appears messy or "off" – an aimless backdrop plodding through time.³¹

The musical orchestration translates the general feeling of urban life within the "system" of Brazilian society. The drum pattern is a basic rock sequence with the bass drum, snare and hi hat pattern consistent throughout the song. The bass line is almost indistinguishable by pitch; it rather acts as another line of rhythmic punctuation. The bass line acts as a relentless body blow, systematic and quotidian. Edi Rock accomplishes the main objective of the "marginal" hip-hop style in that he calls out the "system" and reveals its everyday innards. *Negritude* is neither particularly salient nor worthy of specific reference. It is simply an underlying fact of *periferia* misery.

Edi Rock has been particularly interested in this line of sound production. In a 2001 compilation *Movimento de Rua* (Atração Records), he produced the song "Não seja mais um pilantra" (Don't be just another scoundrel). The song has no melody to speak of and yet achieved popularity through a dramatic high-pitched drone combined with Edi Rock's deep, ominous voice.

The dominance of *periferia* or what I have called elsewhere the "marginal" aesthetic of São Paulo hip-hop (Pardue *et al.* 2002) limited the space for groups that a few years prior had had more influence and community resonance. In the following I narrate my memories of an event held in Diadema during July of 1999 featuring a female soul group, a B-boy crew from the countryside of São Paulo state and a former Posse Hausa Afro-centric rap group, Banzo Banto. This piece of ethnography demonstrates the extent to which *negritude* has been pushed aside within the general hip-hop imagination.

Remembering Diadema, São Paulo, 17 July 1999

I had been to Diadema many times to meet with Nino Brown and others at the Canhema Cultural Center, which later became the Casa da Cultura Hip-Hop or simply "a casa". The neighbourhood of Canhema is easily accessible by "trolley bus" departing from the southernmost subway station of Jabaquara. Yet, on this day I needed detailed directions to arrive in the right place. Sam from the rap group Banzo Banto patiently explained to me over the phone to ask the ticket taker (*cobrador*) on the "inter-urban" bus to notify me when the bus passed the second bakery on the way up the hill. This was the recognized landmark. "*Todo mundo conhece*" ("everyone knows this place"). I could then yank the chain and signal the bus driver to stop. "Cross the street and walk through the gas station to the other side and look down. Then you'll see it", he told me. Following

Sam's directions, I found myself with a bird's eye view of that day's place for hip-hop. On this gloomy and blustery Saturday afternoon, many adolescents from Jardim Paineiras and Vila Campanário, two adjacent neighbourhoods in the middle of the large periphery area of south-east São Paulo metropolitan area, gathered in the public park. One of the organizers of this particular event, Akan OADQ (acronym meaning "of African origin and directly descendant of the *quilombos*") described at length the profile of Jardim Paineiras. He summarized his depiction by stating that it is a "neighbourhood where blood and drugs run freely and often" (Akan 1999). A member of the postal service by trade, Akan has lived almost his entire life in Jardim Paineiras and believes that hip-hop culture is a way of self-affirmation and a road to a "better (life)" ("*tô no caminho procurando o melhor*"). As he prepped the modest crowd for the upcoming group Banzo Banto and the ensuing three-on-three basketball tournament, Akan reminds the audience:

It's like this. We need to transform our community, take on this attitude. Right? Enough complaining. You're unemployed, without a place to stay, look for alternatives. But where are you at? Pay attention to what's coming up next. I'll be out there with ya. Peace.

Levi, a representative of the Municipal Secretary of Culture from the city of São Paulo, who promotes various neighbourhood events every weekend throughout the metropolitan area, echoes Akan's sentiments: "Check it. The real deal is the following: peace, lots of peace. Violence for us ain't got nothing going for it. Dig? Without further adieu. . . .Banzo Banto." For their part, members Ketu and Honerê of the rap group Banzo Banto³² introduce themselves as "*caretas*" (squares, not hip) for not falling prey to drugs and senseless violence.

Despite the fact that throughout the show the whole park reeked of marijuana from seemingly invisible smokers, Banzo Banto and Akan continued to try to mobilize the crowd around keywords of nobility and fortitude within a common racial history as well as around the presumed benefits of following the path of self-education. Honerê performed a series of vinyl scratching and concluded his introduction to the song "A Era do Zumbi"³³ with bombastic finales reminiscent of the characteristic sounds of a few years prior at the height of Posse Hausa (i.e. "moment 2"). Banzo Banto had hoped to create an atmosphere of power and positive energy against the supposed apathy indicated by the marijuana. Summarizing Banzo Banto's message, "dope makes one a dope and hip-hop allows one to rise above and transform the 'periphery' into the 'centre' of black knowledge and subaltern pride".

It is not an easy crowd out there, as this event made clear. Many hip-hoppers complain that the majority of the *periferia* and even the hip-hop community itself are woefully "uninformed" and "alienated" from "reality". However, as is the case with most if not all cultural groups who utilize popular music in conjunction with social messages, participants in hip-hop culture in São Paulo take up a number of different and sometimes opposing positions with regard to how exactly the "reality" of

blackness and periphery should be represented in words, sounds and visual cues. Banzo Banto's performance of *negritude* appeared disconnected from the "reality" circulated by Racionais MCs. The significant difference lies in the fact that Racionais not only directly addresses the drug trafficking scene but also meticulously describes the rise and fall of *os neguinho servindo* ("the black pushers serving [the clientele]").

Leaving the Quebradas Behind? Positive Rap's Challenge to Periferia (Moment 4)

Finally, the present moment of hip-hop and *negritude* involves a competitive and creative struggle between the aesthetics and ethics of the "marginal" and the "positive" hip-hoppers. Differences between these two major tendencies manifest themselves in graphic, sonic and spatial dimensions. The common ground among "positive" hip-hoppers is the belief that denunciations of *periferia* daily life are not enough. They argue that hip-hop needs to provide concrete solutions beginning with sharper strategies of collectivity built on education and entertainment. In this section I discuss the various ways in which "positive" hip-hoppers seek discursively to leave the *periferia* behind.

For all their attempts to speak to the general human condition of suffering and enlightenment, "positive rappers" continue to depend on the specifics of São Paulo (sub)urban locality in the *quebradas* (neighbourhoods). However, "positive" hip-hoppers configure universalism in different manners and part of this difference involves the reckoning of *negritude*. *Negritude* has become a point of debate not only between "marginal" and "positive" hip-hop camps, but also among "positive" hip-hoppers. "Evangelical" rappers are those most active in the current recuperation of *negritude* as an empowering semiotic element, while other "positive" rappers hearken back to earlier eras of Brazilian hip-hop as a form of community and leisure.

The emphasis on *união* (unity) brings many contemporary "positive" hip-hoppers to a position of universalism, which signifies essentially an erasure of race. This is certainly the case with group *Sistema Racional* (Rational System), whose leader Fábio Féter claims to have coined the term *rap positivo* (Féter 2002). Fábio and I met during a community radio station interview in February of 2002. DJ Jair from Radio Everest on the east side of São Paulo had invited me to hang out during his Friday night hip-hop show. Fábio and I quickly became friends and met several times over the subsequent weeks to discuss his group's upcoming CD release, the Labour Party (PT) in his hometown of São Paulo suburb Santo André, musical composition and CD cover design. In fact, Fábio helped me administer the questionnaires used in a fieldwork project related to graphic design. He covered a series of music stores in the *galerias* (downtown malls) and I covered another set. When we met to exchange notes and collect the questionnaires, I noticed that few participants from his stack actually had answered the "social profile" question concerning "race". Fábio explained that there is only one race and that the question was bogus. This perspective appears to go with his idea of "positive" rap.

Groups such as Sistema Racional (Rational System) and Xis³⁴ understand “positive” as a general quality of life where entertainment and independent thought are the keys to restructuring the *periferia* into a harmless and palatable product for outside audiences. Sistema Racional reworked the legendary mantra “that’s the way it is” (*assim que é*) popularized by the west side group RZO into “it should be like this” (*é assim que tem que ser*) and, in so doing, at least rhetorically offered a “solution”. What the *periferia* should be like is a place where one can simply take a stroll around the block (“*dar um rolê*”) and stand on the corner (“*esquina*”)³⁵ in peace.

Sistema Racional erases race from their version of hip-hop and sharply criticizes popular Christianity as a group filled with opportunistic entrepreneurs. This latter point is explicitly demonstrated in the song “A Igreja do Sal” (The salt church), which is a play on the *Igreja Universal*, founded by Edir Macedo or, as satirized by Sistema Racional, *Pedir Mais Cedo* (“to ask [for money] quick and early”).

In some ways, this current sector of hip-hoppers revives the musical innocence of the early years of Brazilian rap outlined above under the category of “moment 1” but now for different reasons. Gone are the samples of everyday violence and criminality from the *quebradas* of the *periferia* so prevalent in “marginal” hip-hop. In their place, producers place occasional children’s voices in the case of Xis and rappers utilize clownish vocal styles for satirical purposes. In the song “Igreja do Sal” Sistema Racional couples a vocal imitation of church leaders’ authoritarian tones with a strategic use of church bell samples. In the title track to their first CD “É assim que tem que ser” Sistema Racional employs a high-pitched keyboard melody; however, in this context it works not to elicit melodrama but a playfulness of simply “*dar um rolê na quebrada com os manos*” (to take a swing around the block with the brothers). The significant difference in keyboard use between “marginal” and this brand of “positive” rap is that in the latter the keyboard is more melodic. Rather than sustained pitches of tension, the keyboard sounds often parallel the melodic contour of the voice or, as is more prevalent in “positive” rap, voices. In terms of composition, the keyboard-voice parallel stands as a common point within the “positive” group as “evangelical” rappers also utilize synthesized keyboards to complement harmonic singing, usually during refrain sections.

For many “positive” hip-hoppers departure from the *periferia* is primarily commercial. *Periferia* as a generative discourse is intended to expand and cross over into other entertainment circuits and markets. Yet, most positive rappers continue to feel a responsibility to include violence, crime and marginality in a significant percentage of their recorded material. In an interlude section of his CD, Xis literally answers reporters about whether or not his songs serve as a “defence for crime” (“*apologia ao crime*”). Xis employs a typical discourse of marginality in his response: “violence, violence is reality of the street, the nonsense of people starving to death, that is violence” (Xis 1999).

Even less commercially successful “positive” hip-hop artists find it difficult to break away from the semiotic formula of *periferia*. Over the course of 2002 I came to know Limonada, a fanzine publisher and rapper from São Bernardo do Campo. We

talked several times on his way to and from recording studios, radio stations and municipal government departments, as he balanced obligations to his rap group RU10 (United Races to the tenth degree), to his fanzines *Folhas de Atitude* (“Attitude pages”) and *Mente Poderoso* (“Powerful mind”) and to the organization of the annual São Bernardo hip-hop event.

During one morning on our way to a studio recording session, Limonada admitted that he felt pressure to include marginality on his CD, because, as he explained, “people still want to hear these stories” (Limonada 2002). Later, during the session, Limonada discussed with studio producer Fegato the song structure of “Mente Poderoso” (Powerful mind), an otherwise “positive” rap about human potential. Interestingly, he stressed the importance of musically highlighting the passage that includes the following phrase: “the crime scene is already set” (*a cena do crime está feito*). Limonada argued that the description of reality, as if it were a prefabricated crime scene, effectively provokes the listener into positive (re)action. Limited in resources and recording equipment, Limonada suggested the direct sampling of the descending keyboard line made famous in US rapper Coolio’s version of “Gangsta Paradise” (1995).³⁶ Ultimately, the drama and tragedy of reality’s “crime scene” are musically achieved as Limonada feels obliged to include typical *periferia* stories and recognizable sounds of everyday drama. Soon thereafter, Limonada succeeded in convincing a leading FM radio DJ, who is also one of the editors of the two major hip-hop magazines in São Paulo, to include “Mente Poderoso” on an upcoming compilation sponsored by the magazine *Planeta Hip-Hop* (May 2002).

There are differences, however, within self-proclaimed “positive” hip-hoppers on the place of race and *periferia* in music and collective identity. From a perspective quite different from that of Sistema Racional, Xis and Limonada, other “positive” hip-hoppers are, in fact, deeply involved with a number of popular Christian worship organizations. In my experience with hip-hoppers from this sub-group, a relatively high percentage of practitioners are of obvious African descent. In his work, John Burdick (1998a,b) details the disconnection between the *movimento negro* (black movement) in Rio de Janeiro and the black, working-class due to a misrecognition of the importance of Christianity in people’s lives. To simply discount devotees of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal religions on the basis of the historical ties between the Church and institutions of slavery or because of religion’s tendency to distract worshippers from the recognition of “reality”, i.e. conditions of exploitation, is to talk past a massive potential audience. The emerging school of “positive” hip-hoppers, as exemplified by the 7 Taças recording artists in São Paulo, attempts to connect hip-hop to *negritude* so as to reach that “lost constituency” (Burdick 1998a).

The Família 7 Taças (7 Chalices Family) expresses departure from the *periferia* in explicitly spatial and spiritual terms. Seven Chalices is a recording label directed by *Pregador Luo* (Preacher Luo) from the evangelical rap group *Apocalipse 16*. Part of the reason for their success comes from recent strategies utilized by contemporary popular Christian churches. These include opening up spaces of worship to popular music performance. Various groups from 7 Taças travel extensively throughout the

periferia thanks to invitations from church organizers. Based on biblical interpretation with the objective of personal salvation, 7 Taças rappers attempt to fade out the *periferia* by reducing the complexity of life to individual choice. The members approach representation as universal.

Narratives rarely mention specific place names as national landmarks substitute metropolitan neighbourhood “shout outs”. In addition, the banal sounds of the street, such as buses, gunshots, television sets and neighbourhood banter, are revealingly absent. In their place 7 Taças recordings privilege US-influenced contemporary R&B musical production and choral singing styles. Rappers such as Professor Pablo and Lito Atalaia utilize samples from orchestral European art music coupled with composed electronic music motifs in an effort to bring together the sacred and the secular, the past and the future. The prominent role of orchestral string samples in evangelical rap speaks to an underlying association made by producers and listeners between the sound of violins and cellos with religiosity and spirituality. For its part, the sounds of keyboard melodies, piano or guitar R&B chord progressions and specific sounds linked to computer use (i.e. error beeps and boings) work with the lyrics to create an aura of contemporary technology and a movement towards the future and ultimately resolution and salvation. Rather than a nostalgia for James Brown, the non-Christian domain of *candomblé* or even the overtly “African” semiotic cluster of *capoeira* and the *berimbau*, these “positive” hip-hoppers express *negritude* in a reworking of the sounds of R&B and gospel – a presumably logical point of musical contact between God and Afro-Brazilians.

“The keys to life [and death] are in your hands.” The imagination of leaving the *periferia* is more significant than physical departure. During a phone conversation, Pregador Luo emphasized the durability and resilience of imagination over the temporary nature of art and entertainment: “the music passes but ideas stay” (Pregador Luo 2002). Furthermore, Lito Atalaia, one of the solo artists in the 7 Taças family, dismisses material and space as ultimately unimportant. “Our hope is not here and not in anyone, [in] who [then]?” The constant development of a relationship with Jesus Christ removes the individual out of existing material conditions of violence and crime and into a potentially life-affirming place based on faith.

Members of the veteran posse *Aliança Negra* (Black Alliance) from the Cidade Tiradentes neighbourhood of São Paulo echoed this perspective. *Aliança Negra* is one of the oldest posses in Brazilian hip-hop, yet it was only in December of 2001 that I succeeded in making contact with them and visiting a monthly meeting. When I asked about the rise of evangelical rap, long-time member Elton replied that other genres have been relatively unsuccessful in “spreading information” and “conquering space.” “[This] has made it clearer than ever that God is the solution” (Elton 2001).

Unlike Sistema Racional, rappers from organizations such as 7 Taças explicitly link spirituality with *negritude*. In the following lyrical excerpt Professor Pablo uses a

discourse of faith amplified by an interesting mixture of violin and electric rock guitar motifs to relate his version of “reality” as a “black” collective one.

If someone messes with any black brother (*preto*)
 I think then they're messing with me
 Blacks united (*pretos unidos*) will never be defeated
 Much less so than other subdued races. . . .
 Whoever is black like me
 Gets disturbed by it all, it's all wack like that
 Look to the side and see a brother totally lost (*alienado*)
 Without a clue, without an idea
 About which side to be on
 But I hope our rhyme can help the cause
 My people live like this, moved by faith
 (Who's black like me knows the deal)
 We get beat down but stay on our feet
 (Who's black like me knows the deal)
 Whether one is man or woman
 (Who's black like me knows the deal). . .

(Professor Pablo, from “Quem é preto” [“Who is black”], 2002)

Whether “moved by faith” or willing to expand *união* (unity) into *revolução* (revolution), as other “positivists” such as local group Afro-Rude urge, hip-hoppers continue to struggle in the position *vis-à-vis* a now entrenched tradition of *periferia* narratives. Racionais MCs, Facção Central, along with dozens of other groups codified the popular phrase “*cada um cada um*” (every man for himself) as that which appears inescapable as part of “reality”. “Positivists” have reacted by framing hip-hop as ultimately race-blind entertainment, in the case of Sistema Racional, or by linking a more aggressive *negritude*, reminiscent of the mid-1990s, to a kind of spiritual unity. While Sistema Racional has enjoyed some commercial success and has garnered state sponsorship through municipal departments of culture, groups like Professor Pablo, Afro-Rude, Banzo Banto and even Thaíde and DJ Hum (now on separate career paths), two of São Paulo’s hip-hop pioneers, struggle for airtime.

Working *negritude*, as essential to hip-hop culture throughout its history in Brazil, has had its moments and has produced significant ties to political and community organizations. In addition, as Thaíde himself stated, *negritude* has become part of thousands of Afro-Brazilians’ “consciousness” due in great part to hip-hop culture. He sees this as a more important victory than any political party victory (Thaíde 2002).³⁷ I ultimately believe that the one durable legacy of *negritude* as articulated by hip-hoppers is to strongly associate terms of blackness in and of themselves with social critique. This, in my opinion, is a fundamental part of a productive Afro-centric perspective. The mechanisms of capitalism within the music industry provide a structure, albeit skewed towards hyperbole, for the circulation of social critique. Consequently, *negritude* becomes part of hip-hop’s cultural capital and thus contains value associated with knowledge and respect.

Conclusion

The “hip-hop nation” is not a homogenous set of styles, ideas and practices. An attention to mediation provides a better understanding of how social groups “locate” diaspora and “reterritorialize” cosmopolitan expressive forms (Mitchell 2001; Forman 2002). In São Paulo, Brazilian hip-hop involves the shifting axes of *negritude* and *periferia* as influential forces and inspirational palettes, with which participants tell their “reality” stories and sound out their “reality”-scapes.

To remember race and to reckon its significance has been a persistent dilemma in the formation and evaluation of Brazil as an operating nation-state.³⁸ Race is salient in this case, because hip-hop culture depends on blackness among other social qualities, e.g. *periferia* and *machismo*, for its recognized aesthetic and semiotic force. The extent to which mass mobilization occurs as part of an inquiry into contemporary practices of racism varies over time and regional space. Furthermore, the legacies of “racial democracy” continue to structure Brazilian hip-hop in its relation to *negritude*. In this article I have analysed São Paulo hip-hop’s *negritude* historically and systematically within a range of activities and conceptualizations that participants have appropriated from near and far and recreated locally.

My investigation into rap’s narrative strategies around *periferia* reveals that, while discourses of crime and violence are generative, they also reinforce historically grounded and systematically enacted structures of domination. The extent to which hip-hop practitioners are able to design a more empowering *periferia* through and beyond the mediation of marginality is not simply a theoretical issue of academia, but also constitutes one of the primary pragmatic issues of local hip-hop activists and intellectuals.

Following Fanon and others I have represented blackness as a formation. I have demonstrated that Brazilian hip-hoppers engage *negritude* not as a thing or an essential and static element unquestionably theirs, but one that demands inquiry or “information”. Brazilian hip-hoppers, perhaps more so than in any other place within the cosmopolitan topos of the “hip-hop nation”, reveal the complexity and plurality of race and music. In the case of Brazil, blackness, even among hip-hoppers, is often polemic. They have inherited a legacy of “racial democracy” and cultural *tropicalia* so that the mere utterance of blackness outside cultural nostalgia draws accusations of *gringo* imitation and racism itself. By considering *negritude* and hip-hop as historical formations, I have provided depth to identity politics. Furthermore, I have analysed how persons mediate, conduct and comment on social categories such as race through the production and performance of music. Again, these are not merely discursive projects as hip-hoppers actively concern themselves with whether or not their “putting *mano* to music” has had any lasting effect on the lives of *periferia* dwellers and on general conceptions of blackness in Brazil.

Notes

- [1] “The system” is yet another powerful but often vaguely defined term within hip-hop culture. Names of groups, posses, music titles, CD titles often contain an oppositional position to “o sistema” usually literally indicting the concept. For the MNU (United Black Movement), the “system” is a:

group of persons who are in control of society. In control of communication, production, industry, residential practices. The system is (re)constructed by the various levels of government and is institutionalized in places such as the (Catholic) Church, banks, property ownerships. The system is naturally inclined towards a “Catholic, white” perspective on morality and culture.

(MNU 1997)

- [2] The Brazilian historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, in his paradigmatic monograph *Raízes do Brasil* (Roots of Brazil, 1936), characterized Brazilian society as effective at the level of intimacy rather than at the institutional level. He argued that Brazilians operated at the personal level and it is here that the national archetype of the “cordial” man was born. Sixty years later *Folha de São Paulo*, one of the leading daily newspapers in São Paulo, published a series of articles and an edited volume (DataFolha, 1995) recuperating the theme of cordiality as the primary mark of Brazilian racism.
- [3] An understanding of “racial democracy” necessarily involves the work of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre:

the cross-breeding so widely practiced here corrected the social distance which otherwise would have remained enormous between plantation mansion and slave quarters. What the large-landholding, slaveowning monoculture produced in the way of aristocratization, dividing Brazilian society into classes of masters and slaves, with a piddling and insignificant middle section of freedmen sandwiched between the two antagonistic extremes, was in great part neutralized by miscegenation social effects. Indian and African women, at first, then mulatto women, the yallers, octoroons and so on, becoming the white master’s domestics, concubines and even legitimate wives, played a powerful role in Brazil’s social democratization.

(Freyre 1969 [1933], 34)

Gilberto Freyre must be read in the context of *fin de siècle* Brazil (1890–1920), a period in which Brazilian elites became fascinated with European theories of eugenics and racial purity. Educated at Columbia University, Freyre no doubt read and was influenced by Boas’ scholarship in physical anthropology during the 1890s with Native Americans that demonstrated that mixture had “a favorable effect upon the race” (Boas 1894 in Stocking 1968, 173). Brazil’s interpretation and reinscription of such racist theories at home would be the foundational steps in the ideology of “whitening”. In his efforts to affirm the importance of Africanity in the historical formation of the Brazilian nation, Freyre reinvented the African person and black culture as a “co-colonizing” force in Brazil, “with considerable acculturating influence over the Amerindian, who was less culturally developed than the African Negro” (Freyre 1976, 8). The occlusion of slavery and race-based oppression has been a popular strategy among Brazilian citizens in their attempts to make sense of Brazil as a distinct nation and society.

- [4] “Progress” in Brazil, as in most of Latin America, has historically referred to a host of value terms, such as modernity, modernization and civilization, with which citizens evaluate the status of the nation. For Brazilians, this is particularly salient, because “progress”, along with “order”, is one of the keywords of the slogan on the national flag (“*Ordem e progresso*”).
- [5] “Break dancing” is the recognized euphemism for hip-hop dance. In the mid-1980s break dancing became commercially successful through films such as *Breakin’* (1984). Many

- hip-hoppers in Brazil cite this film as one of the first contact points they had with hip-hop culture in general. It is important to note that other forms of dance, such as poppin' and lockin', which are significantly different from break in form and technique, are fundamental to understanding and performing hip-hop culture in Brazil. This is a point made clear to me by friend and consultant Marcelinho Back Spin in our conversations.
- [6] In Brazilian Portuguese "*suburbia*" refers almost exclusively to the increasingly expansive periphery neighbourhoods outside the downtown or *centro* of Brazilian cities throughout the nation. When I use "suburb" in this article I am referring to such areas, which are sometimes incorporated into the central municipality, e.g. Cidade Tiradentes as part of São Paulo, and sometimes part of another municipality, e.g. Vila Campanário as part of Diadema city in the São Paulo metro area. It is important to note that suburbs or the *periferia* house over 50% of the metropolitan populations in Brazil.
- [7] I borrow the word "marginal" directly from its usage in Brazilian Portuguese. Beyond its similar cognate meanings between English and Portuguese, "marginal" also connotes delinquency, criminality and violence. Furthermore, in the urban Brazilian context, "marginal" refers to the socio-geographical process regarding the making of *periferia* or shantytown suburbs as part of modern urbanization.
- [8] In the field of ethnomusicology, see Gourlay (1982) for an early statement on the implication of the academy in the perpetuation of racial othering through a new guise of liberal objectivity. In *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Radano and Bohlman state in their introduction that "these calls [for the 'end of ideology' in favour of 'cultural egalitarianism'], however laudable, also revealed a new kind of imperialism consistent with America's world dominance rarely entered into the reflections on the discipline's mission" (Radano and Bohlman 2000, 23).
- [9] In Brazil, recent "ethnicities" would include Japanese, South Korean, Chinese and Lebanese. With regard to race and ethnicity in Latin America, see Wade (1997) among others. The study of *brancos* (whites) or better *branquitude* (whiteness), as Kabengele Munanga once whimsically pondered (1990, 109), has received little systematic scholarship. "Studying whites" did appear briefly after the 1940 census was hailed as definitive evidence that indeed the Brazilian population was finally "whitening" and turning the corner towards "civilization" (see Deffontaines 1945). In addition, Norvell (1992) investigates the inherent instability of "whiteness" as utilized by intellectuals from 1928 to 1936. For the most part, whiteness has remained a silent and unproblematic partner of the "problem" of blackness. See Fernandes (1972), Piza (2000), Soares (2000) and Andrews (1988) among others.
- [10] See Silva (1998, 122–9).
- [11] Kelley points out that "nigga" often refers to a "condition rather than skin color or culture" within LA gangsta rap (Kelley 1994, 210). Thus, gangsta rappers, according to Kelley, "implicitly acknowledge the limitations of racial politics, including black middle-class reformism as well as black nationalism" (ibid.).
- [12] *Candomblé* is the syncretic religion, which combines Catholicism and polytheistic West African religions. As an "invented tradition" *candomblé* represents the mediation of slavery and colonialism in the form of a cosmological system. *Terreiro* refers to the space of *candomblé* worship.
- [13] While it is virtually impossible to calculate any sort of exact number of hip-hop practitioners or consumers, any cursory weekend visit to São Paulo's *periferia* reveals that hundreds of thousands of people consider themselves hip-hoppers in some fashion. Brazilian record sales, especially with regard to popular music, are notoriously inaccurate due to the rampant practice of music pirating. The most effective way to gauge the popularity of hip-hop culture in São Paulo is by sampling around the vast *periferia*. It is precisely this sense of fragmentation and dispersal of the *periferia* and hip-hop that frustrates so many hip-hoppers as they reflect

on the community and the movement. That aside, some statistics are worth quoting. In 1997, Racionais MCs' release *Sobrevivendo no Inferno* ("Surviving in hell") sold more than 1 million copies without any corporate marketing at all. Considering that the price of a CD is approximately 10% of a monthly minimum wage and that the majority of Racionais MCs' audience is from the poor, working classes (total monthly household income is equivalent to 3–5 minimum wage salaries per household, see Faria 2000), the figure of 1 million units sold is most certainly a fraction of total units sold via street vendors, etc. In addition, in 1995 I attended a public concert sponsored by MTV Brasil in commemoration of the death of Zumbi (see note 33), in which there were well over 300,000 people in attendance.

- [14] In this article I use São Paulo and Brazil interchangeably to describe and explain hip-hop culture, because São Paulo is presently the unquestionable centre of Brazilian hip-hop commercial and cultural production. In other words, São Paulo and Brazil have a metonymic relationship with regard to hip-hop cultural production.
- [15] I use the spelling "signifyin(g)" as a respectful gesture towards Gates (1988) and others who have transformed the verb "to signify" into a fundamental keyword in African-American (intended in the continental sense of the term not simply US) discursive performance. The main idea carried through in this article is that São Paulo hip-hoppers to varying extents reconfigure signs or, as Russell Potter phrases it, "mistake the meaning" (1995, 83–4). In this article I use "signifyin(g)" in a more limited sense of black cultural referencing rather than playful semiotic jocularly. The latter is the original sense of the term as demonstrated in the fable "The signifying monkey" (Gates 1988).
- [16] Within the deity system of *candomblé*, Ogum is the god of war and Iemenjá is the goddess of the sea.
- [17] Portuguese from Angola and Mozambique is much more akin to Portuguese from Portugal than Brazilian Portuguese. Linguistic differences are easily discernible in daily speech. Consequently, Brazilian Portuguese speakers mark these immigrants and native Portuguese speakers as other. Many *periferia* youth associate *periferia* Angolans and Mozambiques with the Afro-Brazilian religion of *candomblé* due to the formality of Portuguese from Portugal coupled with their relative dark skin. Frequently, young people refer to them as *preto velhos* ("old black men"), a recognized role within the religion, whether or not they actually participate or practise *candomblé*.
- [18] In addition to "black", many rappers and other hip-hoppers took on "brown" as a last name. The most well-known examples include: King Nino Brown, Mano Brown and Paulo Brown. The adoption of "brown" is a homage to the "godfather of soul" James Brown.
- [19] Research "nuclei" such as the IPCN (Research Institute of Black Cultures) founded in 1974 and the resulting Center for Studies of Brasil-Africa (1976) are important to note with regard to network formations between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Gonzalez and Hasenbalg 1982, 37–9). It is generally recognized that Rio was more active in black politics and culture. The pre-eminence of São Paulo in national hip-hop culture has in many ways been a mark of pride for racially "conscious" São Paulo hip-hoppers.
- [20] See also Moura (1994) and Fontaine (1985).
- [21] These include the organization of the DDR highway labour camps, Lula and the metal workers unions of the 1970s, and important community leaders in neighbourhoods like Jardim Beatriz near the centre square. This is where Nino Brown's father and grandfather-in-law combined community mobilization with issues of race and racial discrimination. In conversations about his neighbourhood, Nino, one of the most respected member of Brazilian hip-hop and an acting "elder statesman", showed great pride in pointing out these facts and directing my attention to his collection of media snippets about his in-laws' activism.
- [22] Posse Hausa unofficially disbanded for a time in 2000–2, but has recently returned to an active role within the hip-hop and São Bernardo community scene. In April of 2003 members

Nino and Guriz sent me a flyer advertising an event in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of Posse Hausa.

- [23] It is important to note that, unlike the US where hip-hoppers had already established a solid relationship with the recording industry and produced hundreds of CD releases by the mid-1990s, in Brazil the number of hip-hop recordings was staggering low. According to official reports, between 1986 and 1996 just over a hundred rap CDs were released, with 68 recordings in the peak years of 1992–4 (Silva 1998, 110). Therefore, the fact that a Posse Mente Zulu CD exists as of 1994 is itself significant.
- The word *quilombo* literally signifies a population or union. *Quilombos* were communities of runaway African and African-descent slaves. Presently, they are rural communities of Brazilians of predominantly African and African-indigenous descent, who, according to Article 68 in the Federal Constitution (1988), have been granted “definitive rights to possession” of the *quilombo* properties. The majority of these maroon havens were located in the north-east, but a significant portion was established in the state of São Paulo (south-eastern region of the country). The recognition of São Paulo as a significant locale for *quilombos* was recently documented under the auspices of the state governmental organ of justice and citizenship (see Andrade 1997)).
- [24] 20 November marks the day when the Afro-Brazilian historical icon Zumbi died (?–1695). Jorge Ben is a popular musician from Rio Soul Movement of the 1970s.
- [25] MPB (Popular Brazilian Music) became the overarching category to include popular music, which mixed *bossa nova* with rock and/or international popular musical trends (new wave, electronic music).
- [26] It is important to note that reggae in Brazil has a long tradition, especially in the northern state of Maranhão.
- [27] *Embolada* refers to a musical genre from the north-east of Brazil, in which performers improvise rhymes, often in couplets, over *coco* or *baião* rhythms (an eight-count pulse divided into three parts: 3-3-2) usually played on the *pandeiro* (hand percussion instrument similar in appearance to tambourine).
- [28] The *cavaquinho* is a small, guitar-like instrument with four metal strings. In *samba* the *cavaquinho* provides rhythmic and harmonic support. *Repique de mão* is a percussive instrument invented by practitioners of the most contemporary form of *samba* – *samba pagode*. Normally, the player lays the instrument horizontally across the lap and articulates basic underpinning rhythms with one hand (*mão*) on the base of the instrument while the other hand strikes the instrument head in more complicated and periodically improvisatory fashion. The *tam-tam* is played in a similar manner. The difference is pitch, with the *tam-tam* providing the low, bass pulse. In essence, the *tam-tam* substitutes for the more conventional *surdo* instrument.
- [29] *Crente* refers to the so-called “evangelical” believer belonging to one of the many contemporary popular, non-Catholic Christian religions in urban Brazil.
- [30] See also Da Matta (1993, 180–97).
- [31] In the US groups like Wu-Tang Clan are known for the lack of quantizing, yet, in their case, were able to become popular on a massive scale. My understanding of quantizing comes primarily from conversations with Black, member of rap group *Os Alquimistas* in São Bernardo do Campo, Jesse Brown, a local musician and sound engineer in Urbana, Illinois, and through reading Schloss (2000) and Théberge 1997.
- [32] Ketu and Honerè are names borrowed from one of the West African peoples located in Yorubaland in south-western Nigeria and south-central Dahomey (Benin) who constituted a significant percentage of the slave population in Brazil. This group has been associated with the *candomblé* religion in terms of possible West African origins (Béhague 1984, 222). The choice of the group name is also revealing. “Banzo” refers to a sorrowful nostalgia felt by recent African slaves in Brazil of their homeland. “Banto” is the name of a particular

- community located in what is today Angola, another significant point of Portuguese slave trade.
- [33] Zumbi was the charismatic leader of perhaps the most resistant *quilombo* community during the colonial period of Brazil. His battles against Portuguese military forces became legendary and Brazilians have transformed Zumbi into an icon for Afro-Brazilian pride and solidarity since the 1970s.
- [34] “Xis” is the phonemic spelling of the letter “X” in Portuguese. It is pronounced “sheece”.
- [35] Xis had his biggest success with the song “De Esquina”. Originally released in 1997 on a compilation produced by legendary DJ Hum (partner of rapper Thaíde), the song garnered much attention. Years later in 2001 the alternative MPB (Brazilian Popular Music) star Cássia Eller included a version of the song with Xis on her widely acclaimed acoustic, “unplugged” album. The appeal of the song rests on the desire created in the narrative, which combines the street action (*movimento da rua*) with being “deliriously paranoid” (*paranoia delirante*). Yet, there is almost no mention of danger. The scene and the meaning are all under control as seen through the eyes of the *periferia* flâneur “in peace” (*na paz*). In his work on US rap Forman discusses the corner as a metaphorical power point of “street knowledge.” It is celebrated by hip-hop culture and willingly forgotten by an older generation as a horrible reminder (Forman 2002, 127–8).
- [36] Coolio’s “Gangsta Paradise” (Tommy Boy, 1995) was a hip-hop rendition of Stevie Wonder’s “Pastime paradise”.
- [37] In 2002, Rio de Janeiro rapper MV Bill along with his colleague and manager Celso Athayde launched a campaign for a new political party called PMDPPR (Power to the Majority, the Black People), which limits membership to an ambiguous definition of blackness. Their integration with various communities in the *periferia* of Rio has been important in the establishment of libraries and alternative education projects. However, hip-hoppers such as Thaíde see some of the practices as unproductive and, for this reason, believe that *negritude* is more about “consciousness” rather than “politics”.
- [38] Andrews (1992) sketches out the dynamics (the “highs and lows”) of black protest in São Paulo from the 1860s to the 1980s. His emphasis on black agency is important in diverting the stories of social changes away from governmental grants to popular demands. Balancing his focus between black political organizations and elite-oriented governmental administrations, Andrews identifies four particularly revealing moments of black activism: 1) the decades leading up to abolition in 1888 *vis-à-vis* the *caifazes* (abolition agitators) as a “high” moment; 2) the *belle époque* and most of the First Republic period (1889–1925) as a “low” moment due to the expansion of “whitening” theories undergirded by social Darwinism, incentives for “white” European immigration and limitations of suffrage; 3) the interim period between dictatorships (1945–64), in which political parties provided more access to political participation in general and thus blackness became relegated to “cultural” activities (theatre, literature, art); and, finally, 4) the *abertura* (“opening”) in the latter years of the military dictatorship (1964–1985). The *abertura* began politically with the “party reform” legislation of 1979, which permitted the existence of more than one oppositional party.

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