West Coast Originals: A Case for Reassessing the "Bronx West" Story of Black Youth Culture in 1980s Los Angeles

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In 1983, African American filmmaker Topper Carew went west to investigate rumors of hip-hop in Los Angeles. The young, Washington, D.C.-based auteur was intrigued, because at that time, hip-hop was still an infant music trend confined to and synonymous with New York City. It was an insular East Coast arts movement that garnered little respect or attention beyond the boundaries of the five boroughs. Yet something similar seemed to be taking root in California. Carew believed that hip-hop was a more far-reaching and impactful cultural force than music critics in the early 1980s were willing to concede, and Los Angeles offered a way to test that theory.

Carew completed his LA documentary that same year, titling it *Breakin' 'N' Enterin',* a loose reference to break dancing, the acrobatic dance craze found thriving along Hollywood Boulevard and the Venice Beach Boardwalk. From the opening scenes, which included images of cars slogging along ribbons of freeway, palm trees towering above manicured lawns, and weightlifters and roller skaters reveling in the sun, the film suggested to the viewer that Los Angeles was certainly not New York and that its youth culture was, relatedly, unique. It helped that Carew recruited local hip-hop artist Tracy "Ice T" Marrow to guide his cameras around town. Ice T, a regular performer at a colorful downtown hip-hop nightclub called The Radio, provided the filmmaker intimate access to what the rapper described, in rhyme, as a singular regional

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"movement" marked by "graffiti turning ghettos into art" and "kids who dance on the street and in the park."[1]

Despite the film's premise, that it was spotlighting a novel cultural phenomenon that might redefine the contours of American hip-hop, *Breakin' 'N' Enterin'* presented an LA youth scene cast in an East Coast mold. From the multiracial break-dance crews to the colorful graffiti murals decorating the nightspots Carew chose as backdrops, *Breakin' 'N' Enterin'* presented New York hip-hop trends grafted onto Southern California landscapes, sometimes to the point of cliché. For instance, LA rappers and dancers honed their skills not on a concrete basketball court or schoolyard but inside a palatial ballet studio. In front of single-story family homes, on long driveways and freshly cut lawns, kids exhibited "top-rocks," "freezes," and other dance moves learned from young Bronx migrants. As New York-based performer Steve "Suga Pop" da Silva explained in the film, he and other break-dancers came to Los Angeles in the early 1980s for work opportunities that, it turned out, included offering step-by-step dance tutorials to locals. Even Carew's well-connected local tour guide had East Coast roots—Ice T had been born and raised in New Jersey, and his creative sidekick Charles "Afrika Islam" Glenn was a recent Bronx transplant.[2]

The Radio nightclub, the downtown disco featured in the film, was itself a kind of New York import. A French immigrant named Alex Jordanov ran the place, filling the venue's event calendar by tapping his Manhattan connections. Jordanov turned The Radio into one of the few afterhours establishments in Los Angeles, adopting a dusk-to-dawn schedule reminiscent of New York City nightlife norms. It was one of the first LA dance clubs to provide New York's newest recording artists with West Coast gigs. In addition, Jordanov commissioned colorful faux graffiti murals for the stage. In a city in which street graffiti was mostly single-line, monochrome "tags" and Old English lettering written to designate gang territory, The Radio's vibrant, bubble-letter backdrops were an unusual sight calling to mind Metropolitan Transportation Authority subway cars rather than the Los Angeles River's concrete tunnels.[3] Chris "The Glove" Taylor, a local disc jockey (DJ) who delivered sound equipment to The Radio, said Jordanov aimed to make his establishment "a piece of the East Coast hip hop scene" by spotlighting "spray-can art," sponsoring B-boy "dance battles," and inviting New York hip-hop performers, including the Queens trio Run-DMC.[4]

Within the first few years of hip-hop's existence, the *Breakin' 'N' Enterin'* documentary, however unintentionally, reinforced a popular, reductive interpretation of Los Angeles's postdisco youth music culture—that it was a tribute to New York City's hip-hop arts scene at best and an absurd imitation of that scene at worst. As *Los Angeles Times* music journalist Al Martinez put it colorfully at the time, New York hip-hop "spread to Los Angeles and was eventually adopted by apple-cheeked Beverly Hills teens who rapped in the airconditioned comfort of their Porsche Targas."[5] *Breakin' 'N' Enterin'* offered evidence that Southern California diluted hip-hop, turning a street-based urban music style cre-

ated by poor black and brown kids into something palatable for a whiter, more privileged, California crowd. In the film's concluding scenes, Carew's cameras captured a pair of platinum blonds in pastel party dresses who, appearing at ease surrounded by graffiti murals and minorities, beamed, "It's fun to try out new clubs and stuff." Two other white teenagers from the well-to-do suburbs of Pasadena and Arcadia said they took frequent trips to The Radio "because we like the music here" and "it's a different crowd," sounding quite like the white, thrill-seeking flappers who traversed black Harlem in the 1920s.[6] In these ways, Carew's film adhered to an already familiar hip-hop culture narrative hinging on a postracial fantasy—that, as Bronx DJ Afrika Bambaataa proclaimed, hip-hop was spawned as a vehicle for racial harmony, to "grab that black and white audience and bridge the gap."[7] Carew's depiction of multicultural bliss in Los Angeles's street dance scene inspired TriStar Pictures in Culver City to market a pair of B-rated romantic dramas titled *Breakin'* and *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo,* both about a white ballet dancer who befriends pop-lockers from "the 'hood."[8]

Cultural tourists in the early 1980s were amused by the ways East Coast hip-hop culture reverberated in Los Angeles, and their observations created the groundwork for a narrative about early California hip-hop that can be described as the "Bronx West" story. That is, the burst of B-boy activity in Los Angeles that caught the attention of artists, writers, and entrepreneurs of the period was assessed as a derivative novelty, explained simply by the westward dissemination of New York ideas. Beyond inspiring a few human interest pieces and a couple of romantic comedies, what was happening in Los Angeles in the early 1980s seemed only to highlight the growing influence of New York trailblazers. It appeared then that hip-hop, at its core, was neither a California story nor a California product.

More recently, scholars studying hip-hop music and the creative cultures it spurred have given academic heft to the Bronx West framework and to the argument that early LA hip-hop only mattered insomuch as it represented an etching of the New York original. Sociologist Tricia Rose, a respected pioneer of the multidisciplinary field of hip-hop scholarship, is a case in point. In her acclaimed book *Black Noise* (1994), she argued that 1980s LA rappers like Eric "Eazy-E" Wright, O'Shea "Ice Cube" Jackson, and Lorenzo "MC Ren" Patterson developed a "West Coast style" by refashioning the street poetry of their more politically progressive New York counterparts, including Bronx rapper KRS-One and the Queens-based group Public Enemy. Rose, a Bronx native, focused on hip-hop as an enlightened arts movement tied to "the New York postindustrial urban terrain." She designated a handful of New York's best talents as that city's "prophets of rage" and used their work as a litmus test for judging the value of LA rap music. Despite her assertion that hip-hop was crafted as an expression of "identity and location," she offered barely a nod to the regional idiosyncrasies that produced the sounds of 1980s LA rap. The local, mostly black Angelenos who built, financed, and consumed LA rap in its

infancy were absent from Rose's study, a glaring omission in a book that sought to explain social and cultural contexts for both the production and the reception of hip-hop music.[9] Rose also failed to trace the connections between 1980s LA "gangsta rap," which she characterized as a reprehensible iteration of hip-hop, and films she regarded as groundbreaking expressions of black masculinity, including John Singleton's *Boyz N The Hood* (1991) and the Hughes brothers' *Menace II Society* (1993).[10]

Jeff "DJ Zen" Chang, a reigning authority on the history of hip-hop since the publication of his book *Can't Stop Won't Stop* (2005), built upon Rose's work. *Can't Stop* provided the first historical model for fleshing out the circumstances that gave rise to an experimental music genre, which was, by the turn of the twenty-first century, a potent global force. Chang carefully documented the crucible of New York's urban crisis out of which the fundamentals of hip-hop culture—defined in the book as MCing (emceeing), DJing, graffiti writing, and B-boying—were forged. In the South Bronx, DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and other "preachers of the gospel of the 'four elements'" laid the groundwork for an inner-city party culture that would spawn commercially successful rap acts, including Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Kurtis Blow, Whodini, and Run-DMC. Through the mid-1980s, virtually every hip-hop luminary and national hip-hop trend sprang from one of the five boroughs of New York City, but as Chang argued, kids elsewhere enthusiastically adopted the four elements doctrine and, by the end of the decade, began shaping scenes of their own. Echoing Rose, Chang wrote that LA rappers, including Compton's Todd "Toddy Tee" Howard and South Central Los Angeles's Ice T, used the New York sound to produce something unmistakably provocative. Chang distinguished himself from Rose by making the case that this "new breed of renegades" was not merely aping East Coast hip-hop but instead transforming it to fit with LA sensibilities and suburban ghetto landscapes.

But Chang was inevitably transfixed by downtown Los Angeles's The Radio nightclub, just like so many culture writers of the 1980s. He described the club in *Can't Stop* as reminiscent of Manhattan's Roxy in its celebration of the B-boy and in its ethnically and racially mixed crowds. Just as Carew's 1983 documentary asserted, Chang argued in 2005 that this West Coast Roxy replica was the true fountain of LA rap music. And as a testament to the success of *Can't Stop* and to the broader influence of Chang's scholarship, the still-popular thesis about the history of LA hip-hop is that it hatched from California's cultural mosaic. Chang wrote that a rainbow of youth cliques—best glimpsed at The Radio—included Mexican *cholos,* Samoan gangbangers, "slumming Hollywood whites," and "Korean-American one-point-fivers." (Chang offered no explicit mention of African American partygoers at The Radio, likely because there were barely any.) The result was a simplified, feel-good history of LA hip-hop rooted in a fixation on the New York origin story and dependent upon the pluralism popularly associated with California. Chang's otherwise deeply researched and mesmerizing work does not fully consider the possibility that

as hip-hop blossomed inside New York, other incongruous DJ scenes thrived far away with little regard for the East Coast sound and style, even after New York's Sugar Hill Records began pressing hip-hop on vinyl and marketing it widely. A deeper dive into this topic would have revealed that some of these subcultures did not subscribe to the four elements gospel preached by exalted New York figures like Afrika Bambaataa. A closer look would have shown that through the 1980s, some LA artists and fans, almost as a habit, rejected the rhythms, themes, musical breaks, performance styles, and philosophies so thoroughly associated with East Coast hip-hop. Most critically, Chang misses evidence showing that some of these LA scenes were, in contrast to the New York hip-hop cultures of the early 1980s, nearly exclusively black.[11]

Black Noise and *Can't Stop Won't Stop* are just two examples of a host of similar works that fit into a broader scholarly tradition of viewing black culture in the West through the prism of the urban East. Similar to the Bronx West interpretations of rap, histories of LA blues and jazz culture—in addition to histories of black literature, black art, black stage performance, and black fashion in the mid-century West—have relied upon a methodological approach that, compellingly, suggests this: because Los Angeles is America's modern "migrant city," it can be defined as a product of its newcomers and their places of origin. (After all, as historian Lary May showed, Hollywood was a New York émigré.)[12] But this analytical lens, which is most commonly girded by allusions to "Harlem West" and its references to the Harlem Renaissance innovators of the early twentieth century, can also have the effect of painting a regionally inspired cultural renaissance as little more than a reproduction of something else from somewhere else. In the case of African American music in the West, the comparison has often rendered local black audiences, local black communities, and local geographies invisible, even when it aims to examine black artists and black art.[13]

To be clear, within the scope of black western studies, the Bronx West narrative can be one tool for interpreting the complex history of hip-hop in Southern California. Historians—myself included—have used it as a foundation for understanding the flow of musical styles, fashion trends, dance techniques, and cultural values from East to West. It can guide research about 1980s urban migrations, providing a starting point for exploring, for instance, the experiences of young migrants of color who left the Northeast for opportunity in California. And the Bronx West can be a useful vehicle for studying the dissemination of youth culture in the age of Top 40 commercial radio, cable television, and music videos.

But as a canon, it is insufficient and it is misleading. The Bronx West tale has tempted scholars to fuss over evidence that fits within the New York four elements hip-hop blueprint and to minimize, or even disregard, the significance of phenomena that do not fit. Moreover, as Rose's work demonstrates, the Bronx West is a poor model for examining the unique, homegrown, and socially insulated youth dance scenes that emerged far from the South Bronx,

Brooklyn, and Queens but that developed concurrently. And as music writers in the 1980s proved, the fetishizing of the Bronx hip-hop backstory perpetuates the popular myth about rap that, as *Billboard* magazine contributor Steve Ivory wrote in 1988, “this kind of music, hard-edged and urban, breeds in close quarters,” not in a city of sprawl where “everyone drives” and “you’ve got palm trees and good weather.”[14] The abundant, though still barely tapped, evidence available to culture writers and scholars of the Black West demonstrates that Ivory was quite wrong.

Carew’s earnest attempt to capture the essence of 1980s LA hip-hop cast doubt on the notion that Southern California youth were architects of their own culture. For all of its focus on local color and its engagement with West Coast dancers and partygoers, the film offered barely a glimpse of the LA scene’s most beloved artists, the mobile DJs.

Through the early 1980s, the growth of hip-hop depended upon a handful of independent labels based in New York, including Sugar Hill and Profile Records. These enterprises discovered talent and showcased their signed artists inside a thriving industry-driven New York nightclub circuit. Here, DJs played supporting roles, spinning records to serve the needs of label A&Rs and the acts they represented.

But in Los Angeles, the scene operated quite differently. With the exception of hot spots like The Radio and Club Lingerie, which tended to function as West Coast appendages of the Manhattan scene, LA nightclubs in the early 1980s were a virtual wasteland for contemporary urban music and for the record companies seeking to expose crowds to it. In 1983, Steve Buckley, a promoter for the Capitol Records black music division, noted a dearth of venues for funk, electro, and rap, which struck him as counterintuitive considering Los Angeles’s size and population density. Stating the obvious, Buckley told the *Los Angeles Times,* “A much more active club scene in this community would be important.” African American musician and LA native Leon Chancler said that for black music, Los Angeles offered barely any of the kinds of live entertainment venues set up for discovering talent. While industry-intertwined music events were integral to New York’s nightlife, Chancler lamented, “It’s not part of the black culture here.”[15]

Without the same types of high-profile nightclub gigs and exposure opportunities afforded to their New York counterparts, LA DJs crafted their own scene, a do-it-yourself alternative to industry gigs. Rather than rely upon the patronage of record labels or booking agents at brick-and-mortar venues, artists and entrepreneurs organized “mobile” dance parties in rented spaces, including garages, school gyms, hotel ballrooms, and conference centers, all over Los Angeles County. Black Angeleno youths with business savvy and carefully curated vinyl record collections organized themselves into mobile DJ crews and “mo-

bile sound systems." These crews pooled their resources to book event spaces, hire security, recruit talent, purchase new records, and promote dances. Mobile DJs served as hosts, and they performed as top-billed acts with the kind of name recognition that could draw thousands of cover-paying partygoers. By leveraging their keen insight into the discriminating tastes of their LA peers, mobile DJs earned loyal fans. They became some of the most influential tastemakers in Southern California and captains of a predominantly black-run, grassroots entertainment industry. These were thriving, vertically integrated businesses created by young African American virtuosos who dominated the dance party circuit in Los Angeles County through the early 1980s.[16]

Chief among these LA institutions was Uncle Jamm's Army (UJA), the preeminent mobile DJ sound system of the era. Rodger "Mr. Prinze" Clayton, UJA's founder, cut his teeth in the mid-1970s, spinning records for parties in his father's garage and collecting fifty cents from each guest, an early business venture that netted the teenager "good-ass lunch money." The neighborhood performances eventually earned Clayton better-paying gigs in Compton, Crenshaw, and Torrance, including a coveted booking with LSD, a group of local party promoters that managed to draw thousands of teens to many of its events. When LSD refused to pay him for his work, Clayton assembled his own full-service entertainment crew composed of DJs, dancers, security guards, and able-bodied helpers [Figure 1]. In addition, Clayton deployed a network of street promoters,

Figure 1: A promotional photo of Uncle Jamm's Army mobile disc jockey sound system features the group's original members: in the top row, Razor Sharp, Mr. No Good, Lester Malone, Egyptian Lover, Muffla, Troy, and Gid Martin, and in the bottom row, UJA founder Rodger "Mr. Prinze" Clayton, Bobcat, and Tomcat, 1982. (Photograph courtesy of Egyptian Lover)

mostly friends and fans, who roamed the southern half of Los Angeles County, plastering posters and distributing fliers in their neighborhood haunts. With this legion, plus a dozen hulking Cerwin Vega speakers, twelve power amplifiers, four turntables, fog machines, and professional lighting, Clayton aimed not only to compete with LSD but, as he hoped, to reign supreme.[17]

By 1982, UJA was unrivaled. Clayton's crew regularly filled its events to capacity, graduating from house parties in Compton and Torrance to large rented spaces throughout the county, including the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Culver City, and a popular skating rink in the Mid-City neighborhood called World on Wheels. At larger venues, like the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and the Long Beach Convention Center, UJA's elaborate shows drew thousands. Sometimes Clayton invited funk and R&B heavy hitters like Cameo, Cheryl Lynn, Lakeside, and Midnight Star to take the stage, but usually it was only UJA's elite DJs who filled the bill.[18] These upside-down event rosters, which featured major label artists as openers and local DJs as headliners, caught the attention of Greg "Greg Mack" Macmillan, a newly hired music programmer at local KDAY AM radio. With years of experience in Texas as a radio DJ, and fresh on the LA airwaves, Mack was stunned that Clayton's crew "could fill the LA Sports Arena with 8000 people for a 'dance.'"[19] It was evidence of a kind of DJ empire that Mack had never before seen. As UJA DJ Lester Malone boasted, "We had the whole market. There was nobody in LA but us."[20]

That did not remain true for long. Just as Clayton had built his enterprise in response to LSD, the UJA's remarkable success galvanized other aspiring DJs and promoters, including original UJA members, to develop mobile sound systems. As Clayton demonstrated, mobile parties generated local fame, respect among peers, and steady income for its organizers and talents, all essential forms of currency in South Los Angeles in the early 1980s. This was especially true for young black men contending with declining employment opportunities and the fast-growing influence of street gangs, a problem fueled by cocaine trafficking in the region. Against the allure of the illicit, Clayton and UJA provided a blueprint for a legitimate—and lucrative—trade, showing peers how to make ends meet by building a sound system, assembling talent, designing promotional materials, and stuffing milk crates with records local kids loved.

The LA dance culture that UJA chartered inspired other intrepid youth who sought to make a mark on the scene. Greg "G-Bone" Everett, for instance, founded the Music Masters, a small mobile crew that aimed to provide the UJA experience but at a lower ticket price. To cover steep overhead costs, Everett teamed up with another group of DJs, the Knights of the Turntables, to form Ultrawave Productions. Ultrawave was unable to wrest control of Los Angeles's black teen market away from UJA, but it managed to win fans and earn accolades for its community outreach. Thousands of kids attended Ultrawave dances thrown at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, where Everett's team col-

lected from partygoers canned goods to be distributed to South LA residents in need. “We were being like the Black Panthers,” Everett said.[21]

In Compton, Frank “Mixmaster Spade” Williams and Toddy Tee partnered to corner the house party market, promoting their services by distributing “street tapes” that offered a sampling of the blended song mixes they played for backyard barbecues and garage gatherings. The dubbed cassettes, which ultimately netted them more cash than did their modest mobile events, helped the two earn the local stardom they sought. Most significantly, the cassette mixes provided Toddy Tee with a foundation for promoting his “Batterram” tape in the summer of 1985, a set of original raps about rock cocaine, loose women, dope hustlers, and the LA police. These homemade tracks became the most requested songs at the very dance parties that he and Mixmaster Spade once sought to promote. They also served as early inspiration for other budding young rappers drawn to Toddy Tee’s provocative and defiant lyrics. When thirteen-year-old Calvin “Snoop Dogg” Broadus Jr. heard “Batterram” booming from cars rolling through Long Beach, he felt exhilarated. As a frequent target of police harassment, the teen was thrilled to hear a Compton rapper deliver a “takedown” of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).[22]

Several other DJs emerged from the “teen scene” that UJA monopolized through the early 1980s. Most notable among these was Alonzo “Grand Master Lonzo” Williams, one of UJA’s first DJs who split from Clayton in 1983. Lonzo made his move at the height of the mobile party craze, when most black youths shunned private discos and nightclubs because, as one entertainment writer for the *Los Angeles Times* noted, “no clubs in the city … provided entertainment that catered to them.”[23] Even The Radio, Jordonov’s all-ages spot depicted in *Breakin’ ‘N’ Enterin’,* pandered to the who’s who of the New York–based music industry. Radio DJ Afrika Islam described the typical Radio crowd as “99 percent white and international,” mostly affluent and “trendy” out-of-towners like Jordanov himself. The few black youths spotted at the club were performers, he noted. The Radio was not, in other words, a venue custom-made for Los Angeles’s African American youth.[24]

Lonzo, a staple of the local party circuit, understood how removed “hip” clubs like The Radio were from the flourishing South LA mobile dances. While Jordanov honored the Roxy model, Lonzo seized upon an opportunity to give mobile dance party patrons a more permanent home, one located not on the periphery of South Los Angeles but deep within. Lonzo ran Eve After Dark, a small, 18-and-up nightclub on South Avalon Boulevard in Compton. There, he showcased his DJ supergroup, the World Class Wreckin Cru, featuring Lonzo himself—a UJA original—and three others handpicked from his Compton neighborhood: Marquette “Cli-N-Tel” Hawkins, Antoine “DJ Yella” Carraby, and Andre “Dr. Dre” Young. With Lonzo’s clout among the UJA faithful, and because of the Wreckin Cru’s dynamic shows, Eve After Dark often drew full-capacity crowds.[25]

Texas native Mack may not have had the insider's perspective on the local mobile scene that Lonzo enjoyed, but he learned to respect, and later replicate, Clayton's business just the same. In early 1983, when Mack began his stint as a music programmer for KDAY, the low-frequency radio station that served South Central, he recognized that his listeners were some of the same local kids who filled the UJA mobile events. It was clear to Mack that Clayton's command over Los Angeles County's black teen party scene was a product of careful attention to the eclectic and everchanging tastes of his crowds, and perhaps Mack could learn something from Clayton's claim that he "knew the streets."[26]

Mack arrived in Los Angeles a veteran music programmer, a seasoned talent who had an early career in Texas radio and some experience as a party DJ in the South, which predisposed him to recognizing the powerful influence of South Los Angeles's DJ teams. Mack learned quickly that his mission to revitalize KDAY depended upon what happened at mobile events.[27] So determined was he to seize upon Clayton's program that he sought to join forces with him. It was a relationship that Mack, who made many advertising choices at KDAY, proposed as mutually beneficial. But the UJA founder ultimately rejected Mack's offer of partnership. "We don't need radio," Clayton gloated in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1983. He was reasonably emboldened by hip-hop music label representatives, including executives at New York's Profile, Sugar Hill, and Def Jam Recordings, making a habit of rushing promotional copies of new records directly to him before reaching out to local radio DJs like Mack.[28] Rebuffed, Mack scouted his own DJs, those who he identified as the most promising in the county, namely DJ Yella and Dr. Dre, the top-billed talents at Lonzo's Eve After Dark. Asserting his role at KDAY, Mack gave DJ Yella and Dre on-air spots to showcase their mixes and promote the nightclub's events. In addition, Mack invited the two Compton DJs to moonlight as members of the Mixmasters, Mack's own mobile sound system, and the only one of its kind harnessing the power of live radio. By 1984, over KDAY's airwaves, the Mixmasters broadcast some of the region's most popular dances, including those at Los Angeles's two largest skating rinks, World on Wheels and Skateland USA.[29]

As a frequent patron of Eve After Dark, soon-to-be hardcore rapper Wright was driven to form his own mobile dance business. Young Wright was raised in Los Angeles inside a blue-collar black household in a once-segregated, lily-white corner of East Compton that featured "rows of polite bungalows fronted by porches and lawns."[30] Despite his family's efforts to insulate him from trouble, Wright found it, dropping out of high school and partnering with a cousin to move rock cocaine. The illicit business netted Wright a small fortune, but by 1984, he had had enough of ducking police and fearing his enemies. About the stress he said, "I figured I could do something else or I end up dead myself or in jail."[31] Before taking the name Eazy-E and refashioning himself as a hardcore rapper, Wright's early foray into lawful, sustainable work was his own mobile DJ dance business. Under the moniker High Powered Productions, he scouted backyards and garages around Compton and hired his friend Dr. Dre to DJ.

Wright ultimately decided there was no financial future in promoting barbecues and house parties, but the experience afforded the young businessman insight into black youth music culture in South Los Angeles and the trends that propelled it.[32]

Clayton, his collaborators, and his many competitors tailored their mobile DJ party businesses for their LA peers, and they did so with three significant and related results. First, events thrown by the "high priests" of the mobile scene drew together the party faithful from Los Angeles's most marginal communities. As the *Los Angeles Times* noted in a 1983 profile of Clayton and the UJA, local black teens determined that "these rented-hall dances are the only game in town." One UJA fan explained, "I didn't eat lunch all week so that I could save my $5 for the dance on Friday," a justifiable sacrifice because "you had to be there on Friday night or you were nobody."[33] Second, the leaders of Los Angeles's mobile DJ dance scene created the scaffolding for an alternative, community-based economy. By the early 1980s, when the drug trade offered the promise of fast money to those with the fewest employment options, rented-venue dances provided work opportunities that were both meaningful and legal.

Third, in many cases, the work entertaining local audiences set the foundation for fruitful recording careers. Because of small Los Angeles–based record pressers, the young black entrepreneurs that drove the South LA mobile DJ party circuit managed to curate their own independent recording labels. Among these were Greg "Egyptian Lover" Broussard's Egyptian Empire Records, Lonzo's Kru-Cut Records, and Wright's Ruthless Records.[34] Through the early 1980s, small-scale record pressers delivered affordable access to vinyl pressing machinery, a vital tool of the music business. Unlike larger pressers that contracted with major labels, short-run manufacturers like Macola Record in Hollywood turned no paying customer away. Anyone with a recording and cash could walk out of Macola with stacks of saleable product. In this way, small-shop pressers connected DJs to the means of music production and crucially allowed these mostly black artists to retain ownership of their master recordings and therefore full creative control over their music. It was a service that enabled LA mobile DJs to create opportunities inside an otherwise impervious and exploitative LA recording industry, a loophole that opened doors for a slew of local music stars who eventually earned commercial success in the late 1980s, including Timex Social Club, 2 Live Crew, Rodney-O & Joe Cooley, J.J. Fad, and N.W.A.[35]

South Los Angeles County's complex mobile DJ economy thrived partly because of its sometimes reluctant and sometimes willing associations with those who participated in the illicit, including gang members and drug dealers. One of the characteristics of the early LA hip-hop scene that did make it a New York analogue was its birth in hardship. In the 1970s and early 1980s, recession and government reforms disproportionately disadvantaged blue-collar ur-

ban communities, particularly African Americans and immigrants in inner-city neighborhoods where stable salaried jobs were limited and municipal public services were as vital as they were scarce. Sharply declining wages, rising inflation, industry deregulation, soaring unemployment (according to the U.S. Labor Department, some 5.1 million Americans lost jobs between 1979 and 1984), and cuts to ever-shrinking publicly funded social programs, including youth recreation and work training, eroded the economic foundation of working-class black neighborhoods in Los Angeles just as they did in the predominantly African American, Afro-Caribbean, and Latino regions of New York that had first spawned hip-hop culture.[36] Moreover, for African Americans in particular, the era brought an ever-widening divide between black upper and black lower classes. African Americans had made significant economic, social, and political gains through prior decades, which included greater access to higher education, growing demand for black talent in professional fields, and expansion of middle- and upper-income black households. The work of civil rights lawyers and activists to tear down racial barriers in housing meant that, by the 1970s, upwardly mobile black families in the decaying inner city had the option to relocate to newer, safer, more affluent neighborhoods. And many did, leaving behind those for whom the economic changes of the era were most burdensome.[37]

By the early 1980s, the concerted efforts by national leaders to stimulate the era's weak economy by slashing taxes, cutting welfare programs, and shrinking federal regulations on businesses had come at a high cost to low-income communities. The consequences of these policies were particularly devastating to young people inside the inner city—in places like the Bronx, Brooklyn, South Central Los Angeles, Compton, and East Long Beach—who already bore the brunt of wage disparity and urban flight. On each coast, youths contending with revenue-deprived schools, scant recreational options, and declining job opportunities used what resources they had to build and then capitalize on new music trends.

In Southern California, the plight of those living in low-income inner-city neighborhoods became especially acute in the early 1980s, when Proposition 13, an initiative passed in 1978 that dramatically limited the levying of property taxes, drained government coffers used for improving roads and parks, for enriching public schools and libraries, and for maintaining fire, paramedic, and police services. In the wake of the tax revolt, Los Angeles County leaders put forth proposals for collecting new local taxes to protect and expand existing public services, but those efforts mostly failed. This meant that those families already confined to the poorest neighborhoods by low wages and limited employment opportunities saw public schools deteriorate further and municipal services like public transportation become increasingly unreliable.[38] The shifts coincided with, and resulted in, the further expansion of local street gangs, the rise in violent crime, and the spread of illicit industries, including the trafficking in guns and narcotics. These were devastating changes that gave the coun-

ty's police agencies leverage to demand a larger proportion of public funds for crime control when city budgets were in the red. By the early 1980s, residents in the most economically vulnerable regions of South Los Angeles County dealt not just with deteriorating public services and fewer sustainable jobs. They were also compelled to adapt to an increased police presence marked by "gang sweeps," rampant racial profiling, and militarization, including the deployment of a six-ton tank painted LAPD blue, labeled with the Los Angeles City seal, and outfitted with a steel battering ram.[39]

The most popular mobile dances of the first half of the 1980s worked precisely because, in this context, they delivered entertainment to those kids from places like South Central, Compton, Carson, Torrance, and Long Beach who needed it the most. "We're giving them somewhere to go," Clayton explained of his parties, "where they can forget they don't have a job or that their parents aren't working."[40] As scene regular Mark Luv said, he and his friends were saddled with the day-to-day challenges to "survive the Reagan era" while enduring the dangers that pervaded the neighborhood. "People got jumped on the bus over shoelaces and jewelry or the wrong color Kangol," Luv said, crediting UJA events for offering everyone in South Los Angeles "a break in their lives."[41]

According to UJA's Egyptian Lover, the pleasures offered up by mobile DJ dances—the music, the opportunities to connect with the opposite sex, and the chance to escape burdens on the outside—tended to draw as many young gangbangers, pimps, and drug dealers as those who considered themselves law abiding or only peripherally associated with street gangs. Luv insisted that all kids, no matter "their dirt," needed a social outlet. That was especially true, according to Luv, for those who were "selling, banging, seeing their homies get killed."[42] Plus, as one member of South Central's Pueblo Bishop Bloods explained, all black youths from the poor districts of South Los Angeles could be considered gang "associates" simply because based on their address and attendance at an area school, they were tied geographically and socially to at least one neighborhood street clique.[43] That made any effort to divide active gangbangers from associates and "affiliates" difficult. And for Clayton, any attempt at excluding the former meant cleaving the social connections inside the dance that replicated those on the outside. His aim in curating all-inclusive community dances was as driven by the unique population he served as it was by his desire to keep young people "off the street" and out of trouble.[44]

By contrast, trendy nightclubs on the Los Angeles Westside and in downtown Los Angeles, including Jordonov's The Radio, enforced strict rules for entry that were intended to deter suspected gang members and others deemed dangerous. The dress and conduct codes inevitably targeted black youths broadly. Citing security concerns, nightspots like The Radio, Club Lingerie, and the Palace granted entry only to those in "designer" fashions while regularly turning away kids in Levis, khakis, and T-shirts. As *Los Angeles Times* entertainment reporter Kristine McKenna wrote, even when these voguish clubs hosted

hip-hop showcases, management tended to position the shows for “older, white rock critics.”[45]

As important a consideration as keeping young people off the street, the architects of the mobile dances came to depend upon gang members and drug runners as drivers of the scene. As loyal participants (partygoers, dancers, DJs, and rappers) and as party planners and staff (security guards, street promoters, and even financial backers) these “troublemakers” proved key to the success of mobile dances and the livelihood of their organizers. UJA DJ Chris “The Glove” Taylor often counted “more gangsters” than any other sort of partygoer on the dance floor. Clayton’s former partner Lonzo acknowledged that “some of UJA’s biggest clientele were Crips,” particularly members from one of the gang’s largest sets, the Rollin 60s. New York DJ Henry “Hen Gee” Garcia was so struck by the differences between the LA mobile scene and the East Coast hip-hop culture that he took to referring to the electro and funk music blasting out of the speakers at Compton dances as “gangbanging music.”[46]

By 1984 and 1985, because of the patronage of mobile DJ sound systems, Los Angeles’s most popular skating rinks became known as the stomping grounds for the county’s two most notorious black street gangs, with the Crips claiming the Mid-City neighborhood’s World on Wheels and the Bloods choosing Compton’s Skateland. When Craig Schweisinger opened Skateland in 1984, Compton police warned him that his business would attract gang youth. The rink stood in the cradle of Los Angeles’s Blood territory, two short blocks from West Piru Street, a birthplace of the Piru Bloods. Schweisinger was unmoved, determined to provide all of Compton’s black teenagers with a neighborhood alternative to the Mid-City neighborhood’s World on Wheels. But the rink owner was also wary of riling police officials, so he paid to install a metal detector at the entrance and hung a placard outside that warned “NO CAPS – NO COLORS.” Schweisinger dutifully hired venue security as well, yet to the utter horror of Compton police, he gave those jobs to known gang affiliates from the neighborhood who rarely enforced the dress code and allowed “a sea of red” inside the spot.[47] As LA rapper Michael “Microphone Mike” (“Myka 9”) Troy noted, on any given night in the mid-1980s, the rinks were filled with gang members simply hanging out, “skating and playing video games.”[48]

There were risks to such a communion. In a dance scene bound to warring street gangs, violence was an ominous threat. Even the hint of trouble created significant practical challenges for event planners, performers, and partygoers alike. This was particularly true for the dance circuit’s most popular crew UJA, whose showcases, by 1984, had become as notable for “fresh” music as for “gangbangers going crazy.”[49] Despite Clayton’s expressed confidence that all partygoers, no matter their hustle, would check all drama at the door, many still claimed specific gang sets, brought hostilities in from the outside, and postured on the dance floor. To manage the unpredictable, Clayton spent extravagantly on “high-visibility” security patrols, and many of his hires, like those at Schweisinger’s Compton roller rink, were plucked from South Los Angeles’s

ganglands.[50] He also warned his DJs against abruptly stopping the music during any fight, which tended to draw attention to the commotion and exacerbate anxiety inside the room. Instead, Clayton instructed DJs to play Parliament's "Flash Light," a P-Funk track that had an uncanny ability to calm conflict and reenergize the dance.[51]

Most venues employed similar strategies with mixed results. From 1984 to 1988, Schweisinger's Skateland reported two shooting episodes, while violence at World on Wheels, Skateland's Mid-City neighborhood competitor, was even more common.[52] Despite his best efforts "to stay on top of it," Clayton's UJA events became popularly associated with gunshots and fleeing crowds. By the mid-1980s, Clayton was spending extravagantly on his security detail and his audiences had grown used to bracing for danger.[53]

Still, participants in the DJ dance scene tolerated the uncertainties and resisted barring anyone from the scene, including those representing Los Angeles's street gangs. Some saw clear benefits to inclusivity. Egyptian Lover, who parlayed his UJA gig into a career as a recording artist and label owner, stressed that the gang economy helped facilitate his success. "Drug dealers sell drugs, buy cars with big speakers, and then buy my records."[54] Mixmaster Spade similarly acknowledged that when hawking his homemade mix tapes on the streets of Compton, he found dope boys with cash on hand to be his most enthusiastic customers. When these hustlers then played his music in their opulent cars over powerful audio systems, they also became his most effective advertisers. For better or for worse, these were exalted, deep-pocketed, and culturally influential young men. To marginalize them would be to reject a vital source of support, income, and exposure. It would also ignore that the core mobile dance demographic in Los Angeles County in the 1980s, upon which the successes of so many individual young strivers rested, included gun-toting gangbangers and thousands of young people who were unavoidably affiliated with them. Ice Cube, who grew up just west of South Central, explained that he, like most of his peers, managed generally to abide by the law. But they accepted that gang members in their communities had to be respected as if part of an extended family. Gang culture was interwoven into the fabric of their lives, and it was a social reality that determined how South Los Angeles County's mobile dance crews and their audiences fostered such an unparalleled music subculture.[55]

Amid a growing urban crisis, and when hip-hop was considered synonymous with New York City, LA mobile DJ sound systems emerged as cultural trailblazers, laying the groundwork for a thriving independent music recording industry and eventually the ascendancy of West Coast rap. Young black mobile DJs and entrepreneurs like Clayton, Everett, Mixmaster Spade, Lonzo, Mack, Dr. Dre, and Wright were the architects of a do-it-yourself dance culture based not on traditional, brick-and-mortar nightclubs or on the patronage of

label A&Rs and white bohemians. These mostly black-owned, black-run entertainment businesses relied instead upon borrowed and rented spaces that dotted the urban–suburban landscape of Los Angeles. Family members, classmates, friends, and local hustlers—including gang members and drug runners—provided support and filled dance floors. KDAY, Los Angeles's low-frequency AM radio that served the south side, spread the word. And small storefront record pressers, like Macola, provided the tools for turning parties into recording careers. By offering, as Lonzo noted, "the only source of entertainment for young blacks in the city," mobile DJ crews in the 1980s did more than play and promote music. They governed Los Angeles's black teen music movement, a culture developed to reflect the South LA communities from which its practitioners and participants came.[56]

In the early 1980s, while New York's black and brown youths were popularizing hip-hop, young people from the predominantly African American communities of South Los Angeles were shaping a musical landscape of their own. They did so by remaining attentive to the discriminating tastes of "the streets" of Los Angeles and by forging a mobile dance network out of the region's car culture and its characteristic sprawl—the things that music writers in the 1980s cited as handicaps for the growth of anything akin to New York's "hard-edged and urban" youth music.[57] They also used the unique tools of the recording industry available to them within their city—the celebrated entertainment capital of the world—driving a local independent music economy that would give rise to the LA rappers, producers, filmmakers, and promoters who ensured that, as one of N.W.A.'s early records declared, "LA is the Place."[58]

Billboard music writer Ivory was misinformed when he asserted in 1988 that rap music could not breed in a place where "everyone drives" and "you've got palm trees and good weather." It did. The rap subculture that developed in Los Angeles spurred a sea change in hip-hop. Within a year of Ivory's statement, Southern California had become the focal point of the genre. By the 1990s, West Coast rap—with its thumping 808 beats, its funk-based production, its car-culture themes, and its tales of life inside the palm tree–lined ganglands of Los Angeles—had become the standard bearer for the genre of hip-hop. And within a decade, LA rap artists like Dr. Dre had upended the pop music landscape.[59]

Yet few writers have explored why Los Angeles became such a fountainhead. Instead, they have concentrated on the westward drift of New York art and attitude. Many of the most inspired scholars of hip-hop have proven quite old school in their thinking about the history of the West and more specifically the Black West. As if they were disciples of midcentury historians like Walter Prescott Webb, who questioned the legitimacy of western history and wondered in 1957 how to "make a thick history out of such thin material," these scholars seem not to have learned from the field's revisionists, from the likes of Patricia Limerick, Richard White, Lawrence B. de Graaf, and Quintard Taylor, who proved Webb wrong.[60] The foundation has been laid for shifting the narrative

about black popular culture in the American West. If we look closely enough, the evidence can help us write "thick history." It can have a bearing on the scope of western history and black western studies. And most importantly for this author, it will transform—and necessarily complicate—our understanding of the trajectories of American popular culture.

Notes

1. *Breakin' 'N' Enterin'* (documentary), directed by Topper Carew (Rainbow T.V. Works, 1983), online video, http://www.alluc.org/movies/watch-breakin-n-enterin-1983-online/300988.html, accessed June 2010.

2. Jesse Thorn, "Ice-T Revisits his O.G. roots in the documentary *Something From Nothing: The Art of Rap,*" *A.V. Club,* July 5, 2012, http://www.avclub.com/article/ice-t-revists-his-og-roots-in-the-documentary-isom-81987, accessed April 9, 2017.

3. For more on tagging in 1970s and 1980s Los Angeles and the late introduction of large-scale subway-style graffiti to the region, see Ulysses L. Zemanova, "El Chingaso," in *The Ulysses Guide to the Los Angeles River, Volume I: Biology and Art* (Grimmelbein Kitamura Editions, 2009), and *Bombing L.A.* (documentary), directed by Gary Glaser (Glaser Productions, 1991), videocassette (VHS).

4. Chris "The Glove" Taylor, interview by Stefan Schuetze, *West Coast Pioneers,* July 2004, http://westcoastpioneers.com/interviews.html, accessed August 1, 2011.

5. Al Martinez, "Hip-Hoppin' with Afrika and Ice T," *Los Angeles Times,* July 18, 1985.

6. *Breakin' 'N' Enterin'.*

7. Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn, eds., *Yes, Yes, Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Da Capo Press, 2002), 309.

8. *Breakin',* directed by Joel Silberg (MGM, 1984), motion picture; *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo,* directed by Sam Firstenberg (MGM, 1984), motion picture.

9. Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), xiv–xv, 4, 10–11, 99–145.

10. *Boyz N the Hood,* directed by John Singleton (Columbia Pictures, 1991), motion picture; *Menace II Society,* directed by Allen Hughes and Albert Hughes (New Line Cinema, 1993), motion picture.

11. Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 89–90. Other works in the hip-hop scholarship canon that either use New York as a template for interpreting LA hip-hop, treat the history of hip-hop as purely linear, or both, include Rose, *Black Noise;* Cheryl L. Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2002); Gwendolyn D. Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004); and Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999). Few works exist that consider the history of LA hip-hop in the context of the city's unique cultural, economic, political, and racial landscapes. Notable among these are Brian Cross, ed., *It's Not About A Salary: Rap, Race, and Resistance in Los Angeles* (Verso, 1994); Robin D.G. Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: 'Gangsta Rap' and Postindustrial Los Angeles," in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Michael Eric Dyson, *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and most recently, Ben Westhoff, *Original Gangstas: The Untold Story of Dr. Dre, Eazy-E, Ice Cube, Tupac Shakur, and the Birth of West Coast Rap* (New York: Hachette Books, 2016), and this author's forthcoming book *L.A. County Blues: How Gangsta Rap Changed American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

12. Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (University of Chicago Press, 1983).

13. A few examples to illustrate the Harlem West narrative include Elizabeth Pepin, *Harlem of the West: The San Francisco Fillmore Jazz Era* (Chronicle Books, 2005); Cary D. Wintz and Bruce A. Glasrud, eds., *The Harlem Renaissance in the American West: The New Negro's Western Experience* (Routledge, 2011); and in part, Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (University of California Press, 1999).

14. Steve Ivory quoted in Cary Darling, "Pop Music: L.A.—The Second Deffest City of Hip-Hop," *Los Angeles Times,* February 7, 1988.

15. Don Snowden and Connie Johnson, "In Search of the Black Beat," *Los Angeles Times,* May 8, 1983, U59.

16. Ibid.

17. Clayton's UJA was first christened "Unique Dreams Entertainment." Later, he and his partners renamed the group Uncle Jam's Army, with one *m,* as a homage to Funkadelic's 1979 album *Uncle Jam Wants You.* Clayton later added the additional *m* as his business grew and as he sought to better distinguish his crew from George Clinton's group. DJ Zen [Jeff Chang] and Mike Nardone, "Saturday Nite Fresh: An Interview With Uncle Jamm's Army," *Rap Pages,* December 1994, 36–38, 70–74.

18. Tracy Jones, "Uncle Jamm's Army Was the West Coast's Real-Life Answer to *The Get Down," LA Weekly,* September 7, 2016. In May 1984, UJA promoted a benefit concert for Jesse Jackson, which featured Lakeside, Cheryl Lynn, and Shalamar, as well as performances from UJA. Later that year, the DJ outfit hosted the 1984 Music Festival, which was sponsored by Coca-Cola and featured New York rapper Melle Mel, Gladys Night and the Pips, Cameo, Nona Hendryx, Lakeside, and Midnight Star. "Display Ad 380," *Los Angeles Times,* May 13, 1984, L71; "Today's Highlights," *Los Angeles Times,* August 18, 1984, E2.

19. Cross, *It's Not About A Salary,* 155.

20. Jones, "Uncle Jamm's Army."

21. Greg "G-Bone" Everett in "The Power of Hip-Hop: Lyrics, Accountability, and Behavior," *ProfessU,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNYVvIJIBmw.

22. Cross, *It's Not About A Salary,* 146; Toddy Tee, "Batterram," single (original self-produced cassette-tape format, 1985; Evejim Records, 1985), vinyl, 12 inch; Eric Bailey, "The Gangs of Long Beach: Signs Are Obvious; Graffiti, Poverty, Drugs, Turf Wars, Murders," *Los Angeles Times,* December 1, 1985; Jonah Weiner, "The Lion Smokes Tonight," *Rolling Stone,* May 23, 2013.

23. Snowden and Johnson, "In Search of the Black Beat."

24. Cross, *It's Not About A Salary,* 159.

25. Ibid., 121.

26. Jones, "Uncle Jamm's Army."

27. Cross, *It's Not About A Salary,* 155; Roger Clayton, interview by Stefan Schuetze, *West Coast Pioneers,* September 2006, http://westcoastpioneers.com/interviews.html, accessed June 2, 2011; Don Snowden, "Uncle Jam's Army: Mobile Disco Dances To a Different Beat," *Los Angeles Times,* October 30, 1983, U66.

28. Jones, "Uncle Jamm's Army."

29. Dan Charnas, "Hip-Hop Pioneer Rodger 'Uncle Jamm' Clayton Dies," *The Urban Daily,* October 11, 2010.

30. Alex Spillius, "The Short, Shocking Life of Eric Wright," *The Guardian,* January 27, 1996. For more on the history of race, class, and housing in Compton, see Josh Sides, "Straight Into Compton: American Dreams, Urban Nightmares, and the Metamorphosis of a Black Suburb," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (September 2004): 583–605.

31. Sandy Banks, "School Denies Problem After Attack: Shooting Site Called Back to Normal," *Los Angeles Times,* September 14, 1983, SD3; Chico C. Norwood, "Gunfire Mars School Opening," *Los Angeles Sentinel,* September 15, 1983, A1; Emily E. Straus, *Death of a Suburban Dream: Race and Schools in Compton, California* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 129–30; *Yo! MTV Raps* Eazy-E interview, featured in *NWA: The World's Most Dangerous Group,* directed by Mark Ford (VH1 Rock Docs, 2008), TV broadcast.

32. Jerry L. Barrow, "Andre Young is Still Buzzing," *Vibe,* September 1, 2010.

33. Snowden, "Uncle Jam's Army"; Todd L. Burns, Frosty, and Dave Stelfox, "Nightclubbing: Uncle Jamm's Army," *Red Bull Music Academy,* October 31, 2017.

34. Linda Moleski, "Grass Route," *Billboard* 98, no. 49 (December 6, 1986): 61.

35. Darling, "Pop Music"; Linda Moleski, "Indie Grass Route," *Billboard* 99, no. 15 (April 11, 1987): 65; Linda Moleski, "Grass Route," *Billboard* 98, no. 47 (November 22, 1986): 63.

36. Diane E. Herz, "Worker Displacement in a Period of Rapid Job Expansion: 1983–1987," *Monthly Labor Review* 113 (May 1990): 21, 31, as cited in John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

37. For more on the impact of economic decline on African Americans during the Carter and Reagan administrations, see Ehrman, *The Eighties.*

38. For more on the effects of 1970s and 1980s federal policies on Los Angeles, see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (New York: Verso), 1990.

39. For more on the LAPD's use of the so-called armored battering ram vehicle, see Daryl F. Gates, *Chief: My Life in the LAPD* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992); Patricia Klein and Stephanie Chavez, "Pacoima Leaders Protest Police Use of Motorized Ram," *Los Angeles Times,* February 9, 1985; Greg Braxton, "Second 'Rock House' Raid in Pacoima Nets Drugs," *Los Angeles Times,* March 6, 1985, VA6; Toddy Tee, "Batterram."

40. Snowden, "Uncle Jam's Army."

41. Donnell Alexander, "Do Rappers Dream of Electro-Beats?" *Los Angeles City Beat,* July 28, 2005.

42. Yusef Jah and Sister Shah'Keyah, *Uprising: Crips and Bloods Tell the Story of America's Youth in the Crossfire* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 259.

43. Ibid.

44. Snowden, "Uncle Jam's Army."

45. Kristine McKenna, "Taking the Rap in L.A.," *Los Angeles Times,* March 7, 1983, G1.

46. Wavomatic, interview, *West Coast Poppin,* June 2, 2009, http://westcoastpoppin.com/popping-history/interview-with-wavomatic, accessed June 20, 2011; *Breakin' 'N' Enterin';* Chris "The Glove" Taylor, by Stefan Schuetze, *West Coast Pioneers,* July 2004, http://westcoastpioneers.com/interviews.html, accessed August 1, 2011; Burns et al., "Nightclubbing"; Henry "Hen Gee" Garcia, interview by Stefan Schuetze, *West Coast Pioneers,* June 2006, http://westcoastpioneers.com/interviews.html, accessed June 2, 2011.

47. Sam Sweet, "The Roller Rink Origins of N.W.A.," *The New York Times Magazine,* August 13, 2005; also in Sam Sweet, *All Night Menu, V. 2* (December 2014).

48. "Microphone Mike" was the early moniker of LA rapper Myka 9; Cross, *It's Not About A Salary,* 291.

49. Lil Rockin G and Madmixer RMG (Knights of the Turntables), interview by Stefan Schuetze, *West Coast Pioneers,* June 2005, http://westcoastpioneers.com/interviews.html, accessed August 1, 2011.

50. Snowden, "Uncle Jam's Army."

51. Burns et al., "Nightclubbing."

52. Sweet, "Roller Rink Origins."

53. Egyptian Lover, interview by Chad Kiser, *DUBCNN,* August 2008, http://www.dubcnn.com/interviews/egyptianlover, accessed July 4, 2011; Lil Rockin G and Madmixer RMG, interview; Alexander, "Do Rappers Dream."

54. Egyptian Lover, interview, *West Coast Pioneers,* January 2006, http://westcoastpioneers.com/artists/egyptian-lover.html, accessed 23 May 2011.

55. Mixmaster Spade, interview by The Poetess, "Mixmaster Spade," March 17, 2003, in *Davey D's Hip Hop Political Palace,* http://politicalpalace.yuku.com/topic/10286/Mixmaster-Spade-is-on-Life-Support-He-s-NOT-Dead#.WKdD0MPytE4, accessed January 20, 2017.

56. Snowden and Johnson, "In Search of the Black Beat."

57. Darling, "Pop Music."

58. Eazy E, "The Boyz-N-The Hood/L.A. Is The Place," promo single (Ruthless Records, Macola Record Co., 1987), vinyl, 12 inch.

59. Darling, "Pop Music."

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