
Border-Breaker (The Policing of Black Masculinity)

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Abstract

Centering Black masculinist epistemologies and critical pedagogy, *Border-Breaker* is a rap song and an intersectional, critical method that examines how Black manhood is bordered, monitored, negotiated, and controlled both internally and externally, and formally and informally, within Black communities, Black geographies, society, and the carceral system. Drawing on the tradition of imaginative storytelling in Hip Hop and Black culture in the 21st century, the artist employs wordplay and lyrical skill to highlight the over-policing and surveillance of Black masculine bodies and to confidently challenge the powers that be, including the state, for its negative control over Black vulnerability. This song depicts the Black masculine body as a resisting entity and a checkpoint, using lyrical devices rooted in Hip Hop culture to communicate its message. The author/artist emphasizes healing and care practices, faith, spirituality, brotherhood, and resistance throughout this sociopolitical interrogation. The artist situates this work within a lineage of Hip Hop lyricism and Black radical expression, drawing influence from artists such as Lauryn Hill, Nas, KRS-One, Talib Kweli, Tupac Shakur, The Notorious B.I.G., Nicki Minaj, Erykah Badu, Queen Latifah, and Common, among others.

Keywords

Black masculinity, hip hop studies, critical pedagogy, creative praxis, surveillance

Border-Breaker

Ayo!

Chorus

I know they want my
Black masculinity
A checkpoint to police my vulnerability
Official borders just to hide all identities

Verse 1

Your boy a healer, I been border-breaking
They tell us don't cry when our hearts be aching
Surveillance, watch a brotha move with caution
They hate that I am bold, can't be sold at auction
I could never fit your description
6'2" Black male bun your bordering system
Stay on my grind, still policed, not a victim
They want you dropped out, crashed out
Yeah, that's how the system pick 'em
They want that miseducation, word to Lauryn
Universal mind control, word to Common

Chorus

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Verse 2

Who gon break down our borders,
that's physical?
Stay strong, don't be a stat, empirical
Ayo, how we still alive? That's a miracle
My body, your body, his body
You get it now? It's political
'Cause even when I'm soft, I go hard
Ain't enough reason to revoke my Black card
So, I cross lines and be everywhere with comfort
Peace of mind, brotherly love gotta come first

Chorus

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Bridge

Black male bodies stay detained like ICE is
And out on the streets, bloodshed, like ISIS
Y'all already know who da nicest
Take down these walls, Tetris
My power come from the man who on the cross
he died
Put up fences, but demons wanna cross me,
why?
They on they last leg already used all 9
His angels steady fighting for me on the
frontline

Chorus

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Acknowledgments

To my dear cousin Ogor.

Author Biography

Kevin Ufoegbune is a Nigerian Canadian psychotherapist, social worker, educator, and entertainer who is currently completing his PhD at York University. His Master of Social Work practice-based research paper examined intergenerational trauma and psychotherapy within the Nigerian diaspora through a critical autoethnographic approach. As a therapist, he works with BIPOC communities, families, and organizations (including the NBA), as well as fellow Christians, addressing issues such as spirituality, addictions, trauma, depression, and anxiety. As a television producer, he co-created *Flavours of Africa* on Rogers Television in 2016. The series highlights African and international cuisine, culture, and storytelling.