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The Struggle is Real: Whiteness Studies, Hip Hop Pedagogies, and the Rhetorics of White Privilege

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Dear boys,
Last night Mr. Trump was elected President. It is not the outcome we hoped for, but our country has made its choice. Daddy and I feel that our country is not the same place it was yesterday, and that makes us a bit sad. BUT there are some things we want you to know.

Mr. Trump may be our new leader, but he does not embody the values we hold dear. Our family values remain as they always were.

Be kind – to everyone, always. Be especially kind to those who are different. They need it, more than ever now. Fill up people's buckets rather than empty them.

Be wise – make smart decisions. Be careful what you say now and to whom.

Be mindful – Your actions have consequences. Think about what you do and why. Always have good intentions.

Be brave – stand up for what you know to be right. Don't allow bullies to harm people who are different.

The world will keep spinning and life likely will not change for you very much. But it is a vastly different place today for many different types of people and our values are more important than ever. I love you.

Love,
Mama

This is the letter I adapted from a friend's Facebook post that my husband and I read to our three boys—ages 8, 7, and 4—after Trump won. Afterward, we hung it up on the refrigerator and have done our best to reference it every day since. This is how we begin to navigate white privilege in our home—ideals I believe can and should be translated to addressing white privilege rhetoric in our classrooms.

Let me be clear, I largely blame white privilege for Trump's election. It's easy to villainize those who voted for Trump, but for me that categorization is complicated. They are my neighbors, my aunts and uncles, my PARENTS—folks that truly feel they have been maligned by the previous administration for being successful white folks. And if we don't want to go through this again, this protest certainly starts at home.

As writing and rhetoric teachers, I believe we have the ability to foster a unique, safe, and diverse space to engage in the dismantling of socially, economically, and culturally damaging white privilege rhetoric. Talking about white privilege in college classrooms in this political climate is walking a tenuous and sometimes dangerous line. I realize that. I also realize that our classrooms are oftentimes the first lines of defense against the patriarchal, colonial tropes deeply embedded in our students' lives and that ultimately bind, or perhaps blind, us as a nation. Trump's base is the white, working middle class. Studies like Philips and Lowery's discussed in this article purport that many whites genuinely feel aggrieved against the previous administration and much of their grievances are rooted in the belief that they are being treated unfairly because they are white. Carol Anderson calls this feeling "white rage" (5).

While their struggle may be real to them (and I assure you, their anger is), I argue that the actual struggle is ours—the struggle to dismantle the acceptance and perpetuation of white privilege rhetoric. As a white, heterosexual female ally, I believe this struggle is mine. One that I intend to fight with and for my composition and rhetoric students. Therefore, the goal of this article is to examine current forms of white privilege through the lens of whiteness studies and Hip Hop pedagogies in writing classrooms in order to begin to dismantle these kinds of damaging rhetoric in our society and ultimately raise student's rhetorical awareness of the white privilege tropes that surround them. My argument is that by introducing careful, pointed discussions in composition and rhetoric courses (particularly first-year writing) about white privilege, citing examples of current white privilege rhetoric (i.e., Trump tweets), and tasking writing students to analyze this rhetoric using Hip Hop pedagogies, we have the unique opportunity to engage students more critically in their writing about, and in, the world. This approach also provides students with effective rhetorical strategies and ways of analysis that plant the seeds of allyship, and therefore, impact communities in socially just ways.

Practicing Cultural Rhetorics: Whiteness Studies and Hip Hop Pedagogies

"Sometimes white people vex me. Maybe they confuse you, too. Maybe you're a white person who is sometimes confused by white people…When white people question why blacks get to say certain words or make certain jokes that whites can't or when white people ask where is White History Month or when white people question why they have to pay for the racism of their

ancestors, it's offensive and infuriating and it's also confounding."—Touré, "White people explain why they feel oppressed"

As a white woman who teaches first year writing (FYW) and is also interested in how these forms of white privilege inform our rhetorical analyses of the world around us, I am both infuriated and confounded by current rhetorics of white privilege. The impetus for Touré's vexation is that many white folks "staunchly believe that the primary victims of modern racism are whites," and his observations are not without merit. The *Journal of Experiential Social Psychology* (Phillips and Lowery) recently published a study evidencing that whites maintain clear justifications for their feelings of discrimination and oppression—in many ways Donald Trump's presidency and the rhetoric surrounding his campaign is a perfect example of the manifestation of these feelings. Additionally, in a recent *Present Tense* article, we see Theresa Donovan examine the "habits of whiteness" (5) ingrained in our federal government's continued insistence on listing "white" as the first race box to be checked on all government forms. Composition and rhetoric has sought to address white privilege through the sub fields of cultural studies, cultural rhetorics, and whiteness studies, but in the Donald Trump era, clearly we're not doing enough to combat these issues.

Villanueva foreshadowed these concerns and the shifts in racist rhetoric in his work "The Rhetorics of New Racism or The Master's Four Tropes." He maintains that there has been "a tropic shift in the topos of racism. And we aren't keeping up. So we don't know how to engage, don't know if to engage" (9). This shift is most certainly realized in current forms of white privilege rhetoric. Current forms are similar in focus and scope to those of the past but are more dangerous due in large part to the fact that Trump and the alt right are now being given a visible and justifiable platform to proliferate the belief that white folks have indeed become the marginalized. While white privilege has long been embedded in our institutions, the boldness and entitlement in which white privilege rhetoric is being disseminated on a global stage is troublesome to say the least.

In response, white privilege rhetoric has changed; it no longer lurks in the shadows but instead has been given a spotlight. If there ever was an ounce of stigma associated with standing up and saying there is no such thing as white privilege—and more so that being white does not in fact provide personal, professional, and academic advantages—that time has passed. Being aware of this rhetorical shift is not enough. Again, Villanueva established a similar sentiment when calling directly to our field:

> Rhetoricians must not be frightened of controversy, allowing pc to mean policed conversation, turning a blind eye, safe in the silence. We must rail against censorship. Rail against self-censorship. Be bold. So when that next paper comes your way that says there is no racism, please think of the silence, expose it, looking at the master's tropes. Let's look to the language. Behind it there is a material reality—the reality of racism, still present, and not all that new after all. (17)

As a field we need to guide our students to understand that the change in white privilege rhetoric has taken a dangerous turn, one that if left unchecked, misunderstood, and unstudied will lead to a reversal of social progress in devastating ways.

To begin to unpack these issues, we must first look to how our field defines the terms of "whiteness" and how we can translate these definitions more concretely in our classrooms for the purpose of careful study. Early attempts at theorizing whiteness dealt predominately with English studies and the academy writ large. Keating maintains that "whiteness" is often defined by "its pervasive non-presence," which "makes it difficult—if not impossible—to analyze" (904–905). Working from this definition, Barnett argues that "bringing specific attributes of 'whiteness' to light, therefore, is crucial because it is this very invisibility that helps maintain its power" (11). It is in these arguments that we can come to understand that whiteness is not a social construct but a specific way of being in the world that informs much of how we study current manifestations of white privilege rhetoric.

Barnett's call is clearly solidified in the work of Kennedy et al. to define whiteness studies in particular. They posit that "[w]hiteness studies is not about individual white people per se; rather, it is about how whiteness as a cultural and racial category functions within US language use and haunts US people, literature and institutions" (360). Discussing this definition of whiteness studies with students guides them to understand what whiteness and whiteness studies is and how whiteness studies operates in our society and in the field of composition and rhetoric. We must examine institutional whiteness not just as race, or white people, but as a signifier of encoded cultural and racial functions within our personal and public spaces.

To further situate my use of whiteness studies in the composition classroom, I look to bell hooks who states: "it is so crucial that 'whiteness' be studied, understood, discussed—so that everyone learns that affirmation of multiculturalism, and unbiased inclusive perspective, can and should be present whether or not people of color are present" (43). Because I am white, I am overtly aware of tokenism in my classroom. It is not my intention to marginalize anyone, but instead to broaden perspectives on race, on what it means to be white in a multicultural nation. To closely examine white privilege, our students need to be able to connect with what it means

for them, personally. Being able to reach across disciplines to analyze various rhetorical strategies and devices will allow students to process whiteness studies in their own way while also becoming more conscious of the pervasive issues surround white privilege. The ultimate goal of whiteness studies is not to find fault or "reverse discriminate" but to help students see themselves as social and cultural beings who act upon and have also been acted upon by culture (Callejo Perez et al. 147).

I argue that the field can develop a more complex understanding of white privilege by helping students understand why whiteness studies are important and by using pedagogical practices drawn from Hip Hop culture to help students critically analyze the role of white privilege in society. To do this kind of work, I realize it is important to establish terms for discussing what Hip Hop studies entails. Tinson and McBride provide a comprehensive definition of what Hip Hop studies is, what it does, and how it is practiced in the greater field of composition and rhetoric:

> Hip Hop Studies reveals Hip Hop culture as a form of critical social inquiry, in that it urges a multipronged and agile investigation into raced, gendered, and classed social and political structures around the world. (4)

Working from this definition in my course, the students and I use Hip Hop pedagogy as a means to examine various texts, from song lyrics and campaign speeches to tweets and social media memes. Like established Hip Hop studies scholars, I maintain that elements of youth popular culture such as Hip Hop act as unifying and equalizing forces in culturally diverse classrooms, and that certain elements could also provide motivation for learning traditional subject matter. For example, Campbell argues "that Hip Hop music and culture should figure into literacy studies and composition pedagogy for all (that's right *all*)" (127). Campbell argues that Hip Hop does indeed have a place in composition pedagogy and is part of a foundation of scholars, many of whom I have built my own Hip Hop pedagogy upon. Besides providing connective course content material, modeling the unique rhetorical strategies of Hip Hop music and culture has proven particularly effective in helping students appeal to their desired audience more effectively while also maintaining their creative identity, or what Hip Hop calls "keeping it real." Richardson establishes this notion in her book *Hiphop Literacies* by stating:

> The mantra of Hiphoppas, "keep it real", reflects their preoccupation with authenticity…The ability to survive, "to make a way outta no way", and to narrate this experience rhythmically in such a way that it resonates with the primary audience is what is at stake in evaluation of rappers' performance, delivery, style as authentic. (12)

The Hip Hop pedagogy I establish in my classroom points consistently to student writers maintaining authenticity and self-efficacy in their work. Hip Hop scholars recognize that Hip Hop makes space for student voices in unique ways that directly and positively impact their delivery and style of writing. In this way, I guide students to “keep it real” through Hip Hop pedagogical practices.

As earlier established in Tinson and McBride’s definition, Hip Hop studies is meant to work across and beyond disciplines to perform critical, social inquiry in the classroom. This form of resistance rhetoric has long been established by proponents of Hip Hop pedagogy. Now more than ever, it is imperative to get our students thinking about and critiquing dominant power structures and questioning the “traditional” and “mainstream” American ideals of class, sex, and race. In this way, “the rap music of the Hip Hop Nation simultaneously reflects the cultural evolution of the Black Oral Tradition and the construction of a contemporary resistance rhetoric” (Smitherman 283).

The argument of Hip Hop as resistance rhetoric is perhaps the most effective way to fully position Hip Hop pedagogy as a means to combat white privilege rhetoric. Pough discusses Hip Hop in terms of how black females and Hip Hop artists alike invoke wreck or “bring wreck,” a term used in Hip Hop to signify skill and greatness; the rapper is so good, has so much skill, that he or she wrecks the microphone (77). However, Pough focuses on how wreck can best be described as “a rhetorical act that can be written, spoken, or acted out in a way that shows resistance” (78). Hip Hop rhetoric entails a component of resistance to mainstream, oppressive ideologies through the linguistic choices made by those fully entrenched in Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop music is the mouthpiece for this rhetoric of resistance. It was indeed created to showcase the cultural values and struggles of people of color. Richardson clearly points to Hip Hop as a “means of survival” and that “literally in the African American tradition, rap and rappers made a ‘way outta no way’ when they took elements of their pain and struggle ‘along with stray technological parts’ and brought into being a subculture of resistance and creativity that has commanded global respect” (*Hip Hop Literacies* 72).

This is not to say that composition and rhetoric classrooms should all become bastions of radical political activism but that Hip Hop pedagogies are a means to more critically read the world. For my classroom, the purpose is to also utilize these pedagogies and the foundations of Hip Hop studies to begin conversations about white privilege in the hopes that students will more carefully question why white privilege rhetoric has become laudable in mainstream culture. Or as Campbell aptly states:

> In the end, though, the point is not to piss off students (our customers), or even to criticize them per se. It is to engage them in honest and forthright dialogue, to prompt them to question social constructs and their vested interests in them so that they can truly think freely and independently. (336)

If we engage in balanced discussions in our writing classrooms about what white privilege is and its role in America, our students will be able to approach all rhetorical analyses more effectively. Specifically, when approached from a Hip Hop pedagogical perspective, we can embrace whiteness studies in our classrooms as a way to more critically and ethically examine rhetorics of white privilege.

I also use Hip Hop pedagogies to teach more effective rhetorical skills so that students may critically deconstruct the white privilege rhetoric that surrounds them. Therefore, my approach to Hip Hop pedagogies is also deeply rooted in the practice of cultural rhetorics. As a scholar in this field, I work towards “understanding a specific culture’s systems, beliefs, relationships to the past, practices of meaning-making, and practices of carrying culture forward to future generations” (Bratta and Powell). That is, my goal is to make meaning of whiteness studies and Hip Hop practices to empower the rhetorical analysis skills of my students. For me, to practice cultural rhetorics in FYW is to encourage my students to be allies. Del Hierro et al. define allyship as interactions in complicated, complex spaces where folks come to the table with a myriad of overlapping and conflicting subjectivities, privileges, and oppressions. They argue that “we need to get away from the notion of maintaining a certain position and instead start thinking about movement.”

For the classroom environment, I seek to achieve an ethos of allyship as a cornerstone. I want my students to know that they will never be villainized or tokenized for their varied beliefs and to empower them to own their mistakes and work together as a community to do better. The way cultural rhetorics scholars approach allyship is exactly what I hope to achieve in my classroom by working with cultural rhetorics like Hip Hop pedagogies and whiteness studies—to “knit” my students together in ways that protect their own identities while simultaneously making them aware of the white privilege rhetoric that seeks to dismantle our multicultural nation.

My definition of Hip Hop pedagogies is teaching the rhetorical tradition by using nontraditional heuristics—utilizing Hip Hop culture and music to inspire kairotic moments and also to model effective rhetorical strategies. Marc Lamont Hill calls this approach Hip Hop Based Education (HHBE) but admits he struggles with pushing from a “pedagogy *of* hip-hop” that is rooted in cultural studies theory and “pedagogy *about* hip-hop” as the analysis and recrafting of Hip Hop

texts to a "pedagogy *with* hip-hop" (123). Much of what I am attempting to do in my class is to tackle these obstacles Lamont discusses in his work and effectively establish a Hip Hop pedagogy that utilizes elements of, about, and *with* Hip Hop culture for generative ends. For example, in examining white privilege rhetoric, we will rhetorically analyze Trump tweets/speeches and Hip Hop texts paying particular attention to their rhetorical effectiveness and how/why they work within and around basic assumptions of white privilege to persuade the intended audience. I consider this a Hip Hop pedagogy for three reasons: first, it engages in meaningful analysis of nontraditional texts; second, the purpose behind the pedagogy is rooted in analyzing marginalized voices to better understand the effects of white privilege in our country; and third, students are much more vested and engaged with the course material because it deals with popular culture references and relates to them on a personal level.

To be able to juxtapose a rhetorical analysis of white privilege rhetoric in Trump's speeches and tweets with the rhetorical strategies of various Hip Hop artists is a chance to show our students the power of rhetoric and how it can change the national dialogue. Hip Hop has long been regarded as both a culture and musical genre that gives a voice to the marginalized, while Trump's campaign rhetoric has been largely based on the argument that whites are the "new" marginalized. Pointing to the unique and rhetorically savvy strategies exhibited by many Hip Hop artists to make their voices and art heard in ways that both appeal to and engage the audience guides students to understand how rhetoric actually works in society to achieve tangible, high stakes ends—like making millions off a record about your personal struggle or winning a presidential election. Green solidifies this connection more clearly when he states:

> Part of the perceived fluidity of one's words derives from the ability to turn, flip or redefine concepts, words and ideas in ways that demonstrate an authority over them and language in general. Good rappers exhibit this ability regularly, just as good writers do. I find in reading hip-hop texts with students, pointing to these moves disrupts some fundamental assumptions about their language as natural expressions and highlights the rhetorical nature of compositing of an audience. (179)

As writing instructors, we spend much of our time teaching the mechanics of effective rhetoric, paying particular attention to the rhetorical situation and, in many cases of first-year writing, guiding our students on how to best navigate the rigors of college writing. Providing students with concrete, textual and multimodal examples, such as ones that Green references, are a way to achieve the goals of helping our students become not only better writers but more engaged citizens, ones who "disrupt some fundamental assumptions about their language." In my course, those disruptions come in the form of identifying, analyzing, and understanding the role white privilege plays in America's past, present, and future.

In order to “work against white privilege” (Callejo Perez, et al. 145) we need to transparently and critically discuss white privilege in our classrooms. This call is echoed and magnified by Carmen Kynard when she discusses the deeply embedded tropes of white gaze in the field of composition and the academy writ large. For writing students to fully begin to work towards dismantling white privilege, we must first empower “students of color and radical white allies…who instead of being heard get downplayed in favor of the students of color espousing color-blindness more than color-consciousness” (Kynard 198). In essence, Kynard calls for the makerspace to allow students to push against white privilege in ways that make sense to them and are rooted in their own experiences and perspectives, not ones that we thrust upon them from the ivory tower. Kynard explains that “it is my hope for these color-conscious folk, always explaining one’s self rather than actually learning that they too can roll back the white gaze and instead insert their own history, their own discourse, and their own positionality” (17). Therefore, it is important to first get students to recognize the existence of white privilege in order to build a strong foundation of allyship both in and out of the classroom.

As a student-centered teacher, Kynard’s work informs and inspires the space I strive to create for my students in beginning open and honest discussions about the pervasiveness of white privilege in our institutions. In attempting to establish theoretical frames for my teaching and research, I recognize the importance of establishing a space for discussions of how color-blind racism and stock stories are the go-to justifications for those who deny the existence of white privilege. Martinez argues that “stock stories feign neutrality and at all costs avoid any blame or responsibility for societal inequality” (38). One of the frames I establish in my courses is the importance of counterstory. Martinez provides a clear example of how counterstory works in the academy by stating:

> Counterstory, then, is a method of telling stories by people whose experiences are not often told. Counterstory as a methodology thus serves to expose, analyze, and challenge stock stories of racial privilege and can help to strengthen traditions of social political and cultural survival and resistance. (38)

In a course on writing and rhetoric, an introduction to these terms and methods builds the framework for more mindful semester-long discussions of white privilege that seek to eventually dismantle the perceived validity of the stock stories students have been fed in and through institutions over many years.

To more clearly understand current rhetorics of white privilege, we can look to Phillips and Lowery who embarked on an extensive study of white privilege and concluded that whites

believe that their own personal hardships trump any racial privilege. Which is to say that many whites believe that white privilege exists but not for them, individually.

Anderson directly addresses the deeply embedded and dangerous deliverable of white privilege in America, which she calls "white rage," by explaining:

> White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly…The trigger for white rage, inevitably, is black advancement. It is not the mere presence of black people that is the problem; rather, it is blackness with ambitions, with drive, with purpose, with aspirations, and with demands for full and equal citizenship. (3)

I firmly agree with Anderson here, but I would extend the concept to include not just white anger towards black advancement but deep grievances against any person of color who is thought to be endangering American culture, particularly Hispanic and Middle Eastern immigrants. Sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom observes that: Whiteness defends itself. Against change, against progress, against hope, against black dignity, against black lives, against reason, against truth, against facts, against native claims, and against its own laws and customs.

This is exactly the sentiment that emboldens and justifies much of the results from the Phillips and Lowery study, and it is the heart of what drove Trump to win the election. Many working-class white folks who felt utterly disenfranchised blame the Obama administration as the root of their anger, and thus white privilege cements itself even more firmly into the fabric of our society. Phillips and Lowery's findings seem to be in direct response not only to their study but also to Toure's argument that "[w]hite perception and the reality are completely at odds" (par. 6). The declining number of affirmative action programs and policies is a clear example of this.

And therein lies the catch 22. If whites feel they are oppressed, why would they support policies that give their oppressors (minorities) an advantage? Drawing these connections between rejections of traditional notions about white privilege and a decline in equal opportunity initiatives is a clear way of calling for a closer examination of how our students view white privilege. Hip Hop is the direct result and reflection of U.S. citizens who felt the need to be heard because their problems, their lives were considered minority issues and largely ignored by the majority. In my class, we use Hip Hop's history and texts as a way to understand complex concepts of what happens when social, cultural, and racial majorities and minorities exist in a democratic nation. The systems that exist in our country are all heavily weighted in white people's favor. To ignore that fact is to misunderstand America, and if white people admit to this truth, it will be plain that they are not, in any way, victims (Touré).

Yet rhetorics of white privilege are based almost solely on this rhetoric of victimization and in many cases appropriation of minority struggles. Thus we see the rise of voices like Donald Trump's. Trump presented himself as the underdog in the election, the anti-politician and, in many ways, a victim of what he would argue is President Obama's mismanagement of our economy and immigration policies. The conservative right lauds Trump as the champion of oppressed whites who feel like victims of Obama's presidency just like him. This is more than just reverse racism, "it's a new racism…no longer founded on the presumption of white supremacy, no longer functions under the rhetoric of biological determinism, no longer even takes race as a given" (Villanueva 10). These beliefs are in direct correlation with Phillips and Lowery's findings on current opinions of white privilege.

Acting as a champion of "disenfranchised" whites only seeks to cement whiteness more firmly into our national fabric (Donovan 6). That is not to say that whiteness is a negative term, but only that white privilege is grossly misunderstood. A misunderstanding that can potentially be dealt with by a revamping of whiteness studies in academia, or as Lowery and Phillips recommend, to "correct the fallacies" of white privilege (17).

The way I approach whiteness studies builds upon this foundation and seeks to revisit these goals with a nontraditional approach utilizing Hip Hop pedagogies to more carefully enter into discussions of culture, race, and rhetoric writ large. Specifically, this means my students first read and discuss work on whiteness studies and then apply that understanding to analysis of nontraditional texts (song lyrics, documentary film, social media) in an effort to define and understand white privilege in today's society.

Specifically, I teach whiteness studies via Hip Hop pedagogies to engage my students with current textual and visual rhetoric in an attempt to both establish understanding of and to dismantle white privilege. For example, we will perform a rhetorical analysis of this meme that recently made the rounds on social media:

Fig. 1. http://www.thefederalistpapers.org/us/racism-is-alive-in-the-united-states

Students critically examine the purpose, context, and situation surrounding this meme in order to question its overall argument and assess its effectiveness. More importantly, after much discussion of how Hip Hop culture and music are meant to "disturb the peace" (Smitherman 283), they would determine whether this author's appeals are similar to that of Hip Hop culture's founding goal to provide a voice for the voiceless in times of political and social upheaval. In response to teaching Jay-Z in a post-9/11 world, Hill maintains that "popular culture texts provide a powerful window through which to view young people's understanding and response to reality" and that "the decision to make use of such texts within the classroom creates possibilities for students to recognize the commonality and distinctiveness of their

conditions and to imagine alternate realities" ("Using Jay-Z to Reflect on Post-9/11 Race Relations" 23). While Hill's work here refers to post-9/11 rhetorics, his argument establishes a solid base for using Hip Hop pedagogies to help students make sense of the unstable political climate and disruptive white privilege rhetoric surrounding Trump's presidency. That is, the assignments and discussions in my course are meant to guide students to question the purpose of white privilege rhetoric.

In addition to the meme assignment, my students are tasked to rhetorically analyze campaign speeches, state and local government documents, and various institutional websites to critically discuss the supremely embedded nature of white privilege in our country. What students learn from analyzing these texts after working within the field of whiteness studies is that white privilege exists and deserves careful analysis in order to fully understand how it permeates all levels of American society. And this analysis should lead to more than just social critique—"we must encourage students to develop and articulate their critiques within the public sphere" (Hill) through various writing practices. Ultimately, the point of my pedagogy—similar to Hill and Kynard—is to rage directly against the existing frameworks of white privilege and push students to do the same, to question and examine how whiteness is inevitably and pervasively privileged in our society.

Recently, the BET awards presented my curriculum with a thought-provoking gift of new material to analyze that directly relates to discussions of complex intersections of white privilege rhetoric, Hip Hop rhetorical strategies, and our current political climate. The gift came in the form of a Hip Hop cypher by Eminem where the theme was undoubtedly anti-Trump but more importantly reveals Eminem's approach to allyship in the public sphere. Before viewing the video, I task my students with small-group work in forums via our online courseware to work through the following prompts: What is an ally? Do you think Eminem fits the definition of an ally? Why/why not? By coming to a consensus of how we view and define allyship as a class, we can then begin to analyze and unpack the rhetorical power of the cypher, viewable below.

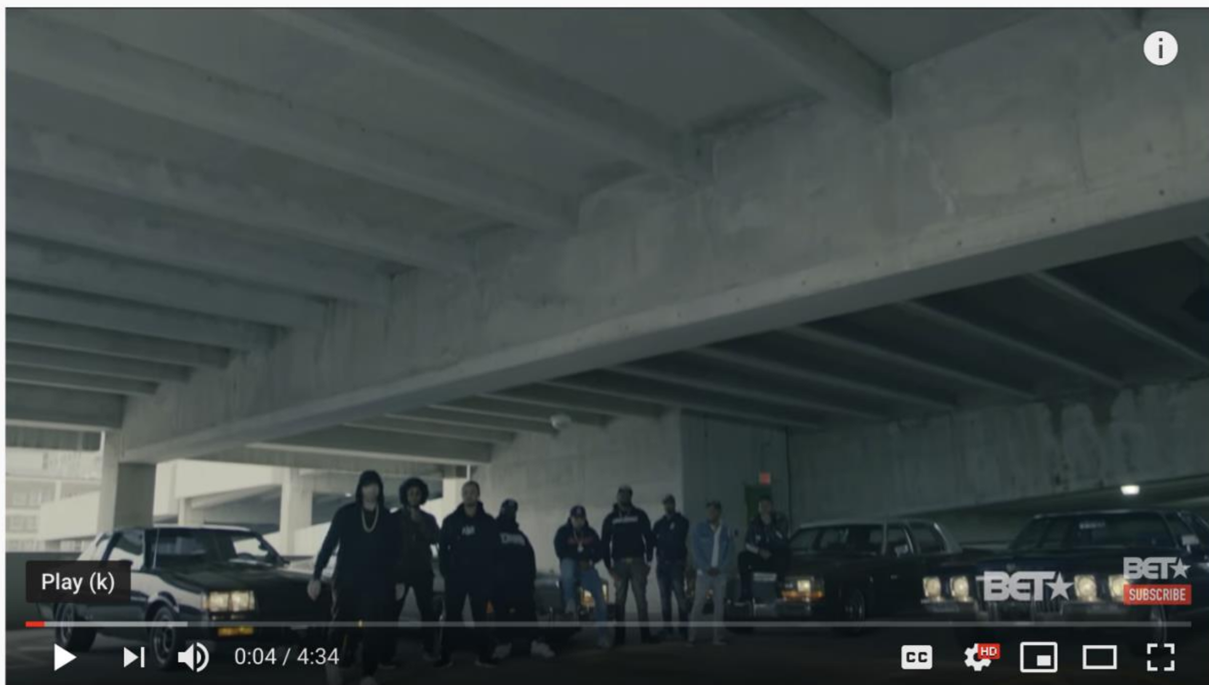

Fig. 2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LunHybOKIjU

After screening the video, students reflect on and respond to the following questions: What is the rhetorical situation of this cypher? What Hip Hop rhetorical strategies does Eminem employ in this cypher? These questions create a foundation to discuss allyship by getting students to state the obvious (Em IS a white, rich male) but to push their analysis further to understand that the rhetoric in this cypher is working to build a community of resistance against the radically racist and white privilege rhetoric that Trump is disseminating to the masses. In rhetorically analyzing the lyrics of this cypher, students come to understand that Em is working mindfully to establish his role as an ally.

The purpose of building up an established idea of allyship and then discussing the rhetorical situation of this piece lends to a robust discussion of a unique point where white privilege rhetoric is overtly taken to task with vigorous Hip Hop rhetorical strategies. Furthermore, the discussion and analysis of this video leads to a concrete discussion about ethos. That is, we discuss Eminem's credibility and legitimacy in the cypher, learning through his transparent lyrics

about the damaging effects of Trump's white privilege rhetoric. After this class exercise, most students readily report that even though they may not all agree with Em's argument, he is indeed credible to present these topics. I agree with Campbell when he offers "that many of our students learn more about what it means to be white and middle class from someone like Eminem than from anything we can teach them" (330). As an instructor, this video serves as model for both Hip Hop pedagogies at work and how to push against a white privilege counterstory of marginalization.

What Students Get From This Type of Work

Getting students to recognize the existence of white privilege in current political and social media rhetoric has been easy. For instance, in a South Carolina campaign speech in August 2016, Trump remarked, which was also reposted on Twitter: "there's no such thing as racism anymore. We've had a black president so it's not a question anymore. Are they saying black lives should matter more than white lives or Asian lives? If black lives matter, then go back to Africa? We'll see how much they matter there." Students can easily analyze this remark as directly pitting white versus black values and creating even more divisiveness in our country. They clearly recognize the white privilege rhetoric hard at work in such remarks and tweets. However, with deeper analysis they come to understand that the criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement brought about the rise of other examples of white privilege rhetoric at work, such as Blue Lives Matter or All Lives Matter as forums for raging against "reverse racism." Their analysis of such social media texts are also a perfect example of connecting how white privilege rhetoric employs themes that are similar to those found in Hip Hop culture and music (marginalization, degradation, etc.) to appeal to the desired audience.

A pedagogy is successful only if it makes knowledge or skills achievable while at the same time allowing students to maintain their own sense of identity (Gilyard). That is, through critically studying and reading about white privilege via a Hip Hop pedagogy, teachers can clearly enhance writing as an achievable, tangible deliverable that celebrates student voices and can influence our communities in positive ways. However, as instructors we must also be aware that by studying such contemporary issues, students will come to the scholarly table with much more to say, and perhaps much more conflicting and heated ideas and discussions than we may have previously encountered in the composition classroom. In order to mediate these discussions and conflicting identities, teachers must teach the value of varied voices, a Sophistic approach to seeing all views, and even though not all agree, seeing the purpose and motives behind these identity constructions.

For me, Hip Hop creation, process, and performance is most similar to the craft of constructing effective rhetoric in our field. The parallels are clear and organic to my students, and working

with rhetorics of Hip Hop makes their work more original, creative, entertaining, informed, and genuine. Like Grand Master Cas says in the documentary *Something From Nothing: The Art of Rap*, "Hip hop didn't invent anything, but it reinvented *everything*." That's what I'd like my students to do: reinvent the way they see and read and understand the pervasiveness of white privilege in our world with their own flavor, rhetorical strategies, and originality to, like Hip Hop artists, make their voices heard.

Conclusion or Final Thoughts on the Rhetoric of White Privilege

"Hip Hop has an obligation to combine social protest, music, and modes of cultural expression to address systemic racism, classicism, suffering, and social neglect"—Bettina Love, ""GET FREE: Creativity, Hip Hop Civics Ed, Intersectionality and Joy"

Since the attempted eradication of Native peoples in America, whites have long been in the numerical majority. Recently, however, the threat of losing majority status has been directly related to affirmative action and immigration polices—but that is only part of the white privilege issue. I argue that a more important variable is that white privilege would exist even if whites were no longer in the majority. The "systemic impact of the development of White dominance and hegemony" (Callejo Perez et al. 146) is so deeply rooted in our national consciousness that it permeates every realm of our society regardless of the numbers in the census. My Hip Hop pedagogical approach seeks to expose this reality by pointing to social media texts that students use and connect to on a daily basis. By rhetorically analyzing current tweets, memes, song lyrics, and videos of popular culture and engaging in discussions about white privilege—whether literal or figurative—we begin the conversation about how this rhetoric impacts our daily lives. This beginning allows our classrooms to become spaces for unpacking and understanding white privilege. Studying nontraditional texts and those associated with popular culture like Hip Hop push both teachers and students to realize that "these texts are [not] reflective of simple ideologies alone. They are a set of resources that [students] use to deal with the world" (Dimidriadis 125).

My hope is that openly discussing the current rhetorics of white privilege through the lens of whiteness studies can create a more socially, racially, and culturally responsible space—a more reflective student body of allies whose work will model that space and therefore be more rhetorically savvy. I am not alone in this hope. Anderson deftly calls this hope to action stating:

> This is the moment now when all of us—black, white, Latino, Native American, Asian American—must step out of the shadow of white rage, deny its power, understand its unseemly goals, and refuse to be seduced by its buzzwords, dog whistles and sophistry. This is when we choose a different future. (178)

Anderson astutely marries her goals of hope and action in this call. I plan to answer it by specifically discussing whiteness studies utilizing Hip Hop pedagogies in my teaching and research to more clearly and honestly question and combat the role of white privilege in our classrooms, universities, and communities. As I stated in the beginning, I blame white privilege for Trump's election, and I plan to do everything in my power as an educator to foster a culture of allyship to fight it.

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