

HERMAN GRAY: Okay, I think we can get started thank you all for coming on a Saturday night in New York City. We were amazed both at the size of the room and the event. I'm Herman Gray and I'm very pleased to be the moderator for this plenary. I should thank first of all President Piven, Fox Piven for the idea and persisting in making popular culture a part of the program this year. And then I owe a very special note of thanks to my good friend and colleague Bonnie Dill Thornton, whose persistence and imagination and persuasion got this panel organized and the idea for the particular novel approach that we're going to try is very much Bonnie's idea, so thank you so much, we're very pleased.

The original idea for this session was to try to think about the literal force of contemporary cultural practices, popular culture, and to try to sort of bring a sense of understanding about popular culture, cultural practices, commercial culture to the foreground in the profession and to sort of give it some prominence, given *its* prominence in contemporary life in our global world. So we were very much interested in having a conversation among a group of people who were involved in all phases of cultural work including intellectuals, academics public intellectuals, film makers, journalists, writers. So I couldn't think of a more distinguished and productive group of people than the ones that you see before you.

So I'm just going to introduce everybody and I'm also very pleased to be sharing the stage with them. I'm going to introduce everybody, they'll say a word or two about their work, their interest in the issue of popular culture or commercial culture, and then we'll sort of have a dialogue among ourselves about a couple of the kind of big questions that emerge and we may show you some things, some film clips, some video clips of work in order to sort of stimulate the conversation among ourselves, but also to invite you to join us. Let me also say that part of the sort of framework for thinking about the conversation that we'd like to have is to really try to get beyond the sort of old binaries of high and low, the binaries of commercial culture versus art culture, all of those sort of tried and true things that sociologists and cultural workers thought that we'd put to rest a generation ago. Sometimes they're not so put to rest and they still very much are a part of the sort of lingua franca of how we think about culture in the contemporary moment. And again, the people that you see before you are engaged with various forms of trying to complicate the question of culture representation, politics, social movements and the sort of industrial structures of the culture industry.

So let me just frame our conversation with those remarks and introduce the guests that we've invited to join us. On the far end is Daphne Brooks, Daphne is an associate professor of English and African-American studies at Princeton where she teaches courses in literature and culture in pro forma studies, critical gender studies and popular music. She is the author of two

books; Bodies and Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, and Jeff Buckley's Grace, a 2005 continuum book.

Next to her is Byron Hurt, a filmmaker who Byron describes himself as more than a filmmaker, actually he's an antisexist activist who provides cutting edge, leadership expert analysis on questions of sexual gender violence and prevention education. Byron's film *Beyond Beats and Rhymes: A Hip Hop Head Weighs in on Manhood*, and Hip Hop is an extraordinary film. If you have not seen it, I strongly suggest that you get a hold of it and have a look-see. Its won prizes at Sundance, shown in Sundance in San Francisco, in Melbourne, in Atlanta in Amsterdam and other places around the world.

Next to him is Jeff Chang who is a journalist and writes about popular music, in particular about hip hop social movements and youth culture. Jeff is the author of Can't Stop, Won't Stop which recounts the origins of hip hop showing us how a generation of neglected kids from the Bronx reinvented through speech, music, fashion, dance, and art, a whole set of cultural practices including their world and eventually our world. His most recent book is called, what is it called, it's called Total Chaos: Art and the Esthetics of Hip Hop, and it's a novel collection of essays and commentary and roundtable discussion about the influence of hip hop beyond the commercial realm including art esthetics, design, graphics and so forth.

And to my immediate right is Craig Watkins, S. Craig Watkins who is at the University of Texas. He is the author of two books, very well received; one is called Representin, which is about the influence of hip hop and music culture on film. And his most recent book is called Hip Hop Matters, published by Beacon Press and it is a political and cultural economic analysis of hip hop and popular music. So, please join in welcoming our guests this evening.

Thank you. So, why don't we start with Daphne telling us a little bit about her work and sharing with us some of the ideas that she has about this question of popular culture critique and most importantly for the purposes of the fanatics, this question of imaginaries, new imaginaries, new subject formations, new possibilities. Daphne.

DAPHNE BROOKS: Thank you Herman. I want to thank Herman for being so gracious and for inviting me to participate with such a fabulous group. I'm also horrified to be in this space, I feel like we should be opening for Prince, I was saying. It's a large space; I don't want to ever see myself on a screen like that again so I'm going to look like this. And I'm an English professor so I'm already, you know fish out of water here and I did end up writing some things, which you know I apologize, I'll be as spontaneous as I can. The other final disclaimer is that I, one of the my connections, my deep and passionate connections to popular culture is teaching at a rock and roll girls' camp, which just completed its first session in New York City today, so I spent the morning

and the afternoon listening to 15 bands with girls ages 8 to 18 rocking out, and so my ear is kind of blown out here. So, I'm going to talk about the work that I do writing about rock music and also the ways that I've become really obsessed with rock music criticism and hopefully have time to talk a little bit about the late great Alan Willis who some of you may be familiar with who is a pioneer in feminist rock criticism. But I also have a clip that I'm going to show, so I've got my, the only reason my iPod is here is so I can keep track of time. So Herman or someone should go like this if I'm running too long.

Okay so, my little narrative; narratives, English professors, they do narratives please bear with me. In the hands of Tenacious D., the self proclaimed greatest rock band of all time, the history of rock and roll — a hallowed history that mainstreamed rock music critics have been telling and repeating in varied forms for decades now — comes to life in all its delicious absurdity witnessed that history as it is passed down from wise man Ben Stiller to the D., his lordliness Jack Black and fellow swash buckling power folk metal shredder Kyle Gass in the wickedly over the top 2006 film Tenacious D. and the Pick of Destiny. So I'm going to show this clip which I feel like generates all sorts of questions and issues for me around rock music criticism. Yes, you're really going to see clip from Tenacious D. Ooh, bad to do, sociologists.

MOVIE CLIP

JACK BLACK: Picks.

KYLE GASS: Let's see.

KYLE GASS: I don't think they have it.

JACK BLACK: Let's talk to the dude. We might have to special order it.

DUDE: Marcus I need a price check on Ernie Ball Amcaster stat. Just be a second. Can I help you gentlemen?

JACK BLACK: Yeah we're looking for a guitar pick like this one.

DUDE: How did you hear about this? What did Pepper Dell tell you?

JACK BLACK: Uh, we just noticed all these musicians are using the same guitar pick—

DUDE: Okay. Just—Jerry do me a favor. Ring up these Amcasters for me. Thank you my man. In here.

We can talk in here.

What you seek is the Pick of Destiny.

KYLE GASS: I think there's a light switch back here.

DUDE: No don't. Grab a seat. You two bozos don't even realize it but you two just stumbled onto the darkest secret in the history of rock.

JACK BLACK: Go on.

DUDE: I actually saw it once. I used to be a guitar tech. So one night I was working a gig up in New Jersey or something. Some real mediocre band. The lead guitarist comes out and starts shredding these licks way beyond his capabilities. Like that shit had to be coming from somewhere else. I noticed he was using a new pick. Weird looking thing the horns on it. Made of green ivory or some shit. It was the pick, it wasn't him. He didn't know what he had though. End of the show he flicks it back into the audience. Some kid catches it. Kid named Eddie.

KYLE GASS: Eddie?

DUDE: Van Halen.

JACK BLACK: Wow.

DUDE: So I started to researching it. Turns out this thing goes deeper than I could have imagined. Way deeper. Back to the dark ages. I moved to Rome. Quit my job. Learned Latin and gained the trust of the night Liberian at the Vatican. Gentlemen named Salvadorian Papadillo. He turned me onto some shit that you wouldn't believe. Check this out. It's an ancient scroll. All in Latin I translated it. Took me six years.

KYLE GASS: Why didn't you just get a translator?

DUDE: And let him read it too? Listen to this. Long ago a dark wizard used his black magic to summon Satan himself. Satanamous. That's Latin for Satan. A horrific battle ensued but the great demon was far too powerful.

SATAN: Snakes.

DARK WIZARD: Finish me fowl beats.

DUDE: Luckily a black smith heard the beast roars.

BLACKSMITH: NNNNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!

SATAN: OOOWWW. Fuck! You chipped my tooth. I'm not complete.

DARK WIZARD: _____

KYLE GASS: What does that mean?

DUDE: From wince you came you shall remain until you are complete again.

SATAN: Fuck you. I'm not complete.

DUDE: The demon was drawn back into the fires of hell and the dark wizard was totally stoked to be alive. With a long draw on his hash pipe the wizard devised a way to repay the blacksmith. The blacksmith loved a fair maiden. To gain her affection he would need a true masters skill that would leave the maiden moist and wanting. And so the wizard fashioned the demons tooth into a pick that would make the black smith play only the most masterful of melodies on his lute. There by winning the heart of the maiden he loved. The secret of the pick died with that blacksmith. And then poof all of a sudden it reappears in the American south at the turn of the century in Robert Johnson's fingers. Spawns the birth of the blues and Rock'N'Roll.

JACK BLACK: Of course.

DUDE: The pick is a tiny part of the beats. So it has supernatural qualities.

JACK BLACK: Supernatural?

DUDE: No. Supranatural. That's like a whole another level above super.

JACK BLACK: Where is it now?

DUDE: This is the last known photo of the pick. That guitar was sold at auction and now resides in the Rock'n'Roll history museum. That's where the pod is to.

JACK BLACK: The pod?

DUDE: The pick----

DAPHNE BROOKS: This is about the time when Herman is probably going to get security and have me removed from here for showing that. But, you know, I really hadn't, there were real issues behind why I wanted to show that, that clip. Equal parts grotesque camp and loving reverential affection, the Pick of Destiny's version of rock history, a blend of skull and bones secrecy, Da Vinci Code conspiracy, our theory in legend, and middle earth epic grandeur exposes the inflated mythologies of rock music culture and criticism for what they in fact

are, mythologies, and yet simultaneously the film of course embraces, enhances and perpetuates these myths in supernatural proportions right.

So similar to the “D”, I grew up in suburban northern California listening to rock and roll and embracing these myths even as they actively erased people of color, and women in particular, from their central roles as agents and innovators of rock and roll culture. So myths of love and death, love and theft, the sexed up necrophilic dalliances of white musical masters and the always black, most often men that they admire and desire, consume and cannibalize continue to hold center stage in the critical imaginaries of rock music histories. Think of Huck and Jim on a raft, Clapton and Hendrix in a deadly embrace into the woods with Kurt and Leadbelly. These are the historical mythologies that dominate our narratives of racial appropriation and fetishization, and yet in my work of late, I’ve been making a public plea in rock critics’ gatherings — yes they really do exist — organized by my colleagues Zan Powers, Eric Weisbard and others at Seattle’s Experience Music Project Museum for new narratives of love and theft. And I have an interest in interrogating rock music criticism, and the way that it always threatens to recycle the racial engendered biases of culture appropriation debates plaguing pop culture since the rise of minstrelcy, and we can talk a lot about minstrelsy tonight if we wanted to.

So repeatedly I’m reminded of the fact that when rock and roll criticism talks about cultural appropriation, these discussions far too often are coded as homo-social affairs instead of awakening us to the kinds of cultural thefts that remain presently absent in rock memory, instead of forcing us to talk in more specific terms about the very gendered economy of the cultural appropriation wars. Canonical rock music criticism has somehow, and I’m thinking of Lester Bangs, of my friends Greil Marcus, Robert Christgau, much of the criticism that was written involved that of Rolling Stone in the late 60s early 70s, has somehow managed to foreclose sustained conversations about the conservation of stable masculinities in these debates.

So what I want, what I’m after then is a way for us to talk differently about cultural appropriation in rock music criticism. For one, I’m interested in shifting the fulcrum of our critical focus on love and theft, surely a terminology that we might continue to interrogate and dissect, as well, and I’m interested in ways that we might recalibrate and restructure rock music criticism to focus on multiple counter narratives of love and theft that demand our attention, so that we might dismantle and reconceptualize the historical framework for reading and rereading genealogies of racial performative encounters. And just as well I’m interested in exploring the role that rock music criticism, that pseudo gonzo journalism born in part out of the Kool-Aid experiment, far-out Berkley trips of the 60s and 70s, I want to talk a bit more, in a bit more detail about the role that rock music criticism has played in shaping contemporary cultural fetishizations of white male performative virtuosity and latent black male innovations at the expense of

producing more nuanced heterogeneous tales of racial and gender collaborations and disidentifications in popular music culture.

So one of the ways that rock music criticism has shaped and continues to shape our understandings of racialized musical encounters and what are the alternative stories that we might tell. And there's a piece that Kelefa Sanneh of The New York Times wrote a couple of years back on this thing called *rockism*, which we can talk more about in the discussion, I don't want to take up too much time, but rockism and a certain kind of fetishizing of certain artists in rock music culture is certainly something that I try to address in my work, as well as some work that Bob Christgau has done on really thinking about the discourse of taste that was constructed in those early issues of Rolling Stone and Cream. I have a quote from Bob which I'll just read and close out with because with that clip, I've already taken up too much time. So, Robert Christgau, the Great Robert Christgau, has written:

"Canons of artistic quality, critical vocabulary, historical overview and cultural commitment quickly asserted themselves in early rock music criticism. The esthetic was Hell on pretension and in love with authenticity, excitement, and the shock of the new. Although it valued formal imagination over technical skill, it expected tuneful song writing and regularly got hot for strong tonsils or slippery fingers deployed in the service of form, authenticity, or both. Blues and country had a baby and Sargent Pepper begat the concept album proved handy origin myths." And above all else Christgau suggests rock music criticism embraced a dream or metaphor of perpetual revolution. Worthwhile bands were supposed to change people's lives, preferably for the better. If they failed to do so, that meant that they didn't matter.

So the work that I've tried to do recently has been to recuperate, as many other feminist rock critics have tried to do of late, Ellen Willis's critical interventions that she has made in thinking about trying to write from a resistant point of view within the world of rock and roll as well as hip hop, country, et al. And I'd love to talk more about Ellen Willis in our discussion today, but I'll close out now.

HERMAN GRAY: Thank you Daphne. Now, you should be rest assured that I promised the members of the panel that these won't be formal papers, so don't, so they are apprised of that. So, why don't we hear from Byron about his work and particularly, his work around questions of cinema and masculinity and sexuality.

BYRON HURT: Well, I want to sort of begin with my personal journey of really becoming interested in the power of popular culture when I took a class at Northeastern University in Boston called *Blacks in the Media and the Press* and was taught by a professor named Elizabeth Hadley Freyberg, right? And for the first time, I was really exposed to a media literacy class. Because in that class

she exposed us to books like Split Image and the works from, I believe it's Thomas Bogle, Coons, Mammies, Bucks, something like that, Coons, Mammies, Bucks or it could have been Bucks, Mammies, Coons, Uncle Toms, any arrangement of those different caricatures, right? And she really forced us as a class to think critically about the images that we were consuming, that we had grown up with, the cartoons that we had watched.

She exposed us to filmmakers like Marlin Riggs, you know, and we watched films like *Ethic Notions* and *Color Adjustment*, and it really forced me to think really differently about the images and the representations of black people, not just black men, but also black women. And so I was really, really moved by the work of Marlin Riggs as a documentary filmmaker, and it was really what inspired me to become a documentary filmmaker. I was a journalism student at that time and I thought that I wanted to get into television, radio or television broadcasting. And so, watching his documentary film, which deconstructed all these representations of manhood and womanhood in the media, mainstream media throughout history, really sort of showed me how powerful the medium of TV was, right? And how I as a documentary filmmaker could use popular culture in a way to sort of push people's awareness and consciousness and that sort of thing. So, that's what sort of lead me to become a documentary filmmaker and to make films that really use popular culture in a way that sort of reinterprets it or changes it so that people look at it differently. People look at whatever genre is that is being discussed in the film in different way than when they walked in the door. They would walk out looking at something with a different lens, right. They were looking at it or listening to it with a different ear and that's what I wanted to do as a filmmaker.

And so, that in addition to learning and being immersed in gender issued, learning about masculine identity, learning about sexism and men's violence against women as a young male in my early 20s really sort of, you know, I learned so much and I was immersed in this in this world that I really didn't know that much about as a man. I didn't really know a whole lot about the ways in which sexism and men's violence against women were not just women's issues, they were men's issues, made me think to myself, okay, all of this stuff that I'm learning here as a guy, right, about masculine identity and just race class in general, race, class, and gender in general, I thought that I could apply my skills as a filmmaker to push people's consciousness about race, class, and gender.

And so, that's what lead me to make the film that we are about to see a clip of, *Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, where I deconstruct representations of masculinity and rap music and hip hop culture. And I do this from a place of love, right, it's, my criticism of rap music and hip hop culture is coming from this place of being a part of this community, being a part of this art form that I grew up, I'm emotionally attached to and love, but have deep problems, have deep issues with in terms of the myriad representations of masculinity and femininity. And so, I just thought that it would be a cool thing to

do, to make a film that would break down some of these various constructions of manhood and masculinity in a way, using a form that people could relate to and identify with. I wanted to make a film that looked like it should be on MTV or BET because I knew that's what people were engaged in. That's what people are watching.

And so that's what I set out to do, that was my goal, and you know, when I go out and I show this film across the country, one of the first one or two questions that I get asked is "How come this is not on BET?" Or "How come this is not on MTV?" Which is an indication that it's a success. So, not only did I set out to make a film that was going to reach people where they were, but I also wanted to make a film that was going to, that could, that had the potential to, be used in classrooms, on college campuses, in youth detention centers, all over the place, right? In the culture in ways that Marlin Rigg's work was used for me and the impact that it had on me.

So we're going to see a clip from my film Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes and just to set the scene up, there's a scene in the film where I actually go to a hip hop convention where I confront a lot of aspiring rap artists about some of the lyrics, the hyper masculine lyrics, that they are, you know rapping to me about on camera, and I challenged them about some of the recurring themes that they use in their rhymes and you'll see what happens next.

26:45 (movie with subtitles)

HERMAN GRAY: Okay, thank you Byron. Jeff.

JEFF CHANG: Hard to follow that man. That's powerful stuff. I guess, you know, I kind came up during the same era as a lot of folks here did come up. A lot of my intellectual, sort of development, happened during the late 80s during a time when on the one hand, a lot of folks were getting involved in activism and organizing and a lot of anti-race organizing, especially on the campuses and stuff around diversity issues, around affirmative action, around ethnic studies and at the same time hip hop was coming up and for me, you know, I first heard hip hop when I was 12 years old. I heard Rapper's Delight in Honolulu, Hawaii where I grew up. And everybody there in Hawaii wanted to learn all the lyrics to Rapper's Delight too so, you know, I kind of grew into that and during the 80s I think was a period in which, you know, in a lot of sense, is the movements of the 60s. And in hip hop what we found was sort of the development of a new language around esthetics and around politics that felt very immediate at the time and continued to kind of grow as well. So, I was really inspired by that and I think within the last 10 years of my so-called career, because at one point I was on the sociology track as well. That's another story which we don't need to get into here.

I've been really an advocate, an activist, and a journalist. And I think one of the things that I've seen over the last 10 years is really the shift, and we were

talking about this over dinner, and we've had a lot of discussions about this in other spaces but it's not really out there yet I feel like in the mainstream media, but there's been a major structural shift over the last 10 years in terms of media consolidation. And hip hop has been the way that a lot of these media entertainment companies have been able to go global and shift themselves to be able to move from an old model of 'here's the mainstream culture and everybody else is outside of it' to a popular culture which kind of seeks to incorporate everybody and then figure out a way to take what it is that you're doing and sell it back to you as a lifestyle economy, as a niche market lifestyle economy.

And so, what I've been doing, I think, sort of in retrospect over the last few years especially is to kind of look at where the cracks are in that and to kind of look at the local resistances that are occurring both in arts and in activism and to, I think my job as a journalist and somebody who kind of is given the luxury of being able to think about these things, to be able to connect the dots. Because we're not in a situation any more where there's going to be a media entertainment complex that's going to be able to reflect back to us the kind of stuff that Byron was able to capture, you know, on film here for the most part. Where resistance is happening, it's largely localized. And at the same time, that's not to say that that isn't adding up to something bigger, and so one of my messages has been that if you look at what's happened over the last 3 elections amongst young people, there's been a surge of youth vote that's really reached a demographic watershed. I mean in 2004 there was, there were 4 million new voters between the ages of 18 and 29, and of those 4 million new voters, more than half were African-American and Latino. They didn't look at Asian-Americans, as well, but that's a demographic watershed that nobody's been talking about. And each election since 2000, you've seen an increase in a number of folks that are wanting to get involved and yet if you look at the popular culture, they'll tell you that young people are apathetic, they've been saying that really for about 20 years now. And it's wrong, it's not true. But it's just again, the thing of trying to figure out what's happening, you know, in the neighborhoods, in the cities, in the country, and the countryside as well, in rural communities as well. And try to figure out ways to add that up, I feel like that's our job as people that are able to be able to project back into the world the stuff that's going on. So that's sort of the story that I've been trying to cover.

HERMAN GRAY: Thank you.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: First of all, thanks for Herman for helping to preside over this and Bonnie for creating the space and this opportunity for us to all come together and I'm fans of all of your work and really respect it. I don't know how many of you have ever been in a community space where Byron's film has been exhibited, but it's a pretty powerful experience. I've had an opportunity to do it in a couple of places and the turn, out pretty much the young people, sort of everyday people and their reaction to the film and how it does a lot of the things that you were talking about and really forcing them to sort of challenge a lot of

things that they take for granted, a lot of the things that they participate in, and really ask provocative questions that we often times ask amongst ourselves, but getting people sort of beyond the Ivory Tower to ask these questions and to engage these issues is an immense challenge. And work like what people here are doing, I think is really helping push us in that direction.

I'm a trained sociologist but I teach in a media and communication department. And I actually got PhD from the University of Michigan and anyone, you'll probably get this here, but when people meet me and they understand the work that I do and they ask me "You came out of Michigan sociology program, how did that happen?" And basically, I went to Michigan to primarily to study race and you know, one of the things for me that really was sort of an eye opening, you know, kind of experience was sort of the explosion of what was happening around that time with popular culture, with MTV, with hip hop, and with rap music, and it seemed to me that in my attempt to sort of understand the sociology of race and the ways in which people were experiencing race, how they were constructing their attitudes and beliefs around race, that these commercial and popular culture terrains were very important places in terms of those processes and in terms of their development. So, the word Byron that you used, just how powerful this stuff is, which is just really revealing for me.

You know, bringing these issues into the classroom and trying to frame them and contextualize them in a way that really gets students to start raising these kind of critical questions is always a challenge. And one of the things that I always do, not always, but I've done it in the past, is begin a media and culture or popular culture class with my students and I introduce them, for example to the work of Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *The American Apartheid*, which talked about just the sort of hyper-segregation that has persisted in American throughout the 20th century and even through today, and I ask them how many of them grew up, right, in neighborhoods that were racially diverse. How many of them attended schools that were racially diverse, attended churches and synagogues, religious institutions that were racially diverse. And you know, in concert with that book, very few if any.

And then when you begin to sort of start talking to them about where do you form, so if you live in a racially sort of isolated or racially segregated community and your experience is basically with people who look like you, people who basically sort of believe and share your values, how do you begin to construct notions of those outside of those spaces? How do you begin to understand that so-called other, and it's often times through media, through representation and through communication. And so that's kind of my way in to sort of to start thinking about why this is important. Why these issues are so crucial. And that's been something that I've always tried to do in terms of my work, is to really understand how these issues are connected to questions about power, how they're connected to issues related to social relations, racial

relations, gender relations, and how we as a society and culture reproduce ourselves.

You know, I think historically, you know when we sort of approach these issues, kind of as critical scholars and thinking about, you know, cultural studies and sort of the explosion of that whole tradition, first over in the Birmingham school and you know some of the pioneering thinkers Paul Gilroy, Stewart Hall, so forth and so on, really began to sort of create a new language, right, for sort of thinking about these issues and trying to understand their importance. And so, you know, questions about domination, questions about hegemony; questions about, you know the Frankfurt school, the culture industries, resistance opposition. You know that became a part of the conversation that we historically have had amongst ourselves as academics and including even my own work. And often times I have been, sort of, trying interrogate that history and how that has informed my own thinking about these issues more recently.

And we often times, sort of operated from the sort of premise that, sort of this kind of top down perspective that the creation cultural content, the creation of media, the creation of imagery, representations, narratives, and stories that we all consume are produced first and foremost by the dominant cultures industries. And that we as consumers are; we used to talk about how consumers and audiences would then get these messages, engage these messages, and sort of, you know, in some cases resist and in some ways create alternative or oppositional meanings. And, that was useful for its time, but I'm beginning to wonder, you know, the sort of need to really refine our language when you think about the current technological and social moment that we live in now in terms of what's happening. Particularly with the internet and with the ways in which, you know, and I did a lot with youth culture and young people in terms of how they engage these issues and how they experience these issues.

And now it's impossible, you know, not to sort of look at the culture terrain and see how these sort of shifts that are taking place. So whereas we should talk about content as being something that was controlled by the dominant culture industries, I'm wondering how we can begin to start thinking about content sort of coming from below. And so this idea sort of user generated content; Herman for example asked us to think about this whole sort of version in culture, sort of do-it-yourself media where young kids now are sort of stepping outside of these corporate structures, which I think is crucial, and beginning to sort of create their own experience, beginning to create their own media, they're sharing it with each other. The way in which technology is allowing them to sort of basically create their own sort of peer-to-peer system, how they broadcast, how they share, how they create and produce, and I see that as a really sort of invigorating, and in some ways sort of optimistic, moment.

But I also recognize as I begin to think about these issues and any of you, right, who've downloaded and videos on You Tube, any of you who have gone

into a virtual space, any of you who have played video games, I mean, sort of these spaces where a lot of these sort of so-called new media sort of practices are beginning to take place. I mean there is a kind of euphoria for the moment in terms of what's happening, but I often times wonder how in these new spaces, you know we're sort of recreating some of the same old narratives around race, around gender, and around sexuality.

So where there is this sort of euphoria about user generated content and we're now celebrating this whole culture of do-it-yourself media, there has, at least from my perspective been a sufficient enough critical language to begin to start, sort of interrogating what's being created by users and what kind of world their building in virtual environments, in social networking environments. Because if you go in some of these online communities, the things that they're saying about race, the things that they're saying about gender, the things that they are saying about sexuality; they're horrendous in some cases. And yet, there's been a sort of celebration of this and not a real, sort of critical, you know, kind of interrogation of this.

And so, for me, you know, cause a lot of my earlier work about how, particularly young people from the margins, sort of found their way within these kind of cooperate spaces, right, to create film, to create music, to create video, to create content that in some ways, you know, had the potential to perhaps provide a space for alternatively sort of re-imagining the world and the world in which they lived in, but again. You know I think what's happening today increasingly, are the ways in which young people are sort of just neglecting those cooperate spaces altogether. And again, it really is this issue about sort of content, who controls content now. And if you look at what's going on in terms of the media industries and how they're trying to really sort of rethink how they fit into this new environment, it's really interesting because there is a great degree of anxiety amongst them about sort of losing control of our content, losing control over the kind of media that young people are consuming because young people are sort of creating fashion and customizing their own media environment. So I think as critical scholars, as public intellectuals, as journalists, as filmmakers, you know, how we began to also engage this new environment, I think is going to be critical in terms of how we as a broader society and world begin to think about both the possibilities and the perils that accompany the times that we're living in now.

HERMAN GRAY: Thank you, thank you all. I wonder if that might be an interesting place to sort of open this up discussion among ourselves and eventually with the audience. But almost all of you have sort of noted a shift of one kind or another, whether it's narratives and imaginaries and criticism, or whether it's the kinds of constructions of race and gender and subjectivity. And I'm struck by the power of the, what one of you called the attachment, the sort of, I think Byron called the sort of love element that drives a lot of this. And I wonder if you have thoughts about both the shift that we're going through and how we critically negotiate the sort of power of those attachments; both sort of as politics

on the one hand where we're aspiring to the kind of localism that you're talking about Jeff. And on the other hand, how we constantly reproduce this kind of culture industry in the old sense of domination, of selling products, as some of it was talked about on the film. I wonder if you have any ideas or thoughts that you might share with us about negotiating that under these new shifts. Jeff.

JEFF CHANG: Maybe I'll just throw this out as a way to get everybody, but one of the things that's really interesting is when you look at the development of youth cultures, such as skateboarding or the sort of punk subculture, or of hip hop subculture, or you know where I come from, from Honolulu, Hawaii, the surfing subcultures and that kind of thing, or what they used to call subcultures, youth subcultures.

These were cultures that began in places that were basically socially and politically abandoned. You know, the skateboard phenomenon arises out of Dog Town on the west coast in Santa Monica, the Venice Santa Monica border where, you know, the pier has been left to fall apart and the kids are basically running wild in the street taking over the school yards with their skateboards, jumping into people's backyards to go through the pools during the drought when the pools are, you know, emptied out and that kind of thing. Hip hop of course, taking place in the Bronx, punk happening in the de-industrialized London, you know. Surfing happening in Honolulu at a point in which there is a lot of racial tension, you know, because of economic and all kinds of other structural adjustments that are occurring all around the globe. But these are autonomous cultures at that particular point. These are, that's why they were called subcultures at that particular moment. They were thought of as autonomous types of cultures and at this particular point in the development of the global sort of media entertainment complex, they're not autonomous anymore. And so every movement faces this issue, if you want to call it a movement, of how do you play the game.

And I think that this is what we're talking about when we see the scene that Byron has here of these young people, you know, trying to audition to become part of a system that most likely they'll never get signed, but they're still proceeding from the premise that they could be that one in a million that might get picked up by hanging outside of this power summit and might get discovered in that old sort of myth that the music industry has put out for years and years and years. You know, so it's this question of how do you create a sense of a stable; I think this is what you're, was a stable sort of principles that can push you towards a progressive, esthetic and a progressive politic while at the same time understanding that the distribution systems are now pretty much all controlled, you know, by massive global cooperations. That's the difficulty that I think hip hop has been facing ever since it began.

DAPHNE BROOKS: Well I think the point I was going to make was related absolutely to what Jeff was saying and it's about thinking; I knew I would

end up talking a lot about rock camp, but I think it's actually really significant to our discussions because all week long we were teaching these young girls about creating their own media. But the kind of media we were talking about wasn't You Tube, it was very much this retro, kind of punk rock ideology of do-it-yourself, make-your-own-music, very basic ways of expressing themselves creatively and musically. And I sort of think that ties into, Jeff, what you were talking about in terms of abandoned spaces, but it's kind of figuratively abandoned space in terms of the commodification of female singers, and the 90s Lilith Fair, post riot girl kind of movement we've moved on to. You know, Brittany's crash and burn, etc, etc now.

But, so, there's kind of at least the ethos of rock camp is a retro, you know, feminist etiology about what a popular culture can do. And, it's sort of sad to me to say that it's retro, but you know, at the same time, it's invigorating to see these young girls kind of imagining what it's like to create an entirely different kind of media than what they are used to thinking of as media, you know. So, yeah, I'm interesting in how pedagogically we can continue to distill that within our own work and also teaching for me with these younger girls was just very interesting and challenging and amazing. And so I'm fascinated with how we can, all the different ways we dispense this kind of information, like Byron's use of the documentary film format, I think. And that's why I'm interested in rock music criticism because it's allowed me to straddle being inside and outside of the academy. There something about that critical voice in writing about music that was empowering to me from a young age and was a way of interpolating myself into these scenes that I derived great pleasure from and I think that that's, those ideas about pleasure and media are very interesting sorts of places to go with young people in terms of talking to them about resistance.

HERMAN GRAY: And what do you think about the forms in which we do this; whether it's writing, or whether it's cinema, or whether it's D.Y.I., or whether it's digital art, is part of your recommendation that those of us gathered together need to sort of begin to expand the tools that we use to think about this way of apprehending this kind of powerful way in which affect and love as contradictory expressions, right, yoke us to systems, but at the same time are the sources of new kinds of imaginaries. Any thoughts about that?

BYRON HURT: Well, I mean it dawned on me this afternoon that I could have my own television station on my website, right. I mean I could literally create content, I don't have to ask anybody for permission, I don't have to go through the arduous and very painful, and sometimes humiliating process of having to fundraise, right. I could just buy a low-cost, high-quality camera, take it wherever I travel, shoot whatever I want to shoot, get all sorts of perspectives and ideas and points of views that are not necessarily reflected or represented on mainstream television or in popular culture, and I can sort of just create my own space.

I mean, I can do what I want to do. I can write whatever I want to write. I can create, you know, a very powerful source of information that people can go to if I can just figure out a way to build and find and attract an audience that will log into my site. And I think that's, for me to be able to do that, I would have to divorce myself from the old ways of thinking about media. That is that if you want to make a film that has a certain level of credibility it has to be on, you know PBS, or HBO, or The Discovery Channel, or whatever media that is out there. So for me, you know, I'm coming to the realization that I can still do what I want to do by sort of using popular culture in a way to educate and inform without having to go through the old channels and without having to do it in the same old traditional way.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: You know, part of what's happening too is, I mean there is, I think when sociologists, and when other academics really began to, you know, start seriously, you know thinking about these issues, again, you know we sort of approached it, went from kind of the Frankfurt school perspective of you know, the culture industries as sort of, you know, institutions of capitalism and sort of, you know pervasive, sort of High Germanic reach across the world. But again, it sort of operated from the premise that they were really kind of the driving force, and the driving engine, that they created the content, they controlled the content, and then once we consumed it then, you know, the various debates about how people read, how people interpreted it, how people generated meaning, counter-meaning, so forth and so on. But I think what's happening now in terms of, at least part of the shift and how we might begin to think about the shift, is that old notion or that old rule between, you know producers and consumers. I mean that distinction or that boundary right is being increasingly blurred.

And so now, you know, when we used to talk about audiences and when we used to talk about consumers, they are now the producers, they are now the managers of content, the distributors of content. I mean just in terms of what they are doing either with previously sort of produced or recorded content and remixing it, sort of mashing it up and recontextualizing it, and occasionally sometimes engaging in really sort of interesting social commentary, unfortunately I wasn't able to bring my computer to the meeting hall here with me, but I was just going to show a couple of clips of young people who have taken, you know commercials, taken popular music, you know taking, you know President Bush at a press conference and just taking all of that together, again remixed it, recontextualize it, and make some really powerful commentary out of their bedrooms with the technology that they have at their disposal.

So I think when we talk about tools and when we think about analytical frameworks, it seems to me that, as sort of critical thinkers and to the intent that we want to intervene into the culture and be a part of the culture in terms of how we understand it, that those are the spaces that we've got to go into. And it is not simply just about understanding the big media or corporate media and what

they're producing and doing, right, to the culture and doing to young people, but it's really about how young people are probating technology and how they are using the technology to engage is some very dynamic forms of creativity. And again, not all of their creativity is necessarily positive, or don't want to necessarily use the word positive, but it reproduces some very problematic notions and ideologies and belief systems, but there are elements, right, of really interesting sort of social commentary and critique that are happening in these sort of do-it-yourself cultures and media practices.

HERMAN GRAY: So how do we hook these practices up to political projects, right? I mean one of the things that I can imagine members of the audience thinking, and we'll ask them actually, is you know, if affect is structured. If politics are structured, if political economic institutions are structured, then we can also kind of take our place within those structures and play our roles but we're reproducing these sort of structures of domination at the same time. So, one of the questions might be, kind of, what kind of political possibilities emerge out of these, kind of, emergent local things so that they're not just emergent and local all the time. Is there another step that we could go to, to think about politics?

JEFF CHANG: In 2004 one of the things that occurred was a bunch of folks that had been talking about politics, sort of next generation post multiculturalism, post civil rights politics came up with was, you know, in a lot of ways we see ourselves as a generation that's kind of brought together by hip hop. And it's a strange kind of thought to think that a popular cultural form could actually generate its own politics. Quite separate I might add from the content of the commercialized rap that was out there at that particular moment. But it was happening, I mean there had been an infrastructure of organizations calling themselves hip hop activists that really started getting going in the mid 90s and began to really take hold by the end of the decade. So in 2004, a lot of folks got together and said we're going to have ourselves a political convention modeled on the National Black Political Assembly that had occurred in Gary, Indiana in 1972 and we're going to call it the National Hip Hop Political Convention, and so if you're out there organizing, you need to go ahead and register 50 people to vote and then that will give you a delegate to be able to come to this convention. And, you know, thousands of folks ended up coming Newark that summer, yeah, and developed an agenda. It was a first sort of generational agenda that had been put together and it was a very progressive agenda.

So this is a way of kind of leveraging the local folks that are out there that are doing things like setting up in their garage and teaching girls how to be girls, or teaching folks how to do graffiti murals in the schools and politicizing that, using it as political education. And then from there, kind of bringing folks into a larger sense of what's not just about your hood and you may be very, you know you may be perceiving politics in terms of electoral politics or something that's very distant, but it's actually something that's very close to you because these

are the folks that have been voting against you for the last two decades, you know. And this is why we're in the situation that we're in. And out of that, I think you've got the foundation of this voting surge that begins to occur.

So, you know one of the things that's really interesting to me is a similar type of thing happened in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1992. You had basically folks in the communities, rappers as well as committee organizers, that got together and basically decided that they were going to go into the schools and do these massive assemblies and presentations where folks would all come together and the lure was these guys were going to rap and these are some of the biggest rappers in Brazil at the time, in Sao Paulo at the time. They were going to go and do a rap, but before they do that, you're going to have to sit here and have a political assembly about what are the issues that are affecting you in your school. And this completely disrupted the entire school system in Sao Paulo for a couple of years, and when the progressive leftist mayor was voted out, or her term was up, the program was over but they continued to do that.

And now, you've got this foundation from which cultural minister Gilberto Gil now has established a program that's national in Brazil called culture points, which funds grants of up to 60,000 dollars to organizations exactly like this to teach them how to go out and shoot Rodney King type of videos. And some of these things have ended up on national TV. So the potential is obviously there and states such as Brazil have recognized it. And this is sort of a way of understanding how people are beginning to use culture in a very direct way to change social conditions.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: And that Herman, and I don't know if this responds directly to your question, but another thing that I'm sort of encouraged by are these various movements across the United States for example to create media literacy programs for school-aged children. You know Byron you talked about, you know, for you right, when the light bulb sort of went off and you really began to look at media through a very different lens. And I think most of us in here probably had a similar kind of experience, but that often times, unfortunately likely happened in a college classroom as opposed to an elementary, junior high, or high school classroom. And I think what's, at least again, one of the more encouraging aspects about, you know, trying to, you know create an environment where very young people are taught to really sort of challenge and think critically about the media environment is a kind of encouraging sign. And I know that there are various movements across the country in different states, and I know the politics get really sort of challenging, but I think the idea of sort of media literacy, critical, approaching media from a kind of critical perspective, is a very important part of a conversation that we might have in terms of how we began to perhaps tap and understand and develop further a the sort of political and social potential of media as a kind of change agent.

HERMAN GRAY: I want to, yeah go ahead.

BYRON HURT: Yeah, just really quickly, I think about the CNN You Tube debates. Did anybody see the CNN You Tube debates? And I watched that and I just thought, wow, this is, this is very interesting here what's happening, what's taking place in terms of new media and politics, right. You have people who as individuals used the media that they owned in their local space, right. And they use it in a way that had national impact, right, because they were able to ask certain questions, certain political questions that had a real impact on their immediate lives, right, that have directly impacted them as individuals, which impacts millions of people at the same time, and they were able to ask these questions in ways that the real journalists can't anymore, right. Because of the consolidation of, you know, corporate media, right.

So, I just thought it was really interesting to see all of these various, you know, groups of people and individuals, you know, who are engaging in the political process through media, right. Through popular culture in a way that sort of revolutionized, you know, modern political debates. And, I think it was probably one of the most interesting presidential, or I would say it's not really a presidential, but campaign debates in a really long time. And I, you know. So, on the one hand I thought that was brilliant on the part of CNN to sort of use this as a tactic, right? But I also thought it was kinda like a cop-out at the same time because these are questions that like Wolf Blitzer should be asking, right. I mean these are questions that like Anderson Cooper should be asking, right? But because of whatever handcuffs they have, right, where they have to restrain asking everyday common, you know, questions, they were able to take the pressure off of themselves and allow regular people to ask those questions, which I thought was, you know, in a way, very strategic.

JEFF CHANG: I just want to build on that, I'm sorry did I.

DAPHNE BROOKS: No, that's alright.

JEFF CHANG: No, no Daphne.

DAPHNE BROOKS: Because I've got one last rock camp thing to say.

JEFF CHANG: Say more though, that's a really good thing.

DAPHNE BROOKS: No, well, I mean, because what the camp does is there are workshops in addition to the girls forming their own bands on the first day of camp and then you also break into groups with whatever instrument you want to play be it, you know DJ-ing or playing; we had somebody who was playing French horn in a band, they're all broken into different groups but there are also critical workshops. I taught the workshop on the history of women and music. There are workshops on image and identity, critiquing the media as self defense and feminist theory, and this is all the way from 8 to 18.

And one of the great things that each of the workshops, what we tried to reinforce for them is that rock camp is an institution. Here are all of these other social institutions and how can we think about making an intervention in these other social institutions so they look more like rock camp? And you actually had the girls, you know, getting up and writing things on the board to think about how they can, you know, reorganize their schools and restructure the politics of, you know, power and discrimination in their neighborhoods.

So, you know, I just think it's interesting, right, to connect to everything that we've been talking; using something like, you know, popular music culture as a place where young girls in particular can come together and organize, and have that be the site where feminist theory can really, you know, ferment and evolve. I think that's been lost especially, you know. I know Jeff has talked about this publically, about what happened with Oprah Winfrey and her show, in the wake of the Don Imus affair, you know, that what was lost is any kind of discussion, not only around progressive hip hop, but around feminist politics in music, you know, so I think that being able to conjoin those points again is so powerful and it's what Byron is doing in his work as well. So, last comment about rock camp. Please send all your daughters.

JEFF CHANG: I might actually. One of the things, though, I find really interesting is sort of this development, and this is going to change the topic, but, to something more that, well anyway. In writing about culture, especially in cultural criticism, it seems like there's been a turn over the last 3 or 4 years towards an aestheticization of the writing. In other words, just focusing on the grain of the voice, or you know, or the sound of the cowbell or whatever, you know what I mean. And I'm wondering, like what are, what's, why? Why has that happened? A) How do we lose, like, sort of this concept of contextualizing, you know, art and music, and that sort of view and I was just curious? I was wondering if it's also happened in sociology as well. Because I know for many years, anything written about hip hop had to do with, okay, here's the lyrics. As if the music never existed A), and B) as if, like, these four raps are the only things that people ever made, or these four rappers are the only rappers that ever wrote a poem that would then be read as a poem on a page. So, I'm curious from all the panelists of what you see.

DAPHNE BROOKS: Don't you feel like that has something to do with niche marketing now, and also the fragmentation of media. So you can get, like pitchfork writing in a very particular way about, you know the latest Shins record, you know, but, you know XL is going to write about, you know, whatever, on a totally different, I mean, don't you feel like it's a fragmentation of the media?

HERMAN GRAY: I was going to ask, actually something similar, but not so much about the writing, as much as something that you end your book with, Craig about new knowledges and the ways in which the impact of criticism as a

scene of new imaginaries plays a role both inside the classroom and outside the classroom, right. Journalism for example in relationship to cinema, and in relationship to everyday life of university classrooms and whether this as dramatic shift going on in the struggle around new knowledges in the academy, in the cinema world, right, whether that is also something that's also impacted by the shift. So that if the world is sort of shifting around us and we're sort of steadfastly holding on to certain kinds of categories or producing certain kinds of canons or mythologies about what's sacred and what isn't, it seems to me that professionally, the kinds of categories through which, you know, professional sociologists or psychologist, or anthropologists work. And they actually miss a good deal of, do you know what I mean, that there may be actually a struggle around knowledge and power at that level too. So, I don't know if you have any view Craig or the rest of your thoughts about that.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: I guess, maybe what you're talking about is, where I talk about the idea of sort of artificial intelligence and what kinds of ideas, you know historically, have been permitted in the university classroom, for example, what kinds of subjects have been perceived as suitable or worthy of college students or university professors' graduate students' time, efforts, and energy. And of course that's been, you know, part of a struggle for decades now in terms of, you know, people like yourself, you know, myself, and you know, all of us here, and Daphne, for example, and many of you out here who have tried to bring these issues into the classroom, who have tried to sort of engage these issues from a kind of critical perspective and sort of navigating and negotiating, you know, the politics of academia. And some of those politics have been racial, some of those politics have been generational, sort of they've been gender and sexual too, but what I'm sort of increasingly, sort of learning is that the kinds of students that are walking into our classroom today, I mean if you really are thinking about trying to connect with them, if you're really thinking about trying to engage them, sort of thinking about, you know, the spheres and the environments and the things that matter to them.

And the kinds of things that we're talking about, I mean they live and breathe this stuff everyday and often times have very interesting conversations amongst themselves about these issues, and if we could only sort of provide an additional space and perhaps engage them with our language and with our ideas, not only, they learn from us but we learn from them as well. And so for me, you know, I mean I think that's been a very important part of this. And specifically, right, I guess I was, I mean there's this whole sort of generation of sort of hip hop, there's this whole thing of hip hop studies now. And, I guess in some ways I've been a part of it; Herman, things that you've written have been a part of it, Robin Kelly, Tricia Rose, Mark Anthony Neal, Michael Dyson, James Peterson, the list goes on and on and we could be here forever naming people who sort of have contributed to that. But it's been a really interesting, you know, kind of experience, you know bringing these into the classroom, and we all have sort of conversations amongst ourselves about the challenges that we face in

terms of either our colleagues or just our students. And it's a struggle sometimes, you know, trying to bring these issues to the classroom because we're asking students to think critically and to interrogate things that are so now, that are so relevant.

And sometimes that can be a real challenge because they take those things for granted because it's on the radio, it's what they're dealing with in terms of, you know, whatever they're doing on the internet now. The games that they're playing, the music that they're listening to, you name it. And so how do you get them to sort of step outside of the sort of immediate moment and environment in which they're caught up in, to sort of think critically about how these issues play out both now, but also how they're linked to sort of historical struggles around issues of representation, issues of industrialization and power, and participation in the production of the cultural world and environment that we're all participating in.

HERMAN GRAY: This might be a good place to open it up and invite people from the audience to pose questions or make comments. So why don't we hear from those of you have been kind enough to join us. Here's a hand here. Here's one here, I can't see him, so you'll have to. There are mics out here so just.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi, my name is Gail Wallace, I'm a researcher at Johns Hopkins University, and I have thoroughly enjoyed this panel discussion, and I'm just trying to wrap my brain around a lot of these important issues. I want to go back to the Don Imus incident because as an African-American female, that was a pivotal moment in my life and I thought I would not live through the reality of his, of him keeping his job. It was so important that things happened they way it did because it solidified my humanness, my woman-ness, and the respect that I require. And I bring that up because I think that what is happening is that in our postmodern culture, what we do is we juxtapose knowledge as being different from other forms of knowledge, and that has deflated the urgency of social justice projects. And so we can't discern what's important and what's not important. And that's why the Don Imus incident was one of the most scariest moments in my life as an African-American female, because I feared that people would say, "Oh it's not really a big deal." And then I would be, you know, in the position of walking down the street and have someone call me a bitch or a ho'. And people would say, "Well this is just a different form of art," and I think that's why I'm so happy that we're having this panel because everything is a slippery slope now and when you're the person that's part of a group that has been deemed inferior or stigmatized or someone is imposing their reality upon you, it becomes very clear that fighting for social justice is very, very urgent. So I really thank you for taking the time to talk, speak with us about your work tonight.

Thank you.

DAPHNE BROOKS: I just would sort of respond to that, I mean I'll just reiterate that I felt like what was the most heartbreaking thing about that incident was the lost opportunity to, as Jeff wrote about in a wonderful piece in The Times was it, in the L.A. Times? about to re-cooperate the progressive politics of grass root hip hop, but also there's an invisibility to black feminist cultural criticism, you know, in the popular media and Oprah had a wonderful opportunity given her connections to people like Tony Morrison, to you know, really provide a gateway for these kinds of critical discussions. There are all sorts of figures, black feminist public intellectuals who were not given a voice in that discussion about popular culture, so that to me was the really tragic part of it; one of the many tragic elements of it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi, my name is Nerthamay Udon (sp) from the University of Hawaii, and my question is really about who is responsible for the dissemination of information from popular culture, popular media. Like who would, for whatever negative stereotypes, who would go up front and say, "Yes, I, and I say that this is true," is that something that's important that we should look at or think about, because, yes, it's good to create your own radio or create your own thing, but who is responsible for that information coming out and people digesting it?

JEFF CHANG: We actually had, I wish you could have been at dinner with us. We just had a really, really deep conversation of, I'm gonna just defer to these two gentleman about some of the stuff that you all were saying on that.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: What were we saying, I can't remember now.

JEFF CHANG: Well actually one of the questions had to do with whether or not it was on the artists, or whether it had to do with the institutions and the leaders of those, you know, companies and cooperations and that kind of thing. And I think both of you said both.

BYRON HURT: Yeah, well I said both, but if I had to lean in any one direction, I would have to say the corporate, the people who actually run the machine, I think have to be really taking the task, and they have to be done so repeatedly, you know like Fredrick Douglas has his quote "Agitate, agitate, agitate," I mean we have to agitate enough to like really, really get people to respond. I think the Don Imus situation is an example where I was really encouraged by the fact that something actually happened.

And I think that we're living in an era and a generation where people resist but nothing happens. People protest and nothing happens. And I think that was an example of where, you know, people spoke up, raised their voices and pointed their voices and their energy in the right direction; the advertisers, the

money stream and all these different things, and I think that's what made the real difference. Not that NBC or, who was it Time Warner, it was Time Warner, CBS, Viacom had some moral, sort of awakening, you know, when they became, like, you know, really concerned about black women, you know what I'm saying. They haven't been for years and they weren't in that moment, but they were concerned about losing so much money, right? And so, I think that's an example of people pointing their energy, all of their energy toward the right people in order to make something happen.

And I think ultimately, that's up to us, I think, as consumers and people who participate. You know, people who, you know, people who are a part of, you know, a part of the machine, you know. We're not just cogged in a machine, we're people, we're active agents in all of this. We can do something. So that's kind of like what I try to bring across when I'm out speaking publicly that, you know, that we can actually make a difference and you know, I also use the women at Spelman College, you know who rose up and who resisted some of the images and the representations of black females in hip hop music and music videos, where they actually were very successful in sort of getting a TV show off of the air. You know a show called Uncut BT, Uncut, right, so a small; a very, very small group of very committed passionate intelligent women actually raised their voice enough and pointed their energy in the right direction to change, to get a huge corporation to change their programming. I thought that was very important, so I think we are the answer to the solution. I think more people have to feel empowered that we actually can do something. I think a lot of people feel disempowered, you know, just feel like it's not going to matter so we might as well not say anything, but I think when we do raise our voice, I think it does make a difference, if the energy is placed in the right direction.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: You know one of the things that we were trying to grapple with, and Jeff asked sort of a similar question over dinner. And, you know, it's like how do you begin to make sense of the cultural environment, you know, in an era of sort of mass consolidation and you have this kind of global media conglomerates who are so massive in terms of the scope and region of what they own. And how does that begin to influence and effect what is manufactured, what is created, what is produced, and ultimately, what is consumed? And those are very, very powerful, very powerful issues, and those are the kinds of questions that, for example, political economist in communication have been asking in terms of the kind of chilling effect that that also has in terms of the public sphere and to this whole notion of democracy and whose voice and whose perspectives, whose views become a part of a broader, kind of public discourse, or broader public conversation. And if in fact, right, at least significant parts of the cultural environment, the conversations are being driven by these corporate entities, you know, what are the implications and they can be quite, quite dire, as I think many of us would agree.

JEFF CHANG: But I think one thing too that needs to be pointed out is the public interest has been trashed in the last, you know, the last 10 years really in the sense that, you know, the FCC, a lot of the regulatory agencies, the FTC, have allowed deregulation to occur and allowed consolidation to occur and allowed content to go in this direction. And so a lot of the demands that you see coming from youth media justice campaigns in New York City, in San Francisco are around restoring public affairs programming, restoring local artists, restoring women's voice, resorting progressive voices, and a lot of that has to do with pushing the levers of government that, you know, a lot of the media companies have been able to really impact and have control over for over the last 10 years. So, government is to blame as well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello, I'm Kim Sipes from Purdue University North Central and I want to open this up in a way that hasn't been. I want to see if we can help this out. I'm a U.S. military veteran and I'm a longtime member of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and we just had our 40th anniversary last weekend in Chicago. And, there are a bunch of younger vets coming back from Iraq, and they've formed a group coming out of, you know sort of our next generation called the Iraq Veterans Against the War. What about these young people coming back who have seen the insanity of this war, who understand some of these things? What's this going to have an affect, how's this going to affect, if it is, this youth culture and things like this? Because people are coming back and they're very aware of what they've been through. I mean just the same thing that happened to us in Vietnam, you know, that you can see in the movie *Sir, No Sir*, this stuff is happening in Iraq, it's happening with these people coming back and what's that mean for what this stuff you guys are talking about, you all are talking about?

HERMAN GRAY: Thank you for that.

JEFF CHANG: That's a big topic, my cousin is actually a veteran of the Gulf War and one of the issues that we had was around this sort of illegal draft, right, he had gotten called back to go to Iraq after he had been discharged but, oops, they lost the papers for about a good five or six years, and we had to fight that. But, sort of my participation in that particular, you know, case, it was my cousin, and he lives on Kauai you know he's not wealthy and stuff like that, but we were able to raise the issue in the media; it hit The New York Times front page the day before the army called and said "Oh, don't worry about it, you don't have to report." The day before I had lined up, you know, pretty much all of the top shows, CNN, MSNBC, you know, ABC, and all that kind of stuff, so there is, I guess, a powerful, powerful media hook there that I think needs to be played.

And I know that we've seen an explosion of documentaries over the last couple of years looking, you know, very raw at the situation in Iraq. But what I would like to see happen is for networking to occur between folks that have those types of stories and, you know, folks that, like us, who are, you know, doing

cultural production, have connections to artists doing those kinds of things in order to be able to get that story out. It's absolutely crucial, and I think that for our generation, again, there's been this sort of perception that people don't care, but in all of the places that I've been to over the last three or four years, the war has been the number one issue for young people. Everyone doesn't want to get drafted, I heard today again the draft is back on the table at the White House and I can tell you that there's going to be a lot of 18-year olds that are going to vote this year based just on that type of issue. So, I think that there's an opportunity there, and I think that networking needs to occur.

DAPHNE BROOKS: I'll just add to that, that I think one, kind of form of culture that we haven't touched upon that I work on is theater. And, in the early 90s people like Anna Deavere Smith and Tony Kushner dabbled in this too, but were cultivating and innovating these strategies of documentary theater that were about getting these narratives on the ground from either L.A. or Crown Heights onto this stage and so what Jeff is talking about in terms of forging these kinds of coalitions between folks who were coming back and activists and artists, I think that theater is one of the spaces at the local grassroots level that culturally can deploy all sort so resistant kind of dialectical moments for working through these larger issues about this war. So I do want to keep theater on the table as part of our discussion.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: I was just going to add that I know there have been these sort of interesting debates and this tension between, for example, what some shows just want to share about their experience and what they want to say about that, be it their blogs or other ways of sort of, you know, getting their voice out there and getting their perspective out there. And I'm no military specialist but I know that there are some conflicts there and in terms of the military, sort of, putting some really tight parameters on what they can and can't say while they are still official members of the effort.

HERMAN GRAY: I'm also struck by that. Go ahead.

DAPHNE BROOKS: No, I was just thinking that really I think some of the most powerful kind of cultural work that's been done to critique the war has been happening in the theater, in places like the public theater in New York, so, I just think, and it's off the radar in a lot of ways, so it's worth, as academics, as critics, we need to be writing about those pieces more because they really are extraordinary.

JEFF CHANG: Not to mention the, wasn't *Actors against the War*, that group has been also very powerful as well.

HERMAN GRAY: Yeah, I was just going to suggest that we haven't talked much about the sort of travels and the sort of global connections and the border connections of popular music, but one of the sound tracks of the war for

this generation is exactly the kind of music that we've been talking about and the ways in which it circulates, you know, both locally, but also abroad in a way in which it is vital point of connection, identification for lots of youth and youth cultures is important.

S. CRAIG WATKINS: And these issues really are registering around the world in some ways that are just beyond us. And I'm sure any of who have probably had these encounters where you get calls from journalists around the country and Europe and other parts of the world who are really trying to make sense of *This Thing Called Hip Hop* for example, and how that's impacting youth culture, how that's impacting youth identity, and it's, some pretty profound things that are happening around the world. I just got a call, for example, from a radio program over in the Netherlands. I guess there have been some issues around rap music and violence and what's been happening in terms of youth culture and there is an attempt to try to mobilize the movement against the music, against the culture, it's got to police it more tightly and they're having some really interesting debates. But that's just one of any number of examples that we can certainly talk about in terms of the residence globally that these issues are beginning to develop.

HERMAN GRAY: I think we have time for one more question and then we'll...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I wanted to ask about power and the taking of art forms. I just left Louisville and they talked about how important Elvis Presley is and about the fact that as they celebrate him he bridged the gap between black culture and white culture and somehow made movement of his hips now possible to be white masculinity. So I think what I'm asking though, is that there's a tendency to flatten out culture. To take it, you know, so that jazz is no longer black culture but is French culture or it's culture of the dominant group when underneath there always this attempt of the people to come together around culture. What have you seen in terms of what's happening today, in terms of how there's an effort to pre...I think I'm trying to understand... are there efforts to prevent that coming together, to sort of push culture when it's taken to be the dominant groups? I grew up in an age to find out that white people liked dirty dancing, it was a shock to me they kept it under wraps. But of course nowadays, hip hop is something that's accepted by more cultures. Do you see a tendency by people in power to still do sort of what they did in rock and roll days and that is to prevent whites and blacks from coming together around culture?

DAPHNE BROOKS: Well, I'm so happy I get one more rock camp reference. The name of the camp is Willie May Rock Camp for Girls, it's named after Big Mama Thornton who of course recorded Hound Dog before Elvis Presley did. So, you know, once again trying to recuperate that lost history, and this is indirectly addressing what you're talking about, and I want us to be able to talk about whether that sort of gesture that you're talking about continues to

replicate itself today, but I will say that there are, you know these organizations that are trying to, you know, sort of restructure the way that we think about popular cultural history. And it's certainly the way that I write about music is to try and think about, you know, the different kinds of influences that have remained hidden in the ways that you're talking about.

So for me, if I, you know, part of my love of writing about rock music came from understanding that Tina Turner taught Mick Jagger how to dance, and so inverting those kind of dominant histories and trying to recuperate these lost narratives is, I think, something that especially people in post civil rights generation are entitled to do, and are empowered to do, through access to archives that weren't open to us before. So, you know, I'm also thinking about the ways that this resonates, this problem resonates in contemporary culture today; I don't know what other folks think about...

HERMAN GRAY: So, we had one other panelist who was going to join us, she couldn't, Sarah Benet-Wiser who works on Children's Television and was scheduled to help us think about television and citizenship and national belonging through children. She had an emergency and couldn't join us, but please join me in thanking Daphne Brooks, Byron Hurt, Jeff Chang, and S. Craig Watkins for a lively panel. And thank you for joining us, thank you.