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Living in a Gangsta's Paradise:  
Dr. C. DeLores Tucker's Crusade Against Gansta Rap Music in the 1990s

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts At  
Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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## Abstract

### LIVING IN A GANGSTA'S PARADISE: DR. C. DELORES TUCKER'S CRUSADE AGAINST GANSTA RAP MUSIC IN THE 1990S

By Jordan A. Conway

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015

Major Director: Dr. Timothy N. Thurber  
Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University Department of History

This project examines Dr. C. DeLores Tucker's efforts to abolish the production and distribution of gangsta rap to the American youth. Though her efforts were courageous and daring, they were not sufficient. The thesis will trace Tucker's crusade beginning in 1992 through the end of the 1990s. It brings together several themes in post-World War II American history, such as the issues of race, gender, popular culture, economics, and the role of government. The first chapter thematically explores Tucker's crusade, detailing her methodology and highlighting pivotal events throughout the movement. The second chapter discusses how opposition from rap artists, and the music industry, media coverage of Tucker and her followers, and resistance from members of Congress contributed to the failure of her endeavor.

**Introduction**  
**“Now let me welcome everybody to the wild, wild west”:**  
**The Beginnings of Rap Music and its Relationship to Dr. C. DeLores Tucker**

In 1989, the lyrics, “Beat a police out of shape / and when I’m finished, bring the yellow tape / To tape off the scene of the slaughter,” sparked a national controversy. These lyrics, from N.W.A.’s song, “F--- the Police,” glorified violence and perpetuated the African American male stereotype of being dangerous and violent.<sup>1</sup> That same year, Miami hip-hop group 2 Live Crew released their album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*, which included the song, “Me So Horny.”<sup>2</sup> The song contained misogynist lyrics such as, “I’ll play with your heart just like it’s a game / I’ll be blowing your mind while you’re blowing my brains.” A few years later, Time Warner released Body Count’s self-titled album in 1992. The album’s song, “Cop Killer,” contained the lyrics, “I got my twelve gauge sawed off / I got my headlights turned off / I’m ‘bout to bust some shots off / I’m ‘bout to dust some cops off.”<sup>3</sup> The release of these two albums sparked a debate about gangsta rap and its relationship to society, violence, and the treatment of women. Some believed it was a form of self-expression or an extension of the already popular rap genre, but others, like Dr. C. DeLores Tucker, believed the lyrics were harmful to that nation’s youth. Once gangsta rap became popular at the beginning of the 1990s, Tucker began an anti-gangsta rap crusade.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “N.W.A. Lyrics: ‘Fuck the Police,’” A-Z Lyrics, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/nwa/fuckthepolice.html>.

<sup>2</sup> “The 2 Live Crew Lyrics: ‘Me So Horny,’” A-Z Lyrics, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/2livecrew/mesohorny.html>.

<sup>3</sup> “Body Count Lyrics: ‘Cop Killer,’” A-Z Lyrics, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/bodycount/copkiller.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Pritchett, “In Defense of Rap, Not ‘Gangstas,’” *Wall Street Journal*, July 3, 1992, Page A6.

In 1992, African American entertainers Dionne Warwick and Melba Moore came to Tucker in disgust about the newly popular music genre, gangsta rap. The women felt dehumanized by the lyrics of gangsta rap and were concerned about its effect on younger audiences. Tucker listened to this music and immediately found it distasteful and harmful to her life's work in civil and human rights. She stated:

I had fully expected, as I occasionally listened to the often amusing rhymes and rhetoric of early rappers, that soon this vehicle would be used to express the anger and frustrations of ghetto life, which these budding artists were obviously trying to escape. And, when this angst became manifested in the later more militant versions my only fear was that these artists might be tempted to go overboard and thus invite official suppression of their artistry and talents.<sup>5</sup>

Tucker claimed she was disgusted by what she heard and she believed that the lyrics she listened to were “socially unacceptable” and poisonous to women.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1993, Death Row Records released rapper Snoop Doggy Dog's debut album entitled, *Doggy Style*. The album art depicted women as dogs with cartoon bubbles referring to the female body in an abusive, violent, and sexual manner.<sup>7</sup> Tucker was outraged.

She stated:

Our young women are not sexual playthings subject to the whims of misogynist thugs with a need to control their wives, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, nieces and girlfriends. They are the descendants of African American queens and kings. They are God's precious jewels to nurture and nourish future generations of African queens and kinds. They are to be treated with respect. The 'artwork' included with Snoop Doggy Dog's album teaches them everything but that!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Tucker Papers. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Assessment made on images posted to Google Images. Accessed August 17, 2014.

[https://www.google.com/search?q=snoop+doggy+doggy's+%22doggystyle%22&es\\_sm=119&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=sxj-U83LNU6\\_sQS0xYLIDQ&ved=0CAcQ\\_AUoAg&biw=1257&bih=779](https://www.google.com/search?q=snoop+doggy+doggy's+%22doggystyle%22&es_sm=119&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=sxj-U83LNU6_sQS0xYLIDQ&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAg&biw=1257&bih=779).

<sup>8</sup> Tuckers Papers.

The release of this album began the spark that fueled the crusader's fire. The attack on *Doggy Style* became the first major milestone in the fight against gangsta rap.<sup>9</sup>

Historically, music has always been a popular form of entertainment. The art of music has brought millions of people together through a variety of ways ranging from religious practices to family birthday parties. In the history of American popular culture, however, various forms of music were publically attacked after the end of World War II. During the 1950s, conservative parents and politicians criticized rock and roll music and professionals for creating hyper sexualized teenagers. Historian Glenn C. Altschuler notes, "Rock n' roll was demonstrating the power of the libido, as the music pulsed, the guitarist fondled his instrument, and the singer undulated sensuously. Rock n' roll seemed to be an anti-inhibitor, provoking erotic vandalism."<sup>10</sup> This mentality laced into the 1960s with conservative critics blaming the music for drug use, sexual immortality, and other alarming behaviors. When rock n' roll music hit its peak in the 1970s it was scrutinized by the same conservative critics for its supposed contribution to the downward spiral of America's social behaviors. A decade later, the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) pressured record companies to place a warning label on albums with explicit and obscene lyrics. By the 1990s, gangsta rap music had become the latest target for those who felt the nation was continuing its slide into moral corruption.

Founding members of the PMRC included Susan Baker, wife of then U.S. Treasury Secretary James Baker, Pam Howar, wife of Washington D.C. real estate developer Raymond Howar, and Tipper Gore, the wife of Senator Albert Gore (D-Tn). Gore served as the PMRC's leader and chief spokesperson. The organization received financial aid from Mike Love, a

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<sup>9</sup> Assessment made on images posted to Google Images. Accessed August 17, 2014. [https://www.google.com/search?q=snoop+doggy+dogg's+%22doggystyle%22&es\\_sm=119&source=lnms&tbnm=isc&sa=X&ei=sxj-U83LNU6\\_sQS0xYLIDQ&ved=0CAcQ\\_AUoAg&biw=1257&bih=779](https://www.google.com/search?q=snoop+doggy+dogg's+%22doggystyle%22&es_sm=119&source=lnms&tbnm=isc&sa=X&ei=sxj-U83LNU6_sQS0xYLIDQ&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAg&biw=1257&bih=779).

<sup>10</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock n' Roll Changed America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 67.

member of the Beach Boys, and Joseph Coors, the owner of Coors beer and a conservative activist. The PMRC saw its mission as trying to educate parents about sexually explicit song lyrics, lobbying the federal government for stricter laws regarding music distribution.<sup>11</sup>

However, the organization didn't believe its goals were an act of censorship. "Pornography sold to children to children is illegal, enforcing that is not censorship. It is simply the act of responsible society that recognizes that some material made available to adults is not appropriate for children, argued Baker.<sup>12</sup>

The PMRC initially wanted to establish a rating system similar to that used for films. It wanted albums to be stamped with the letter "V" for violent material, "D/A" for drug/alcohol references, or "O" for references to the occult.<sup>13</sup> The albums would have a single letter printed on the jacket, or a combination of the three letters. Other solutions included printing lyrics on record sleeves, removing albums from the shelves with "lewd" sleeves, and monitoring radio and TV shows.<sup>14</sup> However, during November 1985 Senate hearings on "porn rock," the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), in conjunction with the PMRC and the national Parent-Teachers Association (PTA), announced the use of a voluntary labeling system for objectionable lyrics. There were two options for the label: a label that said, "Explicit Lyrics – Parental Advisory," or the lyrics within the album would be made available either printed on the back sleeve or as a separate paper inserted beneath the plastic wrap of the album. It was also decided the labeling system would be reassessed in one year by the PMRC and national PTA to judge its

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<sup>11</sup> Claude Chastagner, "The Parents' Music Resource Center," *Journal of Popular Music* (1999) 18: 182.

<sup>12</sup> Chastagner 182.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Cutietta, "Rock Music gets a Label," *Music Educators Journal* (1986) 72: 37.

<sup>14</sup> Chastagner 182.

success.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, the RIAA introduced a warning label on all recordings that included explicit and questionable lyrics that has remained on album covers ever since.

Meanwhile, the surge in popularity of rap music coincided with several important developments among African Americans. Though the education, health, living conditions, and incomes of African Americans improved during the middle decades of the twentieth century, by the 1980s a sizable portion of the black population remained poor. Many African American communities also suffered high rates of violent crime, out-of-wedlock births, and low educational attainment.<sup>16</sup> For example, national crime rates began rising in the 1960s and 1970s even before the popularity of rap music. The percentage of Americans living in poverty and demographic change, historian Philip Jenkins notes, contributed to the rise in crime. He states, “Just in terms of murders, Los Angeles experienced the equivalent of a St. Valentine’s Day Massacre every weekend, though such atrocities became too commonplace to attract much concern.”<sup>17</sup> Jenkins adds, “Victimization studies confirm that the years from 1978 through 1981 were among the most dangerous in modern American history, with more violent crime than in any more recent period.”<sup>18</sup> This was also a period of a rising number of murders throughout the nation, and a national panic concerning youth gangs. For example, gang activity peaked in New York City in 1976 with two to three hundred gangs consisting of nearly seventeen thousand members, while gang activity in Detroit, Michigan was so intense it was referred to as “urban terrorism.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cutietta 37.

<sup>16</sup> William O’Hare, Kelvin M. Pollard, Taynia L. Mann, and Mary M. Kent, “African Americans in the 1990s,” *Popular Bulletin* (1991) Volume 46, No. 1, Published by Population Reference Bureau, Inc., Washington, D.C. (<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED338735.pdf>): 5.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 135.

<sup>18</sup> Jenkins 136.

<sup>19</sup> Jenkins 137.

There is no shortage of explanations for these trends. As William R. O'Hare, Kelvin M. Pollard, Taynia L. Mann, and Mary M. Kent, note, many African Americans blamed Ronald Reagan's economic policies for their plight.<sup>20</sup> Others, such as William Julius Wilson, a professor of sociology at Harvard University, argue, "Economic changes, combined with social and demographic forces within the black community, produced these countervailing trends." Wilson contends, "The urban poor became more impoverished and more isolated because the decline of manufacturing and the movement of many blue-collar jobs to suburban areas eliminated a source of relatively well-paying, secure jobs for blacks."<sup>21</sup> O'Hare and others determined that Wilson's interpretation of urban poverty placed heavy emphasis on the effects on broad economic, demographic, and social welfare trends, shifting attention away from racial discrimination within urban America.<sup>22</sup>

These harsh realities within urban black communities during the 1970s and 1980s became personified in American popular culture, especially the musical genre of rap music. Several researchers have discussed a variety of reasons that hip hop music became popular. Melina Abdullah, professor at California State University, Los Angeles, argues, "Hip hop culture, and rap music in particular, serves as not only an artistic form, but a type of political expression."<sup>23</sup> She states, "Hip Hop as political expression essentially means that the cultural forms serves as a commentary on power and resource allocation from the particular standpoint of those that the artist represents (largely black and Latino working class and poor young urbanites)."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> O'Hare 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> O'Hare 6.

<sup>22</sup> O'Hare 7.

<sup>23</sup> Melina Abdullah, "Hip Hop as Political Expression: Potentialities for the Power of Voce in Urban America," in *The Black Urban Community: From Dusk Till Dawn*, edited by Lewis A. Randolph and Gayle T. Tate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 466.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

From its conception in the 1970s, rap music verbalized rhythmically the pleasures and pains of living life in contemporary America. Some observers referred to it as “reality rap.”<sup>25</sup> Within the genre of rap, two forms of rap music exist: lifeline or hard-core rap and commercial or soft rap. Commercialized rap music identifies the common differences between the races, while hard-core rap lyrics contain explicit language and violent, sexual imagery.<sup>26</sup> More specifically, gangsta rap falls under the category of hard-core rap. It originated in Los Angeles, California. Although rap music began in the Bronx in New York City, what the rappers in Los Angeles experienced in their communities shaped the tonality and subject matter of this specific genre of rap, reflecting its racial and violent history.

The early 1960s in Los Angeles saw increased aggression from the African American youth due to police confrontation. As author John Sides argues, Los Angeles was viewed as a flourishing city for African American citizens, but, “Young African Americans, like their parents, were frustrated with segregation in any aspect of daily life. But few issues aroused more anger among the young people of black Los Angeles than harassment by the police.”<sup>27</sup> In August 1965, the Watts riot exploded through the streets of the Watts community in Los Angeles. The violence, which lasted six days, was a result of young African American frustrations of segregation in the city, as well as “real and perceived police harassment.”<sup>28</sup> Sides states that although Americans had become quite familiar with frequent riots in cities such as New York City, Rochester, Jersey City, Paterson and Elizabeth in New Jersey, and Philadelphia

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<sup>25</sup> George Yancy, “So-called ‘Gangsta Rap’ Should be Called Reality Rap: C. Delores Tucker’s Anti-‘Gangsta Rap’ Motives May be Suspect,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 21, 1995, Volume 112, Issue 58, Page 6A.

<sup>26</sup> Becky L. Tatum, “The Link Between Rap Music and Youth Crime and Violence: A Review of the Literature and Issues for Future Research,” *The Justice Professional* (1999) 11: 341.

<sup>27</sup> John Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 172.

<sup>28</sup> Sides 173.

in 1964, “the Watts riots shocked blacks and whites alike ... because it was the most destructive racial explosion since the Detroit riots of 1943.”<sup>29</sup>

The Watt riots had several lasting effects on the black community of Los Angeles. It vividly illustrated racial tension within the city. White members of the community began to move out of the central city into the suburbs, which halted “neighborhood preservation” efforts. Resources from the city, state, and federal governments poured into black areas of Los Angeles. However, the most important effect of the Watts riot came in the form of the War on Poverty. Until the outbreak, the War on Poverty had been absent from Los Angeles.<sup>30</sup> In August 1964, Congress had passed the Economic Opportunity Act. This act, a key component to President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, which was projected to provide funds to anti-poverty projects.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency of Greater Los Angeles (EYOA) was created. The EYOA sponsored many important projects in the South Central area, such as the youth education projects, Head Start, and the Neighborhood Adult Participation Project (NAPP), which placed people into on-the-job training positions in public and private sector clerical fields. By 1966, the NAPP was responsible for providing more than thirty thousand full and part-time jobs to those in need. Although projects such as NAPP were successful, overall, the War on Poverty failed and did not eliminate urban poverty.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, blacks in Los Angeles were facing several economic setbacks. Trouble in the steel industry soon led to substantial job losses in the city’s automobile and tire

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<sup>29</sup> Sides 169.

<sup>30</sup> Sides 170.

<sup>31</sup> Dylan Matthews, “Everything you need to know about the war on poverty,” *The Washington Post*, January 8, 2014, accessed September 21, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/01/08/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-war-on-poverty/>.

<sup>32</sup> Sides 178 – 179.

industries.<sup>33</sup> The Great Migration generation, which had poured into Los Angeles during the 1940s and 1950s, was affected the heaviest by this decline. As Sides describes, “In most auto, steel, and rubber plants, workers needed to have twenty years of service or to be sixty-two years old in order to collect pensions. Thus, blacks, most of whom had entered the industry in the early 1950s, saw their retirement hopes dashed.”<sup>34</sup> The decline had a severe impact on the children of the Great Migration generation as well. Young African Americans in Los Angeles struggled to find financial security and looked outside the legitimized work force, and into the illegal field, increasing crime rates among the youth.

The city of Compton, in southern Los Angeles, was arguably hit the hardest. According to Sides, Compton was “once the pride of Southern California’s blue collar African American middle class,” and, in comparison to other areas much like Watts, became completely devastated and was more affected than any African American area in Southern California.<sup>35</sup> The unemployment rate in Compton increased from 8.7 percent to 10 percent from 1960 to 1970. Furthermore, Sides notes, “Complicating the effects of this slowly rising unemployment was the unusually high proportion of young people in Compton: by the late 1960s, 56 percent of the male population and 52 percent of females were under the age of twenty.”<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, “the economic problems of South Central contributed significantly to crime, drug addiction, rising rates of out-of-wedlock births, and the creation of a substantial – an semi permanent – underclass of African Americans.”<sup>37</sup>

Subsequent decades in the South Central area of Los Angeles showed a steady roller coaster of conditions. Organizations hoping to attack the unemployment rates or better the living

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<sup>33</sup> Sides 181.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Sides 182.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Sides 185.

conditions of the area ultimately failed to find a long-term fix. For example, shortly before the Watts riot, an autoworker named Ted Watkins established the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) in 1965. The WLCAC campaigned for a new hospital to serve the people of Watts, Willowbrook, and Compton. The hospital opened in 1972 and was called the Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center. The Committee also established employment training and placement programs, and a New Deal inspired educational, job training, and placement program called the Community Conservative Corps, which served nearly two thousand African American youths between the ages of seven and twenty one. In addition, Odessa Cox, who migrated to Los Angeles with her husband Raymond in 1944, founded the South-Central Junior College Committee with the aims of bringing a junior college to the African American communities. Completed in 1967, the Los Angeles Southwest College developed academic and vocational programs to benefit the needs of the community. However, despite the commendable efforts of Watkins and Cox, unemployment and crime rates steadily increased. As Sides remarks, although “WLCAC continued to provide important services for South Central, the critical link between industrial employment, unions, and the black community had faded considerably by the late 1970s.”<sup>38</sup> In addition, many black community members were moving out of the area and into more profitable locations in the greater Los Angeles area.

Segregation in Los Angeles was another contributing factor to the decline of the South Central black communities during the post-War era. The segregation in these areas created a massive amount of racial tension between white and black citizens. As the white conservative population grew, African Americans became frustrated on many fronts, including efforts to desegregate schools. Sides reports, “Although Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Alfred

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<sup>38</sup> Sides 186 – 189.

Gitelson ruled in 1970 that the city's schools were clearly and illegally segregated on the basis of race, the California Supreme Court did not hand down its decision ordering the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to desegregate until 1976." Different school busing plans were considered but were ruled out as a solution by South Gate assembly representative Floyd Wakefield. However, in 1978, the LAUSD decided on a plan to redistrict students on both a voluntary and mandatory basis; the plan went into effect that September. Whites strongly opposed this policy resulting in thousands of white students being removed from the LAUSD schools. Even two decades after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, racial tension and racial isolation were too far along for a solution for racial equality in the Los Angeles area, thus, leaving African Americans in a consistent game of "prosperity and poverty, progress and decline, hope and frustration."<sup>39</sup>

The events happening in Los Angeles translated into the music of gangsta rap artists. In the 1980s, gangsta rap became popular through the sounds of artists such as Ice-T, rap group N.W.A., and Snoop Doggy Dogg. These artists utilized traditional African American cultural activities such as descriptive storytelling and funk music and incorporated digital technologies such as samplers and drum machines.<sup>40</sup> According to Dr. Tricia Rose, "Rappers speak with the voice of personal experience, taking on the identity of the observer or narrator."<sup>41</sup> Rose argues that rappers "tend to reinforce the male sexual domination of black women and confirm and sustain the construction of black women as objects and status symbols."<sup>42</sup> During the late 1980s

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<sup>39</sup> Sides 197.

<sup>40</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 236.

<sup>41</sup> Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994), 2.

<sup>42</sup> Rose, 103 – 104.

and throughout the 1990s, gangsta rap personified this argument by incorporating themes such as:

(1) Glorifying the gangsta lifestyle and mentality. Borrowing from the characterization of white male gangsters in the 1920s, gangsta rap projects the life of the rebellious outlaw in which violence is the norm, and killing is a necessary means of survival. (2) Advocating the use of violence against women and the police. (3) Promoting sexist and misogynist attitudes towards women. Women are depicted as bitches and whores who serve as the sexual objects of men or who are nags or gold diggers [and] (4) Promoting stereotypical perceptions of the sexual prowess of black men and the black male as the crazy or psychotic nigger.<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, researchers Terri M. Adams and Douglas B. Fuller of Harvard University state, “The imagery projected in misogynistic rap has its roots in the development of the capitalist patriarchal system based on the principles of White supremacy, elitism, racism, and sexism.”<sup>44</sup>

More specifically, the theme of misogyny within gangsta rap music is the promotion, glamorization, or justification of oppressive ideas of women. Adams and Fuller argue that misogynist rap can be divided into six different categories or themes. They include:

(a) Derogatory statements about women in relation to sex; (b) statements involving violent actions towards women, particularly in relation to sex; (c) references of women causing “trouble” for men; (d) characterization of women as “users” of men; (e) references of women being beneath men; and (f) references of women as usable and discardable beings.<sup>45</sup>

These themes present in rap music show how women are reduced to subhuman beings, which are not worthy of compassion, love, or respect.<sup>46</sup> These various themes marked a shift away from rap’s emphasis on awareness, empowerment, and ethnic pride among black youth brought about by the Civil Rights Movement.

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<sup>43</sup> Tatum, 342.

<sup>44</sup> Terri M. Adams and Douglas B. Fuller, “The Words Have Changed but the Ideology Remains the Same: Misogynist Lyrics in Rap Music,” *Journal of Black Studies* (2006) 36: 942.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 940.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 942.

That transformation also brought about a new wave of activism from Dr. C. DeLores Tucker. Tucker was born on October 4, 1927 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was the daughter of Minister Whitfield and feminist Captilda Nottage, and married Mr. William L. Tucker in July of 1951. Tucker and her sibilings were raised in a strict religious home and forbidden from dancing, listening to music or dating until the age of 21. Because her father was an unpaid pastor, her mother became an entrepreneur to support the family.<sup>47</sup> According to Douglas Martin of the *New York Times*, Mrs. Tucker “founded an employment agency for Southern blacks who migrated northward for jobs, ran a grocery store and became a landlord.”<sup>48</sup> Tucker followed in her mother’s footsteps and became heavily involved in Pennsylvania State politics, women’s rights, and the Civil Rights Movement beginning in the 1950s and 1960s. She became a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and raised funds for the Association. In 1961, she was awarded the NAACP Freedom Fund Award for her dedication and hard work to the betterment of the African-American community. She participated in the Selma to Montgomery marches with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in March of 1965. She also completed a few courses in social science, humanities, and public relations at Temple University in Philadelphia, and later received a Doctor of Humanities degree from Villa Maria College in Erie, Pennsylvania in 1972, and a Doctor of Law degree from Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina in 1976.<sup>49</sup>

In 1971, Governor Milton Sharpp appointed Tucker Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Tucker was the first African-American to hold the position. During her six-year

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<sup>47</sup> Pennsylvania Center for the Book, “Cynthia DeLores Tucker,” Prepared by Alzetta Clay Williamson, Penn State University Libraries, [http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Tucker\\_\\_C\\_DeLores.html](http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Tucker__C_DeLores.html) (accessed November 30, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Douglas Martin, “C. DeLores Tucker, a Voice for Minorities and Women, Is Dead at 78,” *New York Times*, November 6, 2005, Page 39.

<sup>49</sup> Tucker Papers.

tenure, Tucker served as Chairman for the Commission on Charitable Organizations, Chief Election Officer of the Commonwealth, Chief Registration Officer, Corporation Bureau, and Overseer to the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs. She implemented new regulations regarding charity distribution throughout Pennsylvania, reformed election procedures and laws, modernized the Corporation Bureau via full computerization, and instituted procedures for license security and training programs for investigators with the State Police Academy. She was also a member of the Pennsylvania Commission on Women, the Governor's Affirmative Action Council, the Board of Martin Luther King Center for Social Change, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the National Council of Negro Women, the League of Women Voters, and a Founding Trustee for the NAACP committee against Discrimination in the Media. Tucker also served as chairman of the Black Caucus of the Democratic National Committee for eleven years. She and other members of the Caucus met with President Jimmy Carter in February 1977 to discuss key minority issues.<sup>50</sup>

In 1984, Tucker collaborated on the establishment of the National Political Congress of Black Women, Inc. (NPCBW), now known as the National Congress of Black Women (NCBW). The purpose and mission of the NPCBW was, and has remained, to mentor and encourage African-American women to pursue political careers. The NPCBW encouraged women to, "Participate in the development of political parties' policies, platforms and strategies beneficial to the needs and aspirations of the African-American community."<sup>51</sup> She fervently supported and embraced the goals of the NPCBW and became the National Chair for the congress in 1992.

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<sup>50</sup> Pennsylvania Center for the Book, "Cynthia Delores Tucker," Prepared by Alzetta Clay Williamson, Penn State University Libraries, [http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Tucker\\_\\_C\\_Delores.html](http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Tucker__C_Delores.html) (accessed November 30, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Tucker Papers.

The NPCBW was an important factor that played into Tucker's political career that began in the 1970s. With the emerging popularity of gangsta rap music, Tucker and the NPCBW believed that the future political prosperity of African-American women had become threatened. As a result, the Entertainment Commission was created in September 1992. It was co-chaired by entertainers Melba Moore, Dionne Warwick, and Terri Rossi and directed by Von Alexander. The commission was tasked with three important goals:

(1) To seek to eliminate internal blockage in the industry that currently and most obviously prevents African-Americans from achieving equal opportunities as artists and decision-makers; (2) To mobilize African-Americans in the industry to join the struggle to resolve critical issues affection African-American communities, particularly in the areas of education and health, where so many serve as role models and spokespersons; AND (3) To offer strategic suggestions and solutions for reshaping and maintaining positive images to preserve our dignity and heritage for our youth ... INSTEAD of continuously exposing our youth to negative media that distort their images of male/female relationships, undermine the stability of out families, communities and nation by encouraging violence, abuse and sexism as acceptable behaviors, and perpetuates the cycle of low self-esteem of African-American youth.<sup>52</sup>

Tucker alleged, "The music industry will continue to produce this dangerous music and videos until they receive a clear signal from the Afro-American community that we will not tolerate this."<sup>53</sup> With the support of several national organizations such as the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters, and Concerned Black Men of America, Inc., Tucker challenged the African-American communities and the remainder of the nation in 1993 to take responsibility and support the fight to end gangsta rap.

Tucker and the NPCBW began their crusade against gangsta rap music in 1992. She believed, "that this music [also] teaches children to call women 'ho's and bitches' and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 7 – 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 8.

encourages them to disrespect African American women,” encouraging and promoting misogynist ideals.<sup>54</sup> Tucker stated:

What African American children are being exposed to through certain music ... only offers images of human relationships and too often only teach African American men how to mistreat African American women – and for our women to accept this – is nothing short of mental and spiritual contamination ... How can we expect African American children to thrive, survive, and be prepared for the next century if we sit by and allow these ‘artists’ to make them cultural illiterates and degenerates?<sup>55</sup>

She attempted to persuade rappers to “clean up” their lyrics, but ultimately Tucker focused primarily on the record company executives.<sup>56</sup> Tucker said, “My crusade ... is against the executive and publicists who administer ‘gangster rap,’ produce and circulate it all over the world, using vile, demeaning lyrics, encouraging and abetting some of their more aggressive artists in personally defaming their critics.”<sup>57</sup> She believed that the record industry was entirely out of control and needed to be dealt with.<sup>58</sup> If gangsta rap lyrics continued to be produced, the image and credibility of African American women would become tarnished.

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<sup>54</sup> \_\_\_ “C. Delores Tucker Arrested for Picketing Tower Records,” *Call & Post*, March 14, 1995, Volume 81, Issue 11, Page 1A.

<sup>55</sup> Allison Jones, “Black Woman Wage War on Rap,” *The Michigan Citizen*, October 16, 1993, Volume 15, Issue 47, Page A1.

<sup>56</sup> Nelson George, “Too Live,” in *Hip Hop America* (New York: Viking, 1998), 189.

<sup>57</sup> “Dr. C. Delores Tucker File Multi-Million Suit Against Record Producers or Gangsta Rap ‘Filth’,” *Hyde Park Citizen*, August 21, 1997, Volume 8, Issue 38, Page 2.

<sup>58</sup> Kierna Mayo, “Caught Up in the (Gansta) Rapture: Dr. C. Delores Tucker’s Crusade Against ‘Gansta Rap’,” Originally Published in *The Source*, June 1994. In *And It Don’t Stop: The Best American Hip-Hop Journalism of the Last 25 Years*, ed. Raquel Cepeda (New York: Faber and Faber, 2004), 125; Jeff Silberman, “Music News: Attacks on Rap Spawn Album-Rating Debate on Capital Hill,” *Daily Variety*, February 14, 1994.

**Chapter One**  
**“It ain’t personal, strictly business baby”:**  
**Dr. C. DeLores Tucker’s Crusade Methodology**

Dr. C. DeLores Tucker led the crusade against gangsta rap in the 1990s. Her mission was to remove the music genre entirely, which sets her apart from her predecessors. The extremely high profits generated by these albums meant that record companies were not going to eliminate this genre. However, despite knowing she was fighting an indestructible form of popular culture, Tucker did not quit and continued to protest gangsta rap music through a variety of means. The following chapter discusses Tucker’s various attempts to shut down gangsta rap throughout the 1990s and illustrates variety in her methodology by thematically organizing her actions during the crusade.

**Direct Action**

Public protests and national demonstrations played a pivotal role throughout Tucker’s crusade. She picketed outside of record stores selling gangsta rap music, protested at the headquarters of Time Warner, producer of gangsta rap music, and spoke publically about the crusade whenever she could. Tucker was determined to publically make the crusade’s presence

known in any way possible. These methods were effective in grabbing attention and spreading word about the efforts to abolish gangsta rap music.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Tucker and the NPCBW began picketing record stores in hopes of stopping customers from purchasing gangsta rap albums from artists such as Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and Tupac Shakur. Tucker would stand directly outside a store front door with signs speaking to customers as they entered. This strategy was important because there was nowhere for customers to hide from the crusade. During these public protests Tucker would preach the purposes of the anti-gangsta rap crusade. At a protest outside of a Sam Goody record store in Washington, D.C. on January 4, 1994, she proclaimed, “[You] have gathered here ... to reaffirm our decision to engage in nonviolent, direct action in order to make our concerns heard about gansta rap and misogynist lyrics that degrade and denigrate women ... we now want record [stores] such as Sam Goody to refuse to sell such cultural garbage.”<sup>59</sup> She added, “Continued dehumanization and negative depiction of women [in gansta rap] subjects our young people to offensive images that destroy their spirits.”<sup>60</sup> She and others offered a variation of this proclamation at every protest throughout the crusade.

The following year Tucker began a second series of national demonstrations in front of various Tower Records locations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The music retail chain was targeted for its promotion of Tha Dogg Pound’s album, *Dogg Food*, as an excellent Christmas gift. Tucker argued that the album celebrated drugs, sex, and violence as appropriate behavior for children.<sup>61</sup> In 1995, the NPCBW had continually asked Tower Records to refrain from

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<sup>59</sup> “Sam Goody is one of the main logos of the 1,100-unit Musicland Group, the nation’s largest music retailer.” Bill Holland, “Gansta Rap Protesters Stage 2<sup>nd</sup> Demonstration at D.C. Sam Goody,” *Billboard*, January 15, 1994, Page 5; Bill Holland, “Gansta Rap Protesters Stage 2<sup>nd</sup> Demonstration at D.C. Sam Goody,” *Billboard*, January 15, 1994, Page 5.

<sup>60</sup> Holland January 1994.

<sup>61</sup> Tucker Papers.

selling and promoting gansta rap music to minors. The record company dismissed her protest efforts and left gangsta rap album promotions in their catalogues. On March 2, 150 protestors gathered outside of Tower Records and picketed and marched against the company. Tucker was arrested alongside members of the Philadelphia Coalition Against Gansta Rap and Violence, the Philadelphia NPCBW board members, and several others. Even with the arrest, the NPCBW vowed to continue picketing until “Tower Records [stopped] selling misogynist, pornographic gansta/rap” music.<sup>62</sup>

On January 15, 1996 Tucker handed out flyers with the lyrics of Tha Dogg Pound’s music. She argued, “We are here today to continue our selective buying campaign against retailers who insist on promoting and selling this defamatory, obscene and pornographic material. We say ‘enough is enough.’”<sup>63</sup> Tower Records had a policy in effect that gansta rap would not be sold to children under the age of 16. However, a month later, Bill Duffy, the manager of the South Street Tower Records store, allowed a 13 year-old to buy a copy of *Dogg Food*. Duffy stated that he had no knowledge of the minor who bought the album, arguing that the store was open 24 hours a day, and it was impossible to “keep track of every sale.”<sup>64</sup> Tucker considered this to be an excuse and vowed to keep protesting until all of the Tower Records store locations stopped selling gangsta rap music entirely.<sup>65</sup>

Tucker’s determination resulted in yet another arrest in March 1996 while protesting outside of Philadelphia’s downtown Tower Records location. Members of the Philadelphia Coalition Against Gangsta Rap and Violence, Onah Weldon of the Philadelphia NPCBW, and

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<sup>62</sup> “C. Delores Tucker Arrested for Picketing Tower Records,” *Call & Post* 81, no. 11 (March 14, 1995): 1A.

<sup>63</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>64</sup> Irv Lichtman, “Philadelphia Tower Target of Protest: Boycott by C. Delores Tucker’s Group,” *Billboard*, February 17, 1996.

<sup>65</sup> Staci Bush, “Tower Records is Target of Pickets: Philadelphia Store is Scene of Arrests Following Demonstration Against Gangsta Rap Record Sales,” *The Sacramento Observer*, March 20, 1996, Volume 33, Issue 17, Page G1.

Reverend James J. Ebberheart of Mount Olive Tabernacle Baptist Church were also arrested for assisting Tucker in blocking the door. They were released after agreeing to appear for hearings regarding the protests.<sup>66</sup> Between the February and March protests, Tucker reported, “[The] NPCBW believes that this music is offensive to African Americans and portray Blacks as thugs, criminals and disrespects women.”<sup>67</sup> Regardless of her efforts, Tower Records stated that they would not stop selling popular rap albums, including *Dogg Food*.<sup>68</sup>

Tucker also took her case directly to music industry executives. On December 18, 1997, Tucker and several women’s rights activists held a press conference outside of the Time Warner corporate headquarters in Rockefeller Center in New York City. Popular feminists such as Anita Perez Ferguson, President of the National Women’s Political Caucus, Betty Friedan, Founder of the National Organization for Women, entertainment artist Melba Moore, Eleanor Smeal, President of the Feminist Majority Foundation, Gloria Steinem, Founder of *Ms.* magazine, Susan Brownmiller, author of *Against Our Will*, Andrea Johnston, Co-Founder of Girls Speak Out, and Anne Connors, President of the New York City Chapter of the National Organization for Women joined with Tucker in protest of Time Warner’s refusal to meet and discuss the lyrics of Prodigy’s song, “Smack My Bitch Up” and its link to Time Warner’s corporate policy for producing music. In a letter to Mr. Gerald Levin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Time Warner, the women stated, “What links the song to corporate policy is the link to gangsta rap. While Time-Warner has sought to disassociate from gangsta rap, what remains consistent is the attack against women and the promotion of drugs and violence.” The women accused Time Warner of having a double standard that maintained and legitimized violence against women and

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<sup>66</sup> Bush 1996.

<sup>67</sup> Don Thomas, “C. Delores Tucker Arrested Picketing Tower Records,” *New York Beacon*, March 20, 1996, Volume 3, Issue 10, Page 28.

<sup>68</sup> Bush 1996.

defamation. These female leaders challenged Time Warner to set the standards for the entertainment industry stating, “We call upon you as CEO and Time Warner to take leadership and disavow a role as a merchant of violence and sexism.”<sup>69</sup>

The protest resulted due to Levin’s refusal to meet with the group on two separate occasions to discuss their concerns. The third attempt was a formal letter hand delivered to the reception desk of the Time-Warner building. According to the December 22, 1997 press release by NPCBW, “Mr. Levin refused to meet with the group, saying that the appropriate focus was the Warner Bros. subsidiary. The women’s coalition approached Time-Warner because the key issue is corporate responsibility and practices, not the song.”<sup>70</sup> The December 18 demonstration consisted of a carol written by the coalition sung to the tune of “Santa Claus is Coming to Town.” The ultimate goal was to persuade the Christmas shoppers in the area to stop buying Time Warner products.<sup>71</sup> The lyrics stated:

We’re making a list, checking it twice  
Beating up women is a big vice  
Time and Warner better beware!

There’s violence while we’re sleeping  
They strike while we’re awake  
They hit if we’ve been bad or good  
So be good for women’s sake

We’re making a list, checking it twice  
Beating up women is a big vice  
Time and Warner better beware!

You have a right to publish, as Klan and Nazis do  
But you would never publish  
What endangers men like you

We’re making a list, checking it twice  
Refusing to buy what teaches this vice

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<sup>69</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>70</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>71</sup> “Calling on Time-Warner,” *New York Beacon*, January 14, 1998, Volume 4, Issue 52, Page 13.

Time and Warner better beware!<sup>72</sup>

The president of Time Warner, Richard D. Parsons, wrote Tucker on December 24, in response to the protest and the third and final letter left at the building. Parsons spoke on the behalf of Levin and defended the company. “The Music Group has assured me that it was never the intent of the lyric to which you object to advocate violence against women, nor do they believe that it does,” said Parsons. “They regret the possibility that it could be misinterpreted in that way, and so do I,” he continued.<sup>73</sup>

Tucker also used other forms of pressure throughout the crusade. She tried to get gangsta rappers out of the public spotlight as much as possible. When she learned that Snoop Doggy Dogg was to appear on the March 19 episode of *Saturday Night Live*, Tucker wrote Lorne Michael, the show’s producer, and demanded he cancel the episode. She argued that the members of the NPCBW were outraged that the show would have invited him to perform considering the rappers criminal record. Tucker quoted Mike Green, President of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, who stated, “We have the responsibility to be a source of pride and positive influence in the lives of our children... the obligation to honor the image of women in this country. Music must serve as a means ... that allows us to live together with civility and joy.”<sup>74</sup> In addition, she urged a boycott of the NAACP Image Awards seeking the withdrawal of rapper Tupac Shakur’s nomination because he was facing criminal charges.<sup>75</sup> Shakur, a popular gangsta rap artist, had been charged with sexually assaulting a 20-year-old

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid; “Saturday Night Live: Helen Hunt/Snoop Doggy Dogg, Season 19, Episode 16,” IMDB, accessed September 9, 2014, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0694632/>.

<sup>75</sup> James T. Jones, IV. “Gansta Rap Foes Raise Their Voices,” *USA Today*, January 5, 1994, Life section, Page 1D.

female in New York and shooting two police officers in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>76</sup> Despite her efforts, both of Tucker's appeals failed.

In addition, Tucker found ways to spread the word of the crusade on the radio and television. In 1995, Republican William J. Bennett, the former Secretary of Education and co-founder of the organization Empower America, officially joined forces with Tucker. He and Tucker co-starred in a 60-second television commercial attacking Time Warner.<sup>77</sup> It was set to premier by the end of that month in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, California during CNN broadcasts, as well as the Fox station in New York City.<sup>78</sup> The commercial stated:

Bennett: Now Time Warner has made many positive contributions to American entertainment.

Tucker: But Time Warner's music division promotes music that celebrates the rape, torture and murder of women.

Bennett: Isn't anybody at Time Warner embarrassed by these lyrics? Will the executives there stand up and say these things in public? We're not talking about censorship; we're talking about citizenship.

Tucker: It's time parents make their concerns known. If Time Warner doesn't see the light, parents, you ought to make them feel the heat.

Bennett: For more information, call today and find out what you can do.<sup>79</sup>

Time Warner responded immediately. Gerald Levin argued, "Time Warner is an upstanding corporate citizen, which produces a broad range of products everything from Bugs Bunny to Martha Stewart."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Tanya Barrientos and David O'Reilly, "Black Activist Crusades Against 'Gangsta' Rap – C. Delores Tucker 'Ready to Die' for Cause," *The Seattle Times*, February 6, 1994.

<sup>77</sup> "Empower America," Right Web: Tracking militarists' efforts to influence U.S. foreign policy, last modified August 27, 2012, accessed September 10, 2014, [http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/Empower\\_America](http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/Empower_America).

<sup>78</sup> Eben Sharpiro, "Ads Denounce Time Warner for Rap Music," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 1995, Page B1.

<sup>79</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>80</sup> Karen Hunter, "Time Warner Taking Rap for its 'Gangsta' Music," *Daily News* (New York), Business section, Page 45; Patricia J. Williams, "Strange Bedfellows in the Crusade Against Rap," *Ms.*, November 1995, 18.

However, that did not convince Tucker and her followers to end the attacks. In 1996, Tucker and Bennett, in conjunction with Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Ct.) and Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), turned their attention to launching a radio and ad campaign against five of the six leading record companies. Their targets consisted of BMG, PolyGram, Thorn-EMI, Sony Music, and Time Warner. This campaign was slightly different than the others because it entailed letter-writing and radio ads to try and persuade others to join the effort. \$25,000 had been allotted for radio ads that would “ask listeners to write to the companies and demand that they not ‘sponsor this kind of garbage.’” The radio ad declared, “The time has come to tell these corporations, both American and foreign-owned, that we’re not going to stand for the damage they’re doing ... that’s why we are calling on Time Warner, BMG, PolyGram, Thorn-EMI, and Sony to stop spreading the vicious, vulgar music.”<sup>81</sup> The ads did not end the distribution of gangsta rap music. However, they helped what the crusade was after: spreading the word about the anti-gangsta rap crusade and attracted followers.

In 1995, Tucker purchased Time Warner stock in order to speak to company executives directly. In April, Time Warner invested \$20 million dollars for an additional 25 percent stake in Interscope Records, Inc., bringing their total stake to 50 percent and a total investment of \$100 million dollars. The intention was to make the Los Angeles company the fourth largest record label within Time Warner, increasing the popularity of gangsta rap artists such as Snoop Doggy Dogg and Tupac Shakur and record companies including Death Row Records.<sup>82</sup> “I asked [Gerald] Levin several times why Time Warner increased its holdings in Interscope and I got no answer,” said Tucker. “If rap is such a small part of their output, I asked him why they need it,

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<sup>81</sup> Bill Holland, “Anti-Rap Campaign to be Directed at 5 Major Record Labels,” *Billboard*, June 8, 1996.

<sup>82</sup> Jeffery A. Trachtenberg, “Time Warner Boosts Stake in Rap Music,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 1995.

and they couldn't answer me.”<sup>83</sup> Tucker's purchase of stock allowed her to access the company's annual stockholders meeting in New York City on May 18, 1995.<sup>84</sup> Tucker spoke during the meeting and defended her crusade and against Time Warner's relationship with gangsta rap. She referred to the 1992 release of “Cop Killer” as the beginning of the issue surrounding the company and its relationship to gangsta rap. Using specific facts and information reported from publications such as *Billboard*, Tucker questioned Time Warner:

How long will Time Warner continue to put profit before principle? How long will it continue to turn its back on the thousands of young people who are dying spiritually and physically due to the violence perpetuated in these recordings? How long will Time Warner continue to condone misogyny for the love of money? How long will Time Warner continue to be the ‘silent conspirators’ in the social genocide of an entire generation?<sup>85</sup>

She wanted Time Warner to take corporate responsibility for their actions and their alleged effect on the nation's youth.

In June, Levin started to respond to the pressures of the anti-gangsta rap crusade. He first mandated a new set of warning label guidelines. He and the Warner Music Group asked the RIAA for their input to help assess the present warning label and to also accelerate the involvement of other record companies. During an additional meeting on May 18, Levin ordered Warner Music Group chairmen Michael Fuchs and Doug Morris to reach out to the remainder of the recording community regarding the new label.

Although Tucker and her allies welcomed this effort, they wanted more. A year earlier Warner had released 1,250 albums, 28 of which were rap albums and only 15 were stickered with the “Parental Advisory” label, which left Tucker with grave reservations regarding the company's commitment. She stated that the call for new guidelines was an excellent start, but

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<sup>83</sup> Melinda Newman, “Warner Music Seeks Input on Lyric-Labeling Standings,” *Billboard*, June 3, 1995.

<sup>84</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>85</sup> Tucker Papers.

did not fulfill her group's ultimate goal of removing gangsta rap entirely from the musical stage. Tucker and her followers did not advocate for censorship. They wanted gangsta rap destroyed.<sup>86</sup>

Direct action was a frequently used method during the most active years of the anti-gangsta rap crusade. Tucker used public protests, speeches, and radio and television ads to infiltrate the music industry and convince the record labels to stop producing gangsta rap music. Although her efforts failed, Tucker remained hopeful and determined and continued her quest despite a few setbacks such as several arrests.

### **Political Action**

While Tucker was out in the streets protesting and speaking about the anti-gangsta rap crusade, she was also trying to make a difference via political outlets. She sought support from a variety of political figures, and participated in several congressional hearings about the crusade. Using the world of politics as a platform, Tucker experienced some progress but also suffered setbacks.

Tucker and the NPCBW sought support from the African American community. Tucker and her team targeted many, but heavily focused on African Americans in positions of political power. In a letter to Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, (D-II), in October 1993, Tucker stated, "I and the entire membership of the [NPCBW] are outraged at how our children are being bombarded with so many negative messages that undermine positive family values, our authority as parents, and the moral integrity of our nation. NPCBW is doing something about this!"<sup>87</sup> This same letter requested Senator Moseley-Braun join forces with Congresswoman Cardiss Collins (D-II), who had previously expressed interest in holding hearings about the concerns of the

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<sup>86</sup> Newman 1995; Rachel Jones, "In Waging War on Gansta Rap, She Accepts Unlikely Warriors: C. Delores Tucker Teams up with William Bennett," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 1995, Features Magazine: People; Page G01.

<sup>87</sup> Tucker Papers.

NPCBW. To defend her point, Tucker referenced Tipper Gore and her views on lyrics similar to those in gangsta rap. “When Mrs. Tipper Gore became incensed about the negative impact of ‘nasty lyrics’ upon the values she had taught her children and launched her infamous campaign, everyone concerned about the morality of our young welcomed her crusade,” said Tucker.<sup>88</sup>

Responding in part to Tucker’s persistent efforts, Collins organized congressional hearings to discuss controversial musical recordings.<sup>89</sup> The first of the three hearings, conducted by the Subcommittee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Competitiveness, was scheduled to inspect the “production, sale, and distribution in interstate commerce of music that is alleged to contain lyrics that are violent, misogynist, and homophobic.”<sup>90</sup> Many witnesses testified during the hearings, including music artists, record company presidents, and a wide range of others affiliated with the African American community. While many witnesses argued that rap music encouraged disrespect for women and glorified crime, the music’s defenders claimed that gangsta rap was an important register of “the social disintegration that inner-city youth see all around them.”<sup>91</sup>

Tucker was the first to testify during the hearings. She turned to the moral authority of Martin Luther King Jr., alleging “that if he were alive today, [he] would be marching and demonstrating against the glamorization of violence and its corrupting influence, which has now become a part of our culture in the name of freedom.”<sup>92</sup> She also claimed, “Dr. King would be deeply saddened by those in our community who abuse and misuse the freedom of speech by

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Bill Holland, “Pa. Labeling Bill Poses Challenge for RIAA: Exec Unsure of Legislation’s Fate Following Hearing,” *Billboard*, September 24, 1994, Page 6.

<sup>90</sup> Bill Holland, “House Panel to Examine Rap,” *Billboard*, February 19, 1994, Page 1.

<sup>91</sup> George Lipsitz, “The Hip Hop Hearings: Censorship, Social Memory, and Intergenerational Tensions among African Americans,” in *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 395.

<sup>92</sup> Lipsitz, 396.

dehumanizing, demeaning and degrading our own women.”<sup>93</sup> Tucker argued that for centuries African Americans had maintained a sense of humanity and morality, but that “today, however, our morality, which has been the last vestige of our strength, is being threatened by lyrics out of the mouths of our own children.”<sup>94</sup> Tucker also stated that gangsta rap music provoked youth to violence, drug use, and mistreatment of women, claiming it was the reason why so many African American males were in jail as opposed to college.<sup>95</sup> To support her argument, Tucker quoted excerpts from a letter she received from a prisoner in Lorton, Virginia. He wrote:

Rappers ... made it sound so good and look so real (that) I would drink and smoke drugs just like on the video ... thinking that was the only way I could be somebody ... My hood girls – became hoes and bitches. What’s so bad is that they accepted it. You know why? Because they put themselves in the video, too, and the guns, money, cars, drugs, and men became reality. Look where this kind of thinking has gotten me ... facing 25 years to life in jail.<sup>96</sup>

On February 23, 1994, the Senate held a hearing on music lyrics entitled, “Shaping Our Responses to Violent and Demeaning Imagery in Popular Music.” The purpose of the hearing was to examine the effects of violent and misogynist lyrics on young people and the economic and social conditions that support the popularity of gangsta rap music. The event consisted of two panels that included record industry executives, musical artists, and medical and community activists, among others.<sup>97</sup> Senator Moseley-Braun imagined that the establishment of an open line of communication, “[would] educate, as well as inspire unity of direction ... concerning how we as Americans can curb the promotion of violence and misogyny in our society.”<sup>98</sup> There were 17 witnesses who testified at the hearing including Hilary Rose, Executive Vice Present of the RIAA, David W. Harleston, president of Rush Associated Labels and Def Jam, Steve

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<sup>93</sup> Silberman 1994.

<sup>94</sup> Silberman, 396.

<sup>95</sup> Silberman, 396.

<sup>96</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

McKeever, executive Vice President of talent and creative affairs of Motown Records, and entertainer Dionne Warwick. No rappers were present.<sup>99</sup> Senator Moseley-Braun contended that the record industry should play a greater role in attempting to keep rap lyrics out of the ears of children. She argued, “I truly believe that if we do not work together, to develop viable, constitutional solutions to this crisis, an entire generation of young people is at risk.”<sup>100</sup> Moseley-Braun suggested a rating system that mirrored that of the Motion Picture Associations of America’s (MPAA). Rosen opposed such an idea. She stated, “Children would get hold of controversial lyrics even if there were a rating system ... Music is different from movies. Kids who want to hear certain songs find out how to hear them.”<sup>101</sup> Warwick testified against gangsta rap, arguing that it isn’t an art form that should be protected. “Artists should have the freedom to create music and images, but that creativity should not be allowed to demean an entire group of people or foster hatred or homicide,” she declared. Warrick added:

This music, ‘Gangsta Rap,’ reinforces the worst possible of lifestyles that tells young people that even the one that gave birth to them is not worthy of being loved – that they are ‘bitches and hoes.’ How is that art?? ... So, I ask you to look closely at this phenomena in music, this new music age – Gangsta Rap – and then you decide if this is really ART that must be protected, or an outrage found in depravity and greed.<sup>102</sup>

The hearing displayed a variety of opinions, but a concrete solution proved difficult.

*Billboard* reported on March 5 that although the attendees of the hearing agreed that while the lyrics of gangsta rap were troubling, “It would be wrong and irresponsible to attempt to mute the messages of rage roaring from the violent, drug-torn neighborhoods of America’s economically

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<sup>99</sup> Bill Holland, “Senate Hearing Examines Gansta Lyrics: Possibility Raised of Movie-Style Rating System,” *Billboard*, March 5, 1994, Artists and Music section, Page 10.

<sup>100</sup> Moseley-Braun letter to Tucker, 1994.

<sup>101</sup> Moseley-Braun letter to Tucker, 1994.

<sup>102</sup> Tucker Papers.

disadvantaged without a serious commitment by government, community grasps, and individuals to attack the root causes of what one witness called ‘societal disintegration.’”<sup>103</sup>

In November 1997, Tucker testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Restructuring and the District of Columbia’s hearing on “The Social Impact of Music Violence.”<sup>104</sup> Tucker suggested that gangsta rap as a whole did in fact help facilitate the rise of violence in society and the corruption of American youth. She argued, “Those malicious lyrics grossly malign Black women, degrade the unthinking young Black artists who create it, pander pornography to our innocent young children, hold Black people (especially young black males) universally up to ridicule and contempt, and corrupt its vast audience of listeners, white and black, throughout the world.”<sup>105</sup> Tucker took the discussion further and stated, “Gangsta music is drugs-driven, race-driven, greed-driven and violence-driven,” and the wealthy members of the music industry have looked to “prey” on the young black artists living in these poor areas because they are easy targets. “The desperate need for money and the life status it brings, reigns,” she argued.<sup>106</sup> Tucker, however, reiterated that the crusade was not attempting to reshape the way in which the music industry conducted business, but rather, helping the industry in prioritizing principle over profit.<sup>107</sup>

In early December, *The Washington Times* reported about the hearing and the subject of album censoring. Tucker previously discussed this issue at a Seagram Stockholder’s meeting in October, and again at the hearing in November.<sup>108</sup> According to the *Times*, Tucker referenced Chad Anthony Sisk, a 15-year-old Philadelphia high school sophomore, who purchased several

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<sup>103</sup> Holland, “Senate Hearing Examines Gangsta Lyrics” Possibility Raised of Movie-Style Rating System.”

<sup>104</sup> C-SPAN, “The Social Impact of Music Violence,” C-SPAN Web Site, 2:33:14. <http://www.c-span.org/video/?94999-1/social-impact-music-violence> (accessed October 17, 2014).

<sup>105</sup> “Tucker Testifies Before Senate Hearing on Music Violence,” *New York Voice*, November 26, 1997, Volume 39, Issue 34, Page 1.

<sup>106</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid; “Tucker Testifies Before Senate Hearing on Music Violence,” 1997.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

X-rated materials that were supposed to be restricted to him due to his age. These materials clearly had the black and white parental advisory label presented on the front of the album. In response to having these in his possession, Sisk stated, “At first, I didn’t pay attention to the parental guidance signs on them because I could still buy them ... only once at Tower Records did they say, ‘Are you over 18? Do you know you can’t buy this without your parents here?’” He also indicated that even if a problem presented itself when buying restricted music albums in the store, there were ways to work around the system. Sisk described a mail-order records club that would ask for one’s age, would approve regardless of any age restrictions, and would only warn customers of the cursing and inappropriate language.<sup>109</sup> This made obtaining restricted music extremely easy for young children and teens.

The congressional hearings Tucker attended gained additional political support from Senator Lieberman in 1995. The addition of Lieberman to Republican Bennett placed a bipartisan imprint on the campaign. “I’m sure Bill asked me to join because I’m a Democrat, but I want to speak on behalf of parents who are angry and anxious about these forms of entertainment,” stated Lieberman.<sup>110</sup> Regarding Time Warner’s attempt at redefining a labeling strategy, Lieberman was indeed in favor. However, he believed that some of Time Warner’s rap music required more drastic action than music on other labels. “I think the company should conclude that some of this stuff is just bad for society and they should stop it,” he said.<sup>111</sup>

August 1995 was a busy month for the anti-gangsta rap movement. After several months of pressure from Tucker and her allies, Time Warner announced it was in the negotiating stages

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<sup>109</sup> Julia Durin, “Warning Labels Don’t Keep Teens from ‘Adult’ Music: Few Record Stores Police Purchases of Obscene Material,” *The Washington Times*, December 3, 1997, Part A, Culture section, Page A2.

<sup>110</sup> Bennett had a meeting with Lieberman in June 1995 to persuade him to join the effort of riding the music world of gansta rap.

<sup>111</sup> Mark Landler, “The Media Business: Democratic Senator to Join Drive on Gansta Rap,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 1995, Section D, Page 4, Column 1.

of selling its 50 percent stake in Interscope Records. “I’m delighted,” stated Tucker. “I have pretty good reports that Time Warner is getting ready to divorce itself from this gansta rap entirely.”<sup>112</sup> She stated:

This pending decision with Time Warner is historic because it is a victory for all women, especially African American women, who have relentlessly been in the way of the storm protesting against the verbal raping and abuse, and consequential physical disrespect and violence toward our women.<sup>113</sup>

Tucker and Bennett responded optimistically regarding a potential game changer in the fight against gangsta rap. However, Time Warner suggested that their impression of the situation might have been too rash. She hadn’t won the war quite yet.

Following the announcement from Time Warner, Interscope Records Inc. filed a lawsuit against Tucker on August 15. This was the first of many lawsuits against Tucker. Interscope Records accused her of “interfering with contractual relationships and attempting to induce Knight to breach his exclusive contract with Interscope” by committing extortion, threatening, and various other unlawful acts.<sup>114</sup> It was reported that she and her supporters planned a meeting with Marion Knight and Michael Fuchs of Time Warner in early August with the hope of convincing them to cut ties with Death Row Records.<sup>115</sup> The lawsuit stated that she supposedly told Knight that if he divorced with Interscope and cleaned up his albums, she would negotiate a distribution deal with Time Warner. Additionally she evidently promised Knight that Gerald Levin would grant him \$80 million dollars to separate from Interscope, but only if she controlled

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<sup>112</sup> Alexandra Marks, “Turning Up the Volume on ‘Gansta Rap’ Debate,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 18, 1995, Media section, Page 1.

<sup>113</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>114</sup> “Mr. Knight is the chairman for Death Row Records, which produces popular and controversial albums by gansta rap artists like Snoop Doggy Dog and Dr. Dre. Death Row’s albums are distributed by Interscope, which is based in Los Angeles.” (Mark Lander, “The Media Business: Label Ties to Time Warner Sues a Critic of Rap Lyrics,” *The New York Times*, Section D, Page 5, Column 5. Landler, August 1995); Jeffery A. Trachtenberg, “Interscope Records Sues Activist Critic, Alleging Distribution-Pact Interference,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 16, 1995.

<sup>115</sup> George, 190.

the lyrics produced.<sup>116</sup> Tucker stated in an interview, “I wasn’t in this for personal profit... I want Death Row Records to end their pornographic messages aimed at children ... My record speaks for itself – and their records speak for themselves.”<sup>117</sup> Despite the lawsuit, Tucker continued her quest of fighting against what she argued was the label’s supposed “love affair with pornography and misogyny and profanity.”<sup>118</sup>

On August 18, 1995 Death Row Records also filed suit against Tucker.<sup>119</sup> She believed that the lawsuit came out of frustration due to the delayed release of Death Row’s album *Dogg Food* by Tha Dog Pound.<sup>120</sup> “It was reported that this label was due to be released August 15,” said Tucker. “Since our protest has had the effect of putting the album on hold, I believe this is what has produced this frantic flurry of fictional lawsuits.”<sup>121</sup> Death Row spokesman George Pryce replied, “Fine-tuning, not embarrassment, was the cause of the delay,” and that the album would be released later in August instead of the projected release date sometime in July.<sup>122</sup>

Tucker and Bennett soon called a press conference to criticize the lawsuits as “spurious.” Tucker stated, “Whatever they accuse me of doing, it would be worth it to protect children ... [Time Warner and Death Row Records] should be shamed out of business.” On September 27, Time Warner declared it was separating itself from gangsta rap music by dissolving its

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<sup>116</sup> Landler, August 1995; Edna Gundersen, “Rap Label Sues Outspoken Critic,” *USA Today*, August 16, 1995, Life section, Page 1D; \_\_ “‘Gansta Rap’ Crusader Claims She is Being Used: Black Record Executives Not the Enemy, says C. Delores Tucker,” *Sun Reporter*, April 25, 1996, Volume 52, Issue 17, Page 5.

<sup>117</sup> Trachtenberg August 16, 1995.

<sup>118</sup> Edna Gundersen, “Rap Critic Tucker Counters ‘Lies’ of Suit,” *USA Today*, August 17, 1995, Life section, Page 2D.

<sup>119</sup> Edna Gundersen, “Rap Critic Sued Again, by Death Row Records,” *USA Today*, August 21, 1995, Life section, Page 3D.

<sup>120</sup> Andy Seiler, “Rap Critics Rebuff Record Label Lawsuits,” *USA Today*, August 24, 1995, Life section, Page 1D.

<sup>121</sup> Ed Laiscell, “Tucker Continues Battle Despite Lawsuit,” *The Washington Informer*, August 30, 1995, Volume 31, Issue 45, Page 1.

<sup>122</sup> Seiler 1995; This is not the case. ‘Dogg Food’ was set for an even later release date – the Fall of 1995. It was pushed back from mid-October, to the end of October, to roughly the beginning of November (information found from: Edna Gundersen, “Reviled Rap ‘Dogg Food’ Out Soon,” *USA Today*, October 2, 1995, Life section, Page 1D; Edna Gundersen, “‘Dogg Food’ is Served: Rap Album’s Pre-Release Bark Worse than its Bite,” *USA Today*, October 30, 1995, Life section, Page 1D.

partnership with Interscope Records. Warner Music, moreover, would sell back its 50 percent investment in Interscope Records and, according to Michael Fuchs, recover the \$100 million dollars it paid originally for the investment in the company. Time Warner stated that it would not be producing the *Dogg Food* album, which Tucker called, “the filthiest rap album yet.” Tucker enthusiastically stated, “I hope the others follow suit,” and “whoever Interscope goes to next will be our second target.”<sup>123</sup> Tucker spent the remainder of 1995 defending the crusade and the lawsuits filed against her and her efforts of reform.

The lawsuits didn’t stop there. Tucker also filed several multi-million dollar lawsuits against major names in the music industry. Her goal was to direct the lawsuits straight to the heart of the gangsta rap world. The lawsuits named Tower Records of Philadelphia, Interscope and Death Row Records of Philadelphia and Los Angeles, California, Ted Field and James Lovine, officials of Interscope, Time Warner, Seagram Co., and MCA, Inc., “a defamation of character litigation alleging intentional infliction of emotional distress, slander, and invasion of privacy.” Tucker stated, “It was the gangstas in the suites, not the gangstas in the streets” she was primarily pressuring for change because they could effect real change.<sup>124</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The anti-gangsta rap crusade coasted for the remainder of the 1990s. Tucker and her followers continued to place pressure on the music industry and speak out against the effects of gangsta rap lyrics on children and the African American community. She was invited to speak on behalf of the NPCBW and the crusade at various events including the “Hollywood Connection: Substance Abuse in Movies, Music and Television” in Simi Valley, California on

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<sup>123</sup> Edna Gundersen and David Lieberman, “Time Warner Unplugging Gansta Rap,” *USA Today*, September 28, 1995, Money section, Page 1B.

<sup>124</sup> “Dr. C. Delores Tucker Files Multi-Million Suit Against Record Producers of Gansta Rap ‘Filth’” 1997.

March 2, 2000 and the Nashville Urban League Annual Dinner Keynote Address entitled, “Our Children are Our Destiny,” on June 6, 2000. Presenting gave her the position to continue awareness of her crusade and keep the spotlight on the harsh realities of the negativity projected within gangsta rap lyrics and music videos.

Tucker took any chance to publically protest and seek political support in regards to gangsta rap. She attacked the record labels themselves and spoke directly to political figures about the harmful nature of the music’s lyrics. Yet, in the end, her various means of protest yielded few results. Even after momentum slowed at the end of the 1990s, Tucker did not. This sets her apart from her predecessors because there was no happy ending for Tucker unless gangsta rap was shut down entirely. It is because of her determination and drive, that it can be argued that if she had not passed away at a young age in 2005, Tucker would still be protesting outside of record stores and requesting congressional hearings to make a real change concerning to gangsta rap.

**Chapter Two**  
**“They wanna censor me; they'd rather see me in a cell  
livin in hell -- only a few of us'll live to tell”:**  
**Tucker and the Crusade’s Inevitable Failure**

Tucker and her allies worked adamantly throughout the 1990s to rid the musical stage of gangsta rap music. She picked up national supporters ranging from political figures to popular feminist icons, and appeared at several congressional hearings about the debates surrounding music. However, the anti-gangsta rap crusade wasn't warmly welcomed by all. Tucker experienced a tremendous amount of pushback from rap music advocates. Rap artists defended their lyrics by arguing they were simply speaking the truth about their lifestyle growing up and the conditions of their environment. The record companies that Tucker attacked throughout the years continued to produce the explicit lyrics because the music was making the industry a tremendous amount of money and to eliminate gangsta rap would mean a major profit loss. There were others who stood behind the First Amendment and emphasized that Tucker was seeking to deny rappers' rights to free speech. The following chapter discusses the major

arguments against Tucker's crusade and proves the overwhelming strength of resistance caused the crusade to fail.

### **The Response from Gangsta Rap Artists and the "Reality Rap" Argument**

Tucker believed that rappers such as Tupac Shakur, Snoop Doggy Dog, and Lil' Kim were corrupting African American communities through glorifying violent and misogynist lifestyles in their lyrics. Vigorously denying that they were causing violence, rappers argued they were writing about their past and their present, shedding light into their world. For example, rapper Yo-Yo stated, "Being from the 'hood, I can tell you that violence didn't start from a cassette tape that might have popped into a home or car stereo system."<sup>125</sup> Rapper Ice Cube insisted, "This generation and generations before us are just as addicted to sex and violence. And that's what they want to hear."<sup>126</sup> But Tucker didn't agree with these arguments and was verbal about her concerns with gangsta rap lyrics.<sup>127</sup>

Rap artists retaliated against the crusade by victimizing Tucker in the lyrics of their music. Artists began to use Tucker's name in a derogatory and demeaning manner. At the height of the crusade, Tupac Shakur was the most vocal gangsta rap artist against Tucker. On his 1996 album, *All Eyez on Me*, Shakur included two songs in which he rapped about Tucker.<sup>128</sup>

The songs, "Wonder Why They Call U" and "How Do U Want It," included the lyrics, "C.

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<sup>125</sup> Jeff Silberman, "Music News: Attacks on Rap Spawn Album-Rating Debate on Capital Hill," *Daily Variety*, February 14, 1994.

<sup>126</sup> Bruce Haring, "Ice Cube Won't Bow Down to Gangsta Rap Critics," *USA Today*, December 18, 1996, Life section, Page 5D.

<sup>127</sup> Artists such as The Game, Jay-Z, Eminem and Lil' Wayne wrote about Tucker in their music – taking direct hits against her and her efforts. Provided by Wikipedia. Wikipedia, "C. Delores Tucker," Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, [http://http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.\\_Delores\\_Tucker#Hip\\_hop\\_music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._Delores_Tucker#Hip_hop_music) (accessed October 29, 2012).

<sup>128</sup> "Regarding his often violent, sometimes misogynistic, and usually profane lyrics, he once said, 'I'm not saying I want to rule the world, but I know that if I keep talking about how dirty it is out here, somebody is going to clean it up.' His lyrics also included more poignant subjects – reflections on love and loss, life and death," from Adam Bradley and Andrew Dubois, eds., *The Anthology of Rap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 511-12.

Delores Tucker, you're a mother f—ker, instead of trying to help a brother you destroy a nigga,” and, “got your legs up trying to get rich. Keep your head up and your legs closed Ms. Delores Tucker.” This infuriated Tucker.<sup>129</sup> Professor Mickey Hess of Rider University explained that Tupac was exercising vilification, meaning “the use of harsh language against a single conspicuous leader of the opposition with the intent of belittling [her] before the community.”<sup>130</sup> Regardless, Tucker was hurt by the lyrics and felt personally attacked.

Nearly a year after Tupac's death, Tucker filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania against not only Tupac's estate, but also the big names in gangsta rap production such as Interscope and Death Row Records. Tucker alleged that Tupac's lyrics caused “intentional infliction of emotional distress, slander, and invasion of privacy,” as well as increased intimacy issues with her husband.<sup>131</sup> Tucker claimed:

Shakur's Death Row Records, next to the last album, "All Eyez on Me" specifically defamed me in a most degrading way it called me a personal obscenity...for fighting against this music. And I feel that those who produce, and promote this recording all over the world are equally guilty of defamation. Not only have I been defamed, I feel thousands of young women have been defamed by this greed driven, race driven and drug driven music. This sexist lyrical filth that particularly defames black women, promotes drug use, violence and panders pornography to children.<sup>132</sup>

She filed for approximately \$10 million of Tupac's estate.<sup>133</sup> Several supporters of gansta rap stated that the words were not slander and believed Tucker was simply too sensitive to the lyrics. Tucker's attorney, Richard Angino, responded, “They're doing this because they want to shut her up; they're doing this because they want to intimidate her ... we're talking about companies that

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<sup>129</sup> Carolyn Horowitz, “C. Delores Tucker Sues Tupac's Estate: Rap Critic Charges that his Lyrics Slander Her,” *Billboard*, Aug 16, 1997, Volume 109, Issue 33, Page 18.

<sup>130</sup> Mickey Hess, ed, *Icons of Hip Hop: An Encyclopedia of the Movement, Music, and Culture, Volume 2* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 400.

<sup>131</sup> Horowitz 1997.

<sup>132</sup> “Dr. C. Delores Tucker Files Multi-Million Suit Against Record Producers of Gansta Rap ‘Filth’” 1997.

<sup>133</sup> Arlene Vigoda, “Lawsuits Go After Shakur Estate,” *USA Today*, August 4, 1997, Life section, Page 2D.

make millions of dollars for doing nasty things to people.” He claimed that she should win her case and that she should use the money to continue on her journey of ridding children’s ears of gansta rap.<sup>134</sup>

The lawsuit continued through the beginning of 1999. Almost a year after the lawsuit was filed, a memorandum published by Judge Ronald L. Buckwalter of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on February 18, 1998 stated that the charges against the defendants would be dismissed with the exception of the estate representatives and the estate of Tupac Shakur. Buckwalter argued that Tucker’s claim of emotional distress and defamation of her and her crusade was filed much too late to seriously charge the record companies for slanderous material from Tupac’s 1996 album. The judge claimed:

Under Pennsylvania law, suit may be brought against an alleged tort-feasor’s estate within one year after his death although the applicable limitation would have barred the action sooner. This extension is applicable only to suits against the estate. Therefore, the Tucker’s slander and privacy claims are dismissed as time barred as to all defendants except the Estate Representatives and the Estate of Tupac Shakur.<sup>135</sup>

The decision of the prompted another civil action suit the following year against co-administrators of Tupac’s estate, Richard Fischbein and his mother Afeni Shakur. This lawsuit dealt specifically with Tucker’s previous claims in the 1996 lawsuit. Buckwalter argued that the lyrics from Tupac’s two songs that referenced Tucker were not lawfully harmful to her reputation, business, profession, or subject her to public hatred or ridicule. For this reason, the results of the January 29, 1999 civil action case favored the defendants, Fishbein and Shakur. The Judge ruled, “Based upon all of the foregoing, I conclude that the language plaintiffs object

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<sup>134</sup> Horowitz 1997.

<sup>135</sup> C. DeLores Tucker and Williams Tucker v. MTS, Inc. t/a Tower Records, Insterscope Inc., Interscope Records, Ted Fields Time Warener, James Iovine. Seagram Inc., David Kenner, Estate of Tupac Shakur, Richard Fischbein and Afeni Shakur of the Estate of Tupac Shakur, Civil Action No. 97-4717, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (February 18, 1998).

to is not actionable, and that the three other claims based upon it, intentional infliction of emotional distress, invasion of privacy, and the derivative consortium claim, must also fail.”<sup>136</sup>

Throughout the mid-1990s, Tucker attacked a variety of other gangsta rap artists. In May 1997, Tucker went after female rapper, Lil’ Kim and her album *Hardcore*, featuring a song titled, “Big Momma Thang.” She believed Lil’ Kim’s lyrics, “I used to be scared of d--k, now I throw lips around the sh--, handle it like a real b---h,” were extremely offensive. She argued that the song was setting the wrong example for young African American girls, which discredited the purpose of the NPCBW. Lil’ Kim justified the content of her music by explaining the horrors of her past.<sup>137</sup> Her father, a former Army sergeant, was extremely strict and hard on Kim and her brother, Chris, after their parents’ divorce. This drove Kim out of the house at the age of 15 and encouraged her involvement in the drug industry. She had been involved in the industry since she was 12 years old. Kim argued, “I used to help the guys cut it up. I did it to survive. I’m surprised it didn’t wreck my life.”<sup>138</sup> Despite Lil’ Kim’s troubled past, Tucker believed Lil’ Kim’s lyrics were “vile and straight from the pit of hell.”<sup>139</sup>

Others involved with gangsta rap music, such as Russell Simmons, co-founder of Def Jams Records, stated why he was in support of gangsta rap in 1994. Much like Lil’ Kim, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and Tupac, Simmons believed rappers were the products of their environments and were artists creating art. “These rappers are filling a tremendous artistic void. They are giving voice to the thoughts and experiences of a lot of frustrated, and often misguided youth,” Simmons argued. He continued, “To me, the problem is not gangsta rap hitting the mainstream.

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<sup>136</sup> C. DeLores Tucker and William Tucker v. Rihard Fischbein, as the Co-Administrator of the Estate of Tupac Shakur and Afeni Shakur, as Co-Administratrix of the Estate of Tupac Shakur, Civil Action No. 97-4717, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (January 29, 1999).

<sup>137</sup> Saunja Johnson, “C. Delores Tucker Sounds Off on Lil’ Kim,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 9, 1997, Volume 113, Issue 37, Page 7E.

<sup>138</sup> Pete Castro, “Life After Death,” *People*, July 14, 1997.

<sup>139</sup> Johnson 1997.

The problem is conditions which make gangsterism a reasonable life choice. Stifling rappers with morale will not solve the real problem; killing the messenger never does.”<sup>140</sup> In Tucker’s defense, “killing the messenger” is exactly what the crusade was after. If gangsta rap didn’t exist, she believed, crime rates would decrease. But, Simmons refuted this argument by stating, “Since rap artists have played a significant role of refocusing our national debate onto these values while entertaining us with great music, it seems to me that they’ve been doing their job.”<sup>141</sup>

The crusade attempted to get through to the artists in a variety of methods, but failed to do so. The artists argued they were speaking truth and that Tucker and her allies failed to acknowledge the conditions in which they lived. Tucker contended that the artists were promoting violence, not attesting to violence in their past communities. Gangsta rap artists like Tupac Shakur and Lil’ Kim were from poor urban communities in the central Los Angeles area and familiar with violence and misogyny. As the history of this area shows, gangsta rappers were products of racial tension and economic depression. Tucker firmly believed that gangsta rap was responsible for the glorification of violence and misogyny, not a product of violence and misogyny. However, Tucker’s arguments are diminished when the history of the area in which these rappers were born is looked into at a deeper level. It can be argued that not only are criminal records explainable, but also the artists are not to be blamed for promoting and encouraging violence like Tucker had been arguing.

### **Record Companies and Gangsta Rap Profits**

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<sup>140</sup> Russell Simmons, “Why I Support Gangsta Rap,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 17, 1994, Page C-6.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

The idea of 'getting paid' was a recurring theme for advocates of rap music. In 1996, Tucker argued, "Morality goes out the window when greedy corporate heads smell the corrupting wiff of profits."<sup>142</sup> This is evident in the number of sales of gangsta rap music for 1994. *Billboard* projected that gangsta rap music accounted for \$400 million in sales, crossing ethnic and racial boundaries."<sup>143</sup> Ice Cube observed, "The market has changed because now gangsta rap is accepted in some way as a form of rap music. Snoop, all the people that do hardcore rap, can now get paid at a big level. You gotta still bend a little bit, but not as much as in the past."<sup>144</sup> However, Tucker asserted in 1995, "Rap began with a more positive and political message before record executives began hyping the violent imagery." She continued, "It has been perverted by them for their own profit centers."<sup>145</sup>

Gangsta rap popularity soared during the 1990s and made record labels immensely wealthy. Most rap albums produced during this period held top spots on reports such as the *Billboard Top 200*. For example, N.W.A.'s album, *Straight Outta Compton*, was released on August 8, 1988 and sold two million copies by 1993. The album was also reported number 37 on *Billboard's* list.<sup>146</sup> On December 15, 1992, Dr. Dre released his album, *The Chronic*, and debuted at number 3 on *Billboard's* list. It sold over 3 million copies since its release and reached triple platinum status by the RIAA. The following year, Snoop Doggy Dogg's album, *Doggystyle*, sold 802,858 copies in its first week and premiered as number 1 on the *Billboard's* top 200 list. In February 1996, Tupac Shakur's album, *All Eyez On Me*, also took the top spot on the *Billboard* list and won the 1997 Soul Train R&B or Rap Album of the Year Award and

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<sup>142</sup> Michael Dabney, "Tucker Outraged with Label's Violent Lyrics," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 13, 1996, Volume 113, Issue 92, Page 4A.

<sup>143</sup> Marks 1995.

<sup>144</sup> Haring 1996.

<sup>145</sup> Marks 1995.

<sup>146</sup> D.L. Kinch, "NPCBW fights 'gangsta rap,'" *The Washington Afro-American Newspaper*, October 9, 1993, Page A1 and A3.

Award for Favorite Rap/Hip-Hop Artist at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual American Music Awards. His album, considered to be one of the best hip-hop/rap albums of all time, was recently certified Diamond.

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### **Arguments Presented in the Media Against Tucker's Crusade**

Tucker's crusade sparked massive media attention from supporters as well as detractors. Although public opinion was split, some criticized her methodology and her arguments. Some argued she was out of line for protesting against a legitimate form of music supported by the First Amendment. Others stated that Tucker didn't recognize gangsta rap as a form of artistic expression, and others insisted that this crusade was fighting against themes that had always been present in music. The negative press worked against Tucker because it defended the rappers' music and proved that the crusade was fighting a losing battle.

Tucker maintained that gangsta rap promoted violence and misogyny and should be destroyed. George Yancy, a writer from Philadelphia, argued that rap music should be recognized for its structure and internal meaningfulness. "What is needed is greater understanding and appreciation concerning the unique felt-reality that is so blatantly articulated by Ice T, Ice Cube, Snoop Doggy Dogg, School D., Dr. Dre, and others," stated Yancy. He believed that Tucker and her supporters failed to do so during the crusade and questioned the black leaders of disassociating themselves from the "gangsta" lifestyle. Yancy claimed, "Gangsta rap, at one level, is the voice of young Black America responding to the sustained failures of Black leadership; it is a voice that screams loud and persistent."<sup>148</sup> His argument that

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<sup>147</sup> "The Chronic," Wikipedia, accessed April 4, 2015, [http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Chronic](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chronic); "Doggystyle," Wikipedia, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doggystyle>; "All Eyez On Me," Wikipedia, accessed April 4, 2015, [http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_Eyez\\_On\\_Me](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Eyez_On_Me).

<sup>148</sup> George Yancy, "Is Criticism of Gangsta Rap Based on Class Bias?," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 1, 1994.

gangsta rap was merely a response to leadership failure conflicted with Tucker's claim that gangsta rap was affecting the American youth in a negative way.

Supporters of gangsta rap offered a variety of reasons as to why the crusade was ineffective, including the unoriginality of the fight against music violence. Writer David Hinckley noted, "When it comes to music, rappers didn't start the violence. American popular music, like overseas ancestors, has incorporated violence all along." He contended, "The fact some rap songs are disturbing doesn't mean rap presents any more danger to society than the songs of John Lennon, Johnny Cash, Bessie Smith, Robert Johnson, or Jim Jackson. At the very least, charging that violence in rap represents a sudden threat to our society and culture shows a serious ignorance of popular music."<sup>149</sup> Much like the arguments of Yancy, Hinckley too, discredited Tucker and her efforts by referring to her crusade as a battle against a theme in music that had been around for decades.

Some supporters argued that Tucker didn't recognize the music as a legitimate form of artistic expression. Authors Jeanita W. Richardson and Kim A. Scott declared, "Rap music became a cathartic outlet ... rap music has become a way for youth to voice their dissatisfaction with society employing the heritage of the Black oral tradition."<sup>150</sup> Gangsta rap became a way for young Black artists to express their anger and frustrations. Richardson and Scott also stated, "[Rap music] is far too simplistic to portray rap artists as perpetrators of behavior deemed socially deviant without placing the artists and their life experiences in context."<sup>151</sup>

Still others questioned Tucker's claim that gangsta rap music caused violent outbursts and mistreatment of women in black communities. In 1995, Walter Farrell Jr. and James

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<sup>149</sup> David Hinckley, "Don't Know Much About History: Anti-Rap Crusaders Forget that Violence is an old Theme in Music," *Daily News*, April 3, 1997, Page 48.

<sup>150</sup> Jeanita W. Richardson and Kim A. Scott, "Rap Music and Its Violent Progeny: America's Culture of Violence in Context," *The Journal of Negro Education* 71, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 175 – 176.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 176.

Johnson Jr. of *The Philadelphia Tribune* denied the assertion that the music was “culturally deforming children, destroying them and training black people to be not fit for decent society.”<sup>152</sup> They also contended that alcohol, drug, and domestic abuse, youth crime and other issues were getting worse in inner cities long before Snoop Doggy Dogg, Ice T, Ice Cube or Tupac Shakur became popular. Gangsta rap was written in response to the already existing deteriorating communities.<sup>153</sup> Others went as far as to insist that rap music and language were interconnected. Yancy declared in 1997, “Real-world experience and phenomena do not exist in some raw, undifferentiated form. Rather, reality is always filtered, apprehended, encoded codified, and conveyed via some linguistic shape.”<sup>154</sup> He continued, “This linguistic form exists in a dialectic relationship with social cognition and social behavior.”<sup>155</sup> Yancy believed that one should openly listen to rap music by such artists as Tupac because he was “giving us his reality, he [was] sharing with us his own perspective knowing and seeing. He [was] keeping it real.”<sup>156</sup>

The media also attacked Tucker for attacking a “symptom not a cause.” A *Philadelphia Tribune* editorial noted, “Because of [her] contradictions, [the] campaign runs the risk of further alienating Black youths whose salvation this effort is supposedly being waged for.” It continued:

What if the so-called pornographic aspects of gangsta rap were eliminated? Our young would still be awash in songs with strongly sexually suggestive content that are played incessantly on the radio. Are civil-rights leaders saying its OK to have lyrics about licking someone up and down and freakin’ them all night long, as long as the object of this unbridled lust is not called a bitch or a hoe by the singer?<sup>157</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Walter C. Farrell, Jr. and James H. Johnson, Jr., “Gangsta Rap Describes Bits of Reality in Urban Society,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, October 20, 1995, Volume 112, Issue 84, Page 6A.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> George Yancy, “‘Gangsta Rap’: Language in Context Based on One’s Daily Life-Experiences,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 4, 1997, Volume 11, Issue 10, Page 7A.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.; Yancy states, “The reader should bear in mind that ‘keeping it real’ does not (and, I repeat, does not!) function as a set of instructions sanctioning one to go out and commit murder. Keeping it real, within the present context, suggest the need to stay true to one’s perspective knowing. In other words, one should tell one’s story in all of its descriptive rank and glory” (Ibid.)

<sup>157</sup> “No ‘dream’ in gangsta rap,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, January 21, 1994, Editorial section.

Supporters of gangsta rap questioned Tucker's motives and believed them to be inappropriate.

Overall, the media attacks showed that those in support of gangsta rap and gangsta rappers argued Tucker and the crusade were not fighting against the root issue of violence and misogyny in America, but simply fighting against a symptom of the bigger issues. Those opposed to Tucker tried, at any cost, to discredit her argument and the mission of the crusade. They deemed her unoriginal, unimaginative, contradictory, and borderline unintelligent. However, the negative press didn't stop her in her mission, but it did succeed in deterring the success of the crusade.

### **Congressional Hearings and the First Amendment**

During the years of Tucker's crusade, many fought for strict regulation in the entertainment industry. Like Tucker, these individuals were concerned for the nation's youth and believed that music, television, and film became a negative influence on children by glamorizing violence and sexism. However, Tucker believed gangsta rap was especially evil and needed to be abolished, not censored. Congressional hearings happened frequently throughout her crusade but their overall purpose cast a shadow on the fight against gangsta rap. While Tucker argued for a larger presence of government regulation around gangsta rap distribution and production, others pointed out that the artists in the entertainment world are protected under the First Amendment, despite however offensive gangsta rap or television programs were to the youth. Through a discussion of various congressional hearings during Tucker's crusade, it is obvious that her solution to abolish gangsta rap was not the answer. Tucker and her supporters were after an impossible fix to the problem.

On February 23, 1994, Tucker and many others testified during the congressional hearing, “Shaping Our Responses to Violent and Demeaning Imagery in Popular Music,” to discuss “gangsta rap and other popular music that is violent, racist, anti-Semitic, sexually graphic, or demeaning towards women,” and examine possible solutions to better the influence of music on children.<sup>158</sup> Concerns about censorship and the First Amendment were laced throughout the testimonies. Many who spoke at the hearing suggested that government interference was not necessary because the artists were protected under the First Amendment. Senator Moseley-Braun, however, disagreed. She argued that corporations were hiding behind the First Amendment. As an avid supporter of the arts, she objected to government involvement as a solution to violence in media and challenged the music industries to take responsibility in monitoring the material they were marketing towards children. “The First Amendment states that the government shall make no law abiding freedom of speech... Corporate and personal responsibility underscore the foundation of our freedoms, including the freedom of speech and expression,” she argued.<sup>159</sup> She continued, “Just because something can be sold to the public does not mean it necessarily should.”<sup>160</sup>

Tucker attacked the big names in music production throughout her crusade, but instead of urging the industries to self-regulate, she demanded they end the production of gangsta rap entirely. She noted during her testimony, “It is an unavoidable conclusion that gangsta rap is negatively influencing our youth. This explains why we have more black males in jail than we

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<sup>158</sup> Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, Committee of the Judiciary, *Shaping Our Responses to Violent and Demeaning Imagery in Popular Music*, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1994, 1.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

have in college.”<sup>161</sup> Unlike her ally, Moseley-Braun, Tucker wanted the government to step in and enforce change. She argued:

Congress should put forth measures to remove the offending product from the marketplace. The people in the music industry that are proponents of this vile, obscene, racist and anti-social music must be denounced for the pandering opportunities that they are and not be allowed to continue in the trafficking of this cultural garbage to children.<sup>162</sup>

However, others testified to the opposite. Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Ca.) believed gangsta rap music was a bad influence on children, but argued that government censorship was not the answer. “I am adamantly against censorship,” she argued, “but I want us to find ways to embrace and to transform rather than to confront, isolate, and marginalize.”<sup>163</sup> She advocated for transformation rather than regulation. Waters worked closely with the Los Angeles community and argued gangsta rappers should not be labeled as dangerous or vile criminals. “They are young people who have been isolated and, until now, denied the opportunity to say who they are and how they feel,” she proclaimed.<sup>164</sup> In her opinion, if the lives of these individuals were improved in some way, access to a better education for example, then the violent lyrics would decline.

The testimonies of Moseley-Braun and Waters show support for industry self-regulation of music and other forms of entertainment. This directly hurt Tucker’s crusade to get rid of gangsta rap music and demonstrated that the supporters of the First Amendment believed that government involvement was unnecessary and wrong. To these two women, the abolishment of gangsta rap would be violating the artists’ rights. Instead, they wanted the industries to take action and regulate their disturbing products to children. Self-regulation meant that gangsta rap

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

would still be sold in record stores such as Sam Goody, and available for people of all ages to buy. Tucker replied:

Opponents of the First Amendment, deniers of the freedom of expression, threats to “the brothers’ making money” – all these accusations are no more than smokescreens pushed forward by those who want to peddle pornography to our children. As a veteran of the civil and human rights movement, I witnessed first hand what happens when such rights are not respected. Hence my strong support for freedom of speech and expression. However my commitment to the physical and psychological health of our children is equally strong. There is no way I can support anyone who wants to sell songs advocating violence, drug abuse and disrespect for women to our children.<sup>165</sup>

Tucker had been fighting against gangsta rap music since the early 1990s, but it took a tragic incident in Columbine, Colorado at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 for members of Congress to regularly meet to discuss violence in the media. This tragedy sparked a rise in national interest on the negative influence of video games, television programs, and music on children. Shortly after, several hearings were held to discuss the opinions and thoughts about this issue and what actions to take to reduce the negative influences. The majority of attendees were in favor of stricter self-regulation by the entertainment industries in hopes of reducing the exposure of violence to children. These hearings also contributed to the failure of Tucker’s crusade because the focus had shifted from the seriousness of gangsta rap lyrics specifically to an all-encompassing regulation system to protect children.

On September 11, 2000, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released a report entitled, “Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children: A Review of Self-Regulation and Industry Practices in the Motion Picture, Music Recording and Electronic Game Industries.”<sup>166</sup> The report was conducted to seek answers to two questions presented by President Bill Clinton and

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<sup>165</sup> Tucker Papers.

<sup>166</sup> “FTC Releases Report on the Marketing of Violent Entertainment to Children,” Federal Trade Commission: Press Releases accessed March 10, 2015, <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2000/09/ftc-releases-report-marketing-violent-entertainment-children>.

members of Congress: “Do the industries promote products they themselves acknowledge warrant parental caution in venues where children make up a substantial percentage of audience? And are these advertisements intended to attract children and teenagers?” The report concluded that entertainment industries had taken necessary steps to identify what could be deemed as inappropriate for children but still marketed to those under the age of 17. The FTC suggested that the industries should:

Establish or expand codes that prohibit target marketing to children and impose sanctions for violations; Increase compliance at the retail level by checking identification or requiring parental permission before selling tickets to R movies, and by not selling or renting products labeled “Explicit” or rated R or M, to children under 17, and increase parental understanding of the ratings and labels by including the reasons for the rating in the label in all advertising and product packaging. The Commission also calls on the industry to continue efforts to educate parents – and children – about the meanings of ratings and descriptors.<sup>167</sup>

On September 13, 2000, 13 state senators nationwide and a variety of representatives from the entertainment industry met for a congressional hearing about the FTC’s report. Attendees spoke at the “Marketing Violence to Children” hearing either in support or against the FTC’s findings.<sup>168</sup> Tucker’s ally Senator Lieberman argued that “vigorous self-regulation” of the entertainment industries was the answer, while Hillary Rosen stated “music is just music” and parents seem content with the already in place rating systems.<sup>169</sup> She continued, “This debate over music keeps coming back to the same thing. Despite all of the trappings and new ways to look at the issue, the fact is that some people just don’t like music. And that, is a freedom of expression issue.”<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, *Marketing Violence to Children*, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 2000.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 31, 104.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, 104.

## **Conclusion**

Tucker spent her crusade fighting to rid the music industry from gangsta rap music. With gangsta rap eliminated from the music scene, Tucker believed the state of the American youth would improve. She eventually called for government involvement when the record companies would not listen to her words, but was met with great opposition. Despite her valiant efforts, rap artists, record labels, greed, massive media attention, and supporters of the First Amendment prevented Tucker from reaching her ultimate goal. However, she was responsible for shedding light on a much larger picture: media violence and its influence on children. Although gangsta rap remained on the map and increased in dollar sales and popularity, the American government did in fact take notice in the perception of violence on children and actively sought out change.

## **Epilogue**

**“You tryin hard to maintain, then go head  
‘cause I ain't mad at cha”:  
Tucker’s Death and Legacy**

On October 12, 2005, Tucker passed away from prolonged medical issues in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She fought against major record companies such as Time Warner and rap artists like Tupac Shakur to rid the world of gangsta rap music, which she believed promoted violence and threatened the health of the black community, particularly black women. In the end, her extreme ambition and impressive protest efforts were crushed by the overwhelming backlash from the music industry and the media, which called her “old-fashioned”

and “unappreciative” of the gangsta rap art form. The announcement of the death of Tucker’s death led many observers to look back on her crusade fondly. Several publications had similar things to say about Tucker and her anti-gangsta rap crusade: she was an amazing woman who should not be forgotten. The *National NOW Times* named Tucker a “Visionary Leader Advocated for Women’s Rights.”<sup>171</sup> NOW saw her as a woman who made a massive contribution to the fight for women’s rights because she was standing up to one of the biggest industries in the world and demanding women be seen in a different light. The same praise was seen in an article in the *New York Times* a month after her passing. Author Douglas Martin applauded her gangsta rap crusade stating, “Mrs. Tucker achieved perhaps her greatest fame in the 1990s when she campaigned against gangsta rap lyrics.” It was even reported that former Vice President Al Gore called Tucker “a four-star general in the battle for righteousness.”<sup>172</sup>

During the final years of her life, Tucker began writing a memoir about her campaign. She specified her arguments, presented her allies, and detailed the events that unfolded during the fight. Although the manuscript remains unfinished, she began writing her story just as the pace of the crusade slowed down tremendously. To Tucker, this manuscript had the potential to reinvigorate the anti-gangsta rap drive. “Determined to initiate a nation-wide crusade against the greed-driven public propagation of this type of material, I began mobilizing the support needed to confront this formidable foe,”<sup>173</sup> stated Tucker. She continued, “My view, at that time shared by the organization’s entire board, was that this gangsta rap music was not simply a matter [of] bad taste on the part of some artists and their distributors, but was essentially a concentrated

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<sup>171</sup> Liz Wing, “Visionary Leader Advocated for Women’s Rights,” *National NOW Times*, Summer 2006, Gender Watch section, Volume 38, Page 2.

<sup>172</sup> Douglas Martin, “C. Delores Tucker, A Voice for Minorities and Women, is dead at 78,” *New York Times*, November 6, 2005, Page 39.

<sup>173</sup> Tucker Papers.

insult to all womanhood in general and African American women in particular.”<sup>174</sup> This manuscript has had few readers and likely will never be published. Despite this unfortunate situation, Tucker’s project shows her persistence to keep the effort alive and in the most permanent form: a personal account of the anti-gangsta rap crusade.

After her death, many began to question what happened to the momentum Tucker had established in making a change for the better regarding gangsta rap. A 2005 article in the *Tennessee Tribune* stated, “A large number of women don’t seem to be bothered by the lyrics, dismissing critics like Tucker as nothing more than old women who couldn’t get with the times.” But what women were forgetting with the never ending progression of time, according to the *Tribune*, was that, “the only way women would be treated with respect and dignity, and seen as full human beings, [is] to wage war against anyone who chose to marginalize them.” The article concluded with an inspiring message for both men and women: “We should all be thankful that a C. DeLores Tucker was willing to put it on the line, and to honor her legacy, let’s use our collective voices to rally the masses and say that dishonoring women in rap music or any other form isn’t cute, it’s an abomination.”<sup>175</sup>

Despite her passing in 2005 and failure of her anti-gangsta rap crusade during the 1990s, Tucker has remained an influential figure in the fight to clean up rap music. For a few years it seemed as though the American population outraged by gangsta rap music kept quiet. However, a few spoke up. George Curry, award-winning journalist, keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach, defended Tucker’s crusade. On April 22, 2007, he posted an article on his personal webpage that celebrated Tucker’s life and efforts. Curry believed that the anti-gangsta rap fight was Tucker’s “greatest and least appreciated accomplishment.” He argued, “Critics of the music

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Roland S. Martin, “Women Must Take Up C. DeLores Tucker’s Cross,” *Tennessee Tribune*, November 2, 2005, Page C9.

have run out of excuses. It's time to pick up where Tucker left off and declare language that degrade females ... must not be tolerated."<sup>176</sup> In June 2007, Kenneth Gamble, an artist and producer, also spoke out in support of Tucker. Gamble claimed, "C. DeLores Tucker is right, especially about the gangster rap. The government is responsible for letting that happen. But now the genie is out of the bottle, and you can't put it back." Gamble also argued that although it is impossible to completely change an entire race or music genre, there is hope for the future. "There is always a correction," he said. "The Human being always survives."<sup>177</sup> However, despite their efforts, Curry and Gamble found little support.

That same year, rap music saw a decrease in sales and radio popularity. The *Associated Press* reported in March 2007 that rap music experienced a steady decline in sales from 2005 to 2006. The article also stated:

Though music sales are down overall, rap sales slid a whopping 21 percent from 2005 to 2006, and for the first time in 12 years no rap album was among the top 10 sellers of the year. A recent study by the Black Youth Project showed a majority of youth think rap music has too many violent images. In a poll of black Americans by The Associated Press and AOL-Black Voiced last year, 50 percent of respondents said hip-hop was a negative force in American society.<sup>178</sup>

The drop in rap music popularity is evident in the *Billboard* 200 list and *Billboard's* Top 100. Between the years of 2005 and 2007, the *Billboard* 200 list showed only one rap album, 50 Cent's *The Massacre*, was number one. In 2005, Kanye West's song, "Gold digger," held the top spot on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for twelve straight weeks. The following years showed rap or hip hop songs only held the top spot for no more than seven straight weeks. However, when looking at the data closer to the present day, rap music shows a much larger decline in the last

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<sup>176</sup> George E. Curry, "C .DeLores Tucker's Fight Against Offensive Lyrics," April 22, 2007, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://www.georgecurry.com/columns/c.-delores-tuckers-fight-against-offensive-lyrics>.

<sup>177</sup> Garland L. Thompson, "Judge Breathes Life into Tucker Lawsuit," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, June 10, 2007, Volume 6, Issue 30, Pages 1A and 5C.

<sup>178</sup> "Sales of Rap Albums Take Stunning Nosedive," *The Associated Press*, March 1, 2007, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2007/03/01/sales-rap-albums-take-stunning-nosedive/>.

couple of years.<sup>179</sup> The overall decline of rap music popularity from that of the years during the crusade would have greatly pleased Tucker.

Gangsta rap did in fact remain a topic of interest. The media spotlight diminished after Tucker's death, but has picked up momentum in recent years. On February 27, 2014, President Barack Obama announced a task force to help better the lives of minority boys and young men living in poor urban communities. The My Brother's Keeper (MBK) program was designed to help American youth stay on track and provide support to better their futures.<sup>180</sup> Obama declared:

We're dealing with complicated issues that run deep in our history, run deep in our society, and are entrenched in our minds. And addressing these issues will have to be a two-way bargain. Because no matter how much the community chips in, it's ultimately going to be up to these young men and all the young men who are out there to step up and seize responsibility for their own lives.<sup>181</sup>

The MBK focuses on six fundamental milestones: Entering school ready to learn, reading at grade level by third grade, graduating from high school ready for college and career, completing post-secondary education or training, successfully entering the workforce, reducing violence and providing a second chance.<sup>182</sup> These milestones were designed to lead the boys and young men in the right direction.

Fox News television anchor Bill O'Reilly responded by challenging the MBK to attack gangsta rap musicians because he claimed they are the source of the problems. O'Reilly stated in an interview on his television show with President Obama's Senior Advisor, Valerie Jarrett, "You have to attack the fundamental disease if you want to cure it. You're going to have to get

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<sup>179</sup> Billboard Charts Archive, accessed April 15, 2015, <https://www.billboard.com/archive/charts>.

<sup>180</sup> "My Brother's Keeper," The White House, accessed April 11, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>.

<sup>181</sup> President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on 'My Brother's Keeper' Initiative," The White House, February 27, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/remarks-president-my-brothers-keeper-initiative>.

<sup>182</sup> "Our Focus," My Brother's Keeper, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://mbk.ed.gov/our-focus/>.

people like Jay-Z, Kanye West, and all these gangsta rappers to knock it off.” He continued, “[The young men] idolize these guys with the hats on backwards, and the terrible rap lyrics and the drugs and all of that,” and we must “reverse the peer pressure.” He added that these rappers should announce to the world that their actions are not right and to say, “Knock it off!” In response, *Huffington Post*’s Senior Energy and Environment Reporter, Kate Sheppard, predicted that if the administration agreed with O’Reilly and abolished explicit lyrics, like Tucker fought for during her crusade, there would be a massive amount of backlash around the freedom of speech.<sup>183</sup> This argument paralleled that with those who contributed to the demise of her anti-gangsta rap crusade.

The story of gangsta rap’s outbreak rap group, N.W.A, will be personified in a biographical drama film called, *Straight Outta Compton*. The idea for the movie began in 2009, and casting began in 2010. Romeo San Vicente reported in 2010, that the film “will chronicle the rise and dissolution of the bank thanks to money squabbles and egos, as well as the reconciliation mat occurred following the death of Easy-E to AIDS.” San Vicente continued that although N.W.A. introduced gangsta rap to the world, “that means a new generation doesn’t know who they are or what they did and that it’s time for a biopic.”<sup>184</sup> Original members, Ice Cube and Dr. Dre are two of the film’s producers. Ice Cube argued:

I wanted to show why we made N.W.A., what made us, what was happening in our lives at the time that made us make music like that. And then I wanted to show what influence N.W.A. had on the neighborhood. It forged us, and then we changed the ‘hood.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Catherine Taibi, “Bill O’Reilly: White House Needs to Get ‘Gangsta Rappers’ to ‘Knock it Off,’” *The Huffington Post*, February 28, 2014, access April 11, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/28/bill-oreilly-rappers-gangsta-white-house-valerie-jarrett\\_n\\_4873387.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/28/bill-oreilly-rappers-gangsta-white-house-valerie-jarrett_n_4873387.html).

<sup>184</sup> Romeo San Vicente, “The N.W.A Movie: Film the police,” *Between the Lines*, May 10, 2010, Volume 1818, Issue 60, Page 30.

<sup>185</sup> Kory Grow, “Ice Cube on N.W.A.’s ‘Reality rap’ and ‘Straight Outta Compton’ Movie,” *Rolling Stone*, April 15, 2015.

The film is scheduled for national release on August 14, 2015 and will feature music from the era of the movie and original N.W.A. music.

Tucker argued that gangsta rap lyrics, like those of N.W.A, were degrading to women, but Dr. Dre insists that the film will show the opposite. Latifah Muhammad reported in an article in *BET* that Dr. Dre believes their depiction of relationships in the film kill the “gangsta myth” that women are objects to men. Dr. Dre claimed, “What we really wanted to get across is how we feel about women, because there’s a big misconception you know? How much we respect women.”<sup>186</sup> But, the project experienced negative press due to a scandalous casting call for the female roles in the movie. The movie’s casting company, Sande Alessi Casting, posted on Facebook in 2014 that the movie was searching for four different types of girls: A girls who are the “hottest of the hottest,” B girls that are “Beyoncé prototypes,” C girls who are medium to light skin toned African Americans “with a weave,” and D girls that are “poor, not in good shape.”<sup>187</sup> Due to the offensiveness of the post, it was taken down and Kristan Berona of Sande Alessi Casting publically apologized on July 18 via another Facebook post. Berona specified, “My intention was not to offend anyone and I’m deeply sorry for not realizing the insensitivity in its content.” Universal Studios also publically dissociated themselves from the casting call post arguing, “Universal Pictures and the filmmakers for *Straight Outta Compton* did not approve and did not condone the information in this casting notice.”<sup>188</sup>

The release of the film has the potential to reengage negative attention on gangsta rap, but according to the cast and crew, *Straight Outta Compton* celebrates a pivotal time in rap music’s

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<sup>186</sup> Latifah Muhammad, “Dr. Dre Wants Straight Outta Compton Movie to have an Impact on Women,” *BET*, March 27, 2015.

<sup>187</sup> Danielle Cadet, “The ‘Straight Outta Compton’ Casting Call is So Offensive It Will Make Your Jaw Drop,” *The Huffington Post*, July 21, 2014.

<sup>188</sup> Aaron Couch, “Casting Company Apologized for Offensive ‘Straight Outta Compton’ Casting Call,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, July 19, 2014.

history. In an interview with *Billboard*, Ice Cube said the movie “is gonna take over 2015.” He described the film on a superhero level. “You can go see Marvel superheroes and those kind of movies. Or you can see the real superheroes, which is N.W.A.,” he said.<sup>189</sup> Popular social media sites such as Twitter and BuzzFeed have proved there has been growing excitement around the release of this movie. BuzzFeed’s article, “‘Straight Outta Compton’ is the Movie We Need Right Now,” agrees with the film’s message that areas such as L.A. have not changed since the era of N.W.A. and that it’s the best time to retell the rap group’s story.<sup>190</sup>

The release date of this film is particularly ironic because it hits theatres almost ten years exactly after the death of Tucker. She spent the last years of her life protesting against a musical genre that promoted violence and slandered women, and the film will reopen the debate about gangsta rap. The trailer for the movie shows images of members of N.W.A. with heavy machinery, women dancing in little to no clothing, and violent interactions on the street and with members of the police. These similar images that glamorized crime during the crusade will draw attention back to these issues and affect those born after the turn of the century. If Tucker were still alive, it can be assumed that she would picket the opening of this movie just as she did in front of several Sam Goody record stores when Snoop Doggy Dogg’s album was released in stores.

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<sup>189</sup> Elias Leight, “Ice Cube calls N.W.A. Biopic ‘Straight Outta Compton’ a ‘Real Superhero’ Movie,” *Billboard*, February 20, 2015.

<sup>190</sup> Logan Rhoades, “‘Straight Outta Compton’ is the Movie We Need Right Now,” BuzzFeed, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/mrloganrhoades/straight-outta-compton-is-the-movie-we-need-right-now#.tqJqva0R1> (accessed April 14, 2015).

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