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music industry that first exploited the black artists for the benefit of commercial entities and then ultimately, removed the black artist from the genre and replaced them with white artists because the record-buying audience is primarily a white audience.

In the commercial structure of the music industry we see reinforcement of white supremacy as we do in other places in society. And whether it is Iggy Azalea or Eminem or Elvis Presley or any number of artists.

The thing to remember, though, is that the social conditions that produce the environment in which the blues was created, in which jazz was created, in which hip hop music was created, those conditions haven't really changed that much. So there is always going to be an authentic expression that comes from the cultural experience of the people who are oppressed.

S.Z.: *The day before Christmas Eve, Antonio Martin was shot in Berkeley, Mo., just a few miles from Ferguson where Officer Darren Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown last summer. Two officers in NYC were murdered in their vehicle the week before. Can you see any resolution to this growing rift between police officers and the public in general?*

M.C.: There is going to have to be a cultural revolution — a political revolution that is underway as we speak. I don't know how long it is going to take. I can't measure what I will see in my lifetime, but these things are expressions of these ongoing struggles between the world that we exist in and the world that we're trying to create — a world that is more just and equitable.

In that equation, police are a kind of occupying force that stands between the society that we desire — and when I say we, I'm talking about working-class people, poor people, people who are historically oppressed — and the society we have got.

The police are there to protect the interests of the people who control equal access and distribution to wealth and power. That is the only reason police exist. And until we transform things and have more



PHOTO COURTESY OF THERYTHYMINME.BLOGSPOT.COM
Mic Crenshaw at the Afrikan Hip Hop Conference, Soundz of the South event in Cape Town, South Africa.

equitable relationships across society, we're going to be in a violent struggle.

Racism exists because white people brought it into existence.

You've got these cops killing unarmed children, in broad daylight, on camera. The question about whether cops should be wearing body cameras is almost absurd, because people get killed on camera all of the time and there is still no recourse.

You don't have to be a scientist or an academic to see what is going on.

S.Z.: *How do we untangle that? We've come so far since the civil rights movement, we have a black president for the first time in our nation's history and yet ...*

M.C.: That shit was happening before there was a headline. The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement has done a study and they say every 28 hours a black person is executed by police or security or self-deputized white vigilantes.

S.Z.: *You have recently returned from the Afrikan Hip Hop Caravan tour — a kind of cultural exchange. Tell me about the project.*

M.C.: We do a week in various African cities. We started the project in 2013. This year, I participated in Cape Town, South Africa; Harare, Zimbabwe; Arusha, Tanzania and the Nairobi, Kenya legs of the tour. I have also become the lead organizer (for the Afrikan Hip Hop Caravan) in the United States. There are a number of organizers in Africa as well.

For the week that we spend in each city, we are hosted by local hip hop collectives that set up a number of events for us to not only perform music and give free concerts to audiences, but also to interact in the community. It is youth focused and all centers around this idea of how can we utilize hip hop culture as a tool for elevating consciousness and ultimately transforming lives.

This is an important project because it is organized by people who are cultural

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activists who have a priority to work with hip hop culture as a reflection of youth culture in African communities that are oppressed.

S.Z.: *Where do you see the program heading in the future?*

M.C.: My highest aspiration for the project is to bring African American and indigenous artists from the United States and for African and indigenous artists from Africa to be able to participate in the Caravan on both continents.

S.Z.: *We are notoriously "white" and to a great degree, lean toward the left politically in the Pacific Northwest, specifically Portland. How can we do better in our communities to include and honor African ancestry and culture in a way that is inclusive?*

M.C.: That is an interesting question. I think by supporting people who are already doing that work and who are already organized — be they individuals or organizations or community groups and programs.

S.Z.: *What will 2015 bring for you?*

M.C.: It will bring more results of the hard work of people who are oriented toward social justice.

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