

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„The Evolution of Hip-Hop in Post-Katrina New
Orleans.“

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2016 / Vienna 2016

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

A 066 836

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Musikwissenschaft UG2002

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Michele Calella

To my mom, for teaching me that everything is possible if you just work hard enough. Thank you for all your support. Dear Katie, thank you for traveling to New Orleans with me and helping me with the writing of this thesis. You've inspired in more ways than you can possibly imagine. Kati—it's been one hell of a ride and I loved spending it with you.

Laissons les bons temps rouler.

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1. Introduction

In August of 2015, the people of New Orleans commemorated the 10th anniversary of the near destruction of their city by Hurricane Katrina. When the category 5 hurricane hit the South of the United States that late August, it caused over 1,800 fatalities and displaced over 1.2 million people. They were scattered all over the country, temporarily living in different cities or states, many miles away from their now flooded homes. While they sought refuge, their belongings washed away and everything they had built up for themselves was destroyed. They had no idea when or if they would be able to return.

In the wake of Katrina many of these victims were confronted with inequality and discrimination, adding to this natural disaster an additional man-made one. This will be thoroughly expounded on in a later chapter, which examines the numerous decisions of the local and federal government and discusses who is to blame and what could have or should have been done differently. However, it is indisputable that the people of the Gulf Coast suffered a collective trauma, with its aftermath exposing them to a combination of unemployment and homelessness, leaving them stranded like refugees in their own home country. This symbolic figure of the Refugee will become an important link during the course of this paper; its meaning and the debatably wrongful use of it under these circumstances will be discussed.

Not only does this situation have an impact the people, their belongings and the place they inhabit, but also on the intellectual and cultural property of said place.

The southern states are known for their vibrant distinctiveness, be it linguistically, culinarily or musically. The thriving culture of a state like Louisiana and its hospitality is what makes it stand out from all the other parts of the U.S. and has well contributed to its popularity.

After desegregation in the 1960s, large parts of the white population of New Orleans moved to the suburbs (“white flight”) and along with them vanished a large portion of the commerce. Adding to this, after the oil bust of the 1980s, which hit the Louisiana economy quite hard, the city lost most of its port business, leaving tourism to be the main source of income for the city (Le Menestrel & Henry, 2010: 187). With the

introduction of jazz music into mainstream American culture and the growing interest in both Mardi Gras traditions, New Orleans' brass bands and Second Lines, music shifted from being merely a part of the normal Louisiana culture to becoming the focus of tourism and the primary reason why people from all over the world came to visit New Orleans. But what happens when these cultural forms are hit by a natural disaster? They initially emerged from people of different descent expressing themselves and their traditions, but who is expected to keep them alive once these people are displaced? Can this "joie de vivre" that is attributed to the city of New Orleans recover from such a drastic setback? How can this intangible culture be restored?

Although large parts of the south were affected by the storm and the damage it caused, in the following chapters, the focus will lie mostly on New Orleans-based culture, music and artists.

The 10th anniversary of the catastrophe has brought the subject back into prominence, discussing the reconstruction and repopulation of the city. Newspapers have been listing higher numbers of employment and housing possibilities; politicians have been showing charts displaying the re-emergence of small business owners. All of these factors are absolutely essential for the successful repopulation of the city; however, folklorist and anthropology professor Nick Spitzer argues that, to a city like New Orleans, the culture itself functions as the major reason for the people's return and the city's recovery (Spitzer, 2011). Its artists and music industry professionals, such as club owners and producers, had been sent into a temporary diaspora, all of whom form the heart of the New Orleans' musical culture. Their scattering however, disrupted not only their lives but also their music, bringing it to a temporary halt. In the months and years that have followed the flooding, some of them have returned, but many have not. Those who have most certainly lost their instruments, their recording studios and/or their compositions.

Will these factors prevent them from making music again? Will the heart of New Orleans music, although it may never completely recover, beat again?

Within the large range of musical genres New Orleans has to offer, I've decided to focus my thesis on bounce, the local hip-hop music genre leading to the following research question:

Bouncin' back from hurricane Katrina: (How) did the New Orleans hip-hop scene react to and recover from the 2005 disaster and how can it ever be the same?

1.1 Why Hip-Hop? Why New Orleans?

Hip-hop is a culture of its own that first emerged in the late 1970s as a conglomerate of different influences, primarily acting as an outlet for a specific class or race of people. However, it soon reached a global popularity amongst the entire United States that went far beyond what the perennial naysayers initially expected. Due to the exponential growth of the genre's international appreciation and its longevity, hip-hop has become a pop culture phenomenon, which can be accessed and comprehended by people of any background. The superficiality and the fast-moving nature that is often attributed to the different genres of popular music does not apply to hip-hop, as is proven amongst other things by its authenticity and its omnipresence in popular music for almost four decades now. The dissemination of this culture across continents provides different people a platform of identification and projection, most likely adding to this attraction for scholars to study the genre and push it to a 'higher' level: the level of academia.

Over the last few decades, the importance of popular music in academia has grown to such an extent, that it is recognized as a field of study of the same importance as any other sub-categorization of musicology. It has gained a certain amount of intellectual credibility such that universities and other higher education institutions not only offer individual classes on the subject of popular music but it has also become a serious research area and has gained a lot of respect from its initial skeptics. The same development can be observed in hip-hop: in 2002, more than 30 campuses across the U.S., including Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Stanford and the University of

Pennsylvania, offered classes on the music genre and its corresponding three elements: breakdancing, graffiti and deejaying (Ashford, 2002).

What makes hip-hop such a fascinating topic to study is not just the historical and social context it comes from, but also the diversity that lies within the genre. The idiosyncrasy of its locality is what perhaps sets hip-hop apart from other music genres. A downright hip-hop diaspora arises from the aforementioned quality that people of any origin can identify themselves with it. They appropriate it and adapt it to their place and their own cultural identity. This evidently leads to regional stylistic distinctions such as variations in vocal style and vernacular language, the scope of the performance and dance, regional differences between beats etc. (Forman, 2000: 73). Hence the New Orleans local hip-hop genre “bounce music” has its own distinctiveness, maintaining strong local allegiances, which is portrayed among others through the lyrics. This will be further discussed in section 3 of this paper.

This research grew out of a long interest in popular music, more specifically the hip-hop genre. While doing undergraduate research on hip-hop and politics, the focus lying on the social consciousness of the genre, it was impossible to overlook the reaction of hip-hop artists on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The chaos that was brought upon the city and its residents has both intrigued and inspired many scholars to study and write about the subject of its cultural forms post-Katrina, with an important emphasis on the music scene in general. Various articles have been published focusing on the return and production of music from New Orleans’ Jazz artists, such as *Allen Toussaint*, *Dr. John* or Soul singer *Irma Thomas*. They elaborate on how the venues reopened, first shows were played and how annual festivals were being held despite everything they had been through. This is, however, not surprising with Jazz being the city’s number one export product (Piazza, 2005).

Another important event was the one of the first post-Katrina Second Line. Several articles can be found on the return of (parts of) the Brass Bands, playing the first postdiluvian parade, people joining in and dancing in Second Line (Watts & Porter, 2013: 59). Other journalists cover the Mardi Gras tradition, its parades, its music and the exceptional state the city is in during the festivities and how

they managed to follow through with it only six months after Katrina washed away all the instruments, costumes and relics (Abrahams, 2006).

All of these topics have been thoroughly covered with good reason. Nevertheless it is undeniable that the evolution of New Orleans' hip-hop over the last decade, and post-diluvial bounce more specifically, need to be discussed just as extensively and will be equally relevant and meaningful to the broader subject. This includes the development of the genre given the circumstances and the obstacles it had to overcome during and after Katrina. We will find examples in the lyrics and the music of both local and national artists advocating for the victims. Through their recordings, they seem to be giving the evacuees a voice and speaking up for them against the injustice they had borne. These artists address the forced migration along with its unnecessary suffering of the African-American population of New Orleans, using their celebrity status and popularity to bring the subject into prominence and shed light on the actual events without euphemizing or "sugarcoating" it (Kish, 2009: 677).

This is most certainly not the first time that music is used as an outlet for people in need of coping with the distress of sudden loss and dislocation. However, it can be perceived that post-Katrina hip-hop as the most authentic voice in this particular context because of its close relation to the affected audience: many of the artists were born and raised in the neighborhoods that were hit the hardest, some of them still living there. Just like the people stranded in the New Orleans Superdome or the Convention Centre or the roofs of their own houses for days until they were rescued, these rappers lost their belongings and their homes, making their Katrina-themed music all the more credible.

1.2 Current State of Research

As stated prior, most of the research on the music of New Orleans post-Katrina has been focusing on other, more prominent and canonized genres. With the emergence of hip-hop in academia, scholars have started showing interest in the genres' local variations, writing about broader, regional subjects like hip-hop in the South in

general or more specifically studying a particular sub-genre like bounce. Currently, there are a handful of scholars that have a focus on bounce in general, some of them emphasizing the development and history, others on the music itself and the performance practice, and still others devote themselves to more sociocultural aspects of the genre such as gender roles or the audience's participation in the music.

All of these subjects have been studied over the last twenty years and most of the authors either included a chapter on the life-changing incident and its aftermath in newer publications or covered the topic in an entirely different article.

1.2.1 Resources and Methods

The material published on New Orleans' hip-hop consists in a great part in newspaper articles, mostly from the exceptional and thorough coverage in the Times-Picayune, a local newspaper. Other journalistic articles are from national newspapers and periodicals, primarily from the United States.

The more extensive academic publications analyzed here were either entire books or collections of papers on the same topic published in one book. The shorter ones were either articles in periodicals on popular music or research papers and dissertations from scholars mostly from the U.S.

Additionally, I've consulted peer-reviewed journals, websites, blogs and documentaries on the subject, as well as videos of performances and interviews. I have analyzed songs, both lyrically and musically, from which I have drawn comparisons or parallels. I was also inspired by the TV series "Treme" on the post-Katrina music scene, which, though it involves fictional characters, gives a realistic portrayal of the city's culture that is enhanced by the presence of real New Orleans artists. Most of the media sources, such as music, photos and filmed interviews and concerts can be found online in the digital archive of New Orleans hip-hop and bounce music, which I devoted an entire subsection to at the end of this thesis.

The objective of this paper is to first introduce the reader to the sub-genre as such and later on focus on the research question, combining and critically reflecting on the publications (both academic and journalistic) while giving relevant insights on the

matter through a gathering of new material. The goal is to offer a new and more importantly a current perspective on the subject, creating a relevant piece of work accessible to and comprehensible for musicologists outside of the U.S. who might not be as familiar with the genre, exposing it to a larger, international audience.

2. Theoretical Overview

This chapter gives a short overview and elaborates on several examples of socially conscious hip-hop in order to fully comprehend the further elaborations on the subject and create parallels between past and present topics. Considering the research question of this paper, the focus will lie more on those moments and events, groups and songs that were either socially or politically relevant for the genre. This implies, that some subgenres or even entire collectives will not be part of this chapter. I want to clarify in advance that this is mere a glimpse of the actual history of hip-hop. I will not be able to do all the pioneers and icons of the genre justice and individually name them, however important and crucial to the evolution of hip-hop they were/are.

2.1 Emergence and Development of Hip-Hop in the late 1970s and 1980s

First and foremost it is important to establish the difference between hip-hop and rap: although widely considered a synonym for rap music, hip-hop is actually the name of a cultural movement. Rapping or MCing is one of four elements that hip-hop is constituted of, along with deejaying, breakdancing/B-Boying and graffiti painting. Thus, the hip-hop genre combines these four forms of art.

It originated in the late 1970s in the South Bronx of New York City, which was mostly populated by working-class African Americans living in an economically depressed time. The Bronx was a perfect example of living with the consequences of the transformation of a post-Fordism economy. The flight of the “new black middle-class” combined with the ever-present racism of the white population only intensified this marginalization, abandoning them to their fate and having them excluded both spatially and materialistically. Exactly this kind of injustice, this exclusion within cities by a dominating culture, is what hip-hop declares war on in all of its art forms (Scharenberg, 2001: 245f).

Having seen into the social context of hip-hop, I want to take a closer look at the history of its musical origins. The birth of a music genre is a long process. It slowly emerges from the underground and evolves from other different genres and influences. The same can be said for hip-hop, however it is said to have had one forefather in particular, who was amongst the first deejays to create a new sound that no-one had ever heard before. His name was *DJ Kool Herc*, originally from Jamaica, who moved to the Bronx with his family in the late 1960s (Chang, 2007: 73). He started out playing at school parties, using his father's sound system, entertaining mostly young high school kids, who could not get into clubs.

Although many discos were closing down and house parties were declining because of gang activities making them unsafe, this did not affect *Kool Herc*'s rise: with the growth of his popularity, he started playing regular parties and was able to build a loyal following which actuated him to organize a free party on his block in the summer of 1974 (Chang, 2007: 77f.). He took his sound system outside and played for people of all ages. These block parties were supposed to represent a good, carefree time, keeping the kids from the street and out of gangs.

While playing his records, waiting for one song to end and the next to start, he watched the dancers, studied their behavior and noticed, that they were all waiting for a particular part of the song to "get down to" and dance more wildly and freely than to the rest of the song. This would always happen during the instrumental breaks of a song, when the rhythm would become the most important element of the music, blocking out the melody and the lyrics. Eventually he would choose his songs by the power of their break and thus developed his signature sound. To stimulate the dancers, he isolated and extended those break beats and created a continuous flow by using two turntables, moving the needle from one turntable back to the start of the break while the other kept on playing (Chang, 2007: 78f). By sliding the record back and forth under the needle, he created the rhythmic effect called "scratching".

We should always keep in mind that these techniques were used by many of *Herc*'s fellow deejays; that their development was a collective effort. Another popular technique called "sampling" was to use short passages of other songs often from very different genres such as funk, soul or jazz. It can be viewed as a tribute to the original song/artist.

Through the creation of this cultural movement gangs turned into little area crews who focused on music, be it deejaying or breakdancing. They would all meet at *Kool Herc's* block parties to compete against each other. Of course, these outside events respectively could have become a breeding ground for trouble and fights, however *Herc* somehow had control over his crowd and earned their respect by “skillfully working the mic” (Chang, 2007: 80) and by threatening to stop playing at the first disturbance or discrepancy. He would also comment on familiar faces in the crowd or throw spoken interjections over records like introducing the song with spontaneous rhymes. This can be seen as an early form of rapping and was further carried out and expanded by MCs (Masters of Ceremony) who introduced and supported the deejay on stage. However, their commentaries differed from a deejay's expertise to short personal anecdotes (Blanchard, 1999: 1). This communication between the deejay/MC and the audience is still essential to rap music and its subgenres. It creates a bond between them, which reinforces their relationship and the mutual respect that comes with it.

DJ Kool Herc was followed and imitated by many new deejays, creating a breeding ground for a new youth culture that had risen around his music and performance practice. His concept of stripping down the music to its most powerful and basic element by focusing on what the audience wanted to hear and dance to, turned him into a pioneer of the hip-hop genre. While most of these artists were achieving geographically limited successes, the *Sugarhill Gang* was the first hip-hop group to release a nationwide commercially successful rap-song in 1979 with “Rapper's Delight” (Chang, 2007: 130). Before that, MCs recorded their music mostly illegally to tapes and sold their mixtapes on their own initiative. “Rapper's Delight” however was recorded and released on vinyl by a record label, and sold millions of copies in record stores all over the country, bringing hip-hop into focus of the music business as an economically profitable genre (Chang, 2007: 132). From here on, many other rappers who had been making music before the success of the *Sugarhill Gang*, were able to sign record deals that permitted their music to be distributed nationally reaching a much larger audience.

One of these artists was *Afrika Bambaataa* who became the first locally politically engaged deejay. As a former warlord of the Black Spades, one of the largest gangs in the Bronx, he was well aware of the vicious cycle of drugs and violence. Therefore he wanted to use his leadership ability and his musical skills to campaign for a peaceful coexistence and a positive message. In the course of these events, he started a peaceful collective as an alternative to the gangs: the Zulu Nation. Zulu Nation did attach great importance to the notion of competition, but only within the creative disciplines of the young hip-hop culture such as deejaying, breakdancing, graffitiing and MCing. His aim was to reach as many followers as possible to lead them away from criminality towards their own cultural identity, from which they could gain self-confidence (Chang, 2007: 89ff). The name “Zulu Nation” derives from the largest ethnic group from South Africa, who fought against the oppression of the British colonial rulers, establishing this to be an explicitly African-American matter and providing its followers with an African-American pride (Chang, 2007: 93ff).

The third person to complete the “trinity of hip-hop music”—as Chang named them in his history of hip-hop—is *Grandmaster Flash*. With “The Message” *Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five* created a form of rap that could be used as a powerful African American medium of resistance. The last verse addresses the vicious circle of segregation, poor education, unemployment, criminality, drug abuse and the despair that comes with all this.

You'll grow in the ghetto living second-rate
And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate
The places you play and where you stay
Looks like one great big alleyway
You'll admire all the number-book takers
Thugs, pimps and pushers and the big money-makers
Driving big cars, spending twenties and tens
And you'll wanna grow up to be just like them, huh
Smugglers, scramblers, burglars, gamblers
Pickpocket peddlers, even panhandlers
You say "I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool."
But then you wind up dropping outta high school

Now you're unemployed, all null and void
Walking 'round like you're Pretty Boy Floyd.¹

While most of the aforementioned songs were an outcome of mixes from block parties and thus addressed topics such as dancing and having a good time, “The Message” was one of the first songs to present the problematic living situation as its theme, therefore becoming a pioneer of conscious rap. This was accomplished not only by the song’s theme, but also in terms of its musical structure: it was one of the first hip-hop recordings to shift the main focus of the song from the deejay to the rapper, in other words from the music to the lyrics, by using a slow beat and adding emotional depth to the lyrics through the intonation of the rapping (i.e. anger, resignation) (Chang, 2007: 178ff). While *Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five* continued to include conscious rap into their music, this remained to be the only widespread song in the early days of hip-hop to publically address these kinds of issues.

In 1984 Russel Simmons and Rick Rubin founded a music label in New York for rap music named DefJam Recordings, which includes *Run DMC* and the *Beastie Boys* to their first signings. Lyrically, these groups were less about criticizing social-political issues within the system, but more about their self-portrayal as young rebels from the street. They did release more critical songs further into their career; these however were rather exceptions to the rule. What is significant about these bands is that they broke the stereotypical categorization by combining elements of black hip-hop and white rock music, mirroring the descent of the label’s founders, with Simmons being of African American descent and Rubin being a white Jew from Long Beach, NY (Chang, 2007: 245f). This unique blend of genres paved the way for the hip-hop culture to reach and appeal to a broader audience.

The first artists to build on the social consciousness of *Grandmaster Flash*’s “The Message” was a rap collective from the East Coast who called themselves *Public Enemy*. Also released by DefJam Records, they were the first radically political hip-hop group with an active interest in the frustrations and concerns of the African

¹ Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five: The Message (*The Message*). New York: Sugar Hill Records (1982), <http://www.genius.com/166353>, accessed: 22.09.2016.

American community. Corresponding to their name and their logo (a sight targeting a black silhouette), *Public Enemy* staged their group as an opposition, a collective that offers resistance to the higher authorities but also unity and empowerment. They portrayed the many facets of the everyday struggle to survive and the lack of perspective in consequence of social and governmental ignorance, which can be heard through their lyrics (Chang, 2007: 252f). In the early 1980s in the beginnings of hip-hop, it was not common to enclose the printed lyrics to the LP sleeves, this however changed for the first time on the *Public Enemy* records, demonstrating the band's special understanding of rap as a medium for oppositional messages (Gächter, 2001: 69). The lyrics mostly criticized systematic racism and daily politics, through which they wanted to propagate black power and a form of Afrocentrism that empowered their people. They also emphasized their lyrical messages by sampling specific musical—samples from previous protest songs—and non-musical recordings, such as gunshots, sirens and screams, they were able to perfectly underscore the rap-parts of the songs.

In the meantime on the West coast, the members of *N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude)* had a similar approach to the genre when it came to releasing their frustrations, however in a much more blatant way. As Chang puts it quite straight in “Can’t Stop Won’t Stop” (2007):

If the thing was protest, they would toss the ideology and go straight to the riot. If the thing was sex, they would chuck the seduction and go straight to the fuck. Forget knowledge of self or empowering the race. This was about, as Eazy would put it, the strength of the street knowledge.

They would describe their frequently violent stories about living in Compton in the late 1980s graphically. These depictions of a social reality or “reality-rap” were the first beginnings of gangsta rap, which further established itself during the 1990s with its mainstream success and thus its commercialization (Chang, 2007: 320).

Simultaneously, there was an unfolding of a different, more peaceful and playful movement of conscious hip-hop on the East Coast: *Afrika Bambaataa*, the *Jungle Brothers* and *Queen Latifah* form the *Native Tongue Family*. They were known for their positive-minded and Afrocentric ideology and wanted to create a forum for politically and socially critical hip-hop in New York City.

The idea of a community was meant to create awareness through collective performances, exchange and mutual support among members all of this to spread a positive message through music. Furthermore this was one of the first movements that brought male and female rappers together on stage and which offered a safe space for the female body. While gangsta rap was evolving into a rather aggressive, materialistic and at times sexist subgenre of rap dominated by male artists, the *Native Tongues* offered an alternative both musically and socially. By renouncing the use of swearwords and discriminating and misogynic language, they reintroduced the audience to the street slang predating gangsta rap combining it with progressive music that left room for innovation (Jeff Niesel, 1997: 242ff). They are still widely renowned for the musical execution of this ideology: their pioneering use of eclectic sampling combined with jazz inspired beats, proofed to serve as perfect accompaniment to their pithy lyrics and positive memories (Toop, 2000: 216ff). Other important members of the *Native Tongues* were *A Tribe Called Quest* and *De La Soul*, who continue to actively and successfully release music long after the peak of the *Native Tongue* collective.

With the emergence and dominance of gangsta rap in the mid 1990s, socially conscious hip-hop fell into the background and became more of an underground sub-genre. In the late 1990s, the best-selling genre in the U.S. was hip-hop. What started out as a counterculture had by then become a mainstream phenomenon that distanced itself from its economically weak origins, not least because of the success it had met within the cultural industry. Since this development of the genre is not necessarily relevant to the remainder of the paper, I will stop the section on hip-hop's history here and go into detail about its tempestuous relationship with politics.

On a side note, I want to clarify that although this short overview has only mentioned artists from both the East and West Coast, does not mean that Southern cities such as Atlanta, Miami or Austin did not have an active and lively hip-hop scene. During that time many artists established themselves and created a very particular sound or sub-genre on the so-called "third coast" (Sarig, 2007). It arose through the same circumstances and similar preconditions; this topic will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3.

2.2 Social Consciousness of Hip-Hop

Hip-hop as a genre has always been a political voice for people who constitute a minority and thus could not be heard. Be it through rapping, graffitiing, or dancing, artists all over the world have utilized hip-hop as a medium of protest. It all started, however, as a discursive rebellion of the black working class in the 1980s. During the years of Ronald Reagan's presidential terms, the African American lower class was confronted with atrocious conditions, the resulting frustrations, becoming a catalyst for rap music, which I will elaborate on in this section through musical examples.

One of the first songs on this topic was *Boogie Down Production's* "Illegal Business," released in 1988. It very graphically displays the role of the police and the U.S. government within the scene of narcotrafficking, and accuses them of being part of said scene.

(...) It was the same cop car, the same two cops
They jumped out quick, they pulled a gun
They said, "Don't try to fight and don't try to run
Cooperate and we will be your friend
Non-cooperation will be your end"
He jumped in the car, and while they rode
They ran down the list of things he owed
They said, "You owe us some money, you owe us some product
Cause you could be right in the river tied up"
He thought for a second and he said, "What is this?
You want me to pay you to stay in business?"
They said, "That's right, or you go to prison
Cause nobody out there is really gonna listen
To a hood," so he said, "Good!
I'll pay you off for the whole neighborhood"
Because

Cocaine business controls America
Ganja business controls America

KRS-One come to start some hysteria
Illegal business controls America²

In the mid-1980s a new drug started circulating the market initially in southern States like Florida, Texas or California and later all the way up to the black ghettos of New York City; an appealing, lucrative drug called crack cocaine. There have been many rumors, articles and reports claiming that the US government—the CIA more specifically—was involved in the spreading of the drug, working with South American drug traffickers to fund their secret affairs from the profit. The U.S. government eventually took position after the undeniable information had leaked and stated that the above was partially true, however none of it had been authorized by them (Chang, 2007: 206ff). Either way, the fact of deliberately exposing an entire population to such a dangerous drug understandably upset many of them, some of which expressed their anger in rap songs.

Due to the occurrence of the drug and its drastic rise in popularity and thus in its demand and supply, the police constructed racial profiles as part of “Operation Pipeline” through which police officers were trained to pull over “suspiciously” looking cars/passengers on the highway to search for drugs and register into their system. These “pretext stops” can be based on their origin, skin color, style of clothing and often targeted minorities (Harris, 1999). These circumstances triggered artists like *KRS One* (“Sound of da Police”) and *Body Count* (“Cop Killer”) to take a stand and rap openly about the subject, which is how their songs came into being.

Another important song addressing police brutality is *Ice Cube*’s “We Had to Tear This Motherfucka Up” from his 1992 album “The Predator”. A tragic event in L.A. in 1992 caused the barrel to overflow, when four police officers, who were caught on camera excessively physically attacking Rodney King, even long after he had given up resistance, were acquitted of all charges. This resulted in a chorus of outrage, mainly among the African-American community and was followed by riots, lasting several days, ending fatally for 53 people and causing property damage worth up to one billion dollars (Chang, 2007: 374ff). *Ice Cube* does not only speak out on the failure of the juridical system but also denounces the poor media coverage of the riots,

² Boogie Down Productions: *Illegal Business (By All Means Necessary)*. New York: Jive Records (1988). <http://genius.com/Boogie-down-productions-illegal-business-lyrics>, accessed: 22.09.2016.

misrepresenting and inverting the African American community. The intro of the song is a juxtaposition of samples of a speech by the mayor of Nashville during one of the first sit-ins of the Civil Rights Movement followed by the TV news report of the incident in 1992.

("Peace, quiet and good order will be maintained in our city
To the best of our ability. Riots, melees and disturbances
Of the peace are against the interests of all our people; and
Therefore cannot be permitted.")

("The jury found that they were all not guilty, not guilty...")

("We've been told that all along Crenshaw Boulevard, that there's a series of
fires. A lot of looting is going on. A disaster area, obviously.")

("The jury found that they were all not guilty, not guilty...")

[Cube] Make it rough

("A lot of activity continues here at this command post.")

[Cube] Make it rough!!

("We have sporadic fires, throughout the city of Los Angeles.")

Not guilty, the filthy, devils tried to kill me
When the news get to the hood the niggas will be
Hotter than cayenne pepper, cuss, bust
Kickin' up dust is a must
I can't trust, a cracker in a blue uniform³

Sadly, even after 14 years, police brutality is still a social problem in the daily life of many Americans and more than ever artists and celebrities use their reach and fame to support the activist movement against it. “#BlackLivesMatter” was formed in 2013 and protests unjustified police brutality against African-Americans. It was triggered by another case of social injustice similar to the one in 1992: Teenager Trayvon Martin was fatally shot by neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman who later was acquitted of the charge, causing a lot of anger and frustration amongst the media and the audience (Garza, 2013). Many rappers like *Kanye West* and *J.Cole* took to twitter to show their support and take a stand. Sadly, history has repeated itself

³ Ice Cube: We Had to Tear This Muthafucka Up (*The Predator*). New York: Priority/EMI (1992), <http://genius.com/Ice-cube-we-had-to-tear-this-muthafucka-up-lyrics>, accessed: 22.09.2016.

several times since the founding of the movement, leading to severe protests throughout the US. Rapper and hip-hop mogul *Jay-Z* used his streaming service Tidal to organize a charity concert donating \$1.5 million to Black Lives Matter and other social justice groups on what would have been Trayvon Martin's 21st Birthday (Stutz, 2016). These are just several of many contributions hip-hop artists have made to the subject of #BlackLivesMatter.

All of the above is mere a brief outline of 3 decades of conscious rap. Many other problems and cases of injustice have been the subject of hip-hop songs, one very prominent being the US war policy and its archaic political attitude towards its relation with the countries in the Middle East. All of the examples above are musical statements by hip-hop artists to the systematic discrimination against African-Americans in the US, using the art of music as an outlet to release their inner thoughts and to reach a preferably large audience from which they (ideally) obtain consent. Many songs in hip-hop and especially in bounce are about positivity, about having a good time and forgetting about all the problems and literally dancing the struggles away. Keeping this in mind, I consider it extremely important to recognize the other side of hip-hop; the social consciousness that gives the genre more depth and genuineness, providing a platform to an unheard minority.

3. New Orleans: A Breeding Ground for Hip-Hop?

As established in the last chapter, many different factors contributed to the emergence of hip-hop both on the East and the West Coast. These developments in turn encouraged the rise of distinctive regional rap forms, such as Miami bass or New Orleans bounce music. Just as in many other States of the U.S., the African-American community most certainly had to face the same issues and inequalities as on the coasts, creating a demand for an outlet, a way of dealing with the everyday struggle. Throughout the entirety of hip-hop's first decade, Southerners were practically absent and could rarely be found in the national hip-hop landscape. They started moving from a regional to a national level during the 1990s until they made up close to 40% of the singles on the hip-hop charts by the end of the decade. The market share of Southern Rap music kept rising up to 60% around the turn of the millennium, making it the first regional sub-genre to break the East Coast dominance (Sarig, 2007: xv).

As Sarig concludes, the reason for this sudden popularity and tremendous success is its tactical evolution. Because of their later emergence, Southerners had the possibility to skillfully choose from both East and West Coast elements. By picking the best influences from both coasts and adding a Southern flavor, they were able to create a familiar sound with new components. The South has its own history and identity, making its music proudly regional on the one hand but also accessible to anyone on the other, not least because of the embodiment of the Southern hospitality. All of these ingredients combined could be what makes Southern hip-hop so infectious (Sarig, 2007: xix).

The following section will look into the history of New Orleans hip-hop and its musical characteristics, which will be conducive to the comprehension of the chapters to come.

3.1 New Orleans Hip-Hop: Bounce Music Characteristics

Rap came into being in the 1980s in New Orleans, in the light of very similar circumstances and social realities found on the East and West coasts. Before Hurricane Katrina hit, 5% of the entire population, respectively 20% of the African American population of New Orleans, was living in one of the ten housing projects the city offered (Sarig, 2007: 77). To give one example, the Calliope housing development opened in the early 1940s. The idea was to create affordable housing for low-income households who were still suffering from the consequences of the Depression. Albeit the initial concept of subsidized housing might seem progressive, it turned out to create many negative side effects; due to the fact that the Calliope eventually housed only black lower-class families, it created not only concentrated poverty, but also a racial segregation, marginalizing them spatially and socioeconomically from other New Orleanians. This resulted in poor living conditions in an unsafe environment creating a negative public perception of the projects, having people and politicians avoid and thus neglect them (Sarig, 2007: 79).

From a musical point of view, the city, or rather the South in general suffered from a geographic marginality. Its distance from the major centers of the popular music industry (such as Defjam in New York, Motown in Detroit or the big record companies settling in Los Angeles) impeded the New Orleans's rap community from gaining access to and the attention from those companies (Miller, 2012: 19).

Nevertheless New Orleans rap music and its performance are very close to the earliest forms of hip-hop in New York City from the 1970s; it also began with young deejays entertaining their friends at block parties. Just like *DJ Kool Herc*, many artists, producers and deejays from New Orleans are rooted in the Caribbean or Creole culture, which inevitably influences their music.

As explained in Chapter 2, block parties were an opportunity for the community to get together and enjoy the music. One positive concomitant phenomenon was the stimulation of neighborhood businesses, which often served as sponsors for the events (Miller, 2012: 53). Another important location for New Orleanians to explore hip-hop was the nightclub. Aside from block parties, nightclubs were the only other platform

in the mid 1980s for deejays to perform and promote themselves. Since New Orleans rap music was not being mass-produced and distributed (yet), nightclubs were one of the few places where the audience had access to the newest songs, making hip-hop nightclubs essential to the emergence of a local rap scene (Miller, 2012: 54). The third platform for rap artists to present their music was the concept of talent shows or gong shows, hosted by clubs or radio stations. These were contests, where everyone was free to participate, resulting in an eclectic mix of performances from various popular culture backgrounds, such as dancing, rapping/singing, stand-up comedy, etc. The people in the audience were usually the judges, deciding by their response which one of the performers they considered the best. The winner would often be rewarded with a cash prize (Miller, 2012: 55).

But what is bounce music? What distinguishes this New Orleans rap from the earlier forms originated on the coasts? African Americans in New Orleans took the idea of rap and made it their own: They created a distinctive musical style that can only be found in New Orleans through the syncretism of traditional rap music elements and creolization. In any culture or music genre, the relationship between place, identity and musical style is absolutely essential (Miller, 2012: 47). The local influence on both the musical and lyrical content is what sets this newly created sub-genre apart from its original form. By experimenting with highly localized styles, the founders of bounce have added such richness to the music, turning it into so much more than just a genre—it became a form of identification.

One such localized style is the importance and the inclusion of the audience during local rap performances. Similar to other New Orleans genres like jazz or Second Line, bounce is defined by the participation of the people in the audience and their collective enthusiasm and support. Bounce artists interact with the crowd, encouraging them to take part and dance. This participatory nature of bounce is one essential characteristic that separates it distinctively from the other genres of hip-hop. The audience's participation is however not limited to dancing. Many of the songs include call-and-response lyrics that actively demand the crowd to take part throughout an entire show. To an extent the artist is dependent on the audience, because they help him create the atmosphere and shape the performance—the audience's response is required for the show to keep going. The call-and-response

technique can be traced all the way back to its African roots that perpetuated through the generations from field-hollers to blues-singers. It is also not a new element to rap music and has been used by many MCs and deejays throughout the 1980s. However, in no other genre is it as ubiquitous as in bounce music, up until today (Miller, 2012: 45). This exemplifies the shift of importance and relevance of a certain musical element within the same genre. The call-and-response method had already been present in rap music; it is not a new component that New Orleans rap has introduced. It has simply changed the emphasis to that of being essential to the sub-genre.

These audience participatory dances can be described as very sexual and gender-specific. While a bounce music outsider might consider the dance moves, which are practiced mostly by female dancers, as objectifying, the participants have described their experiences as empowering and sexually liberating. On the surface, bounce might seem to perpetuate a form of sexism propagated by mainstream hip-hop, however this particular style of dancing is what liberates the female dancers from those very oppressive forces. The combination of the participation and interaction with an artist that the audience can relate to creates a safe space where a woman can dance feeling empowered rather than objectified. Due to the fact that the entire audience is participating in the same dance and music, there's no observational context, the women are not performing for male viewers, but for themselves, as an outlet for their everyday struggles (Miller, 2012: 99). This is a very unique mindset to a dance practice within the hip-hop genre, which is encouraged by bounce's currently most prominent advocates: the "sissy rappers".

Just as diverse as the participants are, so are the artists. Within New Orleans and the bounce genre there are a number of openly gay, transsexual or transgender artists. Even though they have not always been accepted amongst straight rappers, the local audiences have supported them from the beginning, making bounce the first sub-genre within the national rap industry in which women and gay rappers are represented in such high numbers. This was a groundbreaking occurrence for mainstream hip-hop, which is known for its tendency towards homophobia. Take Fo Records, one of the most important bounce music labels, was the first to sign a transvestite rapper, *Katey Red*, who calls herself "The Millennium Sissy" or "The

Mother of Sissy Bounce.” This signing turned out to be an act that gave rise to an entire movement in the New Orleans bounce scene, creating a generation of “sissy rappers” who have kept bounce alive until today (Miller, 2012: 154f).

Focusing less on its artists and more on its music, bounce has always created parallels between itself and the previous musical culture of New Orleans. While the emergence of jazz had a similar self-reinforcing effect on the African-American community, it also had the same composition of different traditions, matching and completing each other in a new art form. Another very old and widespread tradition in New Orleans is the Second Line, which represents the collective consciousness and importance attributed to the musical culture within this city. For many generations of young black New Orleanians (and many to come), Second Line and its brass bands are their first contact with music, providing an understanding of place and local identity (Miller, 2012: 18f). Many bounce artists started out playing in brass bands, parading the streets and making the music available to everyone within earshot—a similar phenomenon to block parties. This chapter’s musical examples outlining bounce’s history demonstrate the genre’s inspiration in older New Orleans music styles distinctively.

As discussed in Chapter 2, hip-hop gave minorities a voice; it created a forum for discussion and critique. Although nationally successful rappers certainly addressed topics comprehensible and relevant to the New Orleans audience, the lyrics of local rap songs resonate with them on an entirely different level. They touch more local or personal subjects and problems, such as the rivalries between different wards or more locally specific themes like the carnival culture and the parades (Miller, 2012: 7). Even the aspects of the local rap genre—the dancing, the events and venues, and its representatives—are all included into the lyrics or the shout outs, making the songs more accessible and comprehensible for a local audience.

Bounce music as such is rooted back in the 1980s when young deejay crews would play at project yard parties, school dances or talent shows to entertain their peers. Deejays like *Slick Leo*, who introduced New York scratching to bounce, or crews like the *Fellas DJs* (*DJ Jubilee* and his older brother *Lil Nerve*) were the ones to pioneer this to the genre (Saarig, 2007: 251). They were all from the projects, had access to a

sound system that usually belonged to their father and felt pulled towards this new and unusual form of art.

Bounce sets itself apart from other rap genres by using a specific pattern: the music is composed by two distinct themes switching back and forth; the first theme being the hook that samples the “Dragnet” song. This primary influence on bounce music was released in 1986 by the *Showboys*, a rap group from Queens, New York. They came into being around the same time as *Run DMC* did, even at the same label, however their careers did not turn out quite the same way. The duo only released four tracks, one of them being the “Drag Rap”. In the late 1980s it was very common to sample TV themes in rap songs. The *Showboys* used the “Dragnet”-theme, a show about cops and gangsters, which they included into their lyrics. They created gangster personae for themselves, one being *Buggs Can Can* and the other one *Phil D Triggerman* (Miller, 2012: 78). The rest of the song was kept very simple and typical for rap music from that period: it is built around 808 drums (named after the analog drum machine Roland TR-808 which was used primarily for the creation of 1980s hip-hop beats) and shouted rap parts. To make it sound like an actual TV show, they even included a commercial break halfway through the song by quoting a fast food chain’s slogan (Miller, 2012: 79). The motif of the second theme to complete the typical bounce music pattern was a three-note arpeggio played continuously, up and down, on a xylophone-sounding instrument. This synth sound is called “bones” because it is often used in animated films as musical accompaniment for skeletons (Miller, 2012, 79).

New Orleans deejays sampled both themes years later but the second one gained more popularity and thus became the blueprint for bounce music. The so-called “Triggerman” song is sampled over and over again in many bounce songs, and is easily identifiable. The success of the “Drag Rap” was not just limited to New Orleans; it spread throughout the entire South being sampled in likely hundreds of songs. Up until now, its appeal to Southerners has eluded scholars. Around 1989, after the song had been released for 3 years already, local deejays started inserting it into their sets. Just like *Kool Herc* did in the late 1970s with the funky breaks, Southern deejays would isolate and loop the “Triggerman”, because it was the audience’s favorite part. Additionally, they would scratch over the song and chant on top,

shouting out to the audience, the projects or the wards (Miller, 2012: 80). Someone would grab the microphone and comment on or rather command the crowd's dancing. As Sarig explains, bounce was a mere soundtrack to the explicit dance moves at first. As few know, twerking or pussy popping is the term for dancing to bounce music and has been around for a very long time. It gained popularity and reached the mainstream in the last couple of years because of mainstream artists like *Miley Cyrus* who included the dance into her music videos and live performances. It came originally, however, from the South where African-Americans have been practicing that specific dance since the early days of bounce music (Sarig, 2007: 257).

Like every music genre, bounce was not born overnight; it was a long evolution, which can be perfectly portrayed by the development of the "Triggerman". One of the rappers who gets credited for debuting the "Triggerman" in a song is *T.T. Tucker*, who started getting noticed by chanting over it at nightclubs. Together with *DJ Irv*, he recorded the first bounce track called "Where Dey At?". It is extremely simple, consisting only of a series of shout outs and chants set to a loop of the "Triggerman", and the lyrics lack a deep meaning. Despite this, it became a local hit and the deejays kept playing it, since they now did not have to loop the "Triggerman" manually anymore (Sarig, 2007: 257).

After "Where Dey At?", each subsequent track somehow referred to its predecessor, but also added a new element to the song, completing the bounce characteristics step by step, song by song. Shortly after that, *DJ Jimi* released his version, "Where They At" which reused the title phrase. It was, however, a more sophisticated production and he included new chants that have become bounce standards. Then there was the rapper *Everlasting Hitman* who was smart enough to refer to *T.T. Tucker's* song, but also included the spirit of another important bounce characteristic, the calling out to the projects. He then added a reference to the second line, introducing another local cultural phenomenon. With his track "Bounce Baby Bounce" he was the first rapper to actually put the word "bounce" into the song title. As a response, *DJ Jimi* released a single with underage Terius Gray, who thus called himself *Juvenile*. "Bounce (For the Juvenile)" was a lot less explicit and more youth-friendly; instead of profanity, *Juvenile* inserted humor to *T.T. Tucker's* lyrics. He created a new chant for the projects, leaving behind the "Triggerman" (Sarig, 2007: 258).

This demonstrates how there was more to bounce than just this one sample holding it all together. It is about the spirit that lies in the chants and the phrases that are necessary to get and keep the audience moving, dancing, and twerking. Even without the “Triggerman”, bounce developed steadily in the early 1990s and was able to create a solid number of local artists, including an interestingly high number of female rappers, compared to the national hip-hop scenery.

One of these local artists was *DJ Jubilee*, the so-called “King of Bounce”, who appeared at the surface of New Orleans in 1993. Like many of the other bounce artists, *DJ Jubilee* grew up in the projects where he joined the *Fellas DJ* crew in his early teens. They played at school dances, which were the primary social outlet for underage kids. His main focus in bounce music was positivity, directly opposing the themes in gangsta bounce, which were starting to build around him with No Limit and Cash Money Records. He epitomized the genre by not just adding early bounce records to his set but also producing his own bounce music and calling out the names of dance moves, leading the audience (Saarig, 2007: 259). *DJ Jubilee* was working as a schoolteacher when he got signed to Take Fo’ Records and recorded the song “N.O. Block Party” with the duo *Partners-N-Crime*. It went on to become another bounce classic. In this song they accomplished their goal of creating a bounce song that linked New Orleans hip-hop with the city’s musical heritage. In “N.O. Block Party”, they integrated outside elements: the hook can be traced back to “Iko, Iko”, a Mardi Gras standard. By mixing it with the “Triggerman” sample and other chanting elements, they combined the many different music cultures that the city has to offer (Sarig, 200: 261). In the course of the history of bounce, *DJ Jubilee* played a decisive role at important turning points for the genre, which will be further explained in this chapter.

Probably the earliest rap group within bounce was *New York Incorporated*, led by *Denny D* with *Mia X* and *DJ Mannie Fresh*. The latter played the drums in a marching band, which influenced his way of programming beats by adding typical marching band drum elements (e.g. drumroll breaks). He later on established himself as one of the most popular deejays in town, becoming the resident producer for Cash Money Records (Miller, 2012: 60). Another early rap duo was *The Ninja Crew*, who wore

ninja outfits at talent shows. They were composed of *Sporty T* and *Gregory D*, who, like *Mannie*, had also started out as a marching band drummer.

Together, *Gregory D & Mannie Fresh* released one of the most important bounce tracks in the history of the genre: “the Buck Jump Time” (Sarig, 2007: 253) The title “Buck Jump” refers to the second liners, who instead of playing instruments but joined by second lining/dancing. Buck jumping was and still is one of the most popular dances; it is characterized by fast footwork, and is also seen in b-boying. Released in 1989, it is among the first local rap song to include another New Orleanian musical tradition. The beat was very similar to the second-line rhythms, which in turn are rooted in Caribbean musical traditions: these include some typical creole characteristics such as the use of cowbells. *Mannie* combined this beat as a foundation with a walking bassline and returning horn interjections after the chorus (Sarig, 2007: 253). Lyrically, the song focused on celebrating the city, not telling a story. At the beginning of the song, *Gregory D* first calls out to the different housing developments, then to different neighborhoods, which is why the song was named “Project Rap” (Miller, 2012: 66). With this song, *Gregory D* and *Mannie Fresh* created a sound that could be described as authentic hip-hop, but could also be easily traced back to its local origins.

The song was a big success: it became a local hit and is still extremely popular until today. With this song, *Gregory D* and *Mannie Fresh* wanted to take a stand: they came to represent their city, since no-one else did, and took bounce as a musical genre and turned it into a collective identity.

The “Triggerman” or the “Buck Jump Time” are just part of the scaffolding that sets a bounce song apart from any other rap track. However, its local flavor inspired many people to join the local hip-hop movement in the late 1980s/early 1990s: bounce music had arrived and “Buck Jump Time” became its prototype.

3.2 Bounce: Its Rise and Fall

With the arrival of bounce, so came the musical infrastructures that are necessary for a new genre to thrive. By using the examples of No Limit and Cash Money Records, two of the most important and successful music labels that Bounce had to offer in the 1990s, the history of the genre and the role it played within the national hip-hop scene can be explained.

Percy “Master P” Miller founded No Limit Records in 1990. Just like many of the artists on his roster, he grew up in the Calliope projects, an extremely toxic environment, issuing him with the necessary motivation and determination to leave the projects and create a better future for himself (Sarig, 2007: 79). Unlike Cash Money Records, which had always been situated in the South, *Master P* left New Orleans in 1989 to move out to California, where he opened the No Limit Record Store after inheriting ten thousand dollars from his grandfather. He was self-taught. Everything he knew about the business he learned from observing his customers and satisfying their demand. In his history of New Orleans’ rap, Sarig describes *Master P* as extremely focused on profit and money, which is what made his business so successful. After only one year, *Master P* turned his business into a record label. Although he started the label with himself as the only rapper on the roster, he was able to establish it as one of the Bay Area’s most successful hip-hop labels and became a locally relevant artist (Sarig, 2007: 80).

In the mid 1990s, *Master P* decided to come back to New Orleans because he saw new potential in the city’s grassroots hip-hop scene. He wanted *Mia X* for his roster, who by then was already a rap veteran, being part of the aforementioned *New York Incorporated*, one of New Orleans earliest rap groups.

Craig “KLC” Lawson was another artist whom *Master P* needed on his label. Again, *KLC* is another example for the origins of bounce’s protagonists; he grew up in the Melpomene projects situated in the 3rd Ward. As a kid, he started playing in a marching band, giving him a first taste of the New Orleans musical culture. By the mid 1980s he was known as Uptown’s most popular deejay, playing at school dances and project block parties. He simultaneously became a member of the local rap group

3-9 Posse, and shortly after that established his own label named “Parkway Pumpin” which signed many artists who were later part of the No Limit roster (Sarig, 2007: 82).

KLC’s first signing was *Magnolia Slim*. They first encountered each other in the summer of 1990, when *KLC* was playing at a block party in the Magnolia projects. He invited *Slim* on stage, passed him the microphone and the rest is bounce history. In his lyrics, *Slim* always compared life in the ghetto to being a soldier and embodied this theme in his looks, his clothes and his lifestyle; camouflage apparel had become the typical *Magnolia* fashion, turning him into a project hero. This might have influenced *Master P* to use the tank logo and name his artists the No Limit soldiers, which in turn raised the popularity of soldier imagery amongst Southern rappers. With the release of his first two records (on *KLC*’s label), Slim pioneered the “gangsta bounce” sound, which both the Cash Money and the No Limits label were renowned for in the late 1990s. By incorporating elements of gangsta rap into their lyrics, he started leading bounce away from its initial participatory party chant feeling towards the more nationally popular hip-hop (Sarig, 2007: 83). With this gangsta bounce sound being established, *Master P* wanted to create a compilation with Southern rappers, like many labels on the East and West coast had done before. “Down South Hustlers” was the name of the project, an album with New Orleans-style music that he wanted to record in his home base in California. He recruited *Mia X* and *Serv-On* and relied on *KLC* to produce the project for it to sound original, authentic and genuine (Sarig, 2007: 83).

Around the same time that they released the compilation, *Master P* had started a new partnership with a larger distributor, Priority Records. This was an important step for the independent label towards national relevance. Through its much larger purview, the record could reach number 13 on the Billboard R&B/hip-hop charts. After this success, *Master P* took his No Limit Record Label and moved back to New Orleans, where he saw its future (Sarig, 2007: 84).

Up until then, *Master P* still lacked national recognition. This all changed with the release of his album “Ice Cream Man” in 1996, which debuted at number 3 (Billboard R&B/hip-hop charts). His song made a clear statement: it was not just about the two

coasts and its major labels anymore (Sarig, 2007: 86). For the first time, an independent rap business had shown relevance within the national hip-hop industry, paving the way for many other self-made producers, managers and label owners. With this record, No Limit's "Golden Age" had started, in which it found massive national success. The South had become a new mecca for gangsta rap, counting *Master P* amongst the most influential (and the richest) people in Southern hip-hop in the late 1990s.

Much of No Limit's success was due to the producer-duo *Beats By the Pound (BBtP)*, consisting of *KLC* and *Master P*'s cousin *Mo B. Dick*. Just like Motown had its *Holland-Dozier-Holland* trio, *BBtP* created its own little "Hitsville U.S.A" in the studios and offices in Baton Rouge, LA. Within a very short time, they expanded with the arrival of three new members and by 1997 they had a monopoly on No Limit production. This was not only cost effective but also created a coherent sound throughout all the records and reinforced *Master P*'s imagery of his army of soldiers, led by himself (Sarig, 2007: 86).

The follow up to his breakthrough record called "Ghetto D" was the first No Limit album to reach number one on the Billboard 200 pop chart and sold more than two million copies. This time around, *Master P* had created an unmitigated Southern record, collaborating only with Southern rappers from his own artist roster, establishing No Limit for the first time as an original New Orleans record label and, more importantly, as a brand (Sarig, 2007: 88). The themes of their songs were still rooted in the gangsta-rap. Again, *Master P* was driven by monetary gain, so he was willing to portray and embody the lifestyle of a hustler, simply because it was what the target group wanted and what the market demanded.

By 1998, every album released by No Limit records was a success; all 17 reached the Top 20 of the Billboard R&B/hip-hop charts, 11 of them even made it into the Top 20 Billboard Pop charts, which confirms the genres entry into the mainstream (Sarig, 2007: 89). He had put the South and New Orleans on the national hip-hop radar, helping it to become a center of the industry, just as relevant and important as New York City or L.A.

The label started falling apart when *Master P* tried to pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a basketball professional. With music no longer being his priority and in consequence of him not being present, the label lost its vigor and its leader (Sarig, 2007: 90f). The production of the music and its releases slowed down, giving *BBlP* the possibility to work outside of the label. Around the turn of the millennium the label had to cope with the departure of many big artists like *Mystikal* and *Snoop Dogg*. When they eventually ended their distribution deal with Priority Records in 2001, it was clear to everyone that the No Limit's heydays were over. At this point *Master P* dissolved the label and moved his family back to California, focusing on his son *Lil' Romeo*'s career (Sarig, 2007: 91). Although the end of the No Limit Golden Era came ahead of schedule, by the end of its successful decade, the label had sold more than forty million records and yielded New Orleans's biggest-selling artist: the rapper called *Master P* (Sarig, 2007: 92).

Just when No Limit seemed to have reached its peak, a second bounce music label, Cash Money Records, started to rise. It was also rooted in the Uptown projects, but unlike No Limit records, Cash Money never left the city and instead stayed true to its origins (Sarig, 2007: 262). On a musical level, it was closer to New Orleans's true hip-hop spirit, simply because it had been around geographically for the most crucial period in the development of its original bounce sound. While No Limits switched to gangsta rap early on into the business, the audience was able to recognize Cash Money releases as a part of New Orleans because they put more emphasis on the inclusion of local characteristics—the marching beat and the carnival sound (Sarig, 2007: 251). This, however, did not last forever for Cash Money either, since its musical priorities eventually shifted instead towards gangsta-bounce.

The two brothers, Bryan “Baby” Williams and Ronald “Slim” Williams, who grew up first in the Melpomene and later on in the Magnolia projects, founded Cash Money Records in 1993. With barely any experience or resources, they began by selling tapes out of the back of their car and went up from there. Their first releases sounded a lot like the traditional party-oriented bounce music, which they later on left behind to create something that reflected the more radical but also realistic life in the New Orleans projects and its struggles, calling it gangsta bounce (Sarig, 2007: 262). Early into the game, they convinced *Mannie Fresh* to join them as their in-house producer,

since they had an entire roster of artists, but no-one to create the beats. As established earlier, *Mannie* played a crucial role in the creation of bounce music. With *Mannie* on board, their sound evolved but also moved away from bounce towards dark gangsta rap. This was not coincidence; it simply reflected their current lives. 1996 was a dark year for the label, when three artists of the Cash Money roster found themselves murdered within a very brief time span. Following these tragedies, the label decided to change by making way for new artists (Sarig, 2007: 264).

One important artist of this new generation was *Juvenile*. His debut “Solja Rags” was a big breakthrough for Cash Money: the combination of *Juvenile* and *Mannie*, bounce’s best rapper and producer, created a new sound that raised bounce music to an entirely new musical level and thus increased its accessibility to an audience outside of New Orleans. On his album, he featured many of the label’s other rappers like *B.G.*, *Lil’Wayne* and newcomer *Turk*, and just like *Master P*, they created their own Cash Money super-group, the *Hot Boys*.

Similar to the No Limit releases, all of the Cash Money albums were ranked in the Billboard R&B / Hip-Hop chart and their rappers were becoming national stars (Sarig, 2007: 265). Cash Money Records had major success with most of its records selling up to 200,000 copies, owed in part by its independent distribution channels. By 1998, however, the Williams brothers accepted a game-changing distribution deal with Universal Records worth thirty million dollars (Sarig, 2007: 266).

The deal truly became profitable with the release of *Juvenile*’s “400 Degreez”. With this album, *Mannie* had created the epitome of the successful, mainstream bounce music suitable for and comprehensible to a nationwide audience. The hit single from the album “Back That Azz Up” broke all records by topping both the rap and pop charts, landing a mainstream hit never seen before within the bounce scene (Sarig, 2007: 267). The video, in which the Cash Money Clique is driving through the Magnolia projects, was running perpetually on MTV and BET, making bounce and the neighborhood that marked its birth accessible to everyone, regardless of their class, race or background. By the end of 1999, Cash Money had four records in the Top20, all of them going (multi-)platinum and many singles following their success

(Sarig, 2007: 267). They found themselves at a similar high point as the artists at No Limit Records. It indeed seemed to be the prime time for bounce.

However, one thing in particular left not only a mark on the charts, but more importantly on the contemporary language culture. *B.G.*'s song "Bling-Bling" was the ultimate anthem to hip-hop materialism, standing for everything that shines, be it a rapper's jewelry or the rims of his car. The word "bling-bling" has spread rapidly from the mainstream vernacular of the youth into the general colloquial language. This small but relevant contribution to world culture perfectly depicts the importance and influence of Cash Money Records. Their marketing strategy was to sell success-stories to their audience; they lived off of the "bling-bling" imagery of money, materialism and music (Sarig, 2007: 267).

Although the label managed to stay extremely successful after its peak in 1999 for another couple of years, it slowly started falling apart around the early 2000s. Several of the label's biggest rappers left and filed lawsuits for unpaid royalties, which still seems to be an issue in 2015, considering the latest reports about the public conflict between *Lil' Wayne* and his label (Vozick-Levinson, 2015). Some of them started their own label after that. Others had to either face their confrontations with the law or their drug addiction, pulling them out of the music business for an unknown amount of time. *Lil' Wayne*, who had his debut on the *Hot Boys* album at the age of only fourteen, was the only Cash Money artist left who had just started gaining nationwide popularity around the turn of the millennium. However, with the growth of his success, his musical style started moving away from its bounce roots heading towards a more traditional, mainstream hip-hop (Saarig, 2007: 269).

Considering all of the above, the title of this chapter, "The Rise and Fall", succinctly summarizes the history of bounce. After an unexpected and transcendent rise of bounce music to being the prevalent hip-hop genre, dominating the mainstream charts in the late 1990s, it went from stagnating in the early 2000s to receding in importance and becoming a mere local subculture. Both Cash Money and No Limit had a similar success story: they both used analogical strategies (creating super-groups, having an in-house producer team etc.) to secure lucrative deals with important national companies, mainly due to their impressive sales in the regional markets. At the early

stages of their rise, they were deeply connected to the New Orleans scene, but those connections lessened drastically as their national exposure increased. By the time both labels had exceeded their peak, a new grassroots hip-hop scene had come together in the city. It reoriented itself back to what initially defined bounce: a focus on local audiences, both in nightclubs and at block parties, who shared these original values of the genre.

Another new arrival on the local rap scene were “sissy rappers.” As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, sissy rappers are openly gay men who were more or less accepted within New Orleans hip-hop. This might also be a plausible reason for its decline in the rap world—sissy rappers were unable to extend their careers outside of the city. They had increased difficulties being accepted by audiences in other places, that did not have the same cultural values of New Orleans that encouraged the openness to their work (Miller, 2012: 154). Just like the other bounce artists, most of the sissy rappers had grown up in the projects, one of them being *Katey Red*. Take Fo’ Records played a pioneering role in bounce music when they were the first to sign a sissy rapper, releasing the first full-length rap album by an openly gay or transgender performer in New Orleans, and one of the first in the larger national and international rap music field (Miller, 2012: 155). By performing at clubs and block parties, sissy rappers gained attention and popularity, releasing their music through small, independent labels. For sissy rappers to become successful in New Orleans out of all the American cities is not a coincidence. Storyville, the local red-light district around the turn of the century and the place where new genres like jazz had flourished, was known to be more open and tolerant towards gay men and lesbians, perhaps even providing them a space for sexual freedom incomparable to any other city in the U.S. Miller even lists a number of openly gay artists of other genres such as Jazz and R&B during the 1940s – 1960s (Miller, 2012: 156).

Despite their acceptance and general popularity with the (female) audience, the participation of sissy rappers within the local scene has always been rather controversial, especially considering the manifestation of their sexuality in the lyrics of their songs. Nevertheless, these artists gained a certain popularity by keeping to the musical of bounce and its performance practice (Miller, 2012: 157). Additionally their creative and commercial work environments were not restricted to gay people. In fact,

most of the producers, label owners, other artists and the audience did not self-identify as gay and were still prominent supporters of the regular hip-hop genre.

The structure of their songs represented a certain return to the initial characteristics of bounce, with the reintegration of call-and-response lyrics and the musical adaption of local samples. They re-include references to the projects and neighborhoods and lyrically emphasize the dancing and pleasure that comes with bounce. Some of the sissy rappers use humor in their lyrics, to counter the antagonism toward gay men that they encounter in their social environment. In working-class African-American communities, homosexuality is often confronted with denial, which many rappers like *Big Freedia* ridicule in their songs. The same applies to intimate relationships, which are approached with a certain cynicism (Miller, 2012: 157). By returning to the old musical structures and themes of bounce and combining them with topical lyrics, sissy rappers were able to create a new and contemporary form of bounce. At first, this seemed to attract a lot of media attention. After a brief sensation limited to said sexual orientation of the artists instead of their musical output, bounce music once again sank below the radar of the national music industry, leaving behind a dynamic and intriguing music genre limited to its local music scene.

This serves as a summary of the prevailing economic and social circumstances of bounce music before 2005, before hurricane Katrina hit and destroyed the city and its thriving musical culture.

4. Feel that Katrina Clap?⁴

4.1 How Hurricane Katrina Hit the South (New Orleans in Particular).

On the 29th of August 2005, hurricane Katrina made landfall in the city of New Orleans, after making its way through Florida and having gathered strength over the Gulf of Mexico, leaving the Big Easy flooded and in shatters. Five years later, in 2010, director *Spike Lee* released his critically acclaimed HBO-documentary “If God Is Willing and Da Creek Don’t Rise”. While it portrays a clearly subjective point of view and defines its position from the very beginning, it also exposes certain details of the story that got lost in the media coverage. In the first part of the documentary, Lee conducts interviews, which reveal that both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Army Corps of Engineers had conducted research that correctly estimated the immense ramifications that were to follow such a natural disaster. Apart from possible levee breaches, the National Weather Service also predicted a high probability of tidal waves overtopping the levees that kept those parts of New Orleans lying below sea level dry and safe between Lake Pontchartrain on the North and the Mississippi River on the South boundary. One day before the hurricane hit, Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans at that time, called for a mandatory evacuation, opening the Convention Centre and the Superdome as shelters to those residents who did not have the means to flee the city, without previously stocking the shelters with the necessary food and drinking water. Both shelters had to be evacuated later on, due to the damage the hurricane had caused to the buildings, not to mention they were overcrowded and undersupplied (Lee, 2010).

According to the evacuation plan, buses would be supplied to drive the evacuees out of the city. This worked, however, for only a limited amount of buses, until either the outbound highways and bridges were closed or no drivers could be found who were willing to drive the vehicles. Later on, after Katrina had subsided and several days

⁴ Mos Def: Dollar Day (*True Magic*). New York: Geffen Records UMG (2006), <http://genius.com/Yasiin-bey-dollar-day-lyrics>, accessed: 29.09.2016.

had passed, FEMA sent a small number of buses to evacuate both the Superdome and the Convention Centre (Horne, 2006: 94). The reason why so many New Orleans residents were stranded in the city is that most of them had grown ignorant of the evacuation calls, since they had gotten used to hurricanes hitting the South every year, creating a lot of hysteria without severe repercussions. In addition, many residents of the lower-class areas simply did not follow or have access to newspapers and news broadcasts, entailing that they were not aware of the gravity of the situation (Cohn, 2005: 231).

When the hurricane left New Orleans, almost 80% of the city was flooded up to over six meters in some areas (Plyer, 2016, Data Center). Due to reasons which will be discussed in the course of this chapter, the levees of several drainage canals that ought to keep the city below sea level dry breached, releasing storm surge floodwaters into New Orleans' lower lying neighborhoods like Lakeview, Gentilly, Eastern New Orleans and the Ninth Ward, some of them lying up to four meters below sea level. By the end of the storm, Katrina claimed over 1,800 victims, mostly from Louisiana and Mississippi, with numerous people still unaccounted for since the hurricane (Jorgensen, 2011: 3). All in all, it has been estimated that the damages caused by Katrina amount to over 135 billion Dollars (Plyer, 2016, Data Center).

Despite of all the warnings and the awareness of the storm and the damage risk, a great number of residents would not or could not flee the city, leaving them stranded in their houses and on their rooftops. Many of them had taken the necessary precautions, but they ultimately underestimated the force and impact of the storm, raising the question if these warnings had been severe enough or did not reach people in time to act on them. As Jed Horne states in "Breach of Faith" (2006: xvi), an amalgam of witness accounts and a very thorough game of "Who's to blame",

Katrina was an unnatural disaster – unnatural in its scale and destructiveness, but also unnatural in the sense that it was not limited causally to the forces of nature, to weather and geography and tides. (...), Katrina has been essentially a man-made disaster.

In the following chapter, I will elaborate on Horne's implications above by providing more detailed insight on the course of events following the hurricane, the local, federal and the political response during and after the catastrophe, as a result of which many New Orleanians were forced to leave their hometown, being separated from

their loved ones, not knowing where and whom they would end up with or when they would be able to return. For many of them, Katrina caused a sudden departure into the unknown with no foreseeable return, only the eventuality of diaspora (Troutt, 2006: 23).

For a city so heavily rooted in its cultural, musical and culinary traditions as New Orleans, the conceptuality of diaspora is extremely important for the evacuees to feel at home and affiliated with each other. The same applies to bounce, a specific genre of music where the activity of experiencing life together and being together plays an essential role. As stated in one of the chapters above, it originates from and is played (mostly) by the African-American working-class community, who had been living in many of the lower lying neighborhoods in New Orleans. Like many large cities in the U.S., the New Orleans population is apportioned into different neighborhoods based on social status, creating a highly segregated division of the city. A large part of the African-American community lived in the Eastern parts of New Orleans, while the Western neighborhoods were inhabited mostly by white people.

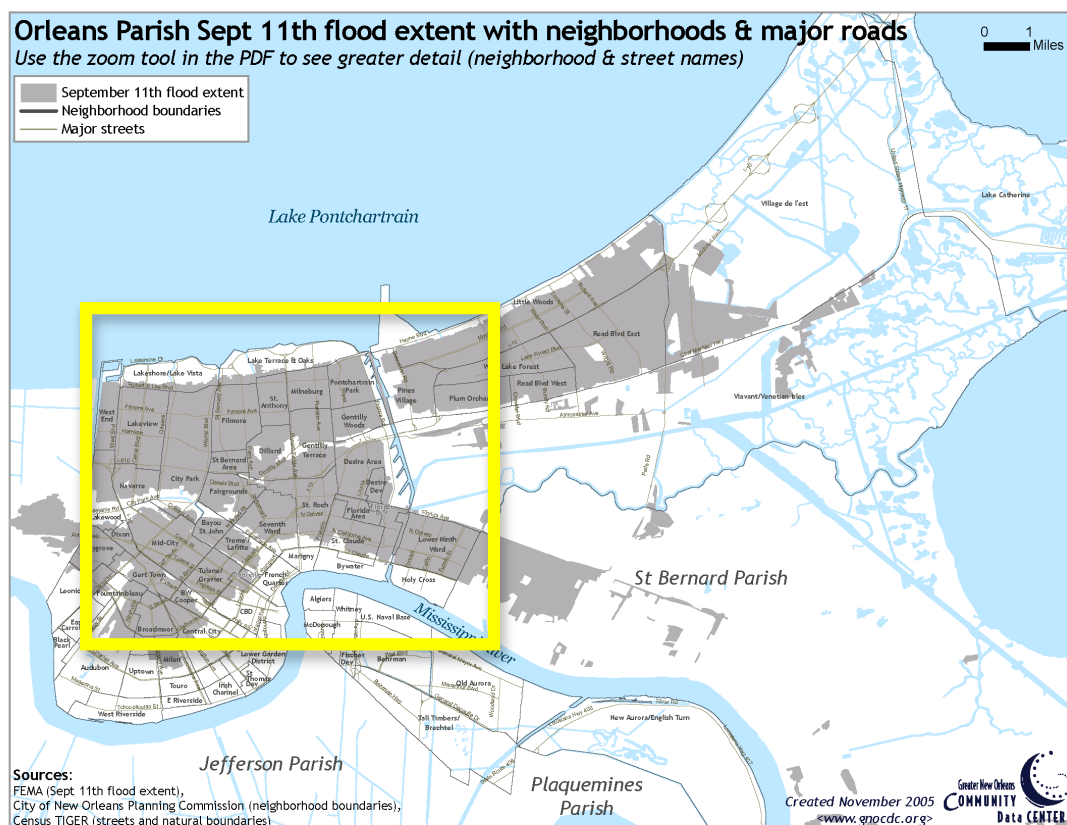


Figure 1 - Map of New Orleans: Extent of Katrina Flooding (Data Center, 2014).

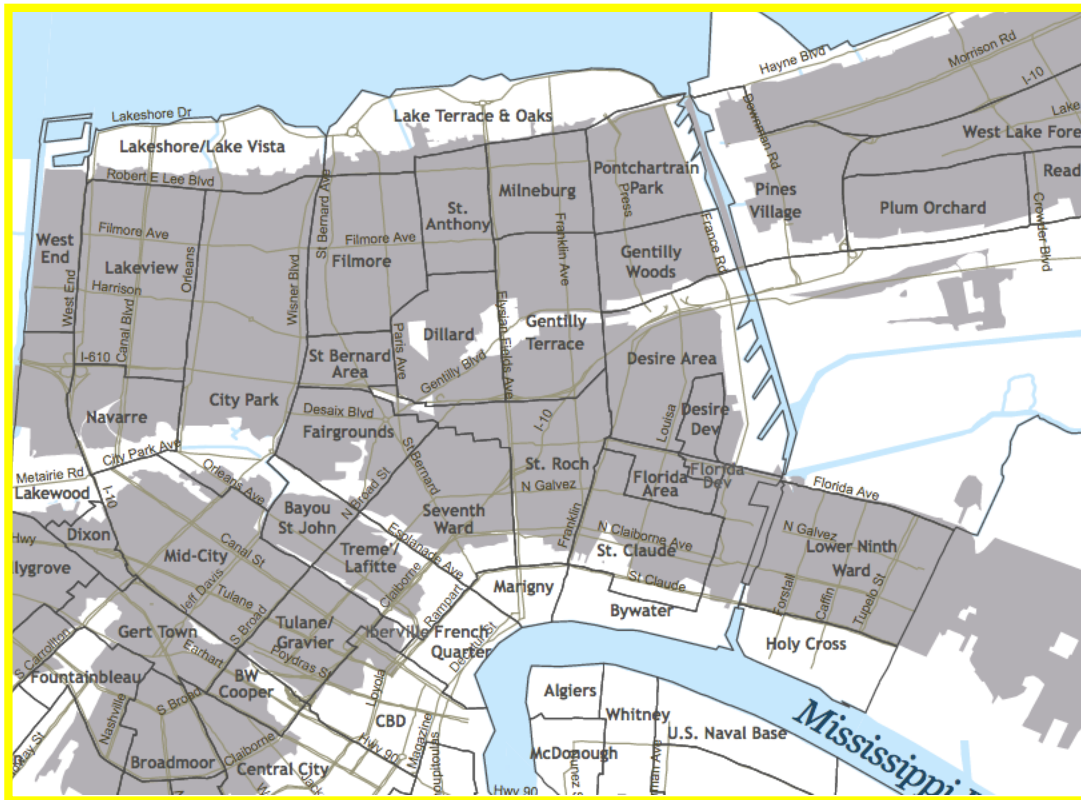


Figure 2 - Close-Up of Map of New Orleans: Extent of Katrina Flooding (Data Center, 2014).

Overnight, one particular neighborhood became known to the entire world watching the flooded city: the Lower Ninth Ward. Having a pre-Katrina population of about 14,000, the Lower Ninth Ward was home to mostly working-class African-American families, making up 98.3% of the population, with about one third of them living below the poverty line and the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ living at or above poverty (collected at the Data Center, 2014). A lot of these families, however, were homeowners, losing all their belongings and savings to the water masses pouring in through the burst levee of the Industrial Canal. While Katrina had caused havoc all over the state of Louisiana, the destruction was by far the most apparent in the Lower Ninth Ward, as was, sadly, the lack of recovery (as will be explained in subsection 3).

4.2 The Social Injustice of the (African-American) Working-Class Population During and After Hurricane Katrina. Indifference or Incompetence of the Authorities?

Shortly after the events of the 29th August and its aftermath, it became apparent to the rest of the world that the situation in New Orleans was the epitome of governmental ineptitude. The lack of communication as well as the dysfunction between the local and the federal leaders led to a failure on all levels, with the New Orleans residents being the ones to suffer (Robertson & Fausset, 2015).

In their study on the sense of place and community recovery in the post-Katrina Ninth Ward, Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) constitute the concept of “institutional racism” playing a role in the lethargic response of the government to the disaster and in the uneven assistance in the recovery of the different neighborhoods. The latter can be perfectly demonstrated by the disproportionate difference of return: families living in the Lower Ninth Ward could not return to their properties until three months after the storm, while the residents of many other neighborhoods in New Orleans were allowed to access their homes only few weeks after the storm (Chamlee-Wright & Store, 2009: 616).

Regarding the accusation of a late response—an accusation coming from the victims, the media, and even academics writing about Katrina a decade later—all have agreed on the fact that the disappointing reaction of the federal government is a sign of either indifference or incompetence (Cashin, 2006: 30). Both Mayor Nagin and Kathleen Blanco, who was Governor of Louisiana at the time, had been alerted timely about the probable consequences of the storm by several official channels, and both had tried reaching out to the White House. This apparently posed a challenge at first, delaying the passing of information to just 48 hours before Katrina hit (Cashin, 2006: 30). In light of this information, it cannot be fully comprehended why it took them so long to help out their fellow citizens. In the following paragraphs, I will illustrate the accusations made above by presenting examples of inexperienced, poor decisions and judgments, to give a more detailed insight into the course of action.

Ivor van Heerden, the deputy director of the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center, was aware of the possible consequences of hurricane Katrina. In a disaster drill conducted the year before, the entire scenario had been anticipated. Interestingly, the organization funding this project was FEMA, proving that they had also been aware of the danger (Horne, 2006: 146). He did not flinch from addressing the media about his findings and suspicions that not only could the disaster have been anticipated, additionally the breaking of the levees could have been prevented or at least stopped before the entire Lake Pontchartrain started pouring into the basin that was formerly known as the neighborhood Lakeview.

According to van Heerden's findings, there were several main reasons why the levee system failed to protect the residents. The soil that the levees were built on was unstable and partly consisting of erodible materials, which is quite common for drained swampland. During the construction, the Army Corps could have reinforced the soil and the levees, however it is unclear whether this was neglected to prevent added expense or because of simple carelessness. In addition, as was stated in the final report, the construction of the levees that the Army Corps had started in the early 1990s still had not been completed when Katrina hit, making the impact of the hurricane ever more disastrous than would otherwise have been the case (Horne, 2006: 154f). All things considered, it can be said that the Army Corps had the assignment to build a levee system able to withstand a certain level of hurricane violence, on which they evidently did not deliver. After months of controverting their mistakes, different experts working independently were able to provide evidence proving the above, leading to a surrender of the Army Corps and a statement of its commanding officer recognizing the fault was theirs (Horne, 2006: 381f).

The New Orleans Levee Board was called into life to supervise the levee and floodwall system and protect the city and its residents with the necessary equipment in case of emergencies. Bob Harvey, a former employee, explains that in such exceptional situations, the Levee Board should be the first to respond, particularly since they have access to a large workforce of 300 people and the necessary equipment, be it heavy machinery or sandbags. On that Monday in 2005 however, they failed to do exactly what New Orleans needed them to do (Horne, 2006: 263f). Harvey expounds further that even though they had not been there to stop the

breaching of the levees on the 17th Street Canal, they should at least have alerted residents to the impending danger. Later research shows that the breach could have been stanchied; it started out as a mere six-meter gap and eventually turned into a sixty-meter-wide breach over the course of several hours (Horne, 2006: 268).

While the government had to cope with a shortage of manpower, with most of the troops abroad fighting a war, it also failed to efficiently use those it had at disposal. In “Breach of Faith” Horne quotes Captain Nora Tyson of the USS Bataan Hospital Ship, the ship that had made its way to New Orleans within the first crucial days, that they had simply been ignored by FEMA and that she could not force herself and her crew on them. The same goes for three Black Hawk helicopters that were used to transport journalists and photographers around instead of rescuing people from their roofs. There are reports of requests for boat brigades and rubber rafts in search for survivors being denied because FEMA rated the situation in the city as unsafe at that time (Horne, 2006: 89). Volunteers were forced to stop helping because they were not officially registered with FEMA, keeping doctors from saving lives because of bureaucratic ineptitude. Even the Red Cross was told to stay away for safety reasons during the first days, FEMA’s reasoning being that people might falsely assume it to be safe to stay since there were aid workers on site (Horne, 2006: 90).

There seems to be no limit to the number of incompetent decisions that were made by this agency in the wake of Katrina. While all the above could have equally affected whites, blacks, or people of any social background, the following section will be focusing on the social injustice the African-American community of New Orleans was confronted with. In her paper “While Visions of Defiance Danced in Their Heads” published in “After the Storm,” Russel-Brown recalls the Gretna “showdown”: while trying to flee the city, where Katrina was about to make landfall, masses of people, most of them of African-American descent, chose to walk across a public bridge leading out of city. However, police officers from three different jurisdictions blocked their way and denied them crossing the bridge that lead through the predominantly white community of Gretna, a suburb of New Orleans, depriving their fellow citizens of their fundamental rights (Russel-Brown, 2006: 115).

Another example displaying the uneven approach to evacuees of different ethnicities is the imagery of black New Orleanians in the media at the time. From the start, journalists and news anchors referred to the black lower-class (and thus poorer) community as “refugees,” insinuating that they were fleeing from another country, as if the remaining states of the U.S. were not their home (Price, 2006: 71). Additionally, the media quickly started stereotyping the black community, mirroring a perception of the ghetto that the rest of America seems to be so afraid of. Instead of accurately conveying the situation as it was in both the Superdome and the Convention Center—chaotic, scary and inhuman—they focused on the nation's preconception of the crazed and dangerous black man, propagating an exaggerated imagery of violence and rape, people taking advantage of the situation for looting, which they understand as typical ghetto behaviors, rationalizing their fears. Suddenly, in their conception, every black New Orleanian became a criminal. Apart from transporting a misconception to the rest of the world, these unsubstantiated media accounts spread unnecessary fear and reluctance, keeping help organizations from being allowed into the city by local authorities on grounds of safety (Harris & Carbado, 2006: 98f).

One picture in particular upset many people that have been concerned with this subject: many articles featured photos of the people left behind after the hurricane, trying to find food and drinks to survive, wading through the flooded streets of New Orleans. Repeatedly, the caption of one picture (Figure3) depicting a white couple said, that they had just found food, whereas the same picture (Figure 4) of a young black man read that he was walking through the water, looting grocery stores (Harris & Carbado, 2006: 88).



*Figure 3 - Caption: "Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery."
(Getty Images/Graythen, in Wade, 2007).*



*Figure 4 - Caption: "A young man walks through chest deep floodwater after looting a grocery store in New Orleans."
(AP Photo/Dave Martin, in: Wade, 2007).*

The example above illustrates the striking difference that the media created, marking black people as criminals and white people as survivors. It is undeniable that there has been more criminality and sexual assault in the aftermath of Katrina, however, we see that Katrina was yet another eye opener of how strong and important media is, but at the same time how manipulative it can be: it decides which information the outside

world obtains and how it is perceived. The discussion that was launched by the release of the pictures above and their captions thoroughly depicts how race is perceived in a lot of the U.S. media even today. Harris & Carbado put it quite aptly with their discussion on the concept of “racial frames” (2006: 103):

[...] Various facts about our social life are racially interpreted through frames. As a result of racial frames, black people are both visible (as criminals) and invisible (as victims).

It is a fact that the black community was disproportionately affected by Katrina since they occupied the neighborhoods lying below sea level. The question that Bouie poses in his 2015 article, “Where Black Lives Matter Began“, is whether the government would have accounted for the damage if this had happened to a mostly white community in Florida. Would the people, who had been left behind because of inadequate preparation to an evacuation, be provided with supplies and shelter or would they just be abandoned in the same way they were in New Orleans?

4.3 Rebuilding a City: Prioritization or Discrimination? Economy vs. Equality

The aftermath of hurricane Katrina initiated a debate amongst politicians concerning the size of New Orleans. Some of them considered this the perfect opportunity to concentrate those who were able to return away from the lower-lying neighborhoods and thus reducing the amount of neighborhoods. As stated earlier, these neighborhoods below sea level were the homes of much of the black middle/working-class, such as the Lower Ninth Ward, Broadmoor or Gentilly. In short, these measures would conclude in obliterating the poor and economically weak neighborhoods, which had been a thorn in several politicians’ flesh all along (Adelson, 2015). Though the idea had been rejected, it left many of the former residents worried and insecure. Neither private citizens nor (local) businesses felt assured enough to put money and work into rebuilding their homes or businesses when the area they were working in might be declared a swamp by their leaders at any given moment. This has raised a lot of distrust among people. The fact that many Ninth Ward neighborhoods still lacked access to electricity and water one year after the storm—stalling all

rebuilding efforts—was not conducive to a regaining of trust (Chamlee Wright & Storr, 2009).

A decade after Katrina, a report from the Data Center of Southeast Louisiana, tracking the addresses receiving residential mail, shows that, though a surprisingly large amount of people have returned, the recovery of New Orleans' population is extremely uneven: the neighborhoods on elevated ground west of the Industrial Canal saw many new residents migrating from all over the country, in addition to the return of many former residents (Adelson, 2015). Put into numbers, this translates into a 90% recovery for more than half of the neighborhoods, with 16 neighborhoods gaining population since the storm. The latter, situated mostly along the Mississippi River above sea level and only slightly damaged during the storm, allowed an early return of former and new residents shortly after the hurricane (Nowakowski, 2015). In contrast, the neighborhoods situated in the eastern parts of the city have seen far fewer people return to their former homes or what was left of them. The doubts and skepticism that arose because of the aforementioned concept of anti-rebuilding certain neighborhoods have caused reluctance among the former residents to return. While they have no assurance that their neighborhoods will be provided with the necessary amenities, the businesses and grocery stores will not return without the expectation of the population to return. By imposing several governmental restrictions regarding the residents' return and the recovery of the community, a vicious circle is created, which is impossible to escape from (Adelson, 2015). It seems as though the city's rebuilding plan focuses on a substantial redevelopment of the upper to middle class (white) neighborhoods, while the Lower Ninth Ward, is standing on the sidelines (Russell-Brown, 2006: 116).

While the African-American population still makes up the majority of the city residents with 58.8%, New Orleans counts about 100,000 fewer black residents than it did pre-Katrina (according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 population estimates), while more of these black households now proportionally have incomes below the poverty line. To give a more specific example, a decade after Katrina 80% of the residents of New Orleans East and only 34% of the population of the Lower Ninth Ward have returned (Plyer, 2015, Data Center). The latter is one of four areas of New Orleans that has seen less than half of its population return after the storm, the other

three being neighborhoods that were home to thousands of low-income families by means of public housing projects. After the demolition of the projects, they had been replaced with newer apartments for mixed-income communities, with only 40% of them at the traditional public housing rents, making it impossible for more than half of the former residents to afford them (Robertson & Fausset, 2015).

The combination of rising costs of living, both in rent and house sale prices, property taxes and flood-insurances, and low wages amongst the African-American working-class (due to a grave absence of middle-class work) creates an extreme income inequality (Rivlin, 2015). Because of this gentrification, many neighborhoods have changed from a majority black population to mostly white residents. There has also been a major demographic shift amongst the Hispanic population, which has seen a vast rise since the hurricane. More than 6,000 people of Hispanic descent have moved to New Orleans since 2005, which is a raise of 40% to the pre-Katrina population. This can be attributed to the fact that many of them moved to New Orleans during its time of recovery, to rebuild the city by working in construction. Many of them then decided to stay for good (Plyer, 2015, Data Center).

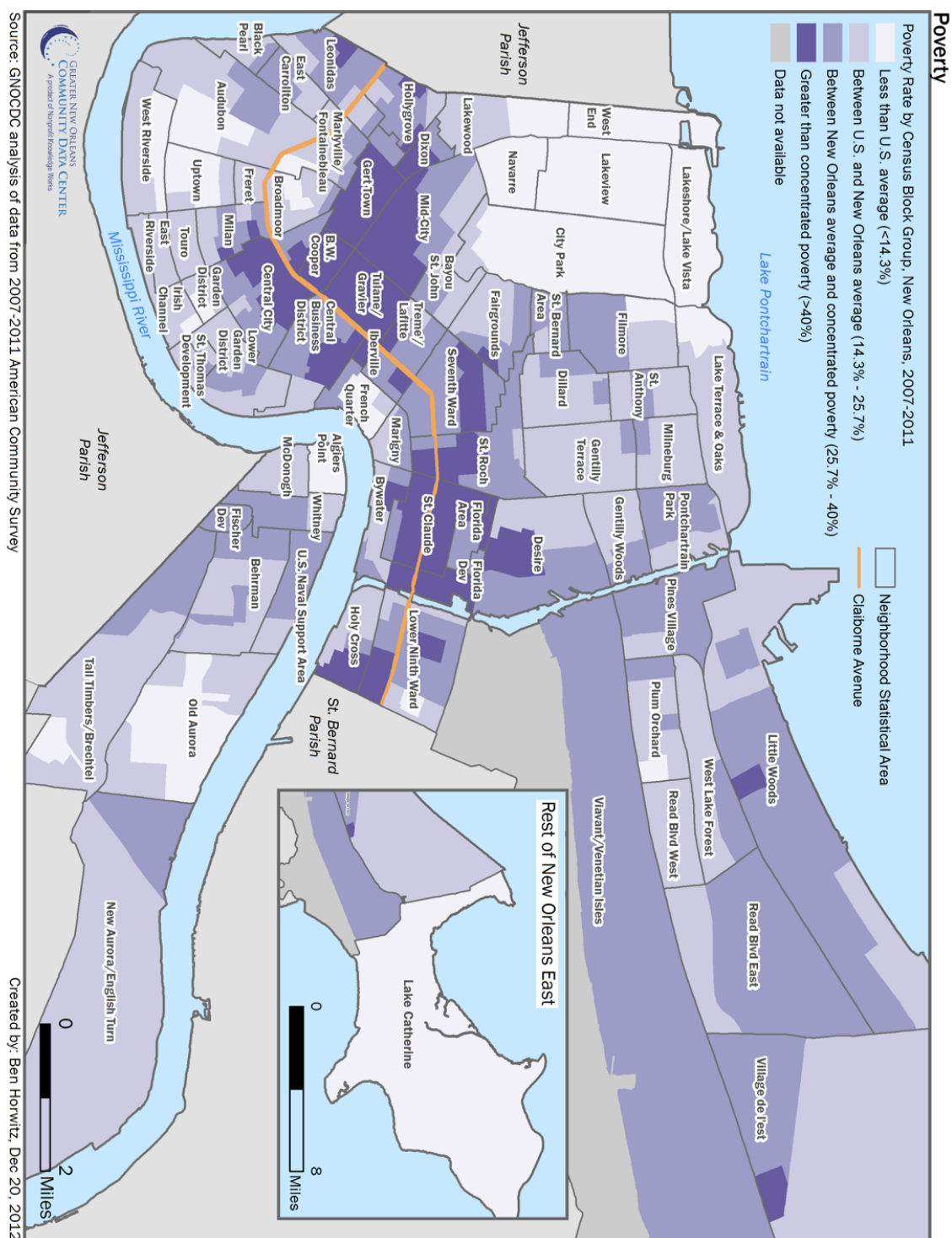


Figure 5 - Map of New Orleans: Poverty Rate (Data Center, 2012).

With a recovery plan that “[...] *discouraged rather than encouraged low-income people of color to return*” (Cashin, 2006: 35), it is no surprise that the black communities are not at the historic numbers (yet) that New Orleans used to be famous for and proud of. While many politicians celebrate the “new” New Orleans and consider its recovery completed, a large part of the residents as well as the journalists and academics cited in this chapter do not agree, stating that a “recovered” New Orleans seems to be equated with a gentrified New Orleans (Roig-Franzia, 2015). While wanting to concentrate the residents in the higher lying neighborhoods, the rising rent prices entailed that living in those neighborhoods becomes a privilege, recreating a concentration of poverty in the lower lying areas of New Orleans, isolating the residents spatially from the Western areas, bringing the city back to square one; to a pre-Katrina segregated New Orleans.

In interviews conducted by Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2007) with former and current residents of the Lower Ninth Ward, almost all of the interview subjects stated that the motivation for their return to the city arose from the sense of place that New Orleans has, the uniqueness of its features, the traditions and the “*joie de vivre*.” But what happens to a city when the people who constitute its character are being replaced by a wealthier, middle-class population that is not familiar with that particular cultural identity? To what extent will both its cultural traditions and the overall atmosphere be affected?

4.4 Remigration to Devastation. Will Bounce Return to a Depopulated City of Destroyed Neighborhoods?

New Orleans is deeply rooted in African and Caribbean tradition because of its location and its history, creating a distinctive culture that cannot be compared to any other American city. Along with that culture comes a strong feeling of identity, of belonging, which has been deeply and severely debilitated by Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The tradition lives through religion, storytelling, culinary art, ceremonies and most importantly the arts. The music of New Orleans is rooted in the culture of the black working-class and they are the ones who perform and nourish

those genres. Be it jazz and brass band, or Mardi Gras, a French Catholic tradition, spiced up with Creole and African elements, hip-hop, or bounce, they all contribute to the city's distinctiveness, making it all the more justified to worry about losing those customs. A logical assumption after such a huge disaster would be that wealthier people with resources and access to help have better preconditions to return and restart their lives. Considering the first three parts of this chapter, it is safe to conclude that the communities among which that culture lives and thrives the most are the ones struggling and shrinking (Guarino, 2015).

As explained in Chapter 3, New Orleans' hip-hop and bounce is rooted in those lowest-lying neighborhoods. Just like the rest of the community, the rappers and deejays lost their belongings, probably even family members or friends, to the hurricane and its aftermath, experiencing the same disruption as all the other evacuees. They had to struggle with FEMA and insurance companies, all while being displaced, miles away from New Orleans, their studios, their venues, their equipment and their usual social environment. Many of the local artists lived in the most heavily inundated areas, returning to a site of destruction. Just like it was for the other residents, both private and business, the uncertainty of the future of their neighborhoods held many musicians back from returning. Not knowing if they were going to be able to record or perform a show at their regular venue or if their audience had returned to come to their shows, was a crucial reason for reluctance, especially for such a local genre depending on its participatory characteristic (Miller, 2012: 160).

Although the general setup seems more than terrible, Katrina and its aftermath do not seem to have affected the hip-hop community in such a negative way. On the contrary, many of the artists were inspired by it, creating an outlet for the thousands of unheard voices. Due to the hypersegregation prevailing in New Orleans long before Katrina, a large part of the city's population got systematically marginalized, which, in consequence of the attention of the media during the hurricane and the federal ineptitude that followed, cannot remain disregarded and unaddressed anymore.

Russell-Brown claims, however, that there will not be any consequences for the guilty "[...] *because there is no space for their offenses within the mainstream media narrative on race, crime, and justice*" (Russell-Brown, 2006: 119), which I disagree

with: the missing platform he describes is the epitome of hip-hop. The collective strength that people need, the injustice that a minority group had to suffer is what fuels the art of hip-hop. In this manner, rap music becomes an outlet for them, rap songs become their voices, rendering them audible and visible, and rappers become their advocates. Just the same as the Civil Rights Movement had gospel, folk or soul, and as racial injustice inspired Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, or as Public Enemy appeared as the long due response to the Reagan era, the survivors of Hurricane Katrina and everyone who shared their pain and anger needed a platform, a voice to speak up.

John Gery, a professor of poetry at the University of New Orleans, made an intriguing observation in the aftermath of Katrina: what happened to the city created an unprecedented demand for and attention to poetry amongst people everywhere, creating an opportunity for poets to express themselves and an entirely new and unknown audience to reach (Gery, 2006: 1541f). I would argue that this exact phenomenon can be translated into the hip-hop genre: the audience asks for the opinion of the well-respected, outspoken people of their community. So to answer the question in the title of this chapter: yes, considering the demand and inspiration for rap music—both socially conscious and distractingly infectious—bounce needs to and will return to a depopulated city of destroyed neighborhoods. It might not be easy, but as seen in the earlier chapters, nothing in the history of hip-hop ever was.

5. Reactions to Katrina and its Social Aftermath in Hip-Hop Music.

The musical culture of New Orleans played an extremely important role in the aftermath of Katrina. Shortly after the city was inundated by the storm, musicians all over the U.S. organized several benefit concerts, tributes and performances at award shows to raise money and awareness, and to pay their respects to the residents of New Orleans. Special relief organizations were brought into being, helping musicians get back on their feet and new foundations were initiated to help preserve the musical heritage of the city. Most of these supporting measures, however, focused on all the local genres—Brass Bands, Jazz and Mardi Gras—except hip-hop. In one of the first national articles about the local hip-hop genre bounce, published in 2006 in the New York Times, Kelefa Sanneh wonders whether it is the image that most rappers represent that prevents them from being included in cultural philanthropy (Sanneh, 2006).

Both local rappers and national hip-hop artists instantly responded to the tragedy, addressing it in their songs and their public statements. They use their celebrity and mainstream fame to bring the injustice of Katrina's aftermath into public conscience. For the first time since the 1980s, back when *N.W.A.* and *Public Enemy* had created reality rap, hip-hop returned to its roots, providing a political voice to those who, otherwise, would not be heard, and exposing those who they considered responsible for the damage inflicted. By including the experiences and problems their audience had to face into the lyrics and samples of their songs, they were able to musically illustrate their long and arduous journey from New Orleans, being exiled into diaspora, and eventually back to devastation (Kish, 2011: 689). Combining the latter with brutal honesty, outspoken criticism, but also encouragement and hope gave birth to a post-Katrina activism that everyone had seemed to be waiting for (Gelbart & Weinstein, n.d.: 2). This echoed very well with the audience: after being left behind by the authorities, a group of people taking action and standing up for their community was just what they needed.

In the following section, I will lay out some examples, illustrating how rappers coped with the events by playing their music and writing about it in their songs, proving that the local bounce music deserves to get the same recognition as the other genres and is equally worth preserving and listening to.

5.1 On a Local Level: Songs, Public Statements, and Documentaries.

While *Juvenile*, who had been a key actor in bounce music and its evolution, was never really known for being politically outspoken, he released his song “Get Ya Hustle On” in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. It served both as a protest against the lack of action from the local and federal government, but at the same time also as a call to the victims of Katrina to stop complaining about the situation and start changing it: by “getting their hustle on”. He musically incorporates bounce by using a slight variation of the “Triggerman” during the entire song.

In his song, *Juvenile* addresses the topic of the aforementioned misuse of the Black Hawk helicopters (see 4.2.), denouncing Fox News for their use of helicopters to take the “winning shot” instead of rescuing the victims from their roofs.

We starvin’! We livin’ like Haiti without no government
Niggas killin’ niggas and them bitches is lovin’ it
Fuck Fox News! I don’t listen to y’all ass
Couldn’t get a nigga off the roof when the storm passed
(...) Talk to ‘em – your mayor ain’t your friend, he’s the enemy
Just to get your vote, a saint is what he pretend to be
Fuck him! Ah – listen to me, I got the remedy
Save your money up and find out who got ‘em for 10 a ki⁵

He also voices his criticism directly towards Mayor Nagin for his lack of support for his people and falling short of the pledges he made while campaigning. The last sentence refers to getting a kilo of cocaine for \$10,000. *Juvenile* urges his fellow New Orleanians to stop waiting for the government to help them and start “hustlin’”—meaning making money—so that they can stand on their own feet, not depending on the help of others anymore, even if that means selling drugs:

⁵ Juvenile: Get Ya Hustle On (*Reality Check*). UTP / Atlantic Records WMG (2006), <http://genius.com/655927>, accessed: 11.12.2015.

Everybody need a check from FEMA
So he can go and sco' him some co-ca-ina
Get money! And I ain't gotta ball in the Beemer
Man, I'm tryin to live, I lost it all in Katrina (damn)⁶

With these last two lines, he points out that he too lost everything, his home and his possessions, in the storm, placing him closer to his audience and making the song approachable and relatable. He states that he does not need a BMW (“beemer”), being a metaphor for the fact that he does not need a large amount of money to live an excessive lifestyle. Just like his fellow New Orleanians, he only expects what he is legitimately entitled to in order to go back to his normal life.

In December of 2005, *Juvenile* filmed the corresponding music video in the devastated landscape of (what was left of) the Lower Ninth Ward, the neighborhood that *Juvenile* grew up in. Although the area had just been cleared and reopened to the public, the crew needed to be escorted by police. Since the budget for the video was relatively low, both the shooting of it and the video itself were kept very simple: just one camera, without the usual amenities (e.g. catering or trailers), and no big storyline, letting the powerful images speak for themselves (Spera, 2001: 244). The video starts out with an acknowledgement to the people of New Orleans, which is very representative of bounce. A shot of a statue of an angel next to the following text:

This is a tribute to those who died in the wrath of hurricane Katrina
the storm may have passed but for thousands the struggle is just beginning.

Then the intro of the song starts and the video cuts to shots of wrecked cars and *Juvenile* rapping in front of destroyed houses, children’s toys hanging in fences and other personal belongings scattered all over the streets. In between the rapping sequences, director Ben Mor cuts to scenes of three children digging around in the ruins, where they find three masks in a cardboard box with pictures of former President George W. Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney, and former Mayor Ray Nagin respectively on the front (Figure 6) and the words “HELP IS COMING”

⁶ Juvenile: Get Ya Hustle On (*Reality Check*). UTP / Atlantic Records WMG (2006), <http://genius.com/655927>, accessed: 11.12.2015.

on the back (Figure 7). For the remainder of the video, the three kids are wearing the masks while wandering the deserted neighborhood of what used to be the Lower Ninth Ward, coming across black people who are holding up signs saying “Still Here,” “2005 or 1905” and “You Already Forgot.”



Figure 6 - Video still from Juvenile's "Get Ya Hustle On" (Mor, 2006, screenshot by me).

When they eventually reach the interstate highway bridge, the one where hundreds of people were trapped for almost a week after Katrina hit, they start throwing down supplies, seemingly providing the area below with water and food (Figure 7). However, when the camera zooms in, it discloses that the water bottles and food cans are empty, symbolizing the empty promises that all three politicians made according to *Juvenile*.



Figure 7 - Video still from Juvenile's "Get Ya Hustle On" (Mor, 2006, screenshot by me).

With this song and its video, *Juvenile* has created an explicit way of conveying his opinion on Katrina's aftermath, maybe even exposing a reality many did not know, and accomplished that the outside world would not forget that easily—despite what the sign in the video says. It is not typical for *Juvenile* to make a political statement with his music, this song in fact being his first (and only, thus far) socially conscious piece of music. As he explained to Keith Spera, the music journalist who joined him for the video shoot, he had other incentives for this project (Spera, 2011: 244):

I don't want my people to think that I'm political. I'm not. It's just that I'm one of those people that actually lost. I'm one of the people that hasn't received insurance money, that was promised help from the government and didn't receive that help. So I'm just speaking from that point of view.

Even though the term “local” in this chapter's title seems to geographically limit the variety of musical examples, there still exists a great difference between the examples at hand. While *Juvenile*'s contribution to the Katrina-themed hip-hop was created in New Orleans, the following example represents the importance of cultural identity and diaspora. Just like *Juvenile*, the New Orleans local rapper 5th Ward Weebie released “Katrina Song (Fuck Katrina)” shortly after the hurricane hit the city. While being exiled in Houston, Texas, he did not forget about his roots whenever he performed at the local clubs. As the first example of a post-Katrina song having emerged from diaspora, *Weebie* was able to create a typical bounce sound by using

familiar samples in the music and specific techniques in his lyrics: the song includes the “Triggerman” throughout the entire song overlying the syncopated “Brown’s Beat”, a drum break characteristic for New Orleans bounce music, sampled from the 1987 single “Rock the Beat” by *Derek B* (Miller, 2012: 79). The lyrics are short, repetitive and catchy, inviting the listener to take part in the performance, and they include call and response parts and shout-outs to the wards, which, as explained earlier, are all common methods of song-writing in bounce.

The song starts out by sampling the FEMA answering machine, a sound that many of the Katrina survivors know very well from being put on hold because the agency seemingly could not handle the large demand.

FEMA: We’re sorry, all of our agents are assisting other callers. / It may take 10 minutes or more to answer your call.⁷

This intro leads into a call and response chant of the words “Fuck Katrina”, bestowing an almost anthem-like feel upon the song, which is not too surprising, considering the song came into being during a live performance for New Orleans residents in Houston (Kish, 2011: 677). Then follows the first and only verse of the song in which he addresses the failure of the authorities and the lack of money, approaching the subject with a sense of wit and sarcasm to follow up the anger of the intro. For instance, he uses explicit language, to personify Katrina as the “hoe” hanging out with (hurricane) Rita, another “hoe”, who are both “fucking over” his people. Sticking to his theme, *Weebie* also refers to President George W. Bush as a “bitch” for taking so long to come down to New Orleans. That verse contains most of the song’s storyline and lyrics and is followed by the call and response part from the intro, which can be described as the chorus. The element of repetition is ubiquitous throughout the song by the constant interjecting of the line “Hurricane Katrina Got us Living Off that Fema” and the recurring chorus chant. By the end of the track, *Weebie* starts calling out to the wards, however, as opposed to the usual technique used in bounce—calling out the neighborhoods of the audience members combined with their ecstatic participation in the performance—he puts a slightly sad spin on the original, by adding what they look like after Katrina and the struggles they had to face:

⁷ 5th Ward Weebie: Fuck Katrina (Katrina Song). FattBoy Ent (2005) (transcribed by me).

9th Ward chapter⁸
8th Ward suffered
7th Ward gone but my man said fuck it
6th Ward empty
5th Ward through
Calliope And Iberville, ain't a thing we can do
West Bank running
Uptown ain't nothing
New Orleans East over, go and get the bulldozers⁹

The song gained a lot of popularity with both the local Texas audience, the exiled residents, and bounce fans. It is a perfect example of the importance of bounce in the diaspora Katrina has created, which will be extensively explained in chapter 6.

Similar to the previous example, *Mia X* released a classic bounce song, combining all the characteristics a bounce song needs from a musical point of view. When listening to it, one can instantly hear the “Triggerman” motif, which is, again, used throughout the entirety of the song. It is combined with the syncopated beat and, further into the song, with the call-outs to the different neighborhoods. However, as opposed to a classic bounce song by *DJ Jubilee*, which focuses on spreading happiness and positivity, the lyrics to this *Mia X* song are full of anger and sadness, complementing each other into a political statement. This form of social consciousness accompanied by a danceable rhythm is fairly uncommon for bounce. However, it did not impair the positive resonance with her fans—on the contrary, the song was and still is very popular amongst her fans and many scholars and journalists have used it as a flagship example for politically outspoken post-Katrina hip-hop (Kish, 2011: 676f). Just like the thousands of New Orleans residents she is reaching out to in her song, *Mia X* lost friends and family members in the storm and the disaster that followed

⁸ “chapter”: common in the New Orleans vernacular, “straight up done, no more good, useless.”

Putty the Pimp. s.v. “Chapter.” *Urban Dictionary* (2006).

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Chapter>, accessed: 03.01.2016.

⁹ 5th Ward Weebie. Fuck Katrina (Katrina Song). FattBoy Ent (2005),

<http://www.urbanlyrics.com/lyrics/5thwardweebie/katrinasongfuckkatrina.html>, accessed: 13.12.2015.

(Miller, 2011: 163). She uses this song to cope with the problems and troubles she has experienced, laying them all out in the emotional lyrics.

Ride through my city,
Beirut. Iraq. Ride through my city.
I ride and cry all through the city.
Looking for the culture all through the city.
We were left for dead for vultures all through the city.
It's so much bigger than the weather.¹⁰

While *Juvenile* literally “rode” through the city in his music video, laying out the struggle the community is faced with after Katrina through imagery, *Mia X* gives the listener a little tour through her lyrics. The last sentence emphasizes that it was not just the hurricane that created the catastrophe, the situation worsened significantly by the lack of intervention. Furthermore, she does not forget to include the struggles that followed the hurricane, not just the disappointment of the government’s late response, but the financial problems that most of the working-class population of New Orleans had to deal with.

Everything under water,
everything gone,
bill collectors stalking me on my phone.
So if you're waiting on me, then I'm waiting on FEMA.
Insurance playing games with a whole lot of people now.¹¹

For *Mia X*, this song is an outlet for the things her community and herself were put through in the months and years that followed the storm, similar to 5th Ward Weebie’s song. But just like “Get Ya Hustle On” it is also supposed to prompt the people to get back up on their feet and try to make the best of their situation, ending the song with a positive message of love for the city. Thus, after two examples of quite different nature, the third one combines the ideology of both into one song. However, just like many other bounce songs that were written post-Katrina, all three songs channel the same sorrowful emotions, which is rather untypical for bounce and its focus on

¹⁰ Mia X: My FEMA People. n.a. (2005). In Kish, Zenia: “‘My FEMA People’: Hip-Hop as Disaster Recovery in the Katrina Diaspora.”, in: *American Quarterly* Vol. 61, No. 3 (2009), p. 676.

¹¹ *ibid.*

positivity. Since all three of them are confronted with the same problems, just like the rest of the community, it seems natural that they address the same serious topics in their songs: displacement, the uncertainty of return, financial problems and loss, which in turn results in sadness, anger and fear (Kish, 2009: 677). While all of the examples include the many musical themes and motifs typical of the genre, the modification of the lyrics and thus the message of the songs make way for an entirely new aspect of bounce, creating the subgenre of socially conscious bounce. This proves once again that any genre is capable of adapting to certain situations if the demand exists within the audience and its key actors.

While the three artists referenced above were already well known and established within the pre-Katrina bounce community and the national hip-hop scene, Kimberly Rivers-Roberts had just started writing songs and performing them when she was forced to leave her hometown. Directed and produced by Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, who both worked on Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, "Trouble the Waters" is a documentary of a couple, one of them being Kimberly Rivers-Roberts, locally known as rapper *Black Kold Madina*, surviving the hurricane but struggling in its aftermath. The movie was released to the public on 22nd August 2008, almost exactly three years after Katrina hit.

As the story progresses, it becomes apparent that the struggles are not just the consequences of a storm, but rather of decades of negligence of an entire community. The producers meet the couple from the Ninth Ward at a shelter, shortly after the city has been evacuated, making for an extremely interesting concept: the film is composed of material shot by the filmmakers, following the rapper around while she is trying to get her life back together, adeptly combined with footage of when the couple was trapped in the attic of their Ninth Ward home and their journey to the shelter, collected from their film camera. Some footage from the news coverage completes the film material, creating a unique and critically acclaimed documentary, which on the one hand speaks to the New Orleans evacuees all over the country, and on the other hand reaches and, more importantly, informs a new audience anywhere in the world. Both the film and the song "Trouble the Water," written, produced and performed by *Black Kold Madina* were nominated for an Academy Award in 2009, gaining an enormous amount of attention, not just for the music genre as such, but

also for the artist, who since has released three albums and has been touring all through the U.S. and Europe¹².

While there have been several other documentaries about hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, “Trouble the Water” is the only one to focus on bounce and even having a bounce rapper as its leading role. The rather unusual but exceptional concept of the movie is what sets it apart from the other documentaries, and definitely played a part in making it so successful. As will be further elaborated in chapter 6, the interest in bounce music and its popularity took a surprising turn in the months and years following Katrina, as can be measured by *Black Kold Madina*’s instant success, in which this documentary played a decisive part.

¹² *Official Website of Trouble the Water*, “The Story | Trouble the Water” (2008), http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com/content/pages/the_story/, accessed: 28.09.2016.

5.2 On a National Level: Songs, Performances, Public Statements, and Charity Events.

Yasiin Bey, a rapper formerly known as *Mos Def* when he released his song “Dollar Day (Katrina Klap)” in 2006, joined the hip-hop movement early on in New York City in the 1990s. With *Talib Kweli* he formed the group called *Black Star* and joined the *Native Tongues Posse*, creating socially conscious rap addressing political issues. Ever since, he has been known for being politically outspoken and being the voice of a minority. He is sometimes even referred to as an activist, making it all the more understandable for him to join the resulting discourse after hurricane Katrina.

The song “Dollar Day (Katrina Klap)” samples an old bounce classic: *UTP*’s “Nolia Clap,” which *Juvenile* wrote as a tribute to where he grew up—the Magnolia projects. By using this song, *Bey* in turn pays tribute to the local hip-hop scene of New Orleans and its representatives.

The song starts out with the story of an encounter of a rescue team with one survivor, days after the storm, ending with her repeatedly asking, “Where You Been?” Just like many of his fellow rappers’ responses, this song is a critique of the Bush administration’s response in the wake of Katrina, raising the government’s prioritization to question: Why are they spending such large amounts of money on a war miles away when it is needed in their own country?

Listen, a million poor since 2004
And they got -illions and killions to waste on the war
And make you question what the taxes is for
Or the cost to reinforce, the broke levee wall
Tell the boss, he shouldn't be the boss anymore¹³

After expressing his discontent with the work of the president, he asks him to resign from office. As the song goes on, the anger in its lyrics increases: in the first verse, *Bey* states that President Bush treats the black residents like garbage, insinuating that they are not worth saving. In the second verse he goes so far as to say that the

¹³ Mos Def: Dollar Day (Katrina Klap) (*True Magic*). New York: Geffen Records UMG (2006), <http://genius.com/Yasiin-bey-dollar-day-lyrics>, accessed: 29.09.2016.

government treats them even worse than that, pointing out the injustice the African-American community experienced, or, more accurately, depicting how they perceived it.

It's like Dollar Day for New Orleans
It's water water everywhere and homies dead in the streets
And Mr. President he 'bout that cash
He got a policy for handlin the niggas and trash
And Mr. President's a natural ass
He out treatin' niggas worse than they treat the trash¹⁴

Bey is referring to the first days after the hurricane, when many of the evacuees were stranded on the interstate without food or water. They had to suffer from inhuman living conditions, having no amenities for personal hygiene. Many of them had to wait for up to six days until the troops reached the city and were able to evacuate the survivors, who were put on buses, not knowing where they would be going and what to expect (Cohn, 2005: 235). In his song, *Bey* suggests that a New Orleans resident of African-American descent in the post-Katrina crisis would most likely be better off being in jail, at war or even dead.

Bey's activism is not limited to the song. He debuted the song during a public guerilla performance at the MTV Video Music Awards on 31st August 2006, Katrina's one-year anniversary. He was playing on a flatbed truck outside of the Radio City Music Hall (New York City) when the police forced him to stop the performance and arrested *Bey* and his crew for not having a permit (Rodriguez, 2006). Through this song and his performance, *Yasiin Bey* gave a voice to those disseized of their own and, as a mainstream artist whose reach stretches farther than many of New Orleans' homegrown rappers, was able to concentrate the world's attention on the injustice of Katrina. The publicity he created by performing the song illegally at one of the most important events of mainstream popular music is incomparable to the purview of the previous examples of local songs.

As one of the pioneers of socially conscious hip-hop, *Public Enemy* released their musical response to Katrina shortly after the hurricane had left New Orleans. Similar

¹⁴ Mos Def: Dollar Day (*True Magic*). New York: Geffen Records UMG (2006), <http://genius.com/Yasiin-bey-dollar-day-lyrics>, accessed: 29.09.2016.

to the previous example, *Chuck D*, who wrote the song, introduces it by sampling a non-musical recording: Mayor Nagin gave a press conference in the days that followed the disaster, calling on people and most importantly the federal government to “get off their asses and do something to fix the biggest goddamn crisis in the history of the country.” By using the angry voice of Nagin saying these explicit lines as the intro for the song, *Chuck D* establishes a general mood that will be maintained throughout its remainder. This mood is full of rage and animosity towards the authorities, but at the same time spurs its audience into action.

Racism in the news, still one sided views
Sayin' whites find food
Pray for the National Guard who be ready to shoot
Because they be sayin' us blacks loot
(...) Now I see we be the new faces of refugees
We ain't even overseas, but stuck here on our knees¹⁵

In this passage, *Chuck D* addresses the topic discussed in chapter 4.2.: the biased representation of the black citizen in the media, endorsing the people's prejudices instead of eliminating them. The image of the refugee, which was ascribed to the black evacuees, entails that they are not citizens of the U.S.—as if New Orleans was not part of the U.S.—turning it into a (American) third world. By this, the outside world can distance itself from the chaos and the evacuees, creating news articles that are seemingly farther away from home and, as a result, are less emotionally charged.

(Streets be floodin', B) no matter where you at no gas
Driving is a luxury (urgency)
Don't y'all know? They said this is a state of emergency
Show somebody's government is far from reality
(...) Forget the plasma TV, ain't no electricity
New world's upside down and out of order
Shelter? Food? Wassup, [where's the water?]
No answers from disaster, them masses hurtin'¹⁶

¹⁵ Public Enemy: Hell No (We Ain't All Right) (*Rebirth of a Nation*). n.a., Guerrilla Funk (2006), <http://genius.com/4933669>, accessed: 13.12.2015.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

The third verse depicts the different stages of failure of the evacuation plan. First, it points out that many people either did not have the means to flee, because they were relying on public transportation, while others who tried leaving the city were stuck in traffic and held up by the high demand of gasoline, which eventually could not be satisfied. The second part of the verse illustrates the negligence, which the evacuees stuck at the Superdome had to suffer due to the lack of simple supplies such as food and water.

To end the song on a positive note, *Flavor Flav*, another member of the group, sends out a message of resilience and hope to his fellow African-Americans both stuck in New Orleans or dispersed across the country, reminding them that they are not forgotten. Though they might have been disappointed by the government, *Flav* emphasizes that the American people will not give up on them.

Let me tell y'all somethin'

All of our hearts is out there with y'all, you know what I'm sayin'?

And we sendin' trucks, we sendin' boats, boxes of cans of soup... and everything

Clothes and all of that... shoes

We donating everything to y'all, you know what I'm saying?

Don't worry, y'all ain't by yourself, you need to know that¹⁷

The use of sampling recordings of speeches or other non-musical sequences is what the two songs described above have in common. They are exemplary for the great number of songs that have been released by mainstream hip-hop artists in the wake of Katrina. This technique is, on the one hand, a method of setting a scene for the listener, who is instantly able to understand the context of the song. On the other hand, it makes the song feel more realistic and authentic. By including the recording of an actual occurrence—the voice of a “real” person—it lends the song a certain depth, which helps convey the seriousness of the song. It is a very popular technique amongst rap artists to emphasize the message of their music and is not limited to socially conscious hip-hop, but can be observed in many different subgenres.

¹⁷ Public Enemy: Hell No (We Ain't All Right) (*Rebirth of a Nation*). n.a., Guerrilla Funk (2006), <http://genius.com/4933669>, accessed: 13.12.2015.

On 2nd September 2005, the television network NBC invited many artists and celebrities to take part in the “Concert For Hurricane Relief” telethon in New York City. In between the performances, the participants informed the viewers about the situation in New Orleans and urged them to support the charity event by donating money. So did rapper *Kanye West* and actor *Mike Myers*, when the former decided to improvise his part of the message:

I hate the way they portray us in the media. You see a black family, it says, “They’re looting.” You see a white family, it says, “They’re looking for food.” And, you know, it’s been five days [waiting for Federal help] because most of the people are black. And even for me to complain about it, I would be a hypocrite because I’ve tried to turn away from the TV because it’s too hard to watch. I’ve even been shopping before even giving a donation, so now I’m calling my business manager right now to see what is the biggest amount I can give, and just to imagine if I was down there, and those are my people down there. So anybody out there that wants to do anything that we can help – with the way America is set up to help the poor, the black people, the less well-off, as slow as possible. I mean, the Red Cross is doing everything they can. We already realize a lot of people that could help are at war right now, fighting another way – and they’ve given them permission to go down and shoot us! George Bush doesn’t care about black people!¹⁸

As the show was broadcast live, *West* took the opportunity to use it as a platform to release his anger towards the government and the media, reaching the entire East Coast with his speech. While the network censored his comments when the show was re-broadcast for the West Coast—its attempt at reducing the chorus of outrage—the segment had already been uploaded to the internet and was featured in every news report (de Moraes, 2005). *West* was the first person to publically speak out about this matter of injustice and deliberate misrepresentation, nine days before former President Bush made his first visit to the devastated city (Alpert, 2015). Since he, too, had been born into a black working-class family on the Southside of Chicago, *West* could relate to the conditions that the people in question were living in and the background that they came from. He could have easily been one of the victims, explaining, “The least I could do was to go up there and say something from my heart that was real.”¹⁹

While the controversy he had created polarized the nation—some agreeing with him and others speaking of reckless, wrongful accusations—his performance at another benefit concert one week later would become an equally meaningful political statement. After the incident at the NBC telethon, the network had become more

¹⁸ quoted in Moraes, 2005.

¹⁹ quoted in Moraes, 2005.

careful, adding a 30-second delay to the broadcast. Furthermore, as Joe Gallen, the producer of the “Shelter from the Storm: A Concert for the Gulf Coast” benefit concert, explained in a Washington Post article, the participants had been briefed: “I have spoken to everyone on the bill, including Kanye. (...) Everyone knows the best way to help is to sing their song, which is reflecting their feelings, or inspiring people to call.”²⁰, preventing the artists from politicizing the event by shutting them up (McGinley, 2007: 59).

During the performance of his song “Jesus Walks” at the “Shelter from the Storm: A Concert for the Gulf Coast benefit concert”, *West* preempted the network to censor his explicit lyrics by replacing them with silence, at the same time depicting and criticizing how the network was trying to silence him. He additionally referenced the network’s restrictions and the public debate that followed his previous comment by changing one particular line from “If I talk about God then my record won’t get played” into “If you speak the truth you won’t get played!” (McGinley, 2007: 60). He changed a large part of the lyrics to incorporate the recent events and connected them to other examples of social injustice, which the black lower-class community faces in their day-to-day lives, such as income inequality, segregation and racism (McGinley, 2007: 60). *West* directly addressed the situation in the chorus:

I can only imagine
I can only imagine
If I couldn’t talk to my mother
If I didn’t know where my mother was
If I didn’t know where my family was
If I had to lose my home
If I had to stay in the Superdome
If I lost where I stayed.²¹

While he initially wrote the song to expose the racial disparities of the military service and war, musically underlining it with a marching beat, he now referenced the hurricane and its unjust aftermath in these same passages, putting them on the same level and emphasizing them. The theme in his music was supported by the visuals in

²⁰ McGinley, 2007: 59.

²¹ McGinley, 2007: 60.

his performance: similar to the performances of the other artists, images of the evacuees in distress were projected onto the background. For his song, however, *West* added pictures of African-American soldiers (McGinley, 2007: 60).

With his statement and performance, *West* tried to bring an injustice into focus that many outsiders were not aware of, calling for political activism amongst the entire American population. Rather than focusing on the ethnicity of the victims, *West* wanted to emphasize President Bush's lack of interest in and empathy for the New Orleans residents in general. His outspokenness created an international discourse about the both the substance of his speech and the network's reaction to it on the one hand. At the same time, it served as an inspiration to many members of the rap community, who in turn started their own songs and movements, contributing to a diverse soundtrack of Katrina.

One example of this inspiration is *The Legendary K.O.*, a duo from Houston, Texas, who took *West*'s comment, remixed it with one of his most popular songs, "Gold Digger", and thus created a political statement of their own (Woods, 2005: 1006). In the original song, *West* samples the R&B song "I Got a Woman" by *Ray Charles*, who sings about his generous lover. *West*, however, twists the meaning of this song when he raps about a materialistic woman who is only willing to be in relationships with wealthy men. The duo uses the song as a foundation and adapts the lyrics appropriately to the situation, replacing the female lead character by President Bush:

I ain't saying he's a gold digger, but he ain't messing with no broke niggas
George Bush don't like black people²²

That the song clearly grew out of the "Kanye-controversy" is beyond debate: the song even includes the original recordings by sampling the sequence of *Kanye West*'s short speech at the NBC telethon for the intro. Another non-musical sample that has been included into the song is the short sequence of Jack Cafferty, a former CNN commentator, who poignantly remarked the following while anchoring the news: "You simply get chills every time you see these poor individuals. So poor—and they are so black."

²² The Legendary K.O.: George Bush Don't Like Black People. n.a. (2005), <http://genius.com/7719083>, accessed: 12.12.2015.

Considering the previous songs, this is the most direct example, focusing solely on President Bush. In their lyrics, the rappers are shifting positions between an experiential report of the survivors and directly addressing the former president for his inanities.

Five damn days, five long days
And at the end of the fifth you walking in like, "Hey!"
Chilling on his vacation sitting patiently
Them black folks gotta hope, gotta wait and see
If FEMA really comes through in an emergency
But nobody seems to have a sense of urgency²³

In these lines, the duo responds to the fact that it took him so long to visit the destroyed city. As opposed to the five days they are referring to in the song, Bush actually did not make his way to New Orleans until September 11th 2005.

Niggas starving and they dying of thirst
I bet he had to go and check on them refineries first
Making a killing off the price of gas
He woulda been up in Connecticut twice as fast²⁴

Just like the assumptions seen in many other articles, the duo believes that, had the disaster happened in a predominantly white state, he would have canceled his vacation earlier, making it there “twice as fast.” They also question his priorities when they insinuate that President Bush checked on the oil refineries at the Gulf Coast prior to visiting the city and its people, since the former are more profitable. In addition, similar to the *Public Enemy* song, they take up the theme of the representation of the black person in the (inter)national media, pillorying the media sensationalism and the inevitable racism that comes with it.

Well, swam to the store trying to look for food
Corner store's kinda flooded so I broke my way through
I got what I could but before I got through
The news said police shot a black man trying to loot?²⁵

²³ The Legendary K.O.: George Bush Don't Like Black People. n.a. (2005), <http://genius.com/7719083>, accessed: 12.12.2015.

²⁴ *ibid.*

The general response to the song was exceptionally positive: the song was released on 6th September 2005 as a free download over the internet and reached over 10,000 downloads within the first 24 hours (Leland, 2005). The fact that the members of *The Legendary K.O.* were based in Houston, one of the cities that accommodated a large number of Katrina-evacuees, made the song more credible and relatable. The evacuees all over the south appreciated the song and helped it gain popularity (Kish, 2011: 679). As he lays out in his interview for the New York Times, freelance video producer Marquise Lee felt that, after hearing the song several times, it needed a music video. He put the sequences from the telethon together with snippets from the original “Gold Digger” music video of *Kanye West* and collaborator *Jamie Foxx* performing the song, and added images of African-American people in distress in New Orleans, intercut by pictures of President George W. Bush. Like the song, the video spread rapidly and was uploaded to many other websites, helping it gain popularity and supporting the message. As Lee puts it, “It was a first-person account of the struggle — ‘Come down and help me’,” (Leland, 2005), or, as it is rapped in the song’s last lines, “come down, Bush, come on, come down”²⁶.

²⁵ The Legendary K.O.: George Bush Don’t Like Black People. n.a. (2005), <http://genius.com/7719083>, accessed: 12.12.2015.

²⁶ *ibid.*

Although the examples listed in this chapter constitute only a small percentage of the actual output of post-Katrina art, they provide a representative outline of it. One distinct difference can be observed when comparing the works of each subsection: the motives of their creators. While their close relation to the audience is part of the motivation for the local artists, the national rappers choose to use their mainstream fame to become advocates for the evacuees.

While hurricane Katrina and its aftermath have inspired many works of art of different natures and genres, journalists and academics have attributed a particular quality of collective relief to the hip-hop genre. In his book “All About the Beat. Why Hip-Hop Can’t Save Black America” (2008), John McWhorter, however, perceives that quality as an overvaluation of the genre’s actual power. He argues that the subversive nature of hip-hop does not actually lead to serious change in the long run. While the lyrics of the songs are supposed to raise consciousness for the situation, McWhorter claims that they primarily focus on the anger instead of finding a solution (McWhorter, 2008: 27). While several of the examples above do propagate a sense of anger and frustration, many artists in question also spur their audience into action by emphasizing said solidarity and the collective. The main motivation for the well-known hip-hop artists was the exposure of the truth and the rectification of the poor media coverage, while the local rappers used hip-hop as an outlet for their own healing and a feeling of belonging.

Although some of the arguments in McWhorter’s book are valid and comprehensible, his conclusion of referring to a political consciousness in hip-hop as “wishful thinking” does not apply to the post-Katrina hip-hop. While it might not “save black America” it definitely contributed to its healing.

6. Bounce After 2005: Rising from the Ashes.

As the previous chapters have established, there was not much left of the New Orleans landscape after 29th August 2005. Its residents were gone, diffused all over the southern states, some even left the South entirely, while the city itself was lying in ruins. In situations like these, the continuity of music is of extreme importance to both the people returning to the city and the community being forced to live in diaspora. Most of the artists who work within the local hip-hop genre are young, working-class African-Americans, who spent the majority of their lives in the eastern neighborhoods of New Orleans, such as the Lower Ninth Ward or New Orleans East. Their motivation to make music arises from the same struggles that their audience faces every day. They are authentic and relatable, and can therefore represent the local vernacular culture. These are all characteristics that, on the one hand, contribute to the quality of their music, rendering their style unique. At the same time, however, they make them dependent on that particular community in that specific social and economic environment.

After Katrina, these parameters shifted, disbalancing the genre and its agents. The extent to which every single artist was affected by this depended on their situation pre-Katrina: locally known artists were naturally facing more problems trying to get back in the business, as opposed to artists who were already (inter)nationally established before the storm (Miller, 2011: 162). In a genre like bounce, where locality plays such a big role, the loss of a sense of place—by closing down the projects for instance—can have serious consequences on the popularity and the vitality of the music. However, this can also be used to their advantage if they deploy it in the context of diaspora. The following chapter will shed light on said diaspora and the role that bounce played within it. By giving examples of its post-Katrina development, locally and internationally, from various angles, musically and academically, I will depict the development of the genre over the past years and outline where it stands now, over a decade after the storm.

6.1 Starting Over: Musicians, Clubs, Record Companies Return to New Orleans.

6.1.1 The Postdiluvian Days of Bounce Artists Exiled from New Orleans...

The relationship between music and place is extremely relevant to bounce music. As with other genres, it is deeply rooted in the city and its history, and has a very vivid scene made up of a network of artists, producers, club owners etc. While it would be logical to assume that the disruption of this network would restrict the genre from thriving, it turned out to be quite flexible and adjustable (Le Menestrel & Henry, 2010: 196). The New Orleans diaspora, which was the outcome of the forced relocation of the evacuees, called for its tradition bearers to make the residents of the Crescent City feel at home. As Nick Cohn points out in his autobiographical tale of his exploration of bounce, people were missing the lifestyle and traditions that they were used to. While the streets of New Orleans used to be filled with life, music and food, this was not conventional behavior in the cities that the evacuees called their new hometowns (Cohn, 2005: 241). The bounce community was eager to fill this void: rap-veteran *Mia X* and fellow musician *DJ Chicken* started to host bounce nights every Tuesday in Dallas, Texas, while other artists organized similar events in Houston and all over the South (Miller, 2011: 163). Some artists left the city for good; others, like 5th *Ward Weebie* and *Big Freedia*, traveled back and forth between Houston and New Orleans (Bonisteel, 2006).

This list of examples demonstrates the effects of diaspora: no-one was spared the trauma and the homesickness that followed the disruption. None of the artists were prepared for any of it, using their music as a coping process for themselves first and foremost. They later realized that releasing new music and performing could help their community cope with the situation as well, providing them with another motivation to continue making music (Bonfiglio, 2010). This insight gave rise to an increase in live performances across the country, thus exposing their music to an entirely new audience and raising the level of awareness for the genre. For the first time in almost a decade, bounce music had left its familiar surroundings and reached a new audience to which the genre was less known. The connections between the

different agents of bounce were also reinforced, creating a possibly stronger network than pre-Katrina through shared hurting (McLeese, 2008: 220).

6.1.2 ...and their Return to the ‘Big Easy’.

Returning to the city was not easy for anyone. Most of the people did not have a place to stay or work anymore and were still waiting on either FEMA or insurance money serving as start-up capital. The New Orleans Musicians' Hurricane Relief Fund (later to be known as Sweet Home New Orleans charity), helped musicians to get back on their feet by providing them with money, social assistance and legal advice. This also extended to hip-hop and bounce performers, whom they especially reached out to, since they were not as connected to the organization as the other more canonized local genres (Fensterstock, 2015). As soon as clubs started opening again, rappers came back to acknowledge their return and play their shows, even if it was just for one night. Caesar's Club, right under the Expressway Bridge to Gretna, was the first bounce club to reopen after Hurricane Katrina. According to *Big Freedia*, she was immediately contacted by the owner to set up a regular night, so they arranged “FEMA Fridays” (Dee, 2010).

What was earlier labeled as “a vicious circle”—the shops depending on the residents to return and vice versa—did not spare the businesses that made their profits off of hip-hop either. Without knowing when or if people would return to their neighborhoods, many small record stores had to close, and so did the local independent record labels, which had to go out of business due to a lack thereof (within the city). In 2007, local rapper *Sess 4-5* was able to re-open his store “Nuthin But Fire Records” in the 7th Ward, specializing in hip-hop, R’n’B and local bounce music (Miller, 2011: 165). This, however, is the exception to the rule. His business is still running today, while many other record stores were not able to return. Another component playing into this is, of course, the development of the music industry, its new methods of selling music and its tendency towards the digital market. The decline in record stores is not limited to New Orleans, as a large part of the music is released and consumed digitally through downloads and streaming platforms, especially within the hip-hop genre. In addition, since a lot of the artists are not signed

with big music labels, they still sell most of their music at their own shows, just like hip-hop artists used to in the early beginnings of the genre.

A similar trajectory can be observed for the local record labels: as stated earlier, Take Fo' records was the first bounce label to sign a sissy rapper in the late 1990s. With some of bounce's pioneers, like *DJ Jubilee* and *Katey Red*, on their artist roster, the label played an important role in the evolution of the genre, primarily because of their open-mindedness and dedication to the local hip-hop genre. After Katrina hit New Orleans, the label had to be relocated to Houston, where many of the evacuees had moved to. Take Fo' records eventually returned to the city in 2009, marking their 17th anniversary in the music business. Unfortunately, there is no exact information as to what happened to the label after that: their website still exists, but there have not been any updates since 2010—the label seems to be inactive. So after almost two decades of successfully releasing bounce music and persevering through Katrina's aftermath, the label seems to have withdrawn from the music business for unknown reasons.

For the residents who were able to, returning to the city and finding a way back into their old lives was a triumph over the devastation and injustice they had to face. While living in diaspora, going to bounce performances made them forget about their troubles, giving them a feeling of home, of belonging, just as it did pre-Katrina. This bond between the genre and its consumers has apparently become so strong that its cohesiveness cannot be affected by a hurricane with such extensive ramifications (Sakakeeny, 2011: 291).

6.2 Post-Katrina News Coverage Taking Bounce Music to an (Inter)National Level

As portrayed in the introduction to bounce, the national popularity of New Orleans hip-hop has drastically decreased since the turn of the millennium. It seems, however, that the years after the hurricane have awoken the interest of the national media landscape. The city's local newspaper, *The Times-Picayune*, has been increasingly covering the local hip-hop scene over the last few years, mainly due to the work of local music journalist, Alison Fensterstock. By emphasizing the close relationship

bounce has with the city's musical roots, her versatile articles have attracted journalists from outside of Louisiana (and the U.S.), whose articles in turn have exposed bounce and its representatives to a new, (inter)national audience (Miller, 2012: 172). The additional news coverage due to Katrina, revealing the injustice and disruption that followed the storm, drew attention to New Orleans rap. Many of the articles focused on the so-called sissy rappers, their story, their origins and their mesmerizing music. The songs, beats and samples New Orleanians grow up with, sounding completely normal and mainstream to them, have an entirely different effect on an outsider, who is probably fascinated by their idiosyncratic style (Dee, 2010). As a result, there seems to have been an abiding interest in the genre's documentation and thus encouraging bounce rappers in the years after Katrina.

As a consequence, the sissy rappers gained popularity and were invited to play shows at clubs and festivals across the country, one being the South by Southwest Festival (SXSW) in Texas, which is among the largest art festivals, combining film, music and conferences.

One of the first bounce artists being invited to play at the SXSW was *Big Freedia* in 2011. Chuck Eddy, a journalist working for the Rolling Stone Magazine, listed the show as his favorite of the entire festival. She was joined by male and female backup dancers for her performance, who demonstrated the dance moves that go with bounce music. The audience was very intrigued by what they were seeing and a large portion ended up joining her on stage by the end of the show (Eddy, 2011).

In 2012, *Mannie Fresh* played at the SXSW festival, bringing *Dee-I* along to open for him. The latter used the stage to play some old-school New Orleans music and incorporated old Cash Money lyrics into his own songs. Both received a strong positive reaction from the audience (Ramsey, 2012). One year later, *Big Freedia* was invited to perform again (along with other bounce artists), creating an energy comparable to her first show, mesmerizing her audience once again (Adams, 2013). At the 2016 edition of the SXSW festival, several bounce artists, including 5th *Ward Weebie*, organized a New Orleans Bounce panel titled "Ya Heard Me" to inform the audience about the genre and meet local artists, with the goal of propagating bounce until it reaches the mainstream (again) (SXSW Schedule 2016).

The farthest bounce has probably travelled (so far) was Berlin in March of 2015. Taking place in Station, an old railway station, which was turned into a venue, the exhibit called “New Orleans: The Sound of a City” had been initiated by the curators Clemens and John Gubernath and lasted for an entire month. It was a multimedia tribute to the unique musical culture of the Big Easy, displaying all the genres it has to offer in one place. The exhibit featured a section on bounce and *Big Freedia* in particular, exhibiting her outfits among other artifacts. She traveled to Germany for the opening reception on 26th March and was then invited to play a show at the Berghain club, one of Berlin’s oldest and most renowned clubs. After this, she stayed in Europe for several weeks to play more shows in the Netherlands and England. With over 700 visitors during just the opening weekend, the exhibition has been a complete success, granting an international audience access to a genre they might have never discovered otherwise (Defazio, 2015). The exhibition was being re-opened in Weimar for another month, starting 20th October 2016, with other artists performing at the opening (Kern, 2016).

Considering the genre’s efforts to reach mainstream success, this opportunity not only put it on the map of many European visitors, but more importantly marked the relevance of bounce within the musical culture of New Orleans by its inclusion into the canon and this exhibition.

6.2.1 Big Freedia: the “Overnight Sensation”²⁷

The artist who seems to be enjoying the most attention is *Big Freedia*, whose story has been all over the national media and without whom sissy-bounce is impossible to imagine. She recently published her new autobiography “God Save the Queen Diva”, which is a history of bounce, narrated through the different chapters of her life. Her exceptionality has been celebrated by her fans and local musicians and journalists alike, ever since she appeared, naming her “the global ambassador of bounce,” especially because of her unique and energetic performances (Fensterstock, 2015).

²⁷ Fensterstock, Alison: “Rapper Big Freedia an ‘Overnight’ Sensation.”, in: *The Times-Picayune* (07.10.2010), http://www.nola.com/music/index.ssf/2010/10/rapper_big_freedia_an_overnigh.html., accessed 19.05.2015.

Once Alison Fensterstock had become a music consultant for bounce on the set of the TV drama “Treme”, it did not take long for *Big Freedia* to be featured in one of the episodes. The show about the post-Katrina life and struggles of different personas living in the Treme neighborhood was a platform for both local and international musicians throughout the entirety of four seasons. The entire world was able to experience the eclecticism of New Orleans’ music through “Treme,” which now bounce was a part of. In the 2nd episode of season 2, two of the main characters went to a bounce club in which *Big Freedia*’s “Gin In My System” was being played. Apart from her, there have been several appearances from other bounce representatives, such as hip-hop veteran *Mannie Fresh*, *Juvenile* and fellow sissy rappers *Katey Red* and *Sissy Nobby* (Fensterstock, 2015).

After this first TV experience, *Freedia* took the next step towards becoming ubiquitous and started a reality TV show on Fuse TV. Since it debuted in 2013, “Big Freedia: Queen of Bounce” has been providing its viewers with the latest bounce music. In early December of 2015, after the premiere of the 4th season turned out to be the most watched season premiere in the history of Fuse TV (breaking its own record of 300,000 viewers) the network announced that the show would be extended for another season in 2016 (D’Arcangelo, 2016). While bounce music and its sissy rappers used to only be accessible at nightclubs, it has made its way to daytime television by the 2010s, reaching a broader audience.

In addition to all of the above, *Big Freedia* went on extended tours throughout the U.S. and all the way to Europe and Australia in 2015, where her popularity is just starting to rise after being featured on the song “Club Now Skunk” by the Swedish artist *Elliphant*, which has been released internationally in September 2015. The song incorporates several bounce elements, such as repetition and the syncopated beat, along with the lyrics propagating the positive message of dancing and having fun at the club. *Elliphant* had reached out to *Freedia* after seeing one of her shows, claiming it was one of the best performances she had ever seen (Benjamin, 2015). Earlier that year, in June 2015, she was also featured on “Drop”, a track produced by *Diplo* and *DJ Snake*, setting the aforementioned elements of bounce to an EDM beat. The song served as the soundtrack to the movie “Entourage”, which was released worldwide, exposing the bounce sound to a mainstream audience (Kinkel, 2016). *Diplo* has shown previous interest in bounce, discovering it while touring the South. In 2010, he

even created a short documentary titled “NOLA Bounce”, produced and directed by Jason Miller, serving as the pilot episode to his mini-series “No One’s Safe”. He elaborates on his first encounter with bounce music and the appeal of an original, local sound, all while exploring the city and the bounce scene.

Big Freedia’s latest and biggest collaboration was with *Beyoncé* for the song “Formation”, released on 7th February 2016. Since *Beyoncé* wanted the accompanying video directed by Melina Matsoukas to carry a southern theme and references to hurricane Katrina, she invited *Big Freedia* to record some improvised phrases, characterizing New Orleans to include in her song to make it sound more authentic (Hunter, 2016):

I did not come to play with you hoes, haha
I came to slay, bitch
I like cornbreads and collard greens, bitch
Oh, yes, you besta believe it²⁸

Freedia’s part is placed right between the first chorus and the second verse, stating that she came “to slay”, which is a colloquial term for succeeding. As mentioned before, New Orleans and the South in general have a distinct food culture, which *Freedia* points out by listing her favorite southern food, cornbread and collard greens. The video incorporates some footage with references to New Orleans and its culture, including the houses of the New Orleans neighborhoods, a brass band playing at a second line, and a Mardi Gras Indian dancing in full costume.

In addition to *Freedia*, the song opens with the voice of late rapper *Messy Mya* asking, “What happened at the New Orleans?” while the video depicts *Beyoncé* standing on a submerged police car in the inundated city of New Orleans (Figure 8).

²⁸ Beyoncé: Formation (*Lemonade*). New York: Columbia Records SME (2016), <http://genius.com/Beyonce-formation-lyrics>, accessed: 03.10.2016.



Figure 8 - Video still from Beyoncé's "Formation" (Matsoukas, 2016, screenshot by me).

Messy Mya was a local rapper and comedian, who became popular through his YouTube videos, criticizing the government's response to Katrina in one of them. In 2010 he was killed in the streets of New Orleans by gun violence at the age of 22 (Hunter 2016). By including his recognizable voice to her song, Beyoncé caused his popularity and video views to rise vastly and reminded the audience of his unsolved murder, addressing the high criminality and violence rate in New Orleans (Syfret , 2016).

I've listed all of the previous examples to explain the empire that *Big Freedia* has created around her persona in such a short amount of time. Considering the odds were not necessarily in her favor, it is very impressive to study her career and the effect it has had on the genre. To sum up, it can be stated that, while she is attracting most of the attention, she skillfully redirects it to bounce music, creating a rebirth of the genre on a local level and arousing great interest for it internationally.

6.2.2 Academic Interest in New Orleans Hip-Hop

After being around for over 30 years, hip-hop has evolved from being a mere counterculture of a minority to a well established and internationally recognized genre that contributes to the eclecticism of popular music to the same extent as blues, rock

or punk music. While it was not accepted into polite society for a long time, the cultural worth that has been attributed to hip-hop over the last decade by both the media and academia has raised its level of validation considerably. Pioneers of the genre are being inducted into The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, chronicling them for the coming generations and thus making them part of the musical history of the United States. Hip-hop has made its way to academia as well, where entire classes and symposiums are being dedicated to its history and social origins (Sanneh, 2006).

The same observation can be made for bounce: more and more scholarly works have been published that academically study the genre in its entirety, making it accessible to scholars all over the world. To name but a few, published in 2011 and co-written by Alison Fensterstock was the auto-biographical account of *10th Ward Buck* and *Lucky Johnson*, recounting their history of bounce in “The Definition of Bounce: Between Ups and Downs in New Orleans”. Another example is Matt Miller, who issued his book “Bounce: Rap Music and Local Identity in New Orleans” in 2012, an impressive and in-detail narrative of New Orleans rap from its earliest beginnings to its unexpected post-Katrina success.

The frequently mentioned journalist Alison Fensterstock was also the one to initiate the “Where They At: New Orleans Hip-Hop and Bounce in Words and Pictures” exhibition. Together with photographer Aubrey Edwards, they have collected and created material over 18 months’ time that adequately portrays the history and presence of New Orleans hip-hop. Through the combination of original interviews and photographs of over forty of bounce’s agents with old material such as vintage records, photographs and tapes, they were able to create a multimedia exhibition, displaying bounce and its artists in as many different ways as possible, visually and audibly, benefiting from the contributions of former participants who shaped the early bounce scene (Fensterstock, 2010). Among the interviewees were artists, producers and performers as well as label executives and record store owners. From the production to the distribution, from the creative to the commercial process, they have taken the experience and knowledge of all these key figures of bounce into account, bringing an exhibition into being, that not only tells the story of the genre but also puts it into a social context (Spera, 2010).

The concept started out as a temporary exhibition in 2010 at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, which is part of the University of New Orleans. The exhibition was accompanied by regular performances at the gallery, attracting a large number of visitors. Furthermore, the entire collection of artifacts, pictures, videos and audio recordings was made accessible on their website (Miller, 2012: 173). As a result of its success, “Where They At” has been exhibited in other cities across the U.S., it has even been held at the SXSW festival in 2010, in the course of which Fensterstock arranged a showcase in the spirit of a New Orleans block party, featuring performances of *DJ Jubilee*, *Partners N Crime*, *Katey Red*, *Big Freedia* and *Magnolia Shorty*, just to name a few (Ramsey, 2010).

As announced on their website, the material that they have collected about several artists was used by other networks for their productions—one of them being *Big Freedia*’s reality show—manifesting that there is an active demand for the documentation of bounce, which the archive is capable of supplying.

6.2.2.1 The Digital Archive of New Orleans Hip-Hop and Bounce Music

The “Where They At” exhibition helped position bounce into the musical context of New Orleans in order for people to perceive it as one of its cultural traditions. Dr. Holly Hobbs, who began her Ph.D. program at Tulane University in 2008, also played an important part in contributing to this. She wrote her dissertation on the local hip-hop scene in New Orleans after Katrina and the role it played in the city’s recovery. Over the years, she had conducted fieldwork for her research, collecting videotaped interviews of rappers and deejays, narrating the history of bounce and the role they played in it (Fensterstock, 2015). What was most important to Hobbs was the accessibility of her work for the outside world. Since dissertations are often accessible only to people in an academic environment, she wanted to create a publicly available archive. Funded by a Kickstarter campaign and a generous donation from the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation, the “NOLA Hip-Hop Archive” was brought into being in 2012. The physical archive can be found on the campus of Tulane University in the Amistad Research Center. The material has also been digitalized and is accessible to everybody through the website of the center, free of charge. Coming

from a working-class community with little access to academia, it was important to Hobbs that the people who helped create the archive were also part of its continuous growth (Fensterstock, 2015).

The destruction caused by the storm was another motivation to preserve the collection of materials for later generations and render its agents visible, acknowledging the work that they have created and the tradition that has emerged from it. With the support of the Amistad Research Center, which is not only the oldest but also the largest and most extensive archive devoted to the modern Civil Rights Movement, the “NOLA Hip-Hop Archive” can evolve consistently and serve as an inspiring model for other young genres. To expand the collection, the materials from Fensterstock’s “Where They At” project were added to the “NOLA Hip-Hop Archive”, setting an example for the collaborative work that stimulates this community and helps it thrive (NOLA hip-hop archive, 2012).

This collection of bounce artifacts brings it one step closer to its fellow local genres such as jazz, brass band or Mardi Gras and their cultural importance to the city. By including bounce to the musical canon of New Orleans, the crucial role it played during Katrina’s aftermath is being acknowledged, proving that it is just as worthy of being saved as the other genres.

6.3 Back to the Roots

With regard to its substance and feel, the post-Katrina bounce sound has experienced a change over the decade after Katrina. There has been a musical shift from the socially conscious hip-hop songs back to the roots of bounce music. As explained in the previous chapter, many of the bounce songs released immediately after the disaster mainly addressed the theme of Katrina and its aftermath, which had an evident effect on the essence of the genre. When rapping about homesickness, destruction, injustice and disappointment, the lyrics reflect on the music and its character. However, as time passed, the focus of the music and its message were moved back to its original meaning: a celebration of life and positivity. With the

aforementioned gaining of media attention and the canonization of the genre, the artists were able to explore new platforms for the creation and performance of bounce music.

Bounce artists are now playing at renowned festivals such as the annual “New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival”, but are also invited to perform at new, mainstream festivals such as the “Lil’ Weezyana Fest”. The latter has been initiated by New Orleans’ local rapper *Lil Wayne* in 2015. As a tribute to his hometown, he includes the different musical traditions it has to offer, having brass bands perform next to international mainstream stars (e.g. *Drake*). For its first edition, *Wayne* was able to get some of the pioneers of bounce history, such as *DJ Mannie Fresh*, 5th *Ward Weebie*, *Big Freedia* and *DJ Jubilee*, to perform (Fensterstock, 2015). During his performance of the 2016 edition, he stopped to give the audience, both at the festival and at home following the live stream, a short introduction on bounce history explaining the beat that they were hearing: the “Triggerman” (Brasted, 2016).

The emergence of such a festival, focusing on its local genre and artists primarily, is proof that the demand for bounce in New Orleans is still high. In addition, *Wayne* invites artists from all over the world who in turn learn about bounce and include its characteristics into their music, as *Drake* did on his album “Views”. In 2016, one year after his performance at the “Lil Weezyana Fest” he released the song “Child’s Play” which sampled a track by bounce producer and artist *HaSizzle*, who has been part of the bounce community for over a decade. In 2005 he released the song “Rode Dat Dick Like a Soldier” which has been a bounce classic ever since (Scherer, 2016). In addition to *Drake* and *Beyoncé*, mainstream hip-hop icon *Missy Elliott* sampled the unique bounce beat with its striking drums for her song “WTF (Where They From)”, which features *Pharrell Williams* (Scherer, 2016).

These are just three of the most prominent examples of bounce motifs being used in mainstream hip-hop. There seems to be an undeniable attraction to the distinct sound of this local subgenre that sets it apart from the mainstream rap. The question then is, if this depicts the future of bounce: being incorporated into mainstream rap, or if it can stand on its own—as an independent genre—within the landscape of mainstream rap.

When writing about the future of bounce, there is no way around one artist in particular. *KENO* (acronym for “Keeping Everything New Orleans”), formerly known as *Fly Boi Keno*, is a young rapper from eastern New Orleans, who has been creating his own style of bounce by incorporating elements of electronic music into his bounce tracks (MacCash, 2016). Since the genres have a similar objective, to spread positivity and encourage the audience to dance, they are compatible both musically and figuratively. By adapting the genre and its beats to a currently more popular style of music, he is able to break into a whole new target group and distribution channel. *KENO* has been attaining a lot of success with his contemporary bounce sound, so much so that two of the most famous EDM producers have offered to collaborate with him in 2015. The project, titled *Jack Ü*, is composed of the aforementioned *Diplo* and *Skrillex* (MacCash, 2016). *KENO* was featured on “Beats Knockin’”, the second track of their album, adding a bounce sound to the song through the use of the bounce beat and his unique style of rapping. There have been similar collaborations since, putting him on the map of both hip-hop and electronic dance music.

Time will tell if this innovative form of bounce will gain acceptance within the local scene and find both representatives and supporters, and if it will eventually reach the mainstream.

To sum up this last chapter, a lot has changed for bounce since hurricane Katrina. In contrast to what one would expect, many artists have benefited from the extensive media coverage, although a large part of it mainly focuses on the sissy rappers and their unique presence within the hip-hop genre, leaving the music to be of secondary importance. With a new wave of interest in bounce from the mainstream, be it through sampling or by collaborating with local artists, there seems to be a definite demand for the New Orleans sound.

7. Conclusion

The city of New Orleans has seen extensive change over the last decade, and so have its residents. After the devastation that the city had suffered, first by hurricane Katrina and later by a failing and disappointing government, no-one really expected it to get back on its feet. The same outcome seemed to have been destined for its local hip-hop scene, which, however, against all expectations, was able to not only recover from the hurricane, but rather benefit from it. Hip-hop took on an important function in the aftermath of the storm. Many local and national rappers and MCs turned to music as a medium for critique. They were able to respond to the abandonment and the negligence the evacuees were confronted with, expressing their anger about this social injustice through their songs. The sincerity and credibility, with which they approached the subject, rang extremely well with their audience and the people of New Orleans in general, approving of but more importantly supporting their new advocates.

The forced migration that followed the evacuation of the city was what appeared as another setback for a local music genre that is so heavily depending on its audience. Again, bounce proved its skeptics wrong. With its audience scattered all over the country, the local hip-hop genre as well had been exiled out of its natural environment and into a diaspora of bounce. It was the music created in Katrina's aftermath that helped the evacuees through the traumatizing experience of dislocation. Being able to attend bounce performances was what connected them to each other and held the community together, by providing a sense of commonplace and collectiveness to its audience. Both the artists as well as the listeners seemed to rely on bounce music to cope with everything they had lived through: the former by using the stage and performing, relieving them from their troubles, and the latter by taking part in said performance and experiencing a sense of belonging. Another factor that played into advantaging the local hip-hop scene was that these performances and musical statements being made in diaspora made bounce accessible to entirely new audiences.

By not changing the stylistic characteristics of the music, using the same samples and musical structures as in pre-Katrina bounce, the artists were able to express their local

identity, both in diaspora but also back in New Orleans. They created an incentive for their audience to return to their city and to affirm life.

Which leads us to the third important component of post-Katrina rap: its call for action, prompting its audience to take matters into their own hands. The main purpose of this was to get the black community back on their feet, ridding themselves of the image of the refugee that was imprinted on them by the media, and countering it with resilience. The experience of this musical catharsis is what the audience needed and depended on to psychologically process the disaster and thus explains the unexpected perseverance that bounce unveiled in the decade after Katrina.

In addition to the demand of its audience, what helped New Orleans rap not only stay relevant but also gain popularity was the increased media attention: through the post-Katrina news coverage, the diaspora and rappers' use of the Katrina-subject in their songs, the interest of more and more people from outside of the city had been caught. Scholars, musicians, journalists and filmmakers from all over the world traveled to the city, wanting to either investigate the injustice and/or document the rich and unique culture. By experiencing the sudden loss of their belongings and their cultural heritage, both the returning and the new residents were all the more motivated to preserve the distinctive traditions of New Orleans music in general and bounce in particular. The loss that people have suffered and the unexpectedness of the devastation seem to have released an urgency of the study and documentation of the genre. The publication of various books and articles, both of journalistic and academic origin, and the initiation of archives and exhibitions over the last ten years have considerably accelerated the process of bounce into canonization. As a result, bounce is now gaining the same importance as the other musical traditions that characterize the city.

So whether bounce could recover from the storm and its repercussions or not can be answered quite easily. Contrary to the expectations, it has come out stronger, louder and more confident than ever before. For now.

The remaining question is, if it will it be able to keep its national prominence or if bounce has plateaued after the initial wave of interest. Although the ten-year anniversary has seen another increase in news coverage, reflecting upon the city's

recovery, it is difficult to predict if the genre will have to solely rely on the articles commemorating the hurricane in the future or if people will genuinely be interested in the local sound of New Orleans hip-hop.

The city's local rap music will always be a collective event and an instrument to express cohesiveness and resilience within the working-class African-American community. I wonder, however, if, while not changing anything in the music, bounce will be able to stay relevant once the outside world has gotten used to—or worse tired of—what initially made it so unique. Considering the decline in popularity of New Orleans hip-hop in the early 2000s, it may just be that the sound is not suitable for long term mainstream success and meant to stay a local genre. Only the future can tell if bounce will survive in the shark pool of national hip-hop.

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9. Abstract/Zusammenfassung

English

The music scene of New Orleans and the hip-hop genre in particular underwent drastic changes during and in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. When the category 5 hurricane hit the South of the United States in August of 2005, it caused over 1,800 fatalities and displaced over 1.2 million people, and thus the cultural heart of the city. With hip-hop artists and their audience struggling to return to the city and their pre-Katrina lives, bounce music—as the local hip-hop genre is named—serves as an outlet for anger and sadness, but also as a musical catharsis for both the performer and the listener. Based on a large number of academic and journalistic articles, books and the recent documentation of a variety of songs by and interviews with bounce artists, this thesis analyzes the return of the genre to the city, its (inter)national success and the importance of the role its performers played throughout the entire process.

Deutsch

Die Musikszene in New Orleans und insbesondere das Hip-Hop Genre durchlebten wegen der Auswirkungen von Hurrikan Katrina einschneidende Veränderungen. Als der Hurrikan, welcher in die Kategorie 5 eingestuft wurde, die Südstaaten der USA Ende August 2005 trifft, fordert er mehr als 1.800 Todesopfer und zwingt über 1,2 Millionen Menschen ihre Heimat zu verlassen, und verlagert somit auch das kulturelle Herz der Stadt. Sowohl die Hip-Hop Künstler als auch ihr Publikum nutzen Bounce Musik, wie die lokale Form des Hip-Hops noch genannt wird, als emotionales Ventil, um ihrer Wut und ihrer Trauer über die Missstände Luft zu machen, aber auch um gemeinsam die Schwierigkeiten der Situation und den Heilungsprozess zu bewältigen. Anhand einer Vielzahl von sowohl wissenschaftlichen als auch journalistischen Aufsätzen und Artikel, ganzen Büchern und der rezenten Dokumentierung einer umfangreichen Auswahl an Musikstücken und Interviews von Bounce-Künstlern, analysiert diese Masterarbeit die Rückkehr des Genres in seine Ursprungstadt, seinen (inter)nationalen Erfolg, und die wichtige Rolle, welche seinen Hauptvertretern im gesamten Prozess zugeschrieben wird.