

CLASSROOM STORIES: Say It Louder! A Progression in Hip Hop Aggression by Adam Fournier

ADAM FOURNIER:

Hello everyone! Thank you for tuning in to 91.3 WXPL, Fitchburg State University's radio station. And thank you to WXPL for allowing me on their airwaves, since I'm no DJ. I'm just a student who took a winter course trying to get enough credits to get to graduation.

My name is Adam Fournier, a film student at Fitchburg State, and welcome to my show that I like to call, "Say it Louder! A Progression in Hip Hop Aggression."

In this show of mine, that I definitely didn't think of in the last few days during my spare time at my full time job, I wanted to explore hip hop songs that spoke about the struggles and misfortunes of the Everyman, how we the people view the powers above us and how we could, and should, overcome the adversity that they put us in.

I also wanted to explore how the sound of hip hop evolved with these messages over time, how it starts to blend with different genres, progressing into heavier sounds to support the aggression and frustration of hip hop artists and the American people.

I'm going to be playing classic hip hop tunes from the 80s and 90s paired with some of my favorites from the mid 2000s to as recent as the 2020s to show how the sound of more modern alternative hip hop shifts from its roots, but the messages still ring true for the modern era, modern audiences, and speak about modern issues.

These first few tracks talk about struggles that we see or hear about every day on the street, making choices and doing what we have to do to survive, even if that means making less than desirable choices. More specifically, this first track is about growing up as a young black man in America. You know I had to start strong with this one. You know the song, you know his name. Here's "Changes" by 2Pac.

["Changes" by 2Pac and "What It's Like" by Everlast]

ADAM FOURNIER:

That second track is, of course, "What It's Like" by Everlast of the group House of Pain, a song that I still hear on stations like 100FM The Pike. Where you can hear the frustration in 2Pac's rhymes, Everlast's sound is more to get empathy from his audience. Not everyone knows what it's like to see gang violence, having to resort to pushing drugs for money, to be judged by the color of your skin, being homeless. The very least we can do is listen to these stories, and maybe one day we can work together to make some changes. Because it's 2025, just about 30 years after these songs came out, and we still see issues like the ones these songs talk about. So yeah, some changes would be good.

This next track takes us back to 1983 with Afrika Bambaataa and The Soulsonic Force. When I was choosing songs for this show, I was thinking about putting some Rage Against The Machine in here, to add that hardcore, punk-rap, anti establishment sound. When I was looking

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into their song "Renegades of Funk," I learned that it was a cover! I never knew that! And while taking this course, we learned so much about Bambaataa, how he was one of the Founding Fathers of hip hop, bringing the youth together at dance parties in the 80s, keeping them away from gangs and street crime. How cool is that? Here's the original "Renegades of Funk."

["Renegades of Funk" by Afrika Bambaataa and The Soulsonic Force and "Rise" by Flobots]

ADAM FOURNIER:

You only ever hear the Rage Against The Machine version of "Renegades of Funk" on the radio, so I think it's appropriate to bring the original to the surface, give it the respect it deserves. The following track you just heard was "Rise" by a group called Flobots. Talk about a huge shift in sound, from the funky, groovy beats of the 80s to an experimental sound with alternative hip hop. Much more serious in tone, a little edgy, fitting for 2007 if you ask me. Although I love that tune and that band, I think it's time for a new wave of funk. I think we can use some funk in 2025.

I chose that song by Flobots because I think it's a good way to show that even though the sound of hip hop can change dramatically, what both of these songs mean is pretty similar. Unexpected people can make the greatest leaders, and it's the renegades that make the greatest changes, helping us rise up and work together. And I think that's a message that'll stand the test of time, pretty much forever.

You know what else will last forever? Money problems! Call me a pessimist, but I think money problems will always exist. You need it to live, but not everyone has it. What's that old saying, "Money rules the world"? Or you can rephrase it, as the Wu Tang Clan put it, "Cash Rules Everything Around Me."

["C.R.E.A.M." by Wu Tang Clan and "American Dream" by Bryce Vine]

ADAM FOURNIER:

"The American dream is a foreign car, You can only afford with a credit card." Man, I felt that at a spiritual level. That was "C.R.E.A.M." by Wu Tang Clan followed by "American Dream" by Bryce Vine, which was released in 2022, so it's a really modern statement about our capitalist society. We all want the American Dream. We all want a nice house, a nice car, just nice things. I'm not even asking for the nicest house, I just want A house. So I guess you can't just get a taste of the American Dream, you have to buy it.

The sound of the last two tracks may not sound too aggressive, but the lyrics certainly voice the frustrations around money and financial turmoil. But if you really listen to the lyrics by Wu Tang, they deliver a message of redemption despite their disadvantaged upbringings. The American Dream may seem out of reach, but let's keep at it. We'll get there.

As we come towards the end of "Say It Louder!", I'd like to dive into the sub-genre of rap-rock.

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It's been around since hip hop and rap became more commercialized in the early 80s, as seen with Run-DMC and their songs like "Rock Box," "It's Tricky," and their collab with Aerosmith in their rap remix of "Walk This Way." With the introduction of rock instrumentals to rap music, the aggressive sounds compliment the aggressive lyrics. This next track is another collab of a popular 80s hip hop group, but this time with an 80s metal band, so it may be a bit jarring compared to what I have been playing. Public Enemy and Anthrax, bring the noise!

["Bring the Noise" by Public Enemy and Anthrax, and "World War Blues" by Spose]

ADAM FOURNIER:

There's the aggression, with "Bring the Noise" by Public Enemy and Anthrax, and "World War Blues" by Spose, a rapper from Wells, Maine. A rapper, from Maine. How do you think that would fare if a white boy from Maine became a rapper in the 80s? My guess is not so well. But then again, the Beastie Boys managed to be successful white rappers, so...

The reason I added this track to the show is, not just because I think it's great and I wanted to share it, but to also show that, today, we're all connected more than ever before, learning about issues all over our country and around the world. And all kinds of artists, hip hop or otherwise, will make art that reflects it.

"Bring the Noise" is a boast, a classic element of hip hop music. Public Enemy is praising their craft as a legitimate art form, telling us to stand up for what we believe in, say it with your chest, and say it loud! Spose carries this message in "World War Blues," calling out America as being a global war machine, profiting on dropping bombs in other countries while the issues back at home still persist. But don't look at all that, just keep on dancing.

With Public Enemy working with Anthrax and Run-DMC with Aerosmith, it's evident that hip hop meshing with the aggressiveness of rock isn't new. What's even cooler is that collabs like this are still happening! Just in September of 2024, Ice-T worked with David Gilmour of Pink Floyd to make a new version of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb." I first heard about this from Mistress Carrie on 100FM The Pike, and I'm a huge Pink Floyd fan, so I just had to listen to this. And, man, it is awesome.

And to put it in this show just makes sense. You're taking one of the most successful MCs of all time, one who's seen the riots and gang violence in 80s and 90s LA, paired with one of the greatest guitarists of the 70s and 80s. Two legendary artists, from different backgrounds, different genres, who've been through life, seeing its ugliest sides, delivering a message that needs to be said loud.

And that is where I take my leave. This has been "Say it Louder! A Progression in Hip Hop Aggression" with me, Adam Fournier, on 91.3 WXPL. Thank you for turning in. And to anyone out there with a message they want to share, a story they want to tell, just remember: say it louder.

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["Comfortably Numb" by Body Count plays until fade out]

[Perseverantia Network Theme fades in]

JASON CARMEL:

This is Jason Carmel, a sophomore Game Design student at Fitchburg State University, and you're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State Podcast Network.

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