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African-Americans in the United States: Their history and their present through Joey Bada\$\$'s *ALL AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$*

Afroamericanos en Estados Unidos: su historia y su presente a través de *ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$* de Joey Bada\$\$

Afroamericanos nos Estados Unidos: a súa historia e o seu presente través de *ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$* de Joey Bada\$\$

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1. Abstract

This work aims to provide an account of racism in the history of the United States from slavery to the present, illustrated by *ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$*, a musical album created by the rapper Joey Bada\$\$\$. Therefore, this dissertation is divided into two parts: the first is a historical summary of the most relevant events regarding racism in the history of the country; the second part analyzes the lyrics of Joey Bada\$\$'s in this album in order to demonstrate what African-Americans feel and how they are treated at the present time. Racism has existed in the country since colonizers first brought slaves from Africa, and it is based on the assumption that black people are inferior and that they have to work for whites. Slavery ended with the American Civil War, at least on paper, but racism was still there. If it was connected to slavery at first, it ended up being connected to segregation in the 20th century (Jim Crow Laws). Even when the segregation laws were abolished after much effort from civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., racism was still a long way from being erased once and for all. Nowadays, it is so deeply internalized by the vast majority that many people do not realize that they are racist. It appears in the form of arrests and police shooting in which blacks, according to statistics, are usually the victims. With this situation, Joey Bada\$\$ decides to create the aforementioned album, in which he tackles all the hurdles that African-Americans have to face today, focusing on how they feel, how change could be achieved and raising awareness of present-day racism. The conclusions are that racism became less accepted with the passing of the years, with blacks becoming more aware and, at the same time, more active in trying to reach a successful end to their struggle. The Civil Rights Movement has achieved a great deal over the course of time, and now further activism can be seen in new platforms such as music, with the album from Joey Bada\$\$ being one example of many.

2. Introduction

With this work, my aim is to give a description of how racism started in the United States, how it evolved throughout the centuries and how it has reached the present, with the music album to illustrate the situation in the 21st century and how music is a platform to spread important messages. To achieve this, I chose the events I considered more relevant in that respect. After establishing a starting point for slavery when the English arrived in North America, I considered the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution of the United States*, focusing on the aspects that have a connection to racism (the hypocrisy of asking for independence when they were not letting slaves be independent or how black slaves did not count as one person for the purposes of census). The following sections deal with the American Civil War and the Reconstruction Era. The historical background is necessarily summarize given the word limit for this dissertation, but I consider that more than merely narrating historical events, my aim is to link the past with the effects of history on the lives of African-Americans. In these periods, slavery ended, but Southerners wanted to bring it back. For the Jim Crow Laws and the Civil Rights Movement the explanations are more detailed because in the context of the topic they are the most relevant issues. There are more detailed descriptions of how blacks lived in times of segregation and how they protested to abolish it. After that period is over, I connect it to the present, explaining that racism still exists even if segregation and slavery do not. Present-day racism is more subtle and a direct consequence of the history of the country.

After all this necessary background is presented, the next step is to analyze ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$ because it touches upon all of the problems African-Americans face in the United States right now. The album consists of twelve songs, but only five are chosen for this particular work. The reasons are based on the aforementioned

word limit, but also on the fact that not all the songs deal equally with racism. However, if all songs were included in the analysis we would find that the same ideas are repeated constantly, to a greater or lesser extent. I have opted for an in-depth analysis of the most noteworthy examples, and, therefore, the selected songs are the ones that I consider more interesting and that are strictly focused on racism. For the analysis, only the relevant verses are mentioned, the reasoning being the same as for the choice of songs. This analysis will show how music is used for social criticism.

3. History of racism in the United States

3.1. Slavery

Before trying to explain racism in the United States, it is necessary to know what the word “racism” really means. It comes from “race”, whose meaning is, according to the Cambridge dictionary, “a group, especially of people, with particular similar physical characteristics, who are considered as belonging to the same type, or the fact of belonging to such a group”. Also, more simply, race can be defined as “a group of people who share the same language, history, characteristics, etc.”, again according to Cambridge dictionary. Both definitions have in common the fact that they are neutral. However, when trying to define “racism”, that changes. It adds the suffix “-ism”, which implies “prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a (specified) attribute” as stated in the Merriam-Webster dictionary. If someone is a racist, he or she is treating other people unfairly. It means superiority and, consequently, inferiority.

In the United States, particularly, the concept has been there since the 17th century, when the first English colonies were established. In fact, racist ideas arrived in America from Europe, thanks to the practice called slavery, which was very common between the first half

of the 15th century and the end of the 19th. Countries such as Portugal, Spain and England benefited economically from slavery and they traded African people in exchange for goods. These trades were called triangular: they “began in Europe, picked up slaves in Africa in exchange for European manufactures, carried the slaves to the Americas, and then returned to Europe with certain tropical American goods” (Thomas 507).

The relationship between racism and slavery is deep. Slavery, in itself, was based on the thought that other people were inferior because they were from a different race. They were treated literally like objects. Establishing a specific point in history in which slavery is “born” is very difficult, but Ibram X. Kendi, in his book *Stamped from the Beginning*, tries to do so. According to what he writes, “the Portuguese made history as the first Europeans to sail along the Atlantic beyond the Western Sahara’s Cape Bojador in order to bring enslaved Africans back to Europe” (23) in the 15th century. In addition, Zurura, a commander of the Prince Henry’s Military Order of Christ, was told “to write a biography of the life and slave-trading work of his ‘beloved uncle’” (22). The result was *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*. This book served a purpose: it justified slavery, which means that, in essence, it justified racism.

Another important name to note is Leo Africanus, an African geographer who wrote *Della descrizione dell’Africa*. He described his continent and its people negatively, comparing them to beasts. In the words of Ibram X. Kendi, Leo Africanus “established himself through *Della descrizione dell’Africa* as the world’s first known African racist, the first illustrious European producer of racist ideas” (28).

It was in the 17th century when the English arrived in America. Those English people were mostly Puritans, whose beliefs centered around predestination. Puritans read Aristotle and

that is important to understand their view on slavery: “Puritans learned rationales for human hierarchy, and they began to believe that some groups were superior to other groups” (17). They considered themselves to be better than the African people or Native Americans, who were their slaves.

The Portuguese were the first to practice slavery, but the English brought it to America and they planted the seed of the racism that is known today. In the following years, there were many events that were very important in terms of the rights of black people or slaves in the United States.

3.2. Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States

The first event worth mentioning is the *Declaration of Independence* of the 4th of July, 1776, drafted by Thomas Jefferson. As is well known, England possessed several colonies in North America and it had been that way for almost two entire centuries. The main reason behind seeking independence was the discontent with the actions of King George III, who is addressed directly in the first part of the declaration: “The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States”. In the document, those “injuries” and “usurpations” are explicitly stated.

One of the first sentences makes clear the irony in the declaration: “all Men are created equal”. As Ibram X. Kendi states (2016, 104) “it is impossible to know for sure whether Jefferson meant to include his enslaved laborers (or women) in his ‘all Men’”.

Considering that black slaves were treated like sugar, tobacco, etc., it makes sense to conclude that, for him, black people were not “Men”, but we cannot be sure of his thoughts

on this point. The ambiguity of this statement was already evident at the time. The sentence “all Men are created equal” made Vermont and Massachusetts eliminate slavery from their states (104). At the same time, in the South the reaction was the opposite: “southern slaveholding states inserted ‘all *freemen* are created equal’ into their constitutions” (105).

In addition, there were different versions of the *Declaration of Independence*. In its original version, Jefferson had defined slavery in negative terms, but “delegates from South Carolina and Georgia disliked Jefferson’s characterization of slavery as a ‘cruel war against human nature’”(108). Therefore, the final edition of the Declaration did not include any reference to slavery, but it appears that Thomas Jefferson was aware of the contradictions between seeking independence and owning slaves simultaneously.

Eleven years later, in 1787, the first Constitution of the United States was written. As is explained in an adaptation from the WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA, one of the main reasons behind the creation of this document was that “each state acted almost like an independent country. Each ran its own affairs exactly as it saw fit, with little concern for the needs of the republic” (6). The constitution’s objective was bringing unity to the new nation and it included a *Preamble* and *The Bill of Rights*. The latter was divided into amendments whose number increased in the following decades and centuries.

The original constitution had little explicit mention of slaves, but there are a few sections in which their role in society can be clearly seen. In Article I, Section 2, Clause 3, it establishes the number of representatives for each state depending on its population. In order to count the number of people, it has to be taken into account “the whole number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons” (19). These “other Persons” were slaves. They did not count

as an entire person; they were barely more than a half person. In Article 1, Section 9, Clause 1, it says that “the Migration or Importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight” (24). Even though it sets a limit in 1808, the constitution is officially permitting the slave trade. Besides, each import of a slave had a tax attached “not exceeding ten dollars for each person” (24).

After the approval of these two documents, black slaves’ lives did not change for the better. They still had to serve white people and, on top of that, whites had two official documents that either did not address the problem of slavery (*Declaration of Independence*) directly or supported that practice (*The Constitution of the United States of America*). Therefore, it could be argued that racism, in that period, was officially backed by people in power. Things would change at the end of the next century, thanks to the American Civil War.

3.3. American Civil War

The American Civil War was a national conflict that lasted four years, from 1861 until 1865. Slavery (and, therefore, racism) was at the center of the battle and it could be argued that it was the main reason for the start of the war. In order to understand why the clash began, it is necessary to go back in time. It was a consequence of many years of argument between North and South regarding slavery. As James McPherson notes in *The Atlas of the American Civil War*, “the American Civil war lay in the outcome of another war fought by America fifteen years earlier: the Mexican War” (9). After signing a treaty with Mexico in 1848, the United States received new territory. A debate started over whether these new territories were going to permit slavery. The South wanted that; the North did not.

Another important event happened that same year when gold was discovered in California. This provoked the massive arrival of people (eighty thousand, more explicitly, according to James McPherson), and it made sense to apply for the creation of a new state. Controversy appeared when the Constitution of California prohibited slavery. The Southerners were against it. Their discontent increased even more “when the American president, Zachary Taylor, encouraged the huge territory of New Mexico (embracing the rest of the cession from Mexico) also to apply for the statehood without slavery” (9).

The threat of secession from these Southern states was a reality. In this situation of turmoil, The Compromise of 1850 was accepted. These laws “admitted California as a free state, divided the remainder of the Mexican cession into the territories of New Mexico and Utah, and left to their residents the question as to whether or not they would have slavery” (9). Simultaneously, the slave trade was put to an end in Columbia. Another clause included in this compensation was the Fugitive Slave Act, which gave the Southern States the chance of controlling their slaves even if they were in Northern territory. In addition, “the Act criminalized abettors of fugitives, provided northerners incentives to capture them, and denied captured Blacks a jury trial, opening the door to mass kidnappings” (Kendi 191). This meant that black people were assumed to be guilty; they did not have the chance to defend themselves.

The division between southerners and the northerners kept growing in the 1850s, a division which was emphasized with the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. This territory had been divided into two parts with the Missouri Compromise in 1820. In the North, slavery was not permitted; in the South it was. Nonetheless, in 1854, this compromise was over. This had consequences: “The storm was so powerful that it swept away many Northern Democrats and gave rise to the Republican party, which pledged to keep slavery out of Kansas and all

other territories” (McPherson 10). Abraham Lincoln was one of the public figures for this new Republican Party. He realized that the United States Constitution was backing slavery in the places where this practice was still the norm. His goal was its final abolishment in all of the United States. He was running for the Senate and, in one of his many public appearances, he summarized the situation of the United States in 1858: “‘A house divided against itself cannot stand’. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*” (10). When a country is so divided and in such disagreement over a topic such as slavery, it is rarely sustainable. The fact that the nation started a war a few years later cannot be surprising.

In 1860, the last trigger for the war was official: Abraham Lincoln and his party won the Senate election, with the support of every Northern state. It was the first time that the South had really lost power. With the intention of maintaining slavery in their lives, all the Southern states decided to secede one by one. The priorities of the North and the South were very different and, consequently, the fate of the nation was to be decided in a war, which started in 1861 and was won by the North. Its effect on the nation in subsequent years was crucial. First of all, it preserved the unity of the states, but, more connected to the theme of this work, it eliminated slavery once and for all. Three amendments were added to the Constitution: the 13th, the 14th and the 15th. The 13th, included in 1865, prohibited slavery officially. The 14th, three years later, gave equal citizenship to black people, which was noteworthy considering they were valued as three-fifths of a person in the first place. Finally, the 15th amendment in 1870 gave black people the right to vote. Slavery disappeared, but racism was still present.

3.4.Reconstruction Era

Immediately after the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era started. It was in this period when the aforementioned amendments were added to the Constitution. It lasted twelve years and it was a significant change of scenery for Southerners used to having black people working for them. They were not able to come to terms with their new reality and their immediate reaction reflects that. They passed a new set of laws known as Black Codes: “These racist laws were designed to restrict the activities of the former slaves. White Southerners were used to being able to keep their slaves in line with laws and threats. The Black Codes, set up in years after the Civil War, would attempt to impose the same limits on the freedmen (sic)” (Fremon 14).

W. E. B. Du Bois (quoted in Kendi, 263), summarized perfectly the years after the Civil War: “the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again towards slavery”. Freedom for black people did not last as long as expected. Even though slavery had been abolished, the prejudices against blacks were there. Southern whites still considered blacks inferior in every sense. That is why many blacks “felt the need to run away from their second slavery” (260).

In 1867, The Reconstruction Act was passed, meant to make sure that “the civil rights of the former slaves were protected as they made the transition to freedom” (Fremon 16). If the seceded states did not let black men vote, they would not be admitted into the Union again. The results of the election showed change: “Men who had been slaves just a few years earlier became legislators. In some states, they even became lieutenant governors or secretaries of their states” (17). Whereas before the Civil War there were only White people in power, at this moment there were Black people too. Besides, the Civil Rights Act of 1875 “forbade discrimination in hotels, railways, theatres, and other private businesses providing

public services” (17). More importantly, the solution for the ones who did not comply with this Act was being fined or sent to prison. The United States were showing progress as a country in terms of racial equality.

3.5. From Jim Crow to the Civil Rights Movement

Before explaining what the Jim Crow Laws meant for Black people in America, it is necessary to understand the origin of their name. It all comes from the traveling performer Thomas “Daddy” Rice, who did not have enough acts for his show in the 1820s. Then he saw a black man dancing and decided to imitate him to complete his performance. When doing this, he sang a few lines in which the three words “jump Jim Crow” were included. As Fremon says: “Rice’s act was a crude mockery of blacks. But white audiences in both the South and the North made the act a huge success. Soon the term Jim Crow, referring to African Americans, became part of America’s vocabulary” (22). Generally speaking, the Jim Crow Laws, which started to be passed in the late 19th century, “limited blacks’ freedom” (22). Over time, the term extended to more than just a group of laws: “It referred to a way of life that was full of limitations for African Americans. In some ways, these humiliations were as bad as slavery” (22).

The concept of segregation summarizes what these laws meant for African-Americans. As defined in the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*, segregation is “the act or policy of separating people of different races, religions or sexes and treating them in a different way”. There were white and black spaces. The South represented this age more than the North, which makes sense considering its history with slaves and racism. This separation was so extreme that, in the event of death, blacks were to have particular cemeteries and funeral homes. There were “signs reading ‘white only’ or ‘colored only’” (Fremon 23) in places such as washrooms, parks, hotels or restaurants. However, banks or post offices were some of the

exceptions: those spaces could be shared but with certain conditions¹. These racial divisions were particularly evident in churches, which were already segregated before. A white deacon saw a black man in a church and he asked him what he was doing there, as that was a white church; the black man answered that he was cleaning the floor; the white man, relieved, threatened the black man saying that he hoped he would not catch him praying (23).

Jim Crow Laws also applied to children. In fact, black and white children played together, but when they reached a certain age the situation had to change: “From then on, the white person would be dominant, the black submissive” (24). Black people had to call white people “mister”, “missus” or “miss”. White people, conversely, could call black people “boy” or “girl”. Racism, therefore, was also present in language and social interaction. A black person could not start a conversation with a white person, and the black person “was expected to take off his hat when a white person came near” (25). They did not have the chance to believe themselves worthy of anything.

There were still black people working for white people in plantations, but other alternatives were not better: “Every year, thousands of African Americans were arrested, convicted, and imprisoned” (28). They did not have to do much to be arrested. Every little thing, for them, was enough, which contrasted with the other side of the coin (whites): “It was said that more blacks went to jail for stealing a farm animal than whites did for killing a black man” (28). Perhaps the most problematic aspect for them was the high number of deaths, in the form of lynching: “In 1910, 846 lynchings were recorded. From 1890 until 1917, on average, two to three blacks in the South were illegally hanged, burned, or otherwise murdered every week”

¹ For instance, black people had to wait until white people were served.

(30). The reasons behind these killings were usually little crimes, such as violating certain unwritten racial codes. Anyway, as Fremon states, this was not meant to promote justice but it was supposed to be a “warning for others” (31).

One of the solutions for African-Americans was going to the North, searching for more freedom and a better life. It is important to note that, even though the application of the Jim Crow Laws was not as wide as in the South, racism was not exclusive to the Southerners. It also existed in the North to a lesser extent. Interestingly, white people wanted black people to stay put. As much as they abused African-Americans, they were important in their lives because they did the dirty work. This shows the hypocrisy of white people: they considered black people inferior in every sense, but the latter did work that the former was not willing to do.

At the start of the 19th century, The Great Migration occurred, which consisted of “more than half a million Southern blacks” (51) going to the North between 1916 and 1919. It was the biggest mass movement of American people in the history of the nation: “Chicago’s black population doubled between 1910 and 1920. Detroit’s increased six- fold” (51). A lot of blacks would have expected a much better situation, but that was not the case. For instance, blacks were prioritized in case someone was to be fired in a workplace, and they were the last to be chosen for a job or post. Whites and blacks welcomed segregation: they did not want to coexist in the same space. There were white and black beaches in Chicago and there was a riot due to some black swimmers accidentally drifting near a white beach in the summer of 1919 (53). The North was better than the South, but it was far from ideal for African-Americans.

It was also noticeable how black Northerners did not welcome their Southern counterparts as

much as could be expected: “They resented the coarse language, rough manners, and unrefined hygiene of the migrants” (53). They feared that white people would compare them to the migrants, making them look worse. The concept of racism was in the mind of the whole country and not even African-Americans were an exception: they could also become racist towards other blacks.

The end of this Jim Crow period is not clear: “The general public typically traces the death of Jim Crow to *Brown v. Board of Education*, although the institution was showing signs of weakness years before” (Alexander 35). Linda Brown was a black child whose all-black school was far away from her home. There was an all-white school much nearer, but she could not attend it. Oliver, her father, complained about the situation, arguing that his daughter “was denied the right to the best possible education” (Fremon 60). *Brown v. Board of Education* ended referring to five cases with similar circumstances. However, it meant more than the end of segregation in schools; its goal was the abolishment of “the entire system of legalized discrimination in the South” (Alexander 36). The final decision was taken in 1954: segregation in schools was considered anticonstitutional. The desegregation process started, but each school had the liberty to do it at the speed they wanted.

As was explained above, segregation came to define the first half of the 20th century for African-Americans in the United States. Jim Crow Laws limited their freedom at all levels. Their response against this discrimination was not always silent, as illustrated by the *Brown v. Board of Education* cases, but even before that, there were specific organizations that defended black people’s rights.

In general, black people experienced discrimination individually and privately, but there was “one common, if not universal, discriminatory practice that blacks were forced to

experience in groups. For many it occurred on a daily basis. In the cities of the South, public buses were segregated” (McNeese 52). Blacks were meant to give up their seats if whites asked for them, and there were special seats reserved for whites. However, in 1953, blacks proposed a change: the seat would be occupied by the first person to arrive and there would not be white-privileged seats. There were two boycotts afterwards. The first had no effect, but the second changed the rules of buses slightly. The first to sit would own that particular place, but there were still going to be two special places reserved for whites in the front. As McNeese writes, “a small battle against segregation had been won” (53).

In Montgomery, the developments had an even more significant impact on what was going to occur in the next few years. Jo-Ann Robinson, a black professor at Alabama State College, was the first to protest in 1953, but no modification of the policy followed. As a consequence, she and other protesters started to contemplate a bus boycott in the city. They needed someone to be arrested, taking the case to court and hoping that the bus policy would be abolished. In the end, that person was Rosa Parks, part of the NAACP in the role of secretary and counselor. She had already confronted bus policies before, in an incident in which she did not enter the bus through the back door. She was left in the street, without entering the bus, although she had already paid for the trip. Nevertheless, the event that really changed reality for blacks occurred in 1955.

Rosa Parks entered the bus and chose an empty seat. She could sit there because no white had asked for it. However, after a stop in Empire Theatre, some whites caught the bus and four black people, Parks included, were told to make room for the newcomers. Rosa rejected the proposition and stayed put. She was threatened with going to jail, but she did not care. The bus driver called the police and they took her to prison. A big boycott was brewing. Given the previous unsuccessful attempts, there was uncertainty over whether this would

be different. In the end, it was and it proved was successful: buses in Montgomery were riding without passengers. People could see it from their homes. Of those people, there is one worth mentioning for the impact he would have in the future: Martin Luther King Jr. Rosa Parks was found guilty and she was to pay a fine of \$14 in all. The Montgomery Improvement Association was created and Martin Luther King Jr. became the president. He gave an inspirational speech in which he argued the action could not stop but there was to be no violence (64-65).

A week later, King, in representation of MIA (Montgomery Improvement Association), met with people in power to propose a new policy on buses. His proposals were rejected at first. Jack Crenshaw, bus company's attorney, argued that the only way of changing that policy was modifying the segregation laws. It was at that moment when Martin Luther King Jr. realized that "the struggle ahead of him was going to be about much more than the way in which Montgomery's city buses were operated. It was going to be struggle against the larger issue of segregation" (68). The boycott continued and the response from city officials was based on stopping MIA's effect. They even legitimized the Ku Klux Klan². Of the 89 people accused of conspiring, Martin Luther King Jr. was the first to be put on trial. He was fined and sentenced to be in jail for a long time, but the judge commuted the resolution because of his non-violent actions. On November 13, 1956 the final decision of this case was made and the policy of bus segregation was eliminated, meaning that black people could sit where they wanted in buses and that bus drivers could be black. After more than a year, the boycott had ended with victory for black population.

² An anti-black association created at the end of the 19th century.

3.6. Civil Rights Movement

The bus boycott, instigated by the Rosa Parks case, had a significant impact on what was going to happen in the following years. All the protests that came next were part of the Civil Rights Movement. It started with a boycott, but it “would serve as a blueprint and a symbol for even more protests and future steps by which blacks would do damage to Jim Crow” (75). The rest of the 1950s, therefore, were defined by this movement in America: “Each victory was important, each representing another step taken toward achieving equality” (75). The leader was Martin Luther King Jr., who created a new civil rights group called the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC). The organization put a focus on voting. At the same time, they taught black people how to advocate for their civil rights against Jim Crow, with new protests against bus segregation arising in Florida and Atlanta, where the headquarters of the organization were.

In 1957, immediately after the resolution of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, a new Civil Rights Act was passed, becoming the “first significant civil rights legislation since Reconstruction had ended 80 years earlier” (77). The purpose of this new legislation was to make sure that civil rights violations against blacks were not happening, but there was a concern: they were not convinced the act was going to be implemented and, in addition, President Dwight Eisenhower did not show his full support in public. Despite the passing of this new act, black people still suffered, particularly in Little Rock, where nine black children were going to be admitted for the first time in an all-white school. This was a place in which segregation had been happening, but those children suffered verbal abuse and people threw objects at them. They had to arrive at school with police escort and they ended up needing federal troops to protect them: it was “the first time soldiers had been used to protect black citizens in the South since the days of Reconstruction” (81-82).

The 1960s continued on the basis of the progress made in the previous decade. The Civil Rights Movement's impact was apparent in the election. It was not until John F. Kennedy showed a little sympathy for the black cause that he gained more votes. When in power, nonetheless, he did not seem to be a supporter of specific tactics used by some civil rights leaders. These tactics were confrontational and, for instance, one of them was the sit-in, which had already been used in the 1940s. In 1960, four college students went into a restaurant and "defied the segregationist policy of local restaurants in Greensboro by sitting down at a lunch counter in the city's Woolworth's five-and-dime store" (85).

Workers refused to attend them, but they did not move. The movement expanded to other places (beaches, libraries, theatres, etc.) and races (white). There were positive results for blacks: "more than 18 months after the first protest at the Greensboro Woolworth's, Atlanta businesses and shops agreed to provide equal service to blacks" (89). This type of tactics was dangerous but, without them, there would have not been Freedom Riders (91).

It was hoped that the Freedom Riders protests would be more successful, calling "for blacks to ride segregated trains and buses during the interstate travel in the upper South" (92). It also involved whites, supposed to sit in the black seats, whereas blacks did the opposite. Their way of protesting was not moving even if they were told to. In the first trip to Washington, D.C., there were serious problems, such as the throwing of a bomb through one window of the bus. The image of this event reached the media and made American citizens confront the consequences of racism. The Freedom Riders' movement, though not successful, had a big impact and it received national attention.

Civil rights organizations agreed to Kennedys' advice and focused on getting more black people to vote. However, there was a setback in Georgia, between 1961 and 1962. Results

were not satisfactory and a lot of black people, Martin Luther King Jr. included, were imprisoned. It was considered “a failure for Reverend King, one of the few of his civil rights career and one that caused him to question whether the movement would continue to be successful” (107). The following year, King thought the movement had stalled, but he learned from his mistakes and initiated a new campaign in Birmingham.

There, where the Ku Klux Klan had a strong influence, the Project C started: “the goals of the campaign included the integration of public facilities and public schools, employment opportunities for blacks, and low-income housing” (109-110). It began in April, 1963, with college students as protagonists, but it failed at first (King, for instance, was imprisoned). They had to change tactics and schoolchildren became the main actors of the protest. Bull Connor, public safety commissioner, ordered the children to be arrested, which generated a reaction: “the American Public was sickened by the sights” (110). This campaign had an effect: “white business would integrate their downtown stores and employ black workers” (111). It was a turning point in the civil rights movement, but many blacks were killed or arrested in subsequent protests.

Influenced by these events, President Kennedy intended to pass a new bill of civil rights to Congress. In that summer, there was a march in Washington, D.C., in which Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous speech “I Have a Dream”, which still inspires people nowadays and which became “one of the defining moments of the civil rights movement of the 1960s” (114). Kennedy’s death threatened to stop the implementation of the new civil rights, but Lyndon B. Johnson, vice-president, supported it and passed it in 1964. It was “a significant step in the fight for black equality at that juncture of the civil rights movement” (116). Segregation ended in certain places and discrimination was illegal, but black people were not guaranteed the vote.

There was still another cause to be fought, so a march from Selma to Montgomery was organized when blacks tried to vote and were met with violence and arrests. The march included blacks and whites, and “it would be larger than any previous civil rights march during the King-led years of the movement” (125). The destination was reached after 50 miles and the petition formally made. After a few months, the Civil Rights Act of 1965 was official.

Three years later, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in Memphis when he went to support some black workers and riots ensued. His influence was evident even after his death, with the passing of a new Civil Rights Act in 1968, which “placed a federal ban on discrimination in housing” (133). The consequences of the Civil Rights Movement were seen in the following decades: “By the mid-1980s, more than 250 American cities were being served by black mayors” (132), something unthinkable before. Without all of these protests and actions, Barack Obama would never have become president of the United States. The civil rights leaders paved the way for people like Obama. On paper, a solution was possible for the racist policies of the Jim Crow Laws.

3.7. Modern racism

It is fair to wonder how far the Civil Rights Movement influenced the situation of blacks in the United States. Even though there were some immediate improvements, with African-Americans becoming political leaders in individual states, racism continues to be part of society even to this day, more than fifty years after the success of the Civil Rights Movement. Considering the vast history of racial inequality in the country, it is not surprising that fifty years have not been enough to erase racism from the minds of people. It is an ongoing process. Nonetheless, racism has presented itself in particular ways from the end of the 20th century to the current 21st.

The shadow of racism frequently appears in police brutality. According to a study carried out and published by the Washington Post published in 2016, “black males were three times as likely to die as their white counterparts” (Kelly, Kimbriell et al.) in these instances. An excellent example is the shooting of Eric Harris in 2015, recorded in a video. Charles Bates, a police officer, shot Harris mistakenly (he claims). Harris, as a consequence of the wounds, was losing his breath: “That’s when an officer yells, ‘Fuck your breath’” (Mohney). The implication of those words is significant and it also represents the police attitude towards blacks, supported by statistical studies such as the one mentioned above.

This latent racism is also illustrated in arrests. For instance, when it comes to the use of marijuana in Manhattan, “Black people there were arrested at 15 times the rate of white people” (Mueller, Benjamin et al.). The justification came from an official arguing that is the case because blacks are more likely to be using marijuana, but a study by The New York Times showed that “among neighborhoods where people called about marijuana at the same rate, the police almost always made arrests at a higher rate in the area with more black residents” (Mueller et al.). To discover present-day racism, therefore, one has to dig deep in numbers and statistics, but it is very much part of the reality of the United States.

One of the better descriptions of that reality was given by Kyle Korver, an NBA player for the Milwaukee Bucks. There is a platform called *The Players Tribune* in which the players have the chance to write about the topic they choose. Kyle, a white man in a predominantly black league, wrote an article in 2019 titled “Privileged”. He started his essay, curiously, explaining a case of police brutality that his then-teammate Thabo Sefolosa, a black man, had suffered. The police broke his leg. The focus, however, is not on what happened but on how Kyle reacted, on that first unconscious reaction: “*What was Thabo doing out at a club on a back-to-back??*” (Korver). As he writes later, he, in a way, blamed his teammate

without knowing the whole story, which shows how ingrained racism is in the mass consciousness. Most people are not aware of it, but he is. When a fan directed verbal abuse towards Russell Westbrook in a game at Utah, he had a similar reaction answering reporters: “*But you know Russ. He gets into it with the crowd a lot*” (Korver). Again, he incurred in racist thoughts unconsciously. Westbrook later declared that he thought the comments had been race-based. That was when Korver realized what that meant: “It was about what it means just to *exist* right now – as a person of color in a mostly white space” (Korver).

As a white man, he knows that he is privileged because he does not have to voice his support for blacks: “my face can blend with the faces of those hecklers any time I want” (Korver). He has two options, whereas blacks do not. He asks himself: “How can I – as a white man, part of this systemic problem – become part of the solution when it comes to racism in my workplace? In my community? In this country?” (Korver). In this particular case, racism is focused on basketball, but it is just a tiny representation of a broader issue:

It’s about understanding that when we’ve said the word ‘inequality’, for generations, what we’ve really meant is slavery, and its aftermath – which is still being felt to this day. It’s about understanding on a fundamental level black people and white people, they still have it different in America. And that those differences come from an ugly history... not some random divide (Korver).

Racism can seem evident in cases such as those mentioned before, but the most difficult to eliminate is the “quiet and subtle kind. The kind that almost hides itself in plain view” (Korver). This is unconscious racism, the kind internalized by most people in America and the kind that is behind what happens with blacks in the country:

The fact that black Americans are more than five times as likely to be incarcerated as white Americans is wrong. The fact that black Americans are more than twice

as likely to live in poverty as white Americans is wrong. The fact that black unemployment rates nationally are double that of overall unemployment rates is wrong. The fact that black imprisonment rates for drug charges are almost six times higher nationally than white imprisonment rates for drug charges is wrong. The fact that black Americans own approximately one-tenth of the wealth that white Americans own is wrong (Korver).

He considers that the privileged are the ones to make a difference because of it. Everyone has to raise their voices to make people understand that racism is as real as ever. Unfortunately for this cause, Donald Trump, the current president, does not help. His reaction when a Black Lives Matter protester was beaten says it all: “Maybe he should have been roughed up because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing” (Diamond).

It has to be said that, although the situation is not perfect, there is more awareness. The Martin Luther King Jr. Day makes people remember what he did for the rights of black people. Besides, there is the Black History Month celebrated each October in honor of what black people achieved in history. These are steps forward towards the goal of racial equality, although they are not the solution. At the same time, there are different ways in which social criticism can be made. Music, for instance, has been one of them since the end of the 20th century, with rappers such as 2Pac who sang, “I see no changes, all I see is racist faces / Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races” in his song “Changes”. Joey Bada\$\$, with his album *ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$* published in 2017, tackles a lot of the hurdles African-Americans face in the United States. He is not revolutionary; he is just an artist who considers himself socially conscious and wants to send a message to the people listening. Furthermore, the fact that this type of music is still produced today makes clear that the country has not changed as much as it would be desirable.

4. Analysis of *ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$*

The first thing to notice is the title of the album, *ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$*. There is an obvious reference to his artistic name, but “AMERIKKAN” has three K’s. The reason behind that is probably a reference to the Ku Klux Klan, the terrorist group that believed in white supremacy and that was the protagonist of numerous attacks against blacks throughout the nation’s history. With that detail, Joey, in a way, summarizes the situation of the United States: it is a country in which whites dominate. It also sets up the whole album, as all the topics he covers revolve around how that domination impacts the lives of African-Americans.

In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, Joey explains the reasons behind creating this type of album: “There comes a point in a musician’s life, especially when the country is undergoing a lot of shit, where you start to feel like you need to speak up. It’s about flexing my freedom of speech as much as I can” (Hyman). It is fair to wonder, then, if musicians have the obligation to speak up given the powerful platform they possess and how many people they can reach. In another interview, this time with *GQ*, he feels it is a responsibility: “As young musicians, we do have the responsibility to speak for the people we know, to speak for the people that can’t be heard. It’s important to speak for the communities that we come from, for the everyday people who support us” (Greeley). However, he also points out that, even though this album reflects the life of blacks in America, it can be applied to any other races in a similar situation: “It transcends just being a black man in America and it becomes just being a human being in the world” (Fletcher).

For the purpose of this work, not all of the songs will be analyzed. The most representative ones will be selected. The message, in general, is similar in all of them; even in those songs

whose theme is different there is at least a reference about racism. However, the focus will not be only on what Joey wants to transmit but also in how he does it and the emotions racism generates in people like him.

4.1. “FOR MY PEOPLE”

After a first verse in which he speaks more about where he came from or what he wants to achieve in music, he starts to comment on racism. In the chorus he sings: “This for my people / Tryna stay alive and just stay peaceful / So hard to survive a world so lethal / Who will take a stand and be our hero?” This song, therefore, is his way of trying to represent all the black people that are struggling in the country. The “hero” he mentions is him. Besides, when he says “tryna stay alive”, it is literally like that: a lot of blacks die on a regular basis. After nominating himself the hero of black people, he uses a metaphor to describe their situation: “Look up in the sky, it’s a bird, it’s a plane / No, it’s the young black god livin’ out his dreams / What you mean? I been up on an ultralight beam / They don’t wanna see you fly, they just gonna shoot your wings”. The first line in particular is a reference to Superman, which in this context means that a black person being successful is rare. He creates the image of a black person flying (in other words, prospering in life), but it does not last long because white people do not want that to happen. They are the ones to “shoot your wings”: in figurative terms but also literally. He also theorizes about music: “Music is a form of expression / I’m a use mine just to teach you a lesson / Rule one: this microphone’s a weapon / I’m shootin’ out the actions manifested and my passion”. This connects to one of the ideas mentioned above: music is powerful because it reaches a lot of people and words can become very strong and influential. It also reinforces the need to speak up; it is the only way change can be made.

4.2. “TEMPTATION”

In the second song on the album, Joey modifies his approach slightly. This one is more centered on black people’s feelings regarding their situation in the country. Before the music in itself begins, Joey includes the words Zianna Oliphant, a nine-year-old girl from Charlotte, said in a speech as a response to a police shooting: *“And I feel like that we are treated differently than other people / And I don’t like how we’re treated / Just because of our color doesn’t mean anything to me”*. She makes the problem clear: black people are not treated well because of their skin. Joey starts mentioning the point of the song: *“This just the way I feel / Mind’s been racing so long, yeah / It’s just no way to deal / With these problems alone”*. He is going to talk about what people like him feel due to racism. The suffering is such that he sings: *“And I really can’t take it no more / I’ve been fighting temptations, my Lord”*. Which temptations is he referring to? People’s behavior, in many cases, is based on how they are treated. Black people in America, therefore, as a result of the racism they endure, can immerse themselves in undesirable activities such as drug-dealing, the life of crime, etc. It also can mean that, on an individual level, he has had temptations about doing something dangerous or radical.

As a consequence of not being able to deal with life, he asks for help from God: *“Tell me Lord, can you help me?”*. Maybe that outside and spiritual force can help black people. Later, he states the following: *“The government been tryna take away what’s ours / It’s really all about the money and the power / I just wanna see my people empowered”*. “Ours” can refer to lives or rights. The systems the government has put in place do not benefit black people; in fact, it is the other way around. This song connects to “FOR MY PEOPLE” with what he raps afterwards: *“Complainin’ all day, but in the same condition/ If you wanna make change, it’s gon’ take commitment”*. There are many black people not happy with

their situation, but complaining once or twice does not have an effect. The complaint has to be consistent. One cannot give up. He reinforces the idea that he is a hero with the line, “I’ve been on a mission, ah”.

In the second verse, he refers to police shootings: “Until they leave ‘em lifeless / Another mama cryin’, it’s another crisis”. In this particular case, the focus is put on the effects it has on families. Mothers mourn the cruel deaths of their children and, emotionally, it becomes a crisis. He then directs his words towards black people: “Are you willin’ just to make the sacrifices? / I know we can’t continue livin’ like this”. Racism has to stop because the physical and emotional pain is too much to handle. This is emphasized when he sings: “Voices in my head, I hear the whispers / When I feel this way, inhale the swisher / Or I sip the liquor, ah”. When he starts to think about what is going on in the United States, he tries to evade reality smoking or drinking alcohol. The song ends with other words from a crying Zianna: “*We are black people and we shouldn’t have to feel like this/ We shouldn’t have to protest because you are treating us wrong / We do this because we need to and we have rights*”. It shows an immense pain generated exclusively by racism.

4.3. “LAND OF THE FREE”

The title is an ironic reference to the last line of the United States anthem. Though similar to the other two, this one has a twist: there are references to the past, to the present and to the future. It is more history-based. He starts arguing that, “Can’t change the world unless we change ourselves / Die from the sicknesses if we don’t seek the health”. This illustrates that racism is ingrained in the mass consciousness, black people included, so the first step to change race inequality would be changing ourselves. He also speaks about “sicknesses”, in this case referring to racism. If the cure is not found for racism, black people will still die

because of it. A reference to the future appears a few lines later: “And everything I do or say today that’s worthwhile / Will for sure inspire actions in your first child”. He is aware that a solution is not possible in the short term, but he still wants to transmit the message because, if it does not inspire people in the present, it will do in the future. In other words, he aims to influence people who are listening at the moment but also the ones who will listen a few years down the line.

In the previous songs, Joey represented black people in the present, but here he goes a step further: “Sometimes I speak and I feel like it ain’t my words / Like I’m just a vessel channeling inside this universe / I feel my ancestors unrested inside of me / It’s like they want me to shoot my chance in changing society”. He believes he has to speak because he is prompted by his ancestors. He feels the struggle they endured. He is aware of American history, and he realizes that the country in which he lives is a direct result of the racism that started when the first slaves set foot in what later became the United States. He is responsible for all of the black people (past, present and future) and he wants to provoke change: “The first step into change is to take notice / Realize the real game they tried to show us / 300 plus years of them cold shoulders / Yet 300 million of us still got no focus”. Unfortunately for him, not all Americans know their past or at least they try to ignore it. These lines are directed to black people, but it also could be meant for American citizens in general. For instance, Korver, in the article mentioned sections before, took notice, realized the country’s past and present and spoke up. He did what Joey meant with these lines. There is also an interesting wordplay with the number 300: slavery started more than 300 years ago in the United States, but 300 million Americans (the nation’s population in the present) do not seem to know. He ends the first verse with, “Obama just wasn’t enough, I need some more closure / And Donald Trump is not equipped to take this country over”. He mentions the last two presidents of the United States. The fact that Obama became president was vital because it

represented a milestone for black people, but Joey does not think that is enough because it could be an exception. Donald Trump becoming the president afterwards is a step back after all the progress made.

When the chorus starts, the first reference to the title does the same: “In the land of the free, it’s full of free loaders / Leave us dead in the street to be their organ donors”. America is supposed to be the land in which everything is possible for everybody, but Joey uses sarcasm to show that is not the case. Accompanying that with “it’s full of free loaders” represents how easy it is for police to shoot a black person. It is the only sense in which America, and Americans, are free. Statistics such as the ones mentioned paragraphs above strengthen the argument: “black males were three times as likely to die as their white counterparts” (Kimbriell et al.). He continues with, “They disorganized my people, made us all loners”, which can refer to two things. On the one hand, it can be connected to the idea that a lot of black people die and, consequently, other black people lose friends and family. On the other hand, it can be a mention of segregation and the Jim Crow laws. They were “loners” because they only were able to coincide with their race equals and not with whites. He ends the chorus with another allusion to the past: “Still got the last name of our slave owners”³. In a way, as he says, black people are still the property of their slave owners. The second verse, with lines such as, “All our history hidden, ain’t no liberty given” or, “I’m reaching out to my children, just hoping that they will listen” follows the same trend as the first.

³ His real, full name is Jo-Vaughn Virginie Scott. “Virginie” comes from France and “Scott” comes from Scotland.

4.4. “Y U DON’T LOVE ME? (MISS AMERIKKKA)”

For this song, Joey uses an original concept to convey his message. He treats the relationship between him (or people like him) and the United States as if it was one between two people. He personifies the country and he speaks to it directly: “Tell me why you don’t love me”. This is the first line and it is already self-explanatory, with the use of the pronoun “you”, recurrent throughout the song as well as first-person pronouns (“me”, “I”), making his intentions clear. He continues with, “Why you always misjudge me? / Why you always put so many things above me? / Why you lead me to believe that I’m ugly?”. He is seeking answers. Black people have been treated so badly for so many years that they cannot help but feel “ugly”. At the same time, black people, although they are a big part of the United States’ population, are not prioritized at all when, considering their importance in the country, they should be. This connects with the next line: “Why you treat me like I don’t matter?”. With a metaphor similar to the one used in “FOR MY PEOPLE”, he represents what white people do to any black who wants to fulfill his or her goals: “Why you always kicking my ladder?”. Climbing the ladder represents being ambitious, trying to achieve dreams. Kicking the ladder illustrates the country’s attitude towards those blacks trying to be successful: it stops them. To end the chorus he raps, “Why you never hearing my side to the story? / Never look me in my eyes, say sorry?”. The first line refers to the fact that blacks are not given a chance to explain themselves. They are deemed guilty without taking into account their version. The second, conversely, refers to the country’s response to what they do to blacks: it does not confront the problem. America does not want to admit what it is doing wrong, and it is never going to say sorry, contrary to what usually happens in a relationship: if one of the two has hurt the other, he or she will apologize. Joey asks for this, but he is not going to receive that treatment.

This song is composed of just one verse instead of two (as in the other examples), and in that verse, Joey goes deeper into examining his relationship with Miss Amerikkka. The line, “Always gotta minimize my pride” refers to how blacks cannot feel good about themselves because they are not enabled to do it. The country puts them in such a difficult situation that they have to be almost ashamed of their race. He follows that with, “Always gon’ criticize my moods / I can’t make one mistake, it’s no room”. It is easy to find a relationship in which one of the two complains about the other’s mood, leading to an argument. In this particular one, arguments are the norm (that is why he cannot “make one mistake”), which reflects how restricted blacks are in America. Just one mistake can lead to death.

This relationship is also unequal: “Since you can do anything you want to, anyway, uh”. One of the “partners” controls the situation (America, whites), whereas the other (Joey, blacks) is forced to be in a passive position. The reasons for complaining are enough: “It’s way deeper than just bein’ emotional”. The empowered partner feels that the other is overreacting, but that is not the case. There is a “deeper” problem behind this dynamic. Nonetheless, the weaker partner is tired of being passive: “Now I’m free, by the truth, I can’t be controlled, no more / Nothin’ like I used to be back before / Know it must hurt for you to see me evolve”. He has changed in the sense that he is going to speak up instead of remaining silent, which “hurts” the country because all of its mistakes will be public. He ends the verse with, “Locked in the cycle, tryna break the chains / Handcuffs so tight, nearly slit my veins / This what tough love feels like, feel my pain, uh”. Again, it shows blacks’ limitations in the United States. With an album like this one, Joey is trying to “break the chains” and gain the freedom all people deserve. The country puts many restrictions (“handcuffs so tight”) that it hurts physically but also emotionally (“tough love” and

“pain”).

The song ends with Joey singing, “Because Amerikkka don’t love me / Whole country turned on me / It’s no love in the city for the homie / Just a gang of police, praying they don’t ever catch it on me”. In a way, it sounds like a break up in which America was the one that decided to end the relationship. Because of that, Joey says that the country does not love him and that, in fact, he is going to be persecuted by the police as though he had done something wrong. He prays for that not to happen, however complicated it may be.

4.5. “AMERIKKKAN IDOL”

In the last song on the album, he does not change his message and he repeats most of what he has said before, but he increases his aggressiveness. He speaks more clearly and more directly, caring less about the consequences of his actions. He is, in summary, blunter in his assessment of the United States’ situation when it comes to racial equality.

This song has three verses, with the last being the longest and most important one. Nevertheless, he also expresses interesting thoughts in the first: “’Cause Bed Stuy a little unsafe for me now / That’s why I keep the .40 loaded with no safety around / Never thought I’d have to hold it, I’m just holdin’ it down / Protect my neck and my crown, patrol throughout the station”. He needs a gun because, if he does not protect his family, no one will do that for him. He needs to be aware of that because there are very dangerous places in America, such as Bed Stuy⁴. This directly connects to the next two lines: “And they judgin’ just ‘cause my skin color is brown / And for that, they wanna leave me dead in the ground”. Most of the shootings that happen in the United States are race-based, as mentioned in a previous section based on a study by the Washington Post: “black males were three times as

⁴ Bed Stuy is a Brooklyn neighborhood in which crime rate is very high.

likely to die as their white counterparts” (Kimbriell et al.). He believes that the police have inner motives to kill black people. He reinforces this idea with, “And have the nerve to blame it all on my background / Sorry white Amerikkka, but I’m about to black out”. The most interesting part of these two lines is the word play with “white Amerikkka” and “black out”. “Black out” means the same as faint (losing consciousness), which is, mostly, what “black” people in America do when they are shot by “white” police officials.

He goes back to the past, as he did in “LAND OF THE FREE”, with the following lines: “Feedin’ you lies like this whole thing wasn’t built on our backs / Assimilate our history then made it a mystery”. Black people, as slaves, were the ones who did the dirty work. They were the ones to “create” the nation, but that part of history is hidden (“mystery”) because it is not favorable for the image of people in power.

Now it is time for the third verse, the most direct part of the song. He starts with, “What the government is doin’ amongst our people is downright evil / Disturbin’, but not surprisin’, that’s for certain”, which is a clear message of intent. What black people suffer is not only bad or very bad; it is, indeed, terrible, horrible and like a nightmare at times. It is not surprising because it has been happening for centuries, but it still hurts and it has to be said. He then introduces a new concept for present-day America: “With all of the conflict of propaganda, I believe they are simply tryna slander / Start a Civil War within the USA amongst black and white and those alike”. The “real” Civil War occurred in the 19th century, but this is the 21st version, with media and the government dividing the nation, again, into those who denounce racism and those who consider it normal. What the government does, in fact, has an intention according to him: “They are simply pushin’ us to our limit so that we can all get together and get with it / They want us to rebel, so that it makes easier for them to kills and put us in jails”. The circumstances are going to be so difficult for blacks that

they will complain or speak up, thus giving whites reasons for killing them or for putting them in jails. It is like they are trapped. Next, he focuses more explicitly on police shootings: “Alton Sterlings are happenin’ every day in this country and around the world / The scary part, boys and girls / Is most of these stories don’t make it to the news and reach mass consciousness”. With “Alton Sterlings” he refers also to cases such as the Eric Harris’ one mentioned sections before: black people that were killed unfairly. As he says, the problem is that not all of those killings appear in the news, thus making it difficult for people to realize how serious racism is in the nation.

Later, he raps, “It is for sure time that we as people stand up for acknowledgement / And accomplishment of what we call human rights”. Here he sounds almost like a modern Martin Luther King. It is not a matter of race; it is a matter of being a person in this world. Human rights are the basics for everyone, but in the United States that is not possible for African Americans, Asian Americans or any other ethnic group. As a consequence, blacks have to do something (“It is time to rebel, better yet, raise hell”), but they have to approach it intelligently: “We have to work together, not only rattlin’ them on a physical level / But to outsmart them on an intellectual mental level the same”. He calls for union with, “As black men, I think our gangs need to do a better job at protectin’ us / The people, our communities and not assistin’ in destroyin’ them brutally”. Blacks are killed by whites constantly, so there is no reason for blacks to kill each other: “We are so quick to pick up a gun and kill one another / But not quick enough to pick it up and protect each other”.

He also explains the mental process of the police when dealing with blacks: “The code words to killin’ a black man by police is, ‘He’s got a gun’ / Damned if he do, damned if he don’t, damned if he runs”. A black does not have any escape. It does not matter what he or she does; it is as though his or her destiny is already written and police officials are the ones

to read the last sentence. As he later says, “they don’t value our lives”. He calls for action because “my people been sufferin’ way too long / And I’m tired of singing the same old song”. With all the songs in the album, he has tried to show that racism is more present than ever in America and that it has to be denounced. Complaining on Twitter is nowhere near enough (“Justice won’t be served by a hashtag”). To end the song, he asks for bigger and stronger action to modify the situation in the country: “Time to wake the fuck up and do our own research / And not form opinions based on just what we’ve heard”. In other words, people should do exactly what Korver did, in spite of the fact that “Amerikkka” want to tell just one part of the story. In a way, this song takes all the ideas explored in the album, it links them and it expresses them more directly for people to realize what is going on in the “land of the free”.

5. Conclusions

The main goal of this work was to show when racism started in the United States, how it evolved throughout the years and how it is still present nowadays, focusing finally on the music album from Joey Bada\$\$ used as a way to make social criticism. The first part of this dissertation was more based on the historical context and the second, focused on the album, consists of an in-depth analysis of the language in relation to events. The first conclusion that can be drawn is that racism was born associated with slavery. Even though it was not called “racism” as such at the time, it is evident that the basis of slavery is a belief that the other race (in this case blacks) is inferior and, therefore, has to work for the superior one (whites). When the English set foot in North America, racism established itself in what later became the United States. Racism was officially backed with the first Constitution (a black was counted as three-fifths of a person for the census) or not even mentioned in the *Declaration of Independence*. The American Civil War, won by the North, put, on paper, an end to slavery, but that was not the case. Erasing it officially is not enough: the difficult

part is erasing it from the minds of people. Southerners, in particular, considered slavery part of their lives and their routine. That is why they created the Black Codes in the Reconstruction Era and why they were the ones who installed Jim Crow Laws more fiercely. Whereas at first racism was inextricably linked with slavery, when it evolved it turned into segregation.

Three centuries had passed and blacks were still subjected to whites. It became unsustainable and it forced a reaction from African-Americans. Awareness increased and the intensity of the protests did the same, reaching their peak with the Rosa Parks' case. Without Rosa Parks, there would have not been the Civil Rights Movement with Martin Luther King Jr. as its leader. They fought for their rights and they were finally successful after many years. Racism, officially, was over, but that was the easy part. When racism has been the basis of a society for three centuries, the problem cannot be resolved in a few years, which is why racism still exists in the 21st century. It is part of the reality for African-Americans, installed in the mass consciousness: arrests and shootings with blacks as the usual victims. They have rights, unlike in the previous century, but that is not reflected in how they are treated. Music, in this era when it can be listened to in several streaming services, is a great platform to provoke change and raise awareness of how racism is still a problem to be solved in the United States. That is what Joey Bada\$\$ does with *ALL-AMERIKKKAN BADA\$\$*: he represents African-Americans, expresses how the present-day racism makes him (them) feel, tries to make people realize what the situation in the country really is and denounces the problem aggressively. The solution is not simple and unlikely to be found in the short term, but it will be interesting to see if the work of musicians such as Joey Bada\$\$ have a lasting effect on racism in the United States.

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