



**mix-mish\_mash\_short\_stories\_masculinity\_hip-hop\_bahamian-  
ness-20220510\_v10**

by Steven Schmid

A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in  
Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design

OCAD U Graduate Studio 418, 205 Richmond West Street, April 29 - May 5

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2022

## Abstract

On a hot, humid and blindly sunny day in The Bahamas, I sit with my nephew under the shade of my mother's porch to talk about our experiences in becoming men. Having not spoken to him in years, I play a draft of my self produced mixtape titled *mix-mix-*

*mish\_mash\_short\_stories\_masculinity\_hip-hop\_bahamian-ness-20220510\_v10*

Exploring Hip-Hop production and assemblage as de-colonial practices, this mixtape cuts, pastes, rearranges, reconfigures, interweaves and assembles academic literature, personal anecdotes, poetry, letters, tweets, WhatsApp messages and song lyrics together to explore my ever evolving relationship with masculinity through Hip-Hop and Hood Feminisms.

As a companion to the exhibition, *Mish -Mash: The Makeshift Party*, this mix also expands on the details and themes within my image making and artistic practice. These moments highlight the ways in which visual, sonic, moral and ethical contradictions intersect within Hip-Hop and Bahamian culture to create unique and sophisticated spaces for self and communal empowerment.

*Keywords: Hip-Hop, Masculinity, Feminism, Sampling, Bahamian-ness*



## Acknowledgments

A huge thanks to my mommy Sunshine Shelley. You've taught me a lot about life by simply being you. Couldn't have made it this far without ya.

Thank you to my brothers Heino and Heinzie. Y'all are annoying (jk) but thanks for always taking care and looking out for me.

To my nephews, Raine, Talon, Toren, Nas and Wyatt and nieces Ki'ara and Hazel. You all have taught me so much about being present, the value of laughter and play and the importance of being yourself. I'll forever be proud of y'all.

To my Primary Advisor Julius Manapul. You're amazing and I REALLY REALLY REALLY APPRECIATE you helping me get to this point. You've set me up for a lifetime of research, pushed my work into amazing new avenues and pushed me to be a better person.

To my Secondary Advisor, Michael Lee Poy. Thank you for your guidance in navigating such a complex subject. You've pushed me to unapologetically me. Messy, confusing and all over the place.

Thank you Peter Morin. Your advice, honesty, sternness and gentleness was greatly needed when I thought I was about to lose it all.

A huge BAM! BAM! BAM! (that's me profusely and excitedly knocking on the nearest table) to my COB family and fellow creatives. Y'all inspire me to keep doing the damn thing. I love y'all for that.

Finally, (I have to put this one in bold, size 23 font because, wow!), **a major thank you to my partner, Gio. You're always encouraging me to be adventurous, to fail, to be honest, to be gentle, to be vulnerable. Without you, I wouldn't be the person I am today.**

## **Dedication**

To us. We got dis.

## Table of Contents

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Abstract</i>                                   | <i>ii</i>   |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i>                            | <i>iii</i>  |
| <i>Dedication</i>                                 | <i>v</i>    |
| <i>Table of Contents</i>                          | <i>vi</i>   |
| <i>List of Figures</i>                            | <i>viii</i> |
| <i>Listening Guide</i>                            | <i>xi</i>   |
| <b>big_body-[Original]</b>                        | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>Man 2 Man Convo.</b>                           | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>big_body-[Original]-[restarted]</b>            | <b>9</b>    |
| <b>may_god-bless-you-and-keep_you_safe -[v1]</b>  | <b>16</b>   |
| <b>get_on_my_level-[new_cut_3-with-ext-outro]</b> | <b>17</b>   |
| <b>on_da_moo-a_new_self_2)-[v5-recut]</b>         | <b>23</b>   |
| <b>mish-mash-[OG_version]</b>                     | <b>31</b>   |
| <b>mish-mash_extended_outro-[mixdown 4]</b>       | <b>35</b>   |
| <b>130_Stichess-[original]</b>                    | <b>41</b>   |
| <b>knife_talk-[lyric_cudi_re-edit]</b>            | <b>42</b>   |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>a_new_self-all_ova_da_place-[jan-2021-mash_up_v6]</b>  | <b>48</b> |
| <b>if_you_don't_laugh- [original mix]</b>                 | <b>57</b> |
| <b>L.T.K.-[og freestyle]</b>                              | <b>61</b> |
| <b>the_makeshift_party [March_freestyle_mix]</b>          | <b>64</b> |
| <b>bell_hooks-[lookin_back-multi_scratch_re-edit]</b>     | <b>74</b> |
| <i>Appendix A: Man 2 Man Convo. Part 2 (Makin' Sense)</i> | <i>78</i> |
| <i>Appendix B: Exhibition Images</i>                      | <i>83</i> |
| <i>Appendix C: A Playlist For You</i>                     | <i>91</i> |
| <i>Works Cited</i>  | <i>92</i> |

## List of Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Still from “Southern Hospitality” (2000) music video (2:48).   | 6  |
| Figure 2: Promotional album cover for <i>Thug Misses</i> : 2002, Khia.   | 10 |
| Figure 3: Still from “Big Pimpin” (1999) music video (2:48).   | 11 |
| Figure 4: Hand-written letter from Mommy, 2016.  | 16 |
| Figure 5: <i>Admiring the Stars 1-3</i> by Steven Schmid: 2021, Digital Assemblage,<br>Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 22 x 27 in | 26 |
| Figure 6: <i>How She Read</i> by Chantel Gibson: 2019, “misplaced modifiers” and<br>“fragments”.   | 28 |
| Figure 7: <i>Cuttin’ Up</i> by Steven Schmid: 2021, Digital Painting, Colouring Pencils,<br>Crayola Markers on Paper, 38 x 50 in.              | 39 |
| Figure 8: <i>Within Reach</i> by Steven Schmid: 2020, Digital Painting, Colouring<br>Pencil, Markers on Paper , 24 x 36 in.                    | 49 |

- Figure 9: *Rattenkonig: Three Bruddas Knot 'Makin'* by Steven Schmid: 2020,  
Digital Painting, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 34 x 37 in. **51**
- Figure 10: *Makin Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece* by Steven Schmid: 2021, CMYK  
Ink, Colouring Pencils, Markers, Graphite on Paper, 42 x 60 in. **54**
- Figure 11: Sample Breakdown for *Still from Mathematics*: 1999, Tracklib. **55**
- Figure 12: Promotional Poster for *Mish-Mash: The Makeshift Party* by Steven  
Schmid: 2022. **64**
- Figure 13: *Off Guard* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage, Colouring  
Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 38 x 50 in. **71**
- Figure 14: *Tongue Out/Shine* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage,  
Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 38 x 50 in. **72**
- Figure 15: *Tongue Out/All Smiles* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage,  
Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 38 x 50 in. **73**
- Figure 16: Installation view of *Makin Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece*. **83**

- Figure 17: *Everybody Get Closer* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 28 x 10 ft. **84**
- Figure 18: Artist wearing a limited edition “Mish-Mash” T-shirt with *Everybody Get Closer*: 2022 **85**
- Figure 19: *Lettin’ Loose* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Cardboard, Paper, Sequins, Fabric, Masking Tape, Hot Glue, Gold Chains, Yarn, Air Ventilation Unit, Bluetooth Speaker, 15 x 8 ft. **86**
- Figure 20: Installation view of *Off Guard, Tongue Out/All Smiles and Tongue Out/Shine*. **87**
- Figure 21: Exhibition view #1. **88**
- Figure 22: Exhibition view #2 **89**
- Figure 23: Exhibition view #3 **90**



## Listening Guide

Drawing inspiration from Disc Jockey (DJ) production and performance techniques such as vinyl crackle, track fade in's, track fade out's and beat repeats, this paper utilizes different text colours, font changes, spacing and symbols to create visual parallels to these sonic aesthetics.

Additionally, this paper uses academic, casual and Bahamian creole throughout the main body of this text. The academic and casual tones are written in a regular, black, size 12, Times New Roman font, and are a part of the main DJ mix that's being played for my nephew, while the Bahamian creole, written in an italicized, blue, size 14, Times New Roman font, is myself talking to my nephew while the mix is being played in the background.

Below are examples of these effects and how they are visualized throughout this paper.

### Chapter/text fade in example:

There's a special thing about this mix that's a bit different compared to others you might be used to.

### Chapter/text fade out example:

There's a special thing about this mix that's a bit different compared to others you might be used to.

### Me talking to my nephew in a creolized voice during the mix:

*All tree a dem was singin' dat word fa word an dere shoulda's was bobbins' like  
crazy ta da beat.*

Chapter/text transition and vinyl crackle example:

..      .....      ....      ...      ...      .....      .....      .....

         .....                              ..                              ....      ...      .

.....      .....      ...      ..      .....      ....                              ....      .....

.....    ...    .....

Beat repeat example:

As a figurative painter, I challenged myself

I challenged myself

I challenged myself

I challenged myself

## **big\_body-[Original]**

*"Men cannot change if there are no blueprints for change. Men cannot love if they are not taught the art of loving. Love is vital to maleness, to the spiritual and emotional wholeness men seek." -*

(bell hooks, "The Will To Change" xvii)

Sitting underneath the large, concrete cross statue at the entrance of my high school, a recognizable bass slowly revealing itself. I stood up to get a closer look. It was a...

*Hold on, Hold on, Hold up.*

*Press Pause...*

I know I told you I was going to just play it for you. But, before I let you hear it, I just wanted to say some things.

## **Man 2 Man Convo.**

...Just

...Just wanted to say I really did this for you, man. I mean, I did it for me too. But, I think what really drove me to want to make this mix was for you. You're my first nephew. I changed your diapers! Now you're 22 years old and taller than I am. A man now.

Feels so weird saying that. What is that even? A man.

I never used to check for this stuff when I lived here, you know? Seemed pretty straightforward. Make some money, provide for your family, your community. Got to be able to fight.

Your dad asked me one time when I was thirteen why I didn't fight after I told him a guy held me up at knife point.

Like...

Damn. He had a knife to my back. Was I suppose fight back over a \$20 watch?

And the big one, don't cry. They get you early on with that one. "Stop cryin'!"

Like...

Damn. If I fall down learning to walk, I can't even have an emotion as a baby now?

I'm still trying to stitch together what masculinity is, but it definitely ain't those. Your value isn't based on some object. You're not the dominator of your household. You're allowed to have emotion.

When was the last time you smiled?

When was the last time someone got that on camera?

You know how it is growing up in The Bahamas. You don't really have much choices about the type of man you want to be living here. You had to make the best with what was handed to you. "U gotta do what u gotta do", is what Ma would always say. But I think when I moved to Canada, I realized there were so much more possibilities for what masculinity could be. For what being a man meant.

It definitely wasn't perfect, but I saw there just wasn't one way to live and act in this world.

I read a lot over the past few years while trying to figure out who I wanted to be. But the ones that really had me wanting to do the work I do now was *We Real Cool* (2003) and *The Will To Change* (2004) by bell hooks, *Hood Feminism* (2020) by Mykki Kendall, and *When Chicken Heads Come To Roost: a hip-hop feminist breaks it down* (2017) by Joan Morgan. I explain them in more detail throughout the mix, but the thing that got me really invested in all of these ideas was how they constantly reiterated the fact that you can't just read and talk about ideas. You have

to act on it somehow. You have to work through it. Live with it... nurture it in your own special way.

That's a huge task to take on if you don't know where to start. There's an abundance of information around us that shapes who we are, even when don't realize it. I tried to find ways to compartmentalize all these ideas into a format that already existed, but I found I was doing it all a disservice.

How can you then talk about such complex, intersecting ideas in neat, organizational pockets?

The best way I found to even attempt to do this is through Hip-Hop, sampling and assemblage.

A Hip-Hop approach to making and understanding removes the rules of time and space. This approach allows for unexpected collaborations and conversations to be had. Jumping from books, to tv shows, to movies, to speeches, to music, to tweets, to anecdotes, to family messages and even letters, Hip-Hop removes hierarchies by allowing any medium or objects' quality or status to cohesively live with another. Expensive chains are paired with two dollar, white t-shirts. Meticulously crafted songs that are created in music studios can be sampled and reconfigured to live alongside low fidelity home recordings of you beating on pots and pans without question...It creates a middle ground where ideas and their backstories exist and communicate with and alongside each other.

Making a Hip-Hop DJ mixtape to tell this story gave me agency to build a world that was uniquely mine by using the smallest of things around me. It helped me to my understand who I am now and provided me with glimpses of who I can be in the future. It gave me the freedom to combine stories, theories and all their re-imaginings into one connected experience; to play, to deconstruct, to reconfigure parts of myself in ways I couldn't have previously imagined. All that being said, it may not always result in the best collaboration ever.

And that's ok.

That is what inter-sectionalism is. That's what feminism is. Inclusivity. Solidarity. The removal of superiority and domination over others. It actually requires putting in the work. This writing is a part of me putting in the work.

As long as you have one's best interest at heart, you  
pick yourself up and try again until you get it right.

You've always been a Hip-Hop head too, you know? When you were just a year old, your favourite song was "Southern Hospitality" (2000) (fig. 1) by Ludacris. Remember that? Whenever the video was playing on the living room TV, you would always be jumping up and down in excitement. The part of the video where Ludacris screams when he sees a bus coming toward him, you always screamed at the exact same time! You couldn't



Fig.1. Still from “Southern Hospitality” (2000) music video (2:48).

rap any of the words of course but, you still wanted to participate in the fun. From then on I was like, he’s going to love Hip-Hop music for the rest of his life.

Anyway...

There’s a special thing about this mix that’s a bit different compared to others you might be used to. There’s a lot of indentations between lines, empty space and moments where just vinyl crackle plays between tracks. I was playing with the ways how a rapper’s flow helped forged a unique identity and how the breaths in between told a story. These also became moments for us rapping along to catch our breath. I wanted to exaggerate that breath in some areas throughout the mix.

It’s also a room to remove your ego. To think. To reflect. To imagine...



To imagine the possibilities of new masculinities that you can create and piece together.

One last thing about the mix before we get started again, I made this mix as a companion piece to my exhibition called, *Mish-Mash: The Makeshift Party*. Instead of explaining the work directly, I wanted to find ways to tell the additional stories that needed to be told about specific parts of the works. To actively do the work of understanding myself. Both forms of making are continuously calling, responding and communicating back and forth with each other.

Anyway, I'll try not to *interrupt while everything is playing*

but, no guarantees. I haven't seen you in years and I got a lot of

stories to tell ya. If I feel the need too, I'll save *those extra stories for the spaces in between* if you like?

All of this may be a bit jarring at times, but to be real, it's necessary for imagining new possibilities of masculinities. To make associations between things that we may have overlooked. To understand what I went through to get here.

This mix is me openly trying to figure out who I am and unlearning the expectations of how I should be. It's messy, confusing and all over the place. But, this is how I've learned to make sense of the world that was handed to me.

At the moment, it's the most complete picture of I am.

It's... a snapshot.

Yea, I like that.

A snapshot...

Ok, ok. I'll stop talking.

Can start it from the beginning...

## **big\_body-[Original]-[restarted]**

*“Men cannot change if there are no blueprints for change. Men cannot love if they are not taught the art of loving. Love is vital to maleness, to the spiritual and emotional wholeness men seek.” - (bell hooks, “The Will To Change” xvii)*

Sitting underneath the large, concrete cross statue at the entrance of my high school, I felt a recognizable bass melody revealing itself from the distance. As I stood up trying to figure out where the sound was coming from, the bass got heavier, thicker, louder. It was the type of bass that perked your ears up, that type of bass you could feel in your bones, the type that gave you goosebumps over your whole body. Others started to feel it too. Students and even administrative staff stood up, slowed their walking pace and even stopped conversations to try and a glimpse at where the music was coming from.

Just as a nondescript Jeep Cherokee turned left into a parking spot, we all noticed where the sound was coming from. With all the windows down and a blinding light flickering off the chrome 22-inch rims, an immaculately clean and shimmering white 1996 Nissan Maxima crept slowly from behind the Jeep blasting Khia’s, “My Neck, My Back (Lick It)” (2002) (fig. 2). Oozing with a kind nonchalant bravado, the driver, a man wearing an oversized all white tee and all black Oakley shades, had his seat laid back with one arm extended, gripping the wood grained steering wheel cover. Another guy, dressed in a similar attire, laid even further back in the front passenger seat. As the trunk and rear-view mirror rattled from the energy of the subwoofers, I



Fig. 2. Promotional album cover for *Thug Misses*: 2002, Khia.

could tell that, even if it was just for this brief moment, they felt as if they were on top of the world. With the car driving around the curved road, disappearing behind the library, people laughed loudly, giggled and pointed fingers with their friends. Sound of the adults even shook their heads in disappointment.

But me, I was in total awe. I thought that was coolest shit I had ever saw.

I played that song every day when I got home, but only on low volume. Even when the censored version played from my bedroom tv or computer speakers, I had to lock the bedroom door. I couldn't let my brother's know I was loving a song like this; might have gotten my ass whooped.



Fig. 3 Still from “Big Pimpin’” (1999) music video (2:48).

Seeing those men exuding so much confidence in that flashy car was THE embodiment of what I saw on TV. To me, it was the same feeling I got when I first saw the “Big Pimpin’” (1999) (fig. 3) music video where Jay-Z was on a yacht off the coast of Trinidad and Tobago rapping about his pimping lifestyle, while everyone was entrenched in diamond chains and surrounded by women. Both moments shared the main premise of what I knew masculinity to be; presence and taking up space. The space could be respect. It could also be fear. It didn’t matter, as long as people were in awe of you.

In “Chapter 3: Shine, Shimmer, and Splendor” (2015), author Krista Thompson displays how rappers created a visual and auditory language around excess to take back symbols of oppression and create status and prestige. Thompson notes that when this language is adopted by diasporic subjects, it become acts of protest and a means of self-representation. (170-175)

*“...taking a symbol that had for so long meant slavery, entrapment and turned their meaning around” - (Issac Hayes, qtd in Thompson, “Shine” 175)*

To see these two men openly play a now considered feminist anthem about sexual liberation, was a bit crazy for the time. Whenever love songs made by women in Hip-Hop and R&B artists were being played, I was so used to seeing heterosexual men alter pronouns and lyrics just because they didn’t want to be seen by others rapping about their affection for men. I even saw men avoid rap verses from women entirely as not to seem ‘soft’ and feminine. *People dem use to really clown me fa strictly singin’ dat 2002 J-Lo’s verse on “I’m Real” and not Ja Rule’s.*

It’s subtle, and in many circles this moment wouldn’t be much, but I think this was definitely the first time I really thought about alternative masculinities. They didn’t seem to care about how they were viewed in the larger context. I think it affected me a little differently because I distinctly remember wanting Destiny’s Child’s *Survivor* (2001) and Missy Elliott’s *Miss*

*E... So Addictive* (2001) albums for my fourteenth birthday and my older brother kept telling me no. I needed the Eminem's *The Marshall Mather's LP* (2000) to man up a little more.

Back to the guys in the white Nissan Maxima. Because they deviated from the perceived masculine norms, I believe this to be a radical fight against patriarchal masculinity.

*oh shoots, Pause it for one sec...*

*....I jus realize I ain put it in dere, but ta summarize bell hooks, patriarchal masculinity is like da overarching ideology dat governs us as men. It's all da rules dat dictate how men gotta act, behave and maneuver, perform from da moment dey born. It tells us we got superiority over otha people and anyting that's feminine. When you tink about, it really limits us...in becomin' our true selves.....It puts us in a box our whole lives and keeps us dere.*

*k, bring it back a lil and press play again.....*

*.....my bad.*

Because they deviated from the perceived masculine norms, I believe this to be a radical fight against patriarchal

masculinity. These guys actively went out there and played that song, knowing people would judge them. At the very least, people will laugh at you or will shake their head in disappointment like they did at school. Other times, doing stuff like that could get you harmed around the wrong people too.

If you ask me, I would like to think that what they were doing was a form of Hip-Hop Feminism. Writer Joan Morgan coined the term in her book *“When Chickenheads Come To Roost”* (2017) to talk about a Feminism, “brave enough to fuck with the grays” (59). At the time, these guys definitely did and it really introduced me to the idea of a functional Feminism that takes into account every aspect of our complicated and often contradictory lives. There is also no perfect set of rules or categories that exists for all of us to adopt.

There’s no one way to perform and live.



Understanding who our true selves are exists, “at the magical intersection where those contrary voices meet - the juncture where “truth” is no longer black and white but subtle, intriguing shades of grey” (Morgan 62).

Each of us needed to take action and create our own.

create our own.

create our own.

create our own.

.....

*I kno it's a lil' childish, ostentatious, inconsiderate an playful but boy...I kine a wish I cud a have dat feeling again when I got my first rims and speakers. I was on top a da world!*

.. .. .

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

may\_god-bless-you-and-keep\_you\_safe -[v1]

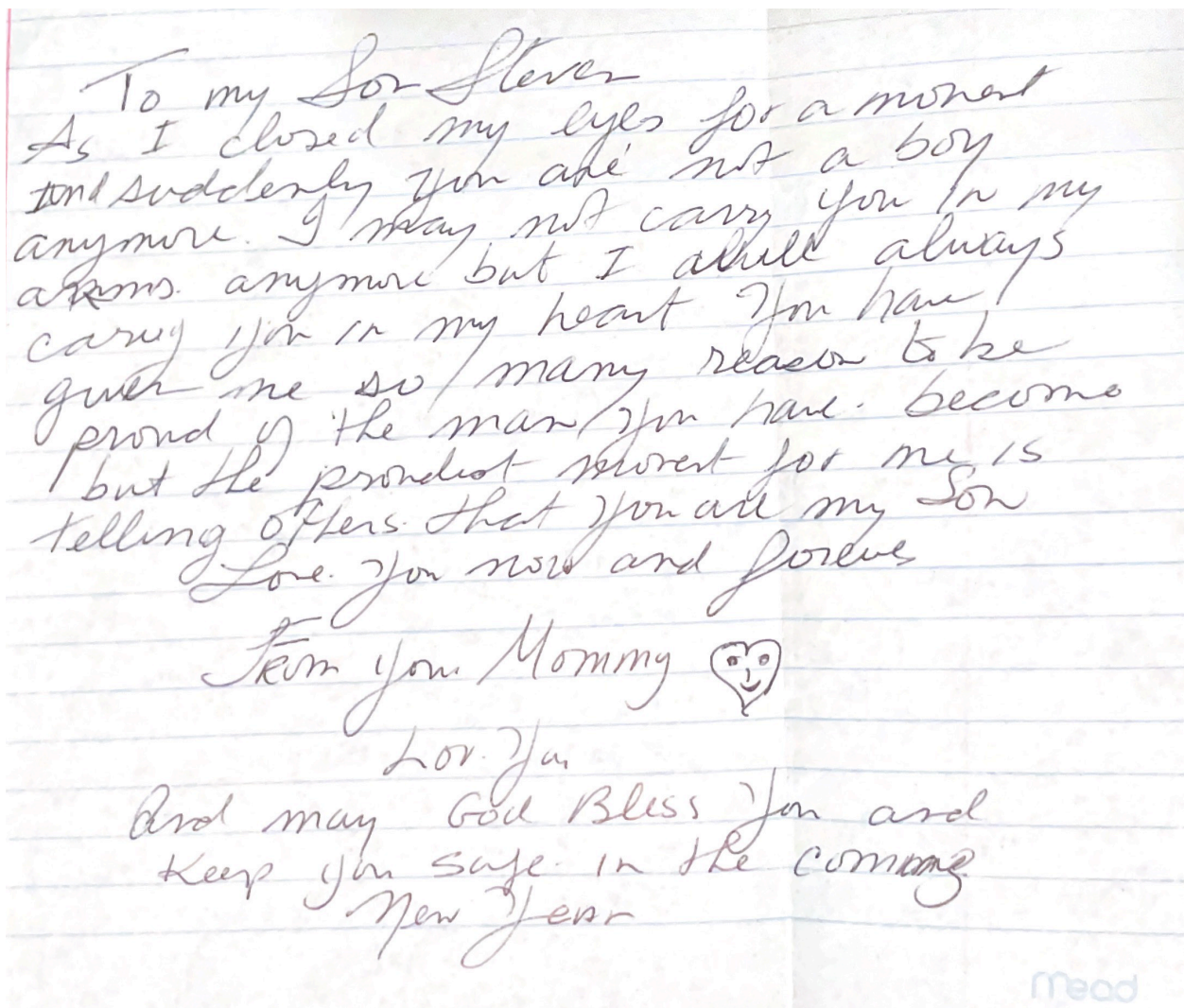


Fig 4. Hand-written letter from Mommy, 2016.

..... ..

## **get\_on\_my\_level-[new\_cut\_3-with-ext-outro]**

*How can you become what you can not imagine?*

- (bell hooks, "Feminism is For Everybody" 152)

"Neva Eva (Get on My Level)" (2003) was my shit back in the day. Performed by an Atlanta Hip-Hop group called *Trillville*, the song was released when the Hip-Hop sub-genre Crunk was just going mainstream. Produced and featuring the genre's leading artist Lil' Jon, alongside newcomer Lil' Scrappy, "Neva Eva" became the anthem for anyone with the slightest inkling for wanting to turn up and let go of their troubles. Filled with aggression, hyper-confidence and the art of not giving a fuck all in one three-minute club track, I distinctly remember the excitement and intensity people would have driving and blasting the song out of their car speakers. Shouting the chorus, "YOU COULD NEVA EVA...EVA EVA...EVA EVA...EVA EVA.... GET ON MY LEVEL! WHAT?! GET ON MY LEVEL!" would even make a then introverted and scrawny 16-year old me feel like I could take on Mike Tyson if he looked at me the wrong way. The swagger, and sheer energy from this song, gave me the confidence to navigate a world that I felt didn't love me back.

I think that was the problem.

You see, Hip-Hop is very competitive and very male identified. From being the best lyricist, producer or dressed person at the award show, to having the flashiest car, biggest chain or being the boss of your own business, there is a drive to be at the top of whatever lane you choose. It's engrained in us from an early age that we must always strive to win and dominate anything we work toward. If men are not at the top or at the very, least striving to be, we're non-existent. Speaking about this weaponizing of men's worth as a form of control, bell hooks notes in *Feminism is For Everybody* (2000) that, "patriarchal masculinity teaches men that their sense of self and identity, their reason for being, resides in their capacity to dominate others" (152).

Hip-Hop is obviously no stranger to violence and patriarchal masculine cultures. Songs like "Never Scared" (2003) by Bone Crusher, "Quick To Back Down" (2003) by The Bravehearts, and especially the previously mentioned "Neva Eva", all display men as aggressors and looking to fight anyone that come their way. Hip-Hop is often seen as the cause of it all when in actuality, a lot of men, including myself, never really knew of an alternative. As Tricia Rose notes in *The Hip Hop Wars* (2008), "hip hop's penchant for stories with violent elements isn't purely a matter of documentary or autobiography, these stories are deeply connected to real social conditions and their impact n the lives of those who live them, close up" (40). As a young Bahamaian man, having a tough exterior was certainly a survival skill. A lot of times, being 'soft' and weak often meant you won't survive very long in the real world. By the men in my life directly telling me the rules of masculinity, or by me indirectly observing how they navigated the world through their actions, I began to witness in my early teenage years that they were simply performing the

In the summer of 2014, shortly after my 25th birthday, I was walking around Downtown Vancouver trying to find somewhere to grab lunch. As a student that was only there for about six months, I didn't know that area at all as I spent majority of my time either on Granville Island at Emily Carr University or with my partner in our one bedroom basement apartment in Kerrisdale.

As I stumbled upon Downtown Vancouver's Emery Barnes Park, I began to notice the families who were watching or entertaining their kids. Through the sea of people, I saw one family that stood out. In the middle of the park, a father walked jubilantly over to his son and knelt down to be on the same level as him. Beneath the brightly lit and cloudless sky, I stood in awe as I

watched them have an actual conversation and laugh together. To see the father, actively kneel to his kid's level, opened my mind to the possibilities of a masculinity that was gentle, caring and lovingly respectful. For this to be successful, bell hooks notes, "what is and was needed is a vision of masculinity where self-esteem and self-love of one's unique being forms the basis of identity" ("Feminism Is For Everybody" 152).

.....

.....

.....

.....

*Lookin' back at my own childhood, it was sumtin I realized dat I rarely, if ever, had da opportunity to experience. I always had ta look up. I don't recall dem kneeling down and lookin' at me at eye level. There was always a... distinction... made for who was in charge. I mean sometimes... I would get a taste a being on dere level. When someone would pick me up, or sit me on da table to help tie my shoes, I cud feel what it meant ta be above all da lil' tings around me. Someday, I taught I woulda been able to have dat feeling of being above it all too. Tinkin' bout it, maybe it was a act of love dat dey would only pick me up and let me see da world from dere level.*

...

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

I still occasionally play “Neva Eva”. Chanting, “GET ON MY LEVEL!” to the top of my lungs does bring back those fun, youthful memories. However, since witnessing such an astonishingly simple gesture of respect and love at Emery Barnes Park, I always tend to feel bad after listening to that song knowing that I don’t agree with the sentiment anymore. I see the power in actively kneeling to someone else’s level to assist, to show them respect and even appreciation. I adopted this rather quickly after when conversing with my niece, nephews and any other children. Sometimes, I fall back in to old habits and stand above them, asserting a distant and dominant authority, but I try to correct this as much as I can. Unlearning doesn’t happen overnight and can take a life time even. However, I’m willing to put in the work knowing that my nieces, nephews and future child(ren) will have a person that will always respectfully meet, and be there for them no matter what level they’re at.

*“You must realize, understand fully, that we have little or no control over our lives. You must then stop giving yourself pain by feeling that you failed somewhere. You have not failed. You have been failed, by history and events, and people over whom you had no control. Only after you understand this can you then go on to make the necessary alterations that will bring some purpose and value to your life; you must gain some control!”*

- (George Jackson, "Soledad Brother" 52)

*When I was alone in my Vancouver apartment, a lil' too high and mashin' up a pizza, I was lookin' fa leaks fa da scrapped Yandhi album by Kanye West on YouTube. I came across dis video, das now deleted, dat had dese tree young men sittin' on a couch, reactin' to dem listening and geekin' over this new version of da album. Hurricane, a popula leak dat I did hear before, was next on da track list. Dere excitement was PALPABLE. All tree a dem was singin' dat word fa word and dere shoulders was bobbin' like crazy ta da beat. He ain hear dis version before doh. This one had a extended outro dat had Kanye's vocals layered up in auto tune. He was croonin' melodically over da heavy synth base dat had drums removed. Erytime he did reach a higher note outside his vocal range, his voice did crack even more and more. Nearin' da end a da track and tryin' ta reach da highest note he cud a make, he did start singin', "Father hold me close, don't let me down... I know you won't!". Boyyyyy...dem boys was wipin' all type a tears from dey eyes.*

*Dey cried fa a couple a minutes .... and I cried wit em.*





haircut, wearing fitted clothing or telling stories about my time in Vancouver that they may not be able to relate to. In retrospect, it was more of an overarching concern where I felt people would see me as someone completely foreign to who they remember me as.

In 2015, for my first trip home in two years, I distinctly remember not bringing back any clothing that may have been considered feminine by family and friends. Only loose fitting clothes, nothing too colourful and definitely not the small, gold hoop earrings that I recently purchased from Amazon. I didn't like, or want, the attention that these clothes would have brought me. I was afraid I had to play the Bahamian masculine role when I went back; the hyper-aggressive, often sexist and patriarchal type. The ones that would excessively drink and party because it was the holidays, cat call at passing women while driving, talk in a deeper and more aggressive voice when around other men and attempt to fight anyone that looked at them wrong the way.

Even if I had to fall back into old habits and pretend to like doing these things, I guess I would only be doing it for a short while. By living in a different country, I would be able to compartmentalize and separate my old and new selves with ease. It was one of the benefits of living thousands of miles away where no one would ever visit me on a whim. On that first plane ride back to Canada, I realized I would constantly have to navigate who I was, who I am and who I wanted to be. It didn't matter which country I was in. By negotiating these interlocking sections of identity, creating a new self would take a lifetime, where the result will undoubtedly be an imperfect one that wouldn't properly exist in either space. *I ramemba seein' a tweet dat did say sumtin' bout, "all Bahamian men NEED to live outside the country for*

*a while in order to see how the country's rigid view of masculinity limits our potential". I couldn't find the original tweet no more but trust me it's true.*

As cultural critic Stuart Hall notes in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, "to return to the Caribbean after any long absence is to experience again the shock of the 'doubleness' of similarity and difference" (227). It's a complex space to negotiate because, even though unintentional, a new territory is formed where "creolisations and assimilations and syncretisms are negotiated" (Hall 234). Because of the removal of hierarchical structures, this newly formed amalgamation can then become sites for producing new quandaries, understandings and realizations about identities that are ultimately unique to you. And as a result, a new, imperfect, self is born.

...

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

From the moment I chose to visit home again, my lives as both a Bahamian and living in Canada were beginning to converse with each other. I realized that I couldn't easily separate where I came from and the new self I was inevitably going to construct any longer. Exploring this idea in my practice, I began asking two questions. How can I visually represent these complicated lived experiences on a Bahamian body? How can the materials around me assist me in negotiating new masculinities in the process? Attempting to explore these questions, I turned to Ian Dawson and Paul Reilly's notion of the phygital nexus; "a no-place and an everyplace in



Fig. 5. *Admiring the Stars 1-3* by Steven Schmid: 2021, Digital Assemblage, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 22 x 27 in.

which the boundaries between what is physical and what is virtual are blurred, where digital-defined objects (actants) are susceptible to transmutations and may be (re)deposited within multiple parallel or intersecting physical and digital assemblages, and are able to ‘jump’ almost anywhere in our digitally hyper-connected universe” (3). By using an unfixed assemblage as a site of constant negotiation, I began to search, collect, cut, chop, splice, re-arrange and connect objects and drawings together to make a whole. I then re-purpose these materials again and again in both physical and digital spaces. By considering the body as an assemblage of experiences that are in constant negotiation with itself, new revelations and unexpected encounters are inevitable. “Assemblages are inherently productive, entering into polyvalent becomings to produce and give expression to previously nonexistent realities, thoughts, bodies, affects, spaces, actions, ideas, and so on” (Weheliye 47).

Formed through images taken throughout my sculptural creation process and further expanded upon through digital painting, photography and other manipulations, works such as *Admiring The Stars 1-3* (fig. 5) highlight the complexities of human experiences and how these systemic and oppressive systems are engrained, brought to the forefront, analysed, removed and reintegrated in my life.

As a figurative painter,

I challenged myself

I challenged myself

I challenged myself

I challenged myself to further let go clean cut lines and anatomically correct rules of the figures, allowing the process of mish-mashing and making quick decisions from what is available around me to dictate the final works. This ultimately led to my practice becoming messier, convoluted and more abstract. By also introducing real world materiality through the sculptural elements, I began to consciously view my work as assemblages and not simply as drawings or paintings. With each fragment becoming living organisms in a way, they traveled with all of their stories, experiences and histories from project to project, continuously evolving and communicating as they moved between each other.

By creating works in the format, I also began to decentre the painting process as the ideal and elitist form of image making. Chantal Gibson's, *How She Read* (2019) (fig. 6) became a staple during this investigative process as I began to consider dissection and reconfiguration of the things around me as a decolonial tool. In works such as "misplaced modifiers" (19) and "fragments" (20), Gibson unapologetically removes specific rules of the written text to parallel

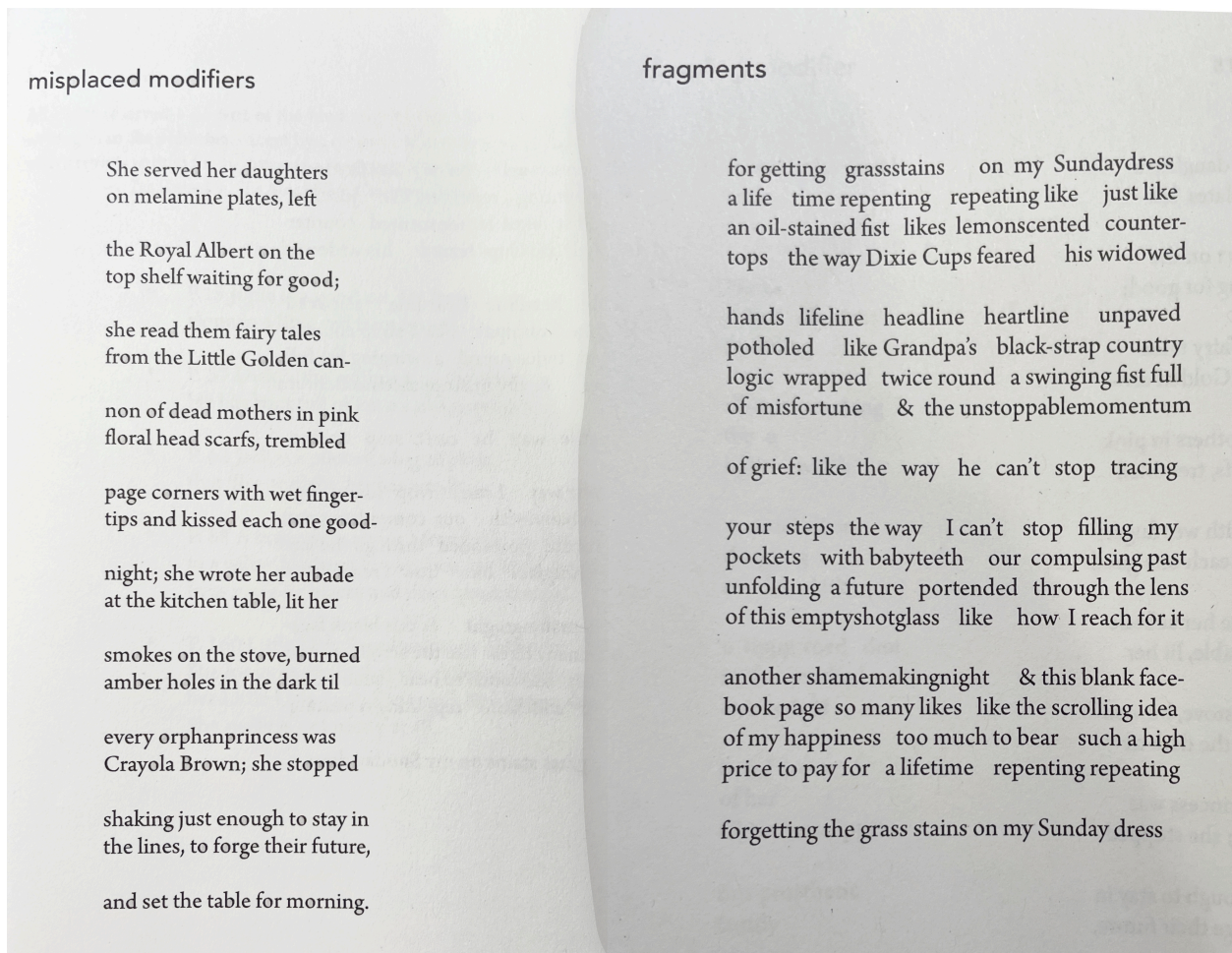


Fig. 6. *How She Read* by Chantel Gibson: 2019, “misplaced modifiers” and “fragments”.

the non-linearity of thought and colloquial speech. By removing punctuation, combining words to make larger ones, extending space between text, pulling apart terms to alter its emphasis and meaning, all while negotiating the matrix of oppressive systems that make up the everyday, Gibson highlights the necessity in dismantling seemingly immovable colonial structures to claim space in our own distinct ways.

This work I’m doing isn’t immediate in any sense. It requires time and energy, sometimes with little to no reward. However, by revisiting and chipping away at the interlocking hegemonic

structures that surround us, we can actively create room to be ourselves; undefined by the rigid structures we're expected to uphold. Change and difference won't be so bad.

At least we'll be ourselves.





## mish-mash-[OG\_version]

[Intro]

“There is no unearned heroism here, there is the unproclaimed heroism of the ordinary person” -  
(Ndebele 155).

[Verse 1: Steven]

Mish-Mash was a dish my mother often created while growing up in The Bahamas. It was one I remember quite fondly because every time it was placed in front me, it looked completely different.

When I recently asked my mother what the ingredients were she noted rather nonchalantly, “Whateva’s roun da house”. This almost always meant there was a \$0.25 package of ramen noodles (beef flavoured preferably) and boiled potatoes used as its main ingredients. When it was time to start frying them together in that 16 inch worn down non stick pan, however, *bui, dat non stick was so run down it did look like a ol’ cast iron from a hundred years ago. You know dat ain no non-stick pan no more*, it was always a surprise of what she would add to it. Some days there might be fried onions along side a \$0.15 hot dog all mixed together with soy sauce for extra pizzazz. Other times it might have green peppers and chicken alongside some of the leftover curry powder from another half eaten ramen package. I remember once even

having frozen broccoli, eggs and a steak added to it one random night. Never knowing which one of these choices or any of the other unmentioned combination my mother made up on the spot, the name Mish-Mash became associated with a general idea of the dish as oppose to any one distinct recipe that was followed. The dish can easily be super elaborate depending on what was on hand or paired down to something extremely minimal that would be ready to go in minutes.

Thinking about it, this described my mother quite well. She always found unique ways to make ends meet. Never complaining, she always focused on what she could make happen with what was handed to her. “U gotta do what u gotta do, Steven”, she would always say.

[break: Sekou Cooke]

“In a rhetorical environment of domination, powerless groups voice their resistance in coded forms” (8).

[Verse 2: Steven]

In *Hood Feminism: Notes From The Women That A Movement Forgot* (2020), author Mikki Kendall expertly critiques the failings of mainstream Feminism by centring the basic needs of women, such as education, housing, medical care and gun violence as Feminist issues. This text is strongly influenced by Kimberlé Crenshaw’s Intersectional Feminism which “centres the voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression in order to understand the depths of the inequalities and the relationships among them in any given context” (UN Women). With a movement that regularly disregarded the complex interlocking issues of poor

people, Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of colour, Kendall highlights the necessity in telling ones personalized story to create a universal Feminism that is for everyone, regardless of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, class or religion. By prioritizing the everyday experiences of people, we can also bring attention to the tireless work and creative ingenuity needed to simply survive under these oppressive conditions. “I am not ashamed of where I came from; the hood taught me that feminism isn’t just academic theory. It isn’t a matter of saying the right words at the right time. Feminism is the work that you do, and the people you do it for who matter more than anything else” (Kendall xiii). We’re all just trying to make do with what’s been handed down to us and we should ultimately be there for each other.

[Chorus: Shelley]

U gotta do what you gotta do

U gotta do what you gotta do

U gotta do what you gotta do

U gotta do what you gotta do

[Verse 3: Steven]

My mother was no exception. By working as a receptionist and then a house keeping manager at a timeshare for nearly 15 years, she often befriended and was loved by many of the guests that stayed there on their trip. She had one of those charismatic, expressive personalities that loved entertaining and making anyone feel welcomed. Regardless of socio-economic background, ethnicity, race, religion, sex or gender, she always wanted to make sure you laughed and had a

memorable time. Sometimes the stories she told might be a little exaggerated for the sake of flair, but it was always an amazing way to entertain and capture other's attention.

When guests were leaving to return home, they would often call her up to their timeshares the night before or the morning of to give her all the unused food, snacks and leftovers they didn't consume. Some Friday nights and Saturday mornings were like Christmas to me. Whenever she pulled in to the driveway after receiving all this food, I would run alongside the car trying to catch a peak of what was in the back seats. Inside the used grocery bags and torn up boxes, there would almost always be snacks that my mother couldn't afford to buy.

The amazing thing was, she always did this with a smile. *Dey used ta call her Sunshiiiiiiiine Shelley cuz a dat smile.* She was never ashamed of receiving help. She was doing what she had to do. I learned the same from my mother as Kendall learned from her grandmother. "She taught me that being able to survive, to take care of myself and those I loved, was arguable more important than being concerned with respectability" (Kendall x). Despite our monetary conditions, she made it work.

Even with some of the most simplest of ingredients, she could mish-mash anything together to make any dish seem gourmet. She did what she had to do and I will always love and appreciate it her for that.

[Chorus: Shelley]

By adopting a Hood Feminist lens in my own making practice, I really began to appreciate the invaluable and creative uniqueness my own communities have instituted to make do with what

was handed to us. Focusing on my own Bahamian background, I wanted to pay homage to the ingenuity, adaptability and constant re-configuration a lot of us have to go through to make ends meet. When I think of my mother, she made the best with what was available. Often combining seemingly mundane and random bits and pieces together or reimagining the thing that no longer served their original purpose, she always managed to make something unique out of very little. What she did was a form of Feminism that was never recognized with an overt and conscious title but was executed time and time again through actions.

Attempting to capture the spontaneous adaptability and almost freestyle approach to navigating the everyday, I began to make quick witted decisions in response to my own making process. By doing this, I began to permanently let go of the idea of perfection as the ultimate goal. *Cuttin' Up'* (2021) (fig. 7), a digital painting that combined various old and new paintings of my family members and their experiences to form a new figure, was the first tangible result of this shift. As a figurative painter whose aesthetic often focused on refined lines and anatomically correct figures, I began to incorporate the messiness from *Makin' Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece* (2021) (fig. 10) into this piece by allowing the residual markings formed through the process of Mish-Mashing previous works together to remain. This digital materiality became essential as a visual passage of time showing how those experiences interconnected, communicated and built around and on top of each other. Although very subtle in this artwork, this approach encouraged me to let go of my imposed restrictions to making, by playing and experimenting more; opening the door to further abstracting the figure and producing previously unimaginable forms.

Besides referencing both the collage approach to my painting practice, the title also references the Bahamian term ‘cuttin’ up’ which alludes to the coyness an individual has when trying to be reserved with their intentions. Here, the person is on the verge of breaking out of that coyness, letting go of the imposed ideologies that structure how one should act and truly beginning to enjoy themselves, even if it may just be for a brief moment. Whether it’s an overt smile or uncontrollable eye of bewilderment, I really tried to display the delicate, fun or innocent moments beneath a tough exterior.

[Chorus: bell hooks]

They must dream about a masculinity that humanizes.

They must dare to embrace boyhood as a time of wonder, play, and self-invention. They must dare to become men who are willing to be different. - (hooks, “We Real Cool” 137)

[Chorus: bell hooks & Steven]

They must dream about a masculinity that humanizes.

*I gotta dream bout a masculinity dat humanizes.*

They must dare to embrace boyhood as a time of wonder, play, and self-invention.

*I muss dare to embrace boyhood as a time a wonda, play, an self-invention.*

They must dare to become men who are willing to be different

*I muss dare-ta become a man who’s willin’ ta be differen.*

[Outro: Steven and Jill Ebrey]

I know this way of troubling the notions of masculinity isn't the only answer. "hooks' analysis reminds us that there are many everyday lives, lived under different circumstances, in different contexts, under different regimes of power. The story of one home, one everyday life does not speak for all" (Ebrey 165). I must try to figure out how to uniquely navigate my surroundings to make the best version with the things that have been so deeply engrained. No matter how small they are.





Fig. 7. *Cuttin' Up* by Steven Schmid: 2021, Digital Painting, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers  
on Paper, 38 x 50 in.

.....

.....



## **130\_Stichess-[original]**

I taught I did tell you I bin lock up lass week Tursdee dey had me charge for attempted murda.

Da fella, break my...two a dem... tree a dem try ta rob me in my car in Stapleton Garden.

Wen dey pull da door, my door was lock.

Den him and sum fella buss out da back glass and den... run, run...he run pass my car,

my driver door an started openin da door

I had a, I have a blade and I cut his troat.

He got a huh,

huh,

a hundred an, thirty six stitchesss

in his troat.

*Transcript of WhatsApp Message*

*0:26*

*December 18, 2021*

*2:38 P.M.*

... ..

.... ..

.. ..

.. ..

## knife\_talk-[lyric\_cudi\_re-edit]

@Itsshadee

*When a Bahamian says, "lemme give you this joke", a joke really don't be involved.*

11:06 AM • 2021-11-24 • Twitter for iPhone

[1]

The Bahamas is a very religious country. With Christianity being the most accepted and heavily integrated into our social and political climate, it attempts to teach us how to navigate the world as a loving, humble and benevolent people. From crosses and images of Jesus hanging on the walls of many homes, businesses and government buildings, to the prayers we collectively recited before, after and sometimes in between, our school days; we're reminded that God is ever-present, watching over us and showering us with love. The expansively vibrant bougevillia

trees, crystal clear oceans and expansively rich culture would also agree. He is here for us and we should be here for each other, no matter what.

But, lemme give you this joke.

In 2017, Index Mundi, compiling data from UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Homicide Statistics database, ranked The Bahamas as number ten in having one of the highest murder rates per capita in the world. Her Majesty's Prison, the main prison of The Bahamas located on New Providence, has around 409 per 100,000 people imprisoned here as of December 2020 (World Prison Brief). Both are rather startling statistics given there's only about 400,000 of us.

There's a lot of rage beneath God's love.

[2]

In the Summer of 2005, I got into a car accident near my home.

My cousin and I were in my 1994 black Nissan Skyline, playing the song "Get on My Level (Neva Eva)" (2002) by Trillville at almost max volume. With the sub woofers rattling my trunk and rearview mirror, you could hear me approaching a mile away. I felt as if I was on top of the world.

Noticing the green light ahead, I began slowing down a bit while I approached the somewhat curved intersection. Just as I entered the four-way crossing, a man driving an ATV ran the red light on his end, slamming into the right bumper of my car and tumbled over the hood on

to the asphalt road. Shocked and startled, I pulled off my seatbelt, asked my cousin in the passenger seat if he was okay and began opening my door to see if the person I had just got into an accident with was okay. Frantically running to the front of my car to check on him, I noticed a crowd of people from the neighbourhood forming around us to see what was going on.

As I got closer to the guy on the ground, another man from the crowd ran aggressively toward me. Accusing me of causing the accident, he then shoved and shouted at me to get out of here as quick as possible. Stumbling backwards and falling on to the hood of my car, I realized how much the situation was intensifying.

I needed to grab my phone and call the police.

Shuffling back to the driver's side of my car, I leaned in to the window to grab my phone out of the cup holder. I noticed my iPod that I had right next to it, was now missing. After repeatedly asking my cousin where it was, all he could manage to frighteningly whisper was, "they took it".

With rage consuming my entire body, I turned to look for the guy that had originally pushed me. Now standing in front of an even larger crowd that had formed all around us, I began fiercely shouting for whoever stole my iPod to return it. Facing a crowd of over forty people now staring back at me, the man proceeded to grab an empty beer bottle off the ground and threw it with all his strength toward me. Somehow blocking it with my right forearm before it had hit my face, I realized we were in trouble.

Reaching for my six inch folding knife hidden behind my car's centre console, I made my decision this was going to be the end of it all. But just as I flipped the knife open, my cousin quickly grabbed my arm and pleaded with me to hop back in the car and leave. Looking at the

tears and sheer fright in his eyes, I paused for a handful of seconds, dropped the knife on the floor, and started the car. With sparks flying everywhere from my busted rim and tire scraping the asphalt road, I sped toward my home.

I don't recall all the specific details after that. My brother took me to the police to file a complaint, and then to a hospital to tend to my swollen and wounded arm. While my adrenaline wore down at the hospital however, I do recall constantly replaying the incident in my mind. I could only think about how much I looked 'soft' in their eyes. How I didn't stand up for be disrespected. In the coming days, I was even more hurt by my reaction to the situation because when I told the story to others, the responses by men were often, "Boyyyyyyy, nobody was gonna take me for no joke. I woulda [insert some violent act they would have done to them]". I distinctly remember looking for a simple "glad you're okay" that I never got.

There is agency in restraint. For a while I saw that moment as a failed attempt of standing up for myself. It was something I was taught I needed to do no matter the repercussions. I avoided that area for nearly three years after the incident, hoping the people in the neighbourhood would forget about me. But as I got older I realized that by making the decision to choose mine and my cousin's safety over 'standing up', there was unbelievable strength in not performing as my world expected.

[3]

Even if I was never convicted of anything, I always thought I would have passed through the prison system at some point. It seemed inevitable. As Bahamians, we've never fully

addressed the generational effects of colonialism, imperialism, poverty and the creation of the tourism industry that made us view ourselves as second to any visitor.

We often turned to Christianity to help deal with this. Although Sunday Service was all about love, forgiveness, community and finding our way back to God when we strayed too far, I always felt from an early age that under the guise of obedience, religion perpetuated rigid and linear ways of navigating space that held Bahamians to an unattainable standard. Consequently, it also perpetuated patriarchal norms that shaped our value systems and the ways gender operated within the culture.

That's why in a religious country such as The Bahamas, I always turned to Hip-Hop/Rap as one of the primary mediums to work through these complicated issues. I remember being seven years old in my older brother's room, listening to Notorious B.I.G. boast about having fame, women, cars and jewelry on "Big Poppa" (1994) while also suddenly getting introspective and mournful about feeling unloved and guilty about the crimes he committed in "Suicidal Thoughts" (1994). Hip-Hop music rarely shied from the struggles, intricacies and conflicts within our everyday lives, providing an open space to work through these problems. "The ordinary is sobering rationality; it is the forcing of attention on necessary detail. Paying attention to the ordinary and its methods will result in a significant growth of consciousness" (Ndebele 152). For me, Hip-Hop/Rap provided a realistic look at what it looked like to be human and the effort needed to survive within an oppressive world.

Songs like Kool G Rap's "Executioner Style" (1995), Lil' Jon and The Eastside Boyz's "I Don't Give A Fuck" (2002), or Waka Flocka Flame's "Hard in Da Paint" (2010) all offered an aggressive and hostile display of how men are expected to perform when interacting with each other. Anger, rage and violence was seemingly the default. But Rap also showed me the tender side to masculinity and the realistic negotiations we need to have with ourselves to become better people. From DMX's violent anthemic proclamations on "Where Da Hood At" (2003) to his reflections and requests for forgiveness on his various "Prayer" (1998-2021) skits, and Tupac's



aggressive posturing on tracks like "Hit Em' Up" (1996) and "Still Ballin'" (2002) to his introspective and appreciations for the work of his mother on "Dear Mama" (1994), many artists displayed masculinity as a convoluted spectrum of emotions. Hip-Hop lives as a site of double consciousness (Perri 20), performing the hyper-masculine while displaying how tired the body became trying to keep up with it. On one hand, Hip-Hop artists create songs that praise hyper-aggression and violence and then on the other, lament about the need for change and wanting to be better people. Throughout this, it showed us that, "to be human is to navigate the world as it is" (Sugrue) and for many, that often means constantly negotiating are placement between multiple lived realities.

Nicolette Bethel, Bahamian writer and cultural critic notes in "Navigations: National Identity and the Archipelago" that, "the internal sea of the nation fosters the development of a variety of separate but interlocking traditions which interact one with another, but are not necessarily replicas of each other – the development, in other words, of a number of centres without margins" (14). By the removal of these margins, new spaces and territories are being formed that allow for distinct interpretations and reinventions of seemingly immovable ideals.

Hip-Hop is at the forefront of those changes. An artist like Kid Cudi for example, uses melody as a site of introspective vulnerability. Combined with lyrics that explore loneliness, anxiety and depression, Cudi introduced many young men, including myself, to the importance mental health. "He understands the bleeding heart. And he builds on a legacy of musicians before him that turned their grief and sorrow into messages of hope, reminding their audience that it's okay to express your vulnerability" (Capitao). Additionally, with the resounding influx of women and queer voices becoming more prominent in the mainstream Hip-Hop world over the past few years, artists such as Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion, Rapsody, Lil Nas X, Young MA, Kevin Abstract and many others, are further challenging the complicated ideas surrounding Feminisms and masculinity in a space that wasn't always so welcoming. Seeing yourself in these spaces provides a way of being a better you and, ultimately, drives the community forward.

## **a\_new\_self-all\_ova\_da\_place-[jan-2021-mash\_up\_v6]**

### *A New Self*

For three years, I struggled to make art. I wanted to incorporate elements of Hip-Hop and be more 'honest' in my practice, but the problem was, I didn't know what that exactly meant. During this time, I made over a hundred partially completed drawings - figures attacking monsters, pigs, hands, eyes, plants, cars, floral patterns, family portraits, among many others - but didn't know what to do with them. I could no longer find meaning in the work I was doing. I didn't talk to anyone about it as I thought it would make me seem like a failure who was unable to progress. If anyone would ask how I was doing and how the artworks were coming along, I would simply respond with, "I'm doing good. It's coming together". After struggling to find direction and purpose within my practice and losing confidence in myself as a person, I decided to tell someone what I was going through.



Fig. 8. *Within Reach* by Steven Schmid: 2020, Digital Painting, Colouring Pencil, Markers on Paper , 24 x 36 in.

Over a weekend breakfast at the dining room table in our Vancouver home, I opened up to my partner about all the issues I had making art, the troubles I had in finding meaning in my life, and the insecurities I had about letting her and my family down. While in a fearful frenzy

explaining my goals and expectations for myself and the work, she grabbed my cheeks and whispered, “Well, jus do dat. You jus beatin’ roun’ da bush”.

I needed to hear those words. Within just a short conversation, she recognized I simply had to be honest and direct with what I wanted for myself instead of always talking around it. I was losing the opportunity to be unapologetically me; that is, a paradoxical human with a conflicting spectrum of emotions, beliefs and behaviours. I knew it, but I needed someone to also recognize it, to lay bare what I didn’t want to acknowledge myself.

Finding purpose did not really come to me as some AHA! moment after that, but over several small trips to The Bahamas. With me travelling there more times in two years than I have done my previous six living here in Canada, I became extremely reinvigorated by the honesty, complexity and richness in the Bahamian everyday. I began to witness the seemingly incongruent and paradoxical moments of Bahamian culture as a novel and intricate space that challenged hierarchal ideals, highlighting the complexities we constantly have to navigate between. Filled with its own myth and ideological inquiry, I turned to my exploration of my Bahamian-ness as a site of recourse.

Before I began my new artistic journey, I wanted to make one more piece as a visual *momento mori*. *Within Reach* (2020) (fig. 8) became this painting. While creating the theme of a figure lamenting the death of a beast at their own hands, I turned to all the work I previously made to become the man components of the beast and the figure. By doing this I came to the realization that the failures I’ve had in the past were all material that can be further expanded on. They still deserved a place within my practice as they were still a part of me and my journey.





Fig. 9. *Rattenkonig: Three Bruddas Knot' Makin'* by Steven Schmid: 2020, Digital Painting, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 34 x 37 in.

*Rattenkonig: Three Brothers Knot' Makin'* (2020) (fig. 9) expanded on these ideas as well and began to further explore my Bahamian-ness through my mixed German-Bahamian heritage. Here, the figures are for the first time, beginning to smile, despite being anatomically incorrect nor properly formed and put together. Pulling elements from *Within Reach* (2020) and from other drawings I made years prior, I began to realize that, “every residual object has the

potential to become a fresh component of one or more subsequent new contexts” (Dawson, Reily 4). By removing the pressure to create for one particular work, ‘playing’ became a central aspect of the practice moving forward. In acknowledging these convoluted spaces of play and oppression, I can begin to explore worlds that disrupted the cultural norm or expectation. In negotiating this space, I realized there is a, “fine line between sanity and madness” (Price 48).

This was no simple task, but something that would take years of unlearning, a lifetime even. It was okay to not have answers and know that this was going to take some time. Although the work might be messy, all over the place, sometimes unresolved and beautifully confusing, “one thing I’m quite certain of is my identity exists in these works” (Hanna).

### *All Over Da Place*

When I visited my family for Christmas 2020, I brought a chain to give to one of my nephews. He was asking for one for a while. I had a couple laying around that I no longer used so I thought, “aahhh why not, it’s yours”. He’s always smiling, exceptionally aware and quite hilarious. When I had given him this chain and placed it around his neck, he began to straighten his posture and not smile as much. When I asked to take a photo, he began making gun gestures and lifting up his chin, the latter also being a symbol of aggression. ‘Ackin’ hard’ is what we call it in The Bahamas.

After a few photos, I did try to make some jokes and clown him a little for the performance in an effort to capture that vibrant

and ecstatic expression he gave when I had first shown it to him. It didn't really work on camera, but every time I look at that photo, the smile and sheer joy he showed right before this always seems to superimpose itself over that image.

I think about the countless times I made similar gestures as well and how I sometimes instinctively still do it to this day.

In an attempt to capture my nephew as I saw him, I learned that, “to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have” (Sontag 11). To be documented in such a vulnerable state can be embarrassing and occasionally even frightening for some, as it reveals the child-like joviality that we are often taught to lose as we get older. *I understan’ it doh. I only jus start smilin’ in photos like 5 years ago.*

From an early age we were often told by older members in our family, both men and women, to be a man, which meant to, “inspire to a masculine identity rotted in the patriarchal ideal” (hooks, “Reconstructing Black Masculinity” 88). This meant letting go of vulnerability and losing a wide emotional spectrum that innately make us human. “We programmatically deny children their feelings...Once a person loses contact with his own feelings, he loses contact with his own body...To have one’s feelings, body, desires and thoughts controlled is to lose one’s self. To lose one’s self is to have one’s soul murdered” (Bradshaw, qtd in hooks, “We Real Cool” 130).





Fig. 10. *Makin Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece* by Steven Schmid: 2021, CMYK Ink, Colouring Pencils, Markers, Graphite on Paper, 42 x 60 in.

This interaction led to me to want to explore those minute and in-between moments when men would smile and for brief moment, let go of the performative and dominating roles of masculinity that's expected of us. By exploring smiling and laughter as a source of resistance



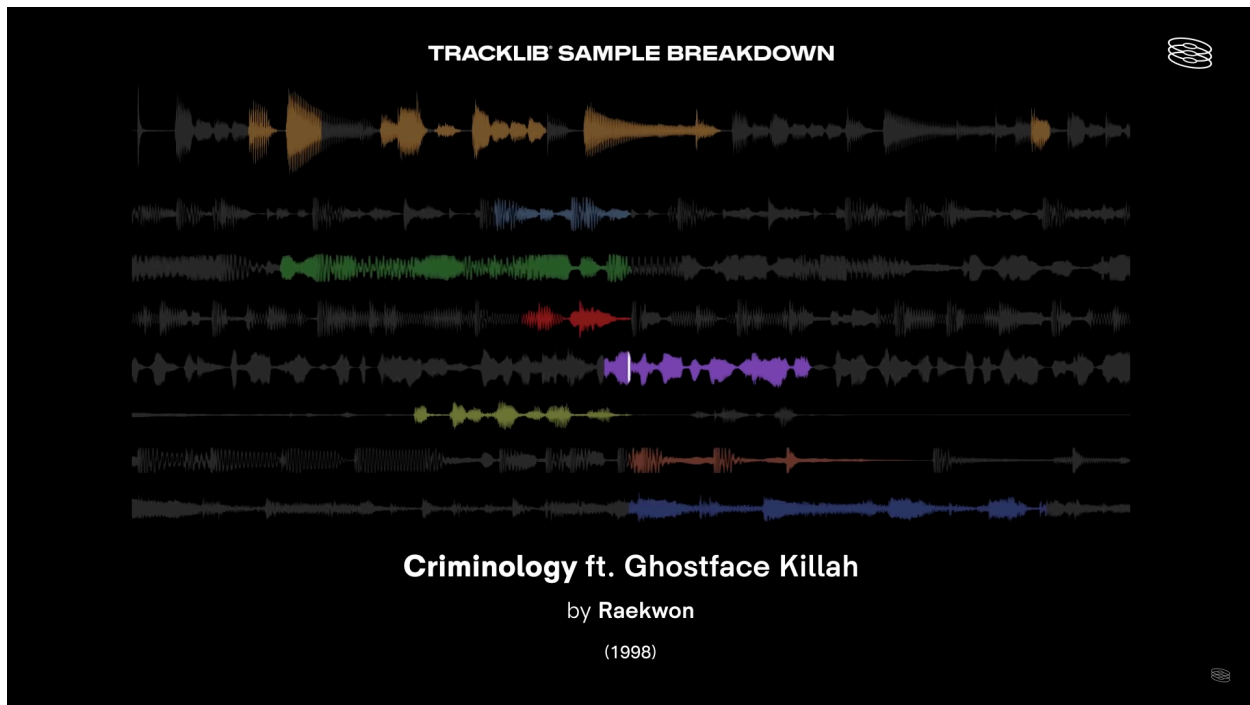


Fig. 11. Sample Breakdown for *Still from Mathematics*: 1999, Tracklib

against the rigid and emotionless expectations of the patriarchal ideal, I began to witness how simple gestures like this can help create more playful, exuberant and carefree forms of masculinity.

*Makin' Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece* (2021) (fig. 10) was a result of this exploration. By capturing laughter and playfulness surrounded by oppressive symbolism and gestures, the work began to examine the ways we as Bahamian men navigate our uniquely constructed spaces of comprised of oppressive, intersecting ideologies to simply show affection. Attempting to further explore these delicately, interlocked juxtapositions in a material making process, I began turning to the unique ways Hip-Hop producers mesh, compound, slice, chop, stretch, manipulate and repurpose sounds from various sources together to continually make something new. By removing hierarchal structures and combining various imagery and materials together to create

new works, the images and materials began to live multiple lives, often changing contexts and creating new meanings and identities in the process.

An example of this can be found in (fig. 11), where producer DJ Premier amalgamates various musical sources to make a newly cohesive whole. On the track “Mathematics” (1999) by Mos Def, Premier meshes small vocal sections from The Fatback Band, Fat Joe, Big Pun, Raekwon, Erykah Badu and a few others to create a communal voice speaking a singular sentence. The rough edits, unexpected scratches and pauses are intentionally left behind as symbols of immediacy and disruption. Adopting a similar freestyle approach encouraged me to be more present in the making process, while helping to realize alternatives to the masculine forms I wanted to make. “Like jazz and blues musicians, freestylers know pieces by heart, but in the moment of improvisational composition, they blend them into a collage of assemblage, altering and reconfiguring them” (Perri 33). With Crayola crayons, markers, glue and scissors in hand, playfully reconfiguring previously constructed images in unexpected ways allowed me to extend the fun and humour I attempted to capture in the final image to the making process as well.

“Hip-Hop is about doing the unexpected. That unexpectedness constitutes the par excellence feature of hybridity: unexpected encounters lead to unexpected productions” (Perri 13). By letting go, being present and establishing a mutable practice, we are able to create novel spaces that allow us to let go of any imposed ideologies and hopefully find enjoy our real selves, even if it may be just for a brief moment.

... ..  
 ....  
 ..... ..

## **if\_you\_don't\_laugh- [original mix]**

*“There is a species of fly that lives only four hours. If one of these flies, June fly I believe they are called, if one of these flies was born at twelve o’ clock midnight in darkness and gloom, there would be no way possible for him in his lifetime to ever understand the concept of day and light.”*

- (George Jackson “Soledad Brother” 44)

I don’t recall his voice, him eating dinners with us, a hug, nor him singing happy birthday for my mother nor my brothers and I. He worked a lot of late night shifts as a chef, so he wasn’t really home much. When he was though, you could often find him asleep on the living room couch, on his recliner in the small nook just before the kitchen or even passed out on the steps in the back yard. Being a chef physically requires a lot out of you but I always knew there were other reasons for him being so removed.

He was present but never, present. Know what I mean? Like so many adult men in The Bahamas, my father turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism to really face his emotional turmoil. A numbing tool to hide and/or not face the circumstances of our realities. *U remember da Dave Chappelle joke when he is say he know he’s in da hood. “I started looking out the window, see gun store, gun store, liquor store, gun store, where the fuck you*

*taking me?” Switch up dat gun store wit church, and you have Nassau, The Bahamas.*

“At least you got a daddy?” people would say. It was a statement that was said all too often from hurt kids and wounded mothers hoping they could meet the standards of the Christian, nuclear, two parent home. The Bahamas, with its heavily influenced patriarchal ideals, would have you believe that presence and providing were the central traits of being a father and a man. Emotional worth could be interesting to have, but was never really considered essential for a home to properly thrive. That’s why that statement always seemed empty to me. I realized very early on in my childhood that being present didn’t equate to love.

In *We Real Cool: Men Love and Masculinity* (2003), author bell hooks bluntly points out the simple ways manhood should be defined and how men are expected to exist within those rules. “In patriarch culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines” (hooks x). It’s a story that many families know all too well. The despondent and distant father, the provider, the protector. It’s part of the many ways patriarchal masculinity defines are worth. We look to our fathers, mothers, friends, family, and the rest of our communities to help us shape our definitions of masculinity. Some of us spend our lives never knowing the possibilities of being able to let go of the rugged and shielded exterior, to be emotional, to be capable of providing love and deserving of it in return. “Men cannot change if there are no blueprints for change. Men cannot love if they are not taught the art of loving. Love is vital to maleness, to the spiritual and emotional wholeness men seek” (hooks, “We Real Cool” 136). If we’re lucky, we might stumble upon new forms of masculinity somewhere in our lifetime. These don’t have to be grandiose

revelations, but can sometimes be found in simple, everyday experiences or interactions with others.

For me, it occurred in a very short-lived interaction as a child where I noticed he was able to let go for a moment.

As I walked in to our kitchen with his back towards me, I could hear the knife hitting the cutting board, moving up and down and through something. I remember being extremely curious to see what he was doing since I rarely saw him do anything in the house. Putting my hands on the counter, he yelled out an audible shriek while turning toward me.

“Get your mother!”

Seeing what looked to be a missing index finger with blood all over the countertop and his hand, I ran screaming to find her. She was already running toward me asking what was going on. Pointing toward the kitchen unable to speak, she dashed toward my fathers shrieks. Grabbing his hand, and asking what was going on, he burst into an uncontrollable laughter.

“You idiot!”, my mother shouted, while playfully hitting him for making such a horrible joke.

The fear in her face turned into an annoyed, head shaking, smirk.

“Spatz! It’s just beets! See?!”

With tears falling down my face, I slowly began to smile while looking back and forth at the beets, the beet juice and his hands. He even curled the finger behind the knuckle for an added effect. Funny guy.

. . . . .

.....

.....

*I wish.....I did have dat laugh recorded.*

It's not a conventional father son moment. Especially when it's one of the only few you remember of him. But it was the first time I recall him being present with me and the only time I remember him laughing. Since the joke was grounded in a rather grotesque, violent and scary act, perhaps it was okay to finally smile. For a brief moment, it was okay to let go of all expectations of how you're expected to be. Perhaps it was the only way he knew how to show love to a child, enacting fear through humour. A trickster's game of sorts.

For a long time I thought that this was expected of me as I became a man. Just brief moments of letting go, with your closest family as not to let everyone know you have other emotions inside. I get it. Sometimes displaying too much emotion could have be harmful as you get older. Safety is keeping people at arms length. But, thirty plus years later I've just now learned to smile and laugh a little bit more. Not just in everyday situations, which is certainly important, but on camera too. Documenting this part of me, in the face of the dominating imagery and standards dehumanize ourselves, is important. Even if I'm not up for it, I wanted to show others and particularly myself, that I tried my best to be a better person despite everything else around me dictating I would become otherwise.

I, very often, get that I look exactly him. When I see pictures of myself laughing, I see the same eye wrinkles he made while practically dying of laughter, ones I don't recall seeing again. It makes me happy, knowing I was able to remember that moment so vividly.

. . . . .

## **L.T.K.-[og freestyle]**

Hey Kendal!

Amanda showed me a photo of you checking out my work a few weeks ago at the Stick It exhibition. I'm glad you were able to check it out!

We haven't seen or spoken to each other in years, but I just wanted to tell you how much I've appreciated what you've done for the community and my practice. Even though, in retrospect, our interactions have been quite limited considering the amount of time I spent there, I've always learned so much from your work and watching you around Popop.

From seeing you sit on top of the stairway, legs crossed with your magnifying glass in hand, intently catching up on your daily newspaper, to constantly revisiting, changing and altering your paintings and sculptures, you've taught me the importance of being still, in constantly reassessing something that isn't working out and in letting go and starting over.

You've also taught me that perfection is only a blissful moment. Fleeting at times too. Whether

redoing just small sections of a work or entirely starting from scratch, I've always seen that letting go as an act of bravery. It's something I'm still trying to capture in my own practice.

Underneath the frantic and vigorous energy of your works, there's a palpable tenderness, grace and stillness that I've also grown to love. I've always thought of it as that brief moment of silence just after a jet breaks the sound barrier and just before the roar of its engines return. I've been particularly interested over the years in how this duality has manifested in the male form of your figurative works.

I've also admired how you've made the time to assess and enjoy the smallest of details around you. I could see you getting inspired by just the placement of things around the yard like the piled up debris near the entrance of the studios from Heino making frames or looking extremely close at works in the gallery for an exceptionally long time with that same magnifying glass of yours. You always seemed laser focused on what was in front of you.

By giving yourself time and space to simply observe things with an analytical eye, there's meticulousness to your craft that I think many might overlook. Seeing you use a ruler and a protractor one time to measure the distance and degrees between your gestural and free flowing lines was wild to me. For a long time, I just never thought tools like this would ever be near abstract paintings like these. Jumping back and forth between these opposing ways of thinking and making was always amazing to witness in action.

I feel like we don't always give credit to those that paved the way for us and I just wanted to give you a little insight on how much you've impacted the way I view the world. You're an exceptional pillar within our community and I cannot thank you enough for opening the door for many of us by simply being yourself.



Thanks again and I hope to see you whenever I'm back in Nassau!

Sincerely,

Shirley

Steven

the\_makeshift\_party [March\_freestyle\_mix]



Fig. 12. Promotional Poster for *Mish-Mash: The Makeshift Party* by Steven Schmid: 2022

.. .. . .. ..  
..... .. . . .

Honestly, I'm afraid.

I'm afraid it won't come together as planned.

I'm afraid that others might see it as a mess.

I'm afraid that it might fall apart midway through the exhibition.

I'm afraid it won't be the best representation of my ideas.

I'm afraid it won't be the best representation of my growth.

I'm afraid it won't be the best representation of me.

I'm afraid I will let my family down.

I'm afraid I will let my friends,

My family,

My advisors,

My community down.

I'm afraid I will let myself down.

*“Some days I can't explain what I'm feeling  
I need space, some days I need healing, some days I need love  
My anxiety be as high as the ceilin, I just wanna breathe  
Can't explain what I need, my mind moving fast  
I just wanna build but shit never last”*

- (Lute, “Be Okay” 2021)

...I'm not worried about the other works.

They're done.

Mixed.

Mastered.

*Cuttin' Up* (2021) (fig. 7), *Makin' Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece* (2021) (fig. 10), *Off Guard* (2022) (fig. 13), *Tongue Out/Shine* (2022) (fig. 14) and *Tongue Out/All Smiles* (2022) (fig. 15) are all printed and ready to go. Every symbol, line, spot is accounted for and placed right where I accepted they show be. Even if other's don't agree with their ideologies, appreciate the approach

or love their aesthetics, I had the time and space to curate, fix and touch up everything to the best of my abilities.

In private though.

The installation *Everybody Get Closer!* (2022). That's getting to me.

I don't know what the outcome will be. It's only 1 of 6 pieces but with such a limited amount of time, I'm also worried I won't be able to get this done.

It has to potential to be an amazing piece. But what if it falls apart?

What if it doesn't work out?

What if it's just one giant mess of ideas and aesthetics?

My chest is heavy every time I think about it.

The goal of the *The Makeshift Party* is supposed to be a celebratory paradise where I can be unapologetically me. It's a site for letting go, having fun in the face of adversity and creating a vulnerable world to nurture my beautifully faulty and contradictory fucked up self, even if it's just for a brief moment.

Yet, the fear is overwhelming. I can't seem to shake it off.

*Even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*I tell you that I'm going through some shit*  
*And you tell me that you going through it too*  
*I say even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*To tell me it's gonna be okay, 'cause we gonna make it through*

*Even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*I tell you that I'm going through some shit*  
*And you tell me that you going through it too*  
*I say even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*To tell me it's gonna be okay, 'cause we gonna make it through*

*Even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*I tell you that I'm going through some shit*  
*And you tell me that you going through it too*  
*I say even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*To tell me it's gonna be okay, 'cause we gonna make it through*

*Even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*  
*I tell you that I'm going through some shit*  
*And you tell me that you going through it too*

*I say even when the light goes dark, I confide in you*

*To tell me it's gonna be okay, 'cause we gonna make it through*

- (Lute, “Be Okay” 2021)

Perhaps, I can treat the gallery space as my home.

Get frustrated, work through it, make mistakes, fix them and keep it going.

Remove the expectations I have.

Even after the opening night, maybe I can continue add, remove, shift and make changes if necessary.

Yea. Even after the opening night, I will continue to add, remove, shift and make changes if necessary. Who says that I have to stay the same person I am today?

I might be able to make it perfect by the time as I have to de-install. But I don't, that's also fine.

Perhaps, letting go is this point of all this and is the true test of what I've learned. Not the painting skills, collage techniques and the regurgitation of quotes, texts and writers.

To let go is to put my all into it, fail and try again until I get it right.

I can always try again. There's time to revisit everything after May 6.

I'll be okay.









Fig. 14. *Tongue Out/Shine* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 38 x 50 in.





Fig. 15. *Tongue Out/All Smiles* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 38 x 50 in.

## bell\_hooks-[lookin\_back-multi\_scratch\_re-edit]

. ... .. ..  
 ..... .. . ... ..  
 .. .. .. ..

I don't know why I thought trying to undo almost 35 years of engrained beliefs would suddenly be resolved in such a short time span. The ideologies that shaped our perceptions of masculinity has preceded our existence and there's a good chance, it's going to be here long after.

. .. .  
 So why would one do all this work, if only to simply disrupt its structural integrity?

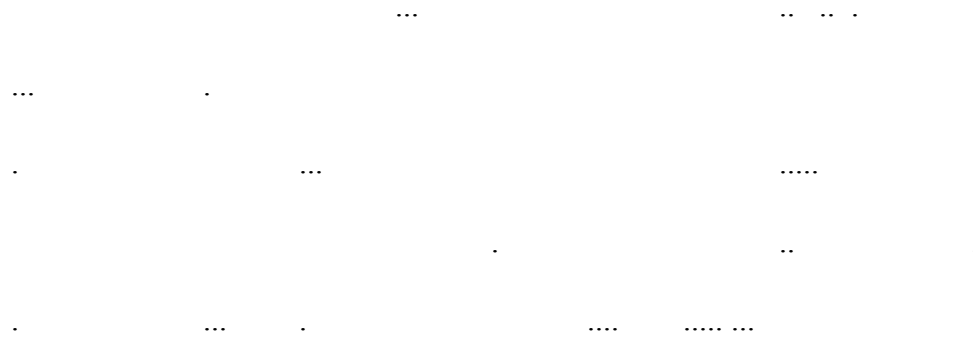
. .... ..  
 bell hooks has taught me if I ever really wanted to become the realest version of myself I can possibly be, I had to no choice but to be honest and actively look within for the answers.  
 This entire project, ultimately, became an active first step in that direction.

I actively began negotiating and reassessing my past experiences and belief systems that made who I am.

I actively listened to the stories of others in an effort to understand own.

I actively turned to inclusive Feminisms that seek to dismantle dominating hierarchal roles.

Now, I know progress is most certainly made by doing. “Work begets work” is what my brother always tells me. But, after constantly building, demolishing, reassessing, rebuilding and reconfiguring, I’ve also found the need to ensure there is an equal amount of time, space and rest between those active negotiations. The body reemerges stronger when given the space to reflect, reevaluate and wonder about new possibilities.



With my practice constantly changing, growing and adapting, I also see writing becoming an even more tightly integrated component within visual practice. Writing always played a supplementary role throughout the making the process, but there’s potential for both these modes of making to assist me in excavating deeper and deeper to find who I really need to be.



So, besides the work that I’ve done, how have I really changed?

Instead of looking at the ground as I walk, I keep my head up a bit more. I make eye contact with people more often. I even occasionally catch myself looking at the sky.

More importantly, I smile a bit more, especially in photos. To have that documented has become such a small yet pivotal step in creating a masculinity that reaffirms our humanity. All of this encouraged me to create a new self that I would be proud of.

*“Sometimes, a chapter might end, but that doesn’t mean that the story is over. And some stories go on, even after the storyteller has stopped telling them”.*

- (Lemony Snicket, “A Series of Unfortunate Events”)

• • • • •

.. .. .. .. ..

..... ..

.....

..... .. ..

.....

....

....

...

This is a just a snapshot of who I am now...

.... ..

..

.

.....

.

..

..

...

.

.

...

.

..

...

... just a minuscule step in a lifetime of unlearning and reimagining who I really want to be.

...

.....

.....

..... ..

..

..

.....

....

.

..

..

..

...

.....

.....

. ...

..

..

..

....

.....

.....

..... ..

.....

..

## **Appendix A: Man 2 Man Convo. Part 2 (Makin' Sense)**

Bui, I'm so glad I was given the liberty to fail.

I realized a lot of us Bahamian men aren't allowed the space to do what I did; to be honest with who we are now and what we have to do to be the person we need to be in the future.

It's funny listening to this mixtape again. So much has changed in just a few weeks. After that thesis presentation, I really didn't feel scared about making and presenting the work anymore. I realized how important it was for me to do the work that I'm doing and how I should really celebrate that moment.

When I went to install the various artworks a week after the presentation, I really leaned into the celebratory aspect of my practice. I was preaching this idea of letting go and having fun as act of dismantling patriarchal ideals, but I think I didn't truly capture that feeling until I began to put the exhibition together in the space.

The original floor plan for the work was great, but I added so much more to the surrounding works after being in there for a few days.



The plain white wall I had originally planned for the “Makin’ Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece” to be on, was filled with floral designs, bursting light beams constructed out of paper, text and stars after an impromptu conversation with my friends about having that energy bleed on the surrounding walls.

The “Everybody Get Closer” wall installation also came together using similar floral and star designs around the main figures. But for this one, I left the masking tape, roughly cut paper and glue marks that I had originally planned to remove on the work to further highlight the immediacy and unbashful ways the figures were rushing and stumbling over each other to be in a photo together.

The sculpture I was so worried about, captured the feeling of exuberance I want to see the men around me have. The haphazardly constructed posture, squinted eyes and bellowing laughter burrowed . He was really enjoying the moment. That work was originally supposed to be an extension of “Everybody Get Closer”, but I decided in the space it needed to be it’s own piece piece that I titled “Lettin’ Loose”. I abstracted the figure more than I originally intended which highlighted the freestyle approach to my making practice. It’s something I was hoping to achieve from the early moments of this project. By “letting go” and allowing the gallery space to inform the work, I was able to create a piece that was substantially more messy, playful and exuberant than I imagined.

I loved it.

The only wall that remained the same as planned was the right wall with three printed. They really needed the space to just exist after all the changes in the other works. I also didn't use the "Cuttin Up" piece anymore.

You got to go with the flow sometimes, you know?

I had rap music playing the entire time the exhibition was up too! I bought this elaborate speaker system to add to the room but it just didn't feel right with all the other works. I went a simpler route. Just like how your grammy would always make something new out of what was around her, I converted the air filtration system that had to stay in the room into a speaker. Well, I taped an image of a speaker to the front of it and placed a bluetooth speaker behind it to give the illusion it was playing music. It was a simple addition but really tied the room and themes together.

A few days later, I did a walkthrough with my external advisor Christopher Cozier. He was extremely generous with the resources I should look into to further expand on my practice. To just name a few;

We spoke about Edward Glissant's idea of the right to opacity.

...About the similarities to my work and calypso music which uses a folkloric and playful approach to critique dominant ideological structures.

...The importance of me connecting with contemporary artists and writers throughout the diaspora like Amir Denzel Hall and Aaron Kamugichi who are doing similar yet highly personalized critiques of Caribbean-ness.

We even spoke about the ways we, as artists must “tell” ourselves into being. The importance of making space for us to be who we want and need to be. He encouraged me to consider the relationality of the different works in the space. For example, the sculptural figures ‘living’ in the space, perhaps having more of them with their backs toward the entrance, obstructing the our view of the wall works and forcing us to walk around them, dance with them, and bump into them in order to fully navigate the space.

I see it.

He’s given me several ways to expand my work for years to come.

Anyway man...

After all this, I keep thinking about the a quote by Dr. bonaventure ndikung that I heard at a residency last summer that really stuck with me.

On being an artist and curator, he says, “We do have fun it it but it’s just not for the fun of it” (1:37:34).

Learning that the act of smiling and playing can critique the world around me is an invaluable lesson.

It’s not easy at all, but, it’s helping me find that person I want to be...

...one step at a time.

## Appendix B: Exhibition Images



Fig. 16: Installation view of *Makin Up Ya Face: Geezus Piece*.



Fig. 17: *Everybody Get closer* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Digital Assemblage, Colouring Pencils, Crayola Markers on Paper, 28 x 10 ft.





Fig. 18: Artist wearing a limited edition “Mish-Mash” T-shirt with *Everybody Get closer*



Fig. 19: *Lettin' Loose* by Steven Schmid: 2022, Cardboard, Paper, Sequins, Fabric, Masking Tape, Hot Glue, Gold Chains, Yarn, Air Ventilation Unit, Bluetooth Speaker, 15 x 8 ft.





Fig. 20: Installation view of *Off Guard*, *Tongue Out/All Smiles* and *Tongue Out/Shine*.



Fig. 21: Exhibition view #1



Fig. 22: Exhibition view #2





Fig. 23: Exhibition view #3

## **Appendix C: A Playlist For You**

Below is a link to a YouTube playlist comprised of all the songs mentioned in this document:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLV\\_3RZiw1dbON6K3j\\_kKW\\_mTxK5G7QIPT](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLV_3RZiw1dbON6K3j_kKW_mTxK5G7QIPT)

## Works Cited

- 808's and Heartburn. "When a Bahamian Says 'Lemme Give You This Joke' a Joke Really Don't Be Involved." *Twitter*, Twitter, 24 Nov. 2021, <https://twitter.com/itsshadaee/status/1463539449913126917?s=21>.
- Bethel, Nicolette. "Navigations: National Identity and the Archipelago." *Yinna: Journal of the Bahamas Association for Cultural Studies (BACUS)*, 2000, p. 14.
- Capitao, Brian. "Man on a Mission: How Kid Cudi S Music Saved Lives." *A.Side*, 8 Nov. 2018, <https://boxden.com/showthread.php?t=2676376>.
- Cooke, Sekou. *Hip-Hop Architecture: History / Theory / Practice*, AVA ACADEMIA, S.I., 2021, p. 8.
- "Countries Ranked by Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)." *Countries Ranked by Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)*, <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5/rankings>.
- Dawson, Ian, and Paul Reilly. "Messy Assemblages, Residuality and Recursion within a Phygital Nexus." *Epoiesen: A Journal for Creative Engagement in History and Archaeology*, vol. 2019, 2019, pp. 3–4., <https://doi.org/10.22215/epoiesen/2019.4>.
- Ebrey, Jill. "The Mundane and Insignificant, the Ordinary and the Extraordinary: Understanding Everyday Participation and Theories of Everyday Life." *Cultural Trends*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2016, p. 165., <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2016.1204044>.
- FCCSUBCO. "Indigenous Art Intensive 2021 - Keynote with Bonaventure Ndikung." YouTube, YouTube, 4 June 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLPbU4h\\_ZZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLPbU4h_ZZE).

Gibson, Chantal. *How She Read*, HARBOUR Publishing, 2019, pp. 19–20.

Hall, Stuart. *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*. <https://sites.middlebury.edu/nydiasporaworkshop/files/2011/04/D-OA-HallStuart-CulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf>.

Handler, Daniel, and Joe Tracz. “The End.” *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, season 3, episode 7, Netflix, 1 Jan. 2019.

Hooks, Bell. “Reclaiming Male Integrity.” *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2005, p. 153.

Hooks, Bell. “Reconstructing Masculinity.” *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 88.

Hooks, Bell. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, Routledge, New York, 2004, pp. x, 130, 136–137.

Jackson, George. *Soledad Brother*, 1970, pp. 44, 52.

Kendall, Mikki. *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot*, Viking, New York, NY, 2020, pp. x, xiii.

Morgan, Joan. *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2017, pp. 59, 62.

Ndebele, Njabulo S. “The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1986, p. 152., <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057078608708118>.

Perry, Imani. *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C, 2006, pp. 13, 20, 23.

Rose, Tricia. "Hip Hop Causes Violence." *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip Hop*, BasicCivitas, New York, 2008, p. 40.

Ruling Could Stop Children Going To Jail 07 Sep 2016 Ruling Could Stop Children Going To Jail, et al. "Bahamas." *Bahamas | World Prison Brief*, 1 Jan. 1998, <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/bahamas>.

"Sample Breakdown: Mos Def - Mathematics - Youtube." *Tracklib*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--A\\_89ITuiA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--A_89ITuiA).

Sontag, Susan. "In Plato's Cave." *On Photography*, Dell Publ, New York, 1977, p. 11.

Sugrue, Michael. *Heidegger: Being and Time*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaobMHescwg>.

Thompson, Krista A. "Chapter 3: Shine, Shimmer, Splendor." *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice*, Duke Univ. Press, Durham, NC, 2015, pp. 170–175.

Umebinyuo, Ijeoma, and Sonja Taaffe. "Diaspora Blues." *Questions for Ada*, CreateSpace, Charleston, SC, 2015, p. 175.

Weheliye, Alexander G. "Chapter 3 - Assemblages: Articulation." *Habeas Viscus Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2014, p. 47.

Wells, Lisa. "Kendal Hanna Retrospective Exhibition." *Popopstudios Archive*, 27 June 2011, <http://www.popopstudios.com/kendal-hanna-retrospective-exhibition/>.



Women, UN. "Intersectional Feminism: What It Means and Why It Matters Right Now."

Medium, Medium, 1 July 2020, <https://un-women.medium.com/intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters-right-now-7743bfa16757>.

## **Songs & Albums**

2Pac. "Hit 'Em Up." *How Do U Want It B-Side*, Death Row, Interscope, 1996.

2Pac. "Still Ballin'." *Better Dayz*, Amaru, Tha Row, Interscope, 2003.

2Pac. "Dear Mama." *Me Against The World*, Interscope, Jive, 1995.

Bone Crusher. "Never Scared." *AttenCHUN!*, So So Def, Arista, 2003.

Bravehearts. "Quick To Back Down." *Bravehearted*, Ill Will, Columbia, 2003.

Destiny's Child. *Survivor*, Columbia, 2001.

DMX. "Where The Hood At." *Grand Champ*, Ruff Ryders, Def Jam, 2003.

DMX. "Prayer (skit)." *It's Dark and Hell Is Hot*, PolyGram, Def Jam, Ruff Ryders, 1998.

DMX. "Prayer II." *Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood*, Def Jam, Ruff Ryders, 1998.

DMX. "Prayer III." *...And Then There Was X*, Def Jam, Ruff Ryders, 1999.

DMX. "The Prayer IV." *The Great Depression*, Def Jam, Ruff Ryders, 2001.

DMX. "Prayer V." *Grand Champ*, Def Jam, Ruff Ryders, 2003.

DMX. "Prayer VI." *Year of the Dog... Again*, Ruff Ryders, Sony Urban, Columbia, 2006.

DMX. "Prayer (skit)." *Undisputed*, Seven Arts Music Fontana, 2012.

DMX. "Prayer." *Exodus*, Def Jam, 1998.

Eminem. *The Marshall Mather's LP*. Aftermath, Interscope, 2000.

Jay-Z. "Big Pimpin'." *Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter*, Roc-A-Fella, Def Jam, 2000.

Khia. "My Neck, My Back (Lick It)." *Thug Misses*, Artemis, 2002.

Kool G Rap. "Executioner Style." *4,5,6, Cold Chillin'*, Epic Street, 1995

Lil' Jon & The Eastside Boyz. "I Don't Give A Fuck." *Kings of Crunk*, BME, TVT, 2002.

Lopez, Jennifer and Ja Rule. "I'm Real (Murder Remix)." *J to tha L-O! The Remixes*, Epic, 2002.

Ludacris. "Southern Hospitality." *Back For The First Time*, Disturbing Tha Peace, Def Jam South, 2000.

Lute. "Be Okay." *Gold Mouf*, Dreamville, Interscope, 2021.

Missy Elliot. *Miss E... So Addictive*, The Goldmind, Elektra, 2001.

Mos Def. "Mathematics." *Black on Both Sides*, Rawkus, Priority, 1999.

The Notorious B.I.G. - "Big Poppa." *Ready To Die*, Bad Boy, Arista, 1994.

The Notorious B.I.G. - "Suicidal Thoughts." *Ready To Die*, Bad Boy, Arista, 1994.

Trillville. "Neva Eva (Get On My Level)." *The King of Crunk & BME Recordings Present: Trillville & Lil Scrappy*. Warner Bros., BME Recordings, 2003.

Waka Floka Flame. "Hard In Da Paint." *Flockaveli*, 1017 Brick Squad, Asylum, Warner Bros., 2010.

West, Kanye. "Hurricane (Unreleased Demo Version)." 2018.