

“I Am Malcolm X” – Islamic Themes in Hip-hop Video Clips Online

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Abstract

The Internet provides a space for new interpretations and conversations concerning religious practices to take place without the direct interference of religious authorities. The intention of this article is to highlight one vivid aspect of this development, Islamic themed hip-hop video clips distributed online. The visual aesthetics, the selection of pictures (or no pictures), themes and storylines supplementing the musical message can be used to mobilize and promote different traditions of interpretation of Islam. They can also convey interesting insights in the negotiations and compromises of Muslim identities in the consumer culture logic of the modern society. Lastly, they can provide a route to analyze the articulations of alternative interpretations of Islam often, but not always, rooted in a deep social-justice activism that connects marginalized communities within and beyond the Middle East.

Keywords

USA, Islam, video, music, identity, rap music

Whenever and wherever it has been necessary, great Negro warriors have arisen from the ranks of Islam, (...) inspired by the teachings of the new faith, which merges all distinctions in one great brotherhood.

Edward Wilmot Blyden, “Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race,” 1888.

Introduction – Video clips online as a source for research

The present text are a part of an ongoing investigation into the hip-hop culture and Islam that began during my time as a student in Islamology and has since developed into a Ph.D. project at Lund University, Sweden. Over the years my research topic has given me the opportunity to conduct interviews with hip-hop artists and other actors involved in this music culture.

The interviews have taken me to a wide range of places such as Istanbul, Beirut, New York, Manama and Malmö. In addition to this, I am an enthusiastic consumer of hip-hop culture. I continuously listen to hip-hop music, read magazines, listen to radio shows, attend concerts and watch music videos and the increasing amount of well-produced hip-hop documentaries. Furthermore, I have spent way too much time online visiting hip-hop forums, websites, and browsing twitter feeds.

Religious themes have been present in the hip-hop culture since it's beginning over thirty years ago in New York. Artists have invoked religious language in lyrics, as well as religious symbols on, for example, album covers, on clothing, on jewelry and in their music videos clips. As noted by Monica Miller in her well researched book Religion and Hip hop (2012) there has been a lot of scholarly effort put into describing religious manifestations within the hip-hop culture but less attention has been directed towards investigating what are the uses these manifestations.

This article seeks to contribute to the growing body of scholarly work on the complex relationship between Islam and the hip-hop culture and point to some potential areas for future research. Several well informed studies have been carried out on the topic but they have almost solely focused on Islamic themes in lyrics (see, for example, Aidi 2002, 2003, 2004; Khabeer 2007; Solomon 2006; Swedenburg 1996).

By analyzing Islamic themes in hip-hop music video clips, published and presented online, I will argue that these expressions are not appropriated by coincidence or as merely cultural borrowing. They are used as a means of commenting on political events and actualities of concern for the Muslim world. They also work to effectively mobilize different Islamic traditions around issues of relevance to the broader Muslim world.

In many ways video clips presented, distributed and in some cases created in a collaborative effort online, are the definitive computer-mediated form of communication. They can contain sounds, graphics, pictures and moving video footage. With cameras readily available in almost every mobile phone

as well as the opportunity to edit video material on existing computers or mobile phones even, the possibilities to not only capture real time events but also to enhance a message by for example crosscut video footage and/or music. Yet they have, as noted by Vit Sisler, largely been neglected in the study of Islam.

Both video games and video clips have been neglected and marginalized by the academy, albeit to varying degrees. Given their pervasiveness, especially among Middle Eastern youth, we are in crucial need today of critical understanding of the different ways these media articulate Islam and communicate it to consumers.

(Sisler 2009:231)

Video clips are distributed over the Internet typically via video sites like Vimeo, YouTube or Worldstarhiphip.com – YouTube being by far the most popular one at the moment. The most popular clips have hundreds of millions of views and often include hip-hop artists. At their best the video clips online offer satire similar to the comics found in newspapers while commenting on ongoing world events. At their worst however it is a cat with a hat playing the piano.

Islamic themed hip-hop video clips can roughly be divided into three categories. The first category are professionally directed music clips, or in other words the traditional music video. The second category are clips generated by fans or semi-professionals, sometimes only containing pictures and maybe lyrics. The third category are clips generated through a communal effort created either solely by fans or by artists who invite fans to contribute their own private video material. Over the years I have spent way too much time online browsing clips. In this article I will only have the opportunity to introduce you to a few clips in order to illustrate my positions.

It is my belief that Islamic themed hip-hop video clips provide an excellent illustration of the dynamic and changing nature of Islamic traditions. In addition to this, I will argue that they provide a window to alternative

worldviews rooted in Islamic traditions shared by young Muslims in urban environments in the US, Europe as well as the Middle East.

The first part of this article analyzes how hip-hop artist in the Middle East has used themes of African-American Islam during the democratic uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. Central for this is the usage of references to Malcolm X. The second part of the text discusses hip-hop video clips released online following publication of the anti-Islamic video trailer “Innocence of Muslims.” The final part of the text sums it up and points to some possible future areas for research.

A framework for this article and a foundation for my understanding of Islamic themed hip-hop is a non-essentialistic definition of Islam, and the assumption that every aspect of Islam is an ongoing process over time and space under constant change and historical mutation. Islam is not a static monolithic construction rather it should be viewed as dynamic traditions shaped, in particular times and geographical spaces, in a close relation to the surrounding societies (see for example Asad 1986; Curtis 2002; Schaebler & Stenberg 2004). It is also my intention to follow in the footsteps of Curtis and move away from what he calls textbook Islam.

Textbook Islam revolves around the Five Pillars of Islamic practice, a brief introduction of the Qur'an and Muhammad, an explanation of Shari'a as "Islamic Law," and the historical split between Sunni and Shi'a – With perhaps a sprinkle of Sufism or Jihadism thrown in for good measure.

(Curtis 2009:78)

A very important and often overseen aspect in the study of Islam is the fact that actors who do not identify themselves as Muslims participate in the process of shaping what is perceived as Islam. (Cato 2012:13) They could for example be pundits, politicians or academics that write and talk about Islam in the public debate. However they could also be Islamic movements like Nation of Gods and Earths that clearly identify with Islamic semiotics,

symbols and concepts but do not consider themselves to be Muslims. It should also be noted that when I speak about the “Muslim world” it should not be seen as a geographical area but rather as a global cognitive universe of ideas.

Themes of African-American Islam in Arab Hip-hop

As noted by many culture commentators, general pundits and scholars alike, hip-hop artists and their music played a role during the democratic uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, though it has been debated to what degree (see for example Gonzalez-Quijano 2013 & Swedengren 2012). For example one of the more visible songs in connection to the uprisings and one of the first to get worldwide recognition was “Rais lebled” (2010) [Leader of the Country] by the Tunisian rapper El Général. It was accompanied by a powerful video clip when it was posted online in November of 2010. The soundscape of the song mimics the dark and gritty sound of New York hip-hop from the early 1990s. Also the video clip, filmed with a blue filter, brings groups like Mobb Deep with videos like “Survival of the Fittest” (1995) and “Shook Ones Pt. 2” (1995) to mind.

The video starts with a clip of now-former President Ben Ali visiting a classroom asking one of the kids sitting in his bench “Why are you worried? Would you tell me something? Don’t be afraid!” The young boy doesn’t dare answer the question. Instead El Général is seen, alone, with his microphone in what looks like an abandoned building. He speaks out and addresses the president. *Mr. President, here, today, I speak with you in my name and the name of all people who live in misery...* (El Général 2010).

Later versions of the video posted after the arrest of El Général also contained an introduction text that told the story of the arrest of El Général and encouraged the spreading of the video:

On the 6th of January 2011 rapper El Général (real name: Hamada Ben Aoun) was arrested in Tunisia by the police for questioning.

Until today no news about him, while dozens of people already died in the streets. He is the voice of Tunisian people, we are their megaphone. Post this video now!

(El Général 2010)

Mark Levine has described “Rais lebled” and the accompanying music video clips as a “perfect reflection of a generation about to explode” (Levine 2011). Even if it is hard to measure the impact of the song on other hip-hop acts from the Middle East it is fair to say that the clips tremendous global impact sparked an interest for hip-hop music in the wake of the uprisings.

Even though the video clip and the song “Rais lebled” does not contain any direct Islamic themes some of the other more widely spread songs, contained themes of African-American Islamic liberation and resistance. For example the song “Prisoner” by Arabian Knightz Ft. Shadia Mansour (2011) heavily sampled the Saviours’ Day address delivered by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan at the Great Western Forum in Los Angeles on February 17, 2002. The words quoted in the song are as follows:

I’m writing you from my prison. What prison? A prison not of bars, but a prison constructed for me out of my passion for truth and justice. [...] and that propaganda has put me in a prison. So I wrote him like Joseph spoke to Pharaoh, out of prison. I know this pharaoh doesn’t only have troubling dreams; he has troubling realities.

(Arabian Knightz Ft. Shadia Mansour 2011)

This section in Minister Farrakhan’s speech is a reference to a letter he wrote to President George W. Bush in December of 2001, after the attacks on the Twin Towers, raising his concerns over the American foreign policy and the war on terror in particular. Minister Farrakhan alludes to the story of Joseph and the Pharaohs dreams that can be found both in the Bible (Gen 41) and the Quran (Sura 12, Yusuf). He compares President Bush to the Pharaoh and casts himself as the dream interpreter, the truth teller who foretold to

Joseph seven years of richness and seven years of famine. In the video clip it is clear that the Pharaoh in this context is now former President Mubarak, who “doesn’t only have troubling dreams; he has troubling realities...” The video clip was released February 4, 2011 and contains strong and violent scenes from the demonstrations as the focal point for the protests in Tahrir Square, Egypt. Pro-democracy protestors are seen clashing with military, police and pro-Mubarak supporters.

References made to the Black Freedom Struggle and the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., and to Malcolm X in particular, where common during the democratic uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. The cable networks showed pictures of demonstrators holding up signs with the text “We Shall Over Come.” One of the more memorable tweets from the uprisings was from the now imprisoned Nabeel Rajab, the head of the Bahrain Center of Human Rights. He linked to Pete Seeger via Twitter singing “We Shall Overcome” followed by the hashtags #Bahrain #Egypt #Kuwait #Saudi #UAE #Lebanon #Morocco #Tunisia #Oman #Qatar. Protest signs were also seen referencing Malcolm X, some with quotes and some with only his photo.

Malcolm X has maintained a unique position as a powerful symbol for the hip-hop generation and as Alridge points out:

Since the early years of Hip Hop, SPC [socially and politically conscious] hip hoppers have continued to espouse many of the ideas and ideology of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and Black Freedom Struggle (BFS).

(Alridge 2005:226)

In 1985 Rapper KRS-One and DJ Scott La Rock formed Boogie Down Productions, one of the formative bands of conscious political hip-hop. Their Album By All Means Necessary (1988) is seen by many as a blueprint for political hip-hop. The title of the album alludes to the famous speech held by Malcolm X in 1965. Also the cover art on the album KRS-One

is seen mimicking a famous photo of Malcolm X from Ebony Magazine (September 1964); wearing a leather jacket, sunglasses, a baseball cap and holding a Micro-Uzi submachine gun. KRS-One peaks out of a window in the same way as Malcolm X did on the photo. KRS-One is not adhering to any Islamic teachings. In fact he has in recent years devoted some of his time to launch his own religion, "The Temple of Hip Hop."

The legendary American hip-hop group Public Enemy has probably done more to promote the image of Malcolm X than any other group. For example Malcolm X's image is prominent in the video for the song "Fight the Power" (1989), first released on the soundtrack for the film "Do the Right Thing" (1989) directed by Spike Lee. The group performs surrounded by the Nation of Islam affiliated security organization S1W (Security of the First World) in front of a giant Malcolm X photo with cheering crowds holding pictures of other African American leaders and persons symbolizing the African American struggle like Harriet Tubman, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King and Jessie Jackson. Malcolm X's words have been sampled in countless hip-hop songs. The black baseball cap with an "X" on and t-shirts with photos of Malcolm X were and are still sold to hip-hop fans all over the world.

The legacy of Malcolm X within hip-hop culture goes beyond national borders, religious beliefs or political goals. Muslim as well as non-Muslims in the US and abroad, utilized his words and pictures. Malcolm X's unique and complex story has and will most likely continue to find new ways to inspire hip-hop artist in their artistic expressions.

One illustration of this is the Egyptian hip-hop trio Arabian Knightz. In April of 2011, in the midst of the Arab uprisings they together with the American MC General Steele recorded the song "I am Malcolm X" (2011). The lyrics of the song link the Arab uprisings to the Black Freedom Struggle in USA. At the beginning of the first verse General Steele raps:

Malik was a king that had a dream like Martin Luther /

Built an Islamic truth for constitution revolution /

our generation needs a new one /
the mother of the civilization needs Civil Rights Movement

(Arabian Knightz Ft. General Steele 2011)

Malik refers to the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, the name Malcolm X took after his conversion to mainstream Islam, after that he left Nation of Islam, in 1964. The quote clearly calls for a new Civil Rights Movement, in Egypt (the mother of the civilization) built on an “Islamic truth.”

The title of the song is a reference to the ending scenes of the Malcolm X movie by Spike Lee. The film ends with a scene of a black teacher in an American classroom. Behind her on the blackboard, are the words “MALCOLM X DAY.” She tells the class that it is Malcolm X’s birthday. “Malcolm X is you, all of you, and you are Malcolm X,” she says. Some of the students in the classroom rise up and one after another holler, “I am Malcolm X!” The scene cuts to a classroom somewhere on the African continent where students also stand up and shout, “I am Malcolm X!” The movie climaxes with the, at the time, recently released anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela, reciting one of Malcolm X’s speeches. The message, both of the song and the scene from the movie is clear: Malcolm X’s struggle was not confined to only American soil, it is a global struggle, one which concerns all oppressed people in the world.

The video clip accompanying the song underlines this message and illustrates it with powerfully video footage showing, for example, the crossing of Edmund Pettus Bridge when Alabama state troopers attacked civil-rights demonstrators outside the town of Selma in 1965 and more recent footage of demonstrators being brutally attacked by police at Tahrir Square in Cairo.

#MuhammadShowedMe – The Hip-hop community reacts to the “Innocence of Muslims”-trailer

The usage of Islamic references is a reoccurring theme within hip-hop music throughout its history. Artists from all corners of the world and from a

wide variety of Islamic traditions of interpretations are represented within the culture. Sometimes, but not always, these references contain political undertones in order to give voice to issues of political relevance and of concern for the Muslim world for example questions concerning environmental issues anti-racism, and anti-globalization.

Video clips online are probably the latest channel for this form of political mass-communication. A recent example of this is the events following the online publication of the anti-Islamic video trailer “Innocence of Muslims” across the Muslim world. This incident clearly shows the impact a video clip going viral can have, as people have reacted to them both online and offline. While protests spread the American hip-hop artist Lupe Fiasco promoted the hashtag #MuhammadShowedMe on twitter and called for Muslims to counter the claims made in the trailer about Muhammad by tweeting what the Prophet Muhammad meant to them. The hashtag swiftly went viral, receiving almost 15 thousand mentions in just two days encouraging Muslims from different Islamic traditions to rally around on cause.

Lupe has gained attention both outside and within the Muslim world as a respected artist with an assertive Muslim identity. He has earned critical recognition both in the underground and in the mainstream hip-hop scenes. In 2008 he was awarded a Grammy and 12 nominations. On top of this he has also been nominated for a number of other music awards. Lately he has been a vocal critic of the public policies of the Obama administration.

Interestingly enough, it did not take long for artists across the Muslim world to respond with hip-hop songs and video clips. In December of 2012 rappers Deen and Sphinx released their track “Muslim” (produced by 21 The Producer & mixed by Mister Rocks) branded online as a direct response to the “Anti-Islam film ‘Innocence of Muslims.’” Sphinx is one of the members of Egyptian hip-hop based group Arabian Knightz (earlier mention in this text). Deen was born in California to parents of Pakistani and Afghan origin and he currently splits his time between Dubai and California.

In an interview with Saudi based hip-hop radio show host Hassane Ahmad Dennaoui aka. Big Hass on the hip-hop program “Lasish Hip-hop” [Why hip-hop?] Deen explains that at first he didn’t want to address the clip but when he discovered that the director of the trailer was from his home town, Cerritos, CA he felt obligated to react. As he explains in the interview:

Hold on, wait a second man, you ain’t going to be living in my city and then on top of that attacking my people. You know, and get away with something like that! I didn’t respond violently. No. Because that’s not what Islam teaches us, what we did, we came out with something positive. We educated... We put out a message that you know, is educational not only for non-Muslim and that director. But is educational for Muslims as well because we are not spouse to be out there reacting violently, you know, and attack this person and that. No! You know the Prophet (Peace be upon him). You know, he used to walk down the street and get, you know, hit with rocks or fruit or what ever it was. Did you ever see him react violently? No! That’s our best example. That’s what we need to follow.

(Big Hass interview with Deen 2012)

As the quote clearly states the song was intended as a form of dawah, an invitation to what is perceived as true Islam direct to non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

During the interview Deen also explains that is was a conscious decision to put the song on YouTube and have the lyrics in English in order to reach as many peoples as possible. It is clear that Deen sees the song as a form of religious edutainment and that the usage of an Islamic message is not used by coincidence.

Deen and Sphinx were not alone to post music clips with Islamic themes as responses to the trailer. For example one clip with the title “The official #Muhammad Response Spoken Word Muslim Version” was posted on Youtube and several other video sites, by an unnamed artist during Septem-

ber 2012. Even do the Spoken Word genre is not strictly hip-hop it draws its inspiration from the same artist that laid the groundwork for the emergence of hip-hop, for example the Last Poets and the late Gil Scott-Heron. Also, the art form utilizes much of the same aesthetics as hip-hop.

Professionally edited with a strict minimalist image, the video quickly reached a big audience. At the time of writing it has had more than one million views on YouTube alone. The website and organization behind the video clip “Talk Islam” is an Australian organization that according to the website talkislam.com.au started “with a group of young Muslim brothers from Sydney inspired to spread the dawah on the streets.” The group is very active online and maintains, along with the website, both a Facebook page (see Facebook Inc. 2011) and a Twitter account (see Twitter Inc. 2012). They have released several video clips all in the same fashion with a coherent graphical design that seems to target a young urban Muslim audience with a message about clean living and personal success marketed in a hip, street-smart manner under the slogan “It’s time for Islam to do the talking. One Message, One God.”

My last example of a video response to the trailer “Innocence of Muslims” was actually not intended as a response when it first was posted on YouTube in August 2012. When it was first posted online, it had the title “APD-TA by Masaniai Muhammad Ali feat Hassan Diop.” However it was later re-released by fans under the title “Innocence of Muslims Movie: Hip Hop Response ‘APDTA’ by Muslim female producer.” It was published on several video clips sites as well as on YouTube but at the time of writing the renamed clip has been removed from YouTube.

The song is produced by Masaniai Muhammad Ali, a California based producer, and features the rapper Hass (Hassan Diop). Masaniai Muhammad Ali is also co-owner of Nation19, a Muslim style street wear line and a magazine, along with her sister Queen Muhammad Ali. The video is professionally produced and edited. It features rapper Hass and Masaniai Muhammad Ali standing in the desert with a road sign stating “Crenshaw BLVD 4800 S.” Crenshaw Boulevard and the Crenshaw district is frequently mentioned

in American hip-hop lyrics by for example by hip-hip icons as Nas and Dr. Dre. The district is also well known within hip-hop lore for having accommodated many famous rappers over the years, for example Ice Cube, Skee-Lo and Ice-T. The video also features clips of whirling dervishes performing dhikr, and pilgrims performing tawaf in Mecca. The intention is clearly to visually connect Crenshaw to the larger Muslim world. Graphics in the video states, "We need Unity." The lyrics highlight the presence of Muslims in the so-called "west." The hook states:

Look to the east bow my head to the Kaaba, I start it how we finish
brutha bismillah. For those who are now home may Allah's peace be
upon them, we pray their deeds were pleasing in the sight of Allah.
Look to the west and see the ummah get larger, We start it how we
finish in the name of Allah.

(Masaniai Muhammad Ali ft. Hassan Diop 2012)

I should note that this interest in Islam is by no means a new phenomenon among African-American artists. Hip-hop artists like Masaniai Muhammad Ali and Hass only extend an interest that has existed at least since 1940s and 1950s when several well known African-American jazz musicians converted to Islam (Curtis 2007:687). One of the more noteworthy artists to convert was Art Blakey also known as Abdullah Ibn Buhaina, famous together with the Muslim Jazz collective the Messengers.

Concluding Remarks – What's on the Rappers Reading Lists?

Computer-mediated forms of communication have played an imperative for the growth of Islamic themed hip-hop worldwide. What began with references to African-American Islamic movements such as the Nation of Islam and The Five Percenters in the particular context of the inner city settings in the U.S. is today a universal phenomenon. The interconnectivity and polycentric nature of the Internet and ultimately the social media tools of the World Wide Web enable individuals to easily frame and broadcast

views to individuals in all corners of the world with mutual interests and concerns. Perhaps more importantly it gives individuals the possibility to encounter similarities in ideas and concepts.

In his book *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (1993) Howard Rheingold introduces the concept of virtual communities to describe networks of social relations online. One of the underlying factors for the formation of a virtual community is what Rheingold calls as a *grassroot groupmind*; the exhilarating “sensation of personally participating” in a process with a common goal.

In order to explain why young people and young adults from different geographical areas, cultures and religions adopts and orchestrated the American hip-hop culture in their own local contexts it is useful to use Black popular culture and dance studies scholar Halifu Osumare’s concept of “Connective Marginalities.” In her book *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves* she defines “Connective Marginalities” as:

the term I give a conceptual frame that encompasses various social and historical realms that forms the context for youth participating in hip-hop outside the United States. These spheres of social experience interconnect and overlap, partially facilitating the explosion of hip-hop culture internationally.

(Osumare 2007:62)

These spheres or themes which, according to Osumare unites participants in the hip-hop culture worldwide are; youth, historical oppression, class and culture. These “Connective Marginalities” helps to cultivate a local activism with a global engagement. By incorporating Islamic themes in for example music video clips, artists visually connect to the cognitive universe of Islam. This in turn leads to concrete cooperation and artistic exchanges where artists translate their respective local battles into a more global struggle. A “sensation of personally participating” helps to bridge the gap between different Islamic traditions. They become what Hamid Dabashi names “border

crossing pilgrims” someone who manage to “translate the native and nativist boundaries of a particular cause [...] into the vernacular grammar of a far more global struggle.” (Dabashi 2008:186)

Through hip-hop music African-American Islamic themes of liberation and resistance were introduced to a young urban Muslim audience outside the US. When talking to young Muslims in the immigrant-dense housing areas in for example Sweden, one is more likely to encounter references to Islamic themed hip-hop than references to traditional Muslim scholars from the Middle East. We know less than we want to know about the influence of African-American traditions of Islam on other traditions of Islam in a global perspective. But what we know is that the hip-hop culture today is a prominent arena where ideas from African-American Islamic traditions, so called orthodox traditions of Islam and the African-American Civil Rights Movement, intersect with thoughts from post-colonial thinkers like Edward Said and Franz Fanon. The cultural impact and iconic status of Malcolm X within in the hip-hop culture is key in order to understand the worldview of many young Muslims around the globe. Malcolm X represents an alternative political Islam not rooted in the constructed divide between “the West” and the “the East” but rather as a collective symbol for a shared experience of marginalization, may it be in the so called “West” or the so called “East.” As Hamid Dabashi writes:

There is no other evolutionary figure who like Malcolm X so gracefully and courageously climbs over that dilapidated wall which mercenary Orientalists have constructed between the Western part of their own perturbed imagination and the rest of the world.

(Dabashi 2008:23)

Peter Mandeville (2010) and others have pointed to this and reexamined the ecology of political Islam in the light of “modern subaltern thought and activism” (2010:2). They have rooted it in discrepant geopolitical worldviews and alternative ethics both in the Pan-Africanism thought of Edward Blyden, who saw Islam as a far better medium for African-American

liberation than Christianity, and of other modern thinkers like South African anti-apartheid scholar-activist Farid Esack (1997) and Hamid Dabashi (2008), who in different ways have formulated ideas around Islamic liberation theologies.

The topic of Islamic themes in hip-hop in the Middle East and beyond is a complex issues that deserves no oversimplifications. Even do this article has focused on instances where Islamic themes in hip-hop are used in order to contest both established Islamic traditions of interpretations and perceived unjust powers structures there are plenty of examples of the opposite. These examples needs to be further investigated by scholars interested in the relationship between Islam and hip-hop. In order to find out more, scholars need to interview participants in the hip-hop culture and find out “what is on their reading list,” so to speak. We also need to know more about how the online activities of the global hip-hop generation translate into “everyday theologies;” this is a colossal research enterprise, which requires continuous investigation and theorizing.

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