

Michael Ralph, Aisha Beliso-De Jesús and Stephan Palmié

SAINT TUPAC

Abstract

Widespread fascination with Tupac Shakur's 2012 holographic resurrection at the Coachella music festival provides the occasion for theorizing human possibility in the context of Afro-diasporic religions. In considering Tupac's life and legacy, we refer to the spiritual power of his resurrection as an apotheosis, or divine ascendancy toward sainthood. However, instead of restricting our discussion to the familiar context of Catholic sainthood, we draw upon Afro-Cuban religious cosmologies (espiritismo, santería, and palo monte) to explore the complicated relationship of spirit copresences who are also described as "angel guardians" or santos (saints). We consider how these logics shift the role Tupac plays for hip hop. Tupac as guardian angel of hip hop acts as an Afro-Cuban santo who guides and protects his constituency from death. In addition, we complicate this dynamic by exploring how the Tupac hologram in particular might be akin to the palo monte practice of enslaving dead spirits for economic gain in the form of a spiritual cauldron (nganga). In this way, we explore Tupac's resurrection through multiple Afro-diasporic logics in order to theorize how the rebel spirit of this murdered rapper continues the fight against systematic oppression, even as he is potentially resurrected by different parties for different reasons. [diaspora, religion, hip hop, race, capitalism]

Yes, it was incredibly eerie and a little bit scary to see the rapper (Tupac), who was murdered more than 15 years ago, walking and talking – he even greeted the crowd with a strikingly pitch-perfect speaking voice.

— "Coachella 2012: Tupac 'responds' to his reincarnation" *Los Angeles Times* (April 16, 2012)

SANTO TUPAC

On Sunday, April 15, 2012, Tupac was resurrected. At the famed annual concert, Coachella, the "iconic West Coast rapper" joined allies Dr. Dre and Snoop on stage for a performance that

people would discuss with fevered intensity for subsequent weeks and months.¹ The sorcerers who engineered Tupac's holographic return transformed binary code into an interactive performance. Tupac's postmortem persona was composed of recorded sound and video samples of his former verbal and bodily performances. Digital Tupac was remixed so that his likeness could perform alongside friends and comrades in person, if not "in the flesh." The Academy Award-winning animation studio that resurrected this ancestor was showered with praise and adulation until an April 18, 2012 *The Washington Post* article reported that Tupac's "hologram" was based on a stage trick pioneered by the Italian magician Giambatista de la Porta in 1584. Rather than a feat of technological wizardry, this technique was known as a parlor trick in theater special effects and haunted houses that used glass and angles of light to create an optical illusion, called "Pepper's Ghost," since the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the revelation that the holographic Tupac was actually an "old" technology, the wonder of Tupac's resurrection faded for all but hip hop's affinity groups and devotees. But what made Tupac's fans and disciples retain their investment in his spectral presence? We suggest the spirit resurrected in Tupac's hologram has force beyond the digital apparatus used to raise him from the dead.

Tupac Amaru Shakur, born Lesane Parish Cooks on June 16, 1971 in Harlem, NY, embodied the aspirations of an entire generation in a dynamic career in film and music. Tupac's mother was a Black Panther, and he was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, which lent force to his message about the perils of economic and political inequality. In film, his portrayals offered nuanced, insightful portrayals of Black masculinity, and in his music, Tupac explored the crippling force of economic exclusion. Tupac captured the fear and frustration of institutionalized brutality, most clear in the erratic and violent behavior of law enforcement officials. And Tupac's own life was cut short, which heightened the stakes. During a tumultuous

time in prison for sexual assault charges, Tupac began studying philosophy and military strategy, and was one of the first rappers to have a number-one record while in prison. While out on bail posted by the record label, Death Row Records, Tupac's life was cut short by the wounds sustained in a drive-by shooting after leaving a Mike Tyson boxing match in Las Vegas, NV. Still alive when he was taken to the hospital, it is reported that his last words were "fuck you" to police who interrogated the rapper.² Six days later, on September 13, 1996, he died of internal injuries. His body was cremated the next day.

Many rumors and myths circulate about who killed Tupac—from his own record label, to the rival East Coast/West Coast hip hop feud with artist The Notorious B.I.G. (who was also killed shortly thereafter, some say in retaliation), to a Los Angeles gang, the Southside Crips. The case remains unsolved. Some even speculate that the artist had in fact faked his own death, with Tupac sightings circulating akin to those of Elvis Presley. Others claim that Tupac found refuge in Cuba inspired by the life of his godmother, former Black Panther Assata Shakur, who fled imprisonment in the United States on dubious charges and escaped to Cuba where she was granted political asylum. "Assata" (as she is affectionately known) maintains her innocence, her most telling statement on the matter, simply put: "My name is Assata and I am a twentieth-century escaped slave" (Smith 2017). Plans to force her extradition occur periodically, although the Cuban government has refused to even entertain that idea. If Tupac is indeed still alive, some speculate that perhaps he has the additional privilege of secrecy in Cuba.

On the other hand, in true saint-like fashion, Tupac's group The Young Outlawz, claim that they rolled up his ashes in a blunt and literally smoked him.³ Rapper Young Noble describes, "We twisted up some of that great-granddaddy California kush [marijuana] and mixed the big homie with it, ya know what I mean?"⁴ An interesting twist on transubstantiation, or the Eucharistic process of consuming the blood and body of Jesus Christ in the form of wine and bread, rolling Tupac in a blunt and smoking him might have more affinity with African diasporic sensibilities like *palo monte*, which also make use of the physical remains of dead humans. Young Outlawz claim the ritual was inspired by lyrics from the Tupac song, "Black Jesus" where he stated, "last wishes, niggas, smoke my ashes."

In Afro-Cuban religions manipulating the remains of dead humans allows for their spirits to be activated in new ways. It creates an "elevation" from which a regular spirit might ascend into the realm of the living as a more powerful entity, and become an "angel guardian" to those who invoke it. It is also common in Afro-Cuban religious practices to commune with the dead in a "spiritual mass" (*misa espiritual*), where you give spirits their favorite foods and conjure them as protective guides from the other world (*ara onu*). In the event where Tupac's homies claimed they rolled his ashes up and smoked him, they practiced a similar conjuring. Addressing the incredulous speculation that the Young Outlawz made this story up, Young Noble recounts the ceremony in vivid detail in an interview:

"Yeah, it is definitely true," said Young Noble. "I think it was the night of, we had a little memorial for him, with his mom, his family and s-t." "We hit the beach, do a lot of the s-t he liked on the beach. Some weed, some chicken wings he loved orange soda and all that kind of s-t. Pac loved that kind of s-t, so we were giving him our own farewell that night."⁵

The ocean is long known as a conduit for African diasporic copresences. It is also one of Tupac's favorite places, which explains why family members and rappers he mentored consumed his body with ritual herb at this site. Giving his spirit his favorite things: marijuana, chicken wings, and orange soda, they partook in his body, and connected with Tupac in true Afro-diasporic fashion.

As these examples demonstrate, Tupac's life and death allow for extensive meditation about human possibility. His holographic resurrection and spiritual work provoke debate about the stakes of his project and the power of his spirit. In what follows, we examine Tupac's role in the critical tradition casually referred to as "hip hop." We refer to the spiritual power of Tupac Shakur as an apotheosis, or divine ascendancy toward sainthood. By contemplating the abiding influence of Tupac's life and legacy, we chart the spiritual labor of his spirit. We also contemplate attempts to harness Tupac's spiritual force for commercial gain. Our analysis interrogates three distinct contexts. First, Tupac as guardian angel of hip hop personifies the rebel slave from heaven who bestows advice and blessings upon his descendants and comrades. Second, rather than restrict our

discussion to the formal protocols of Catholic sainthood, we draw upon Afro-Cuban religious cosmologies (*espiritismo*, *santería*, and *palo monte*) to explore the complicated relationship of spirit agents, some explicitly referred to as “angel guardians.” While pop culture is replete with references to Christ, we explain why the slave rebel figure of Afro-diasporic cosmologies is a more apt figure for Tupac’s spiritual ascension. Lastly, we explore how the idea of resurrecting Tupac as a guardian angel may articulate with the production and appropriation of his commodified digital likeness by entertainment companies concerned with controlling access to their intellectual property and its commercialization. Trapping significant aspects of Tupac’s personhood and creativity in digital storage and reactivating his voice and bodily shape for financial gain seems antithetical to the emancipatory stance of Santo Tupac. But, as we will argue, from the perspective of another Afro-Atlantic ritual tradition, Cuban *palo monte*, the stakes involved in capturing and coercing the dead into relations of exploitation reveal a latter-day version of an Atlantic dialectic—one where the enslaved engage a spirited defense of their humanity in the face of violent efforts to treat them as mere factors of production. As we will demonstrate, Afro-diasporic logics prepare us to think in nuanced ways about the legacy of a murdered rapper turned savior. As we highlight the diverse roles Santo Tupac plays, we point the way to hip hop’s role in pioneering a unique form of urban religiosity that shares a cosmology with the Afro-diasporic practices upon which it draws. As a strategy for resisting oppression, hip hop’s spirituality comes to the forefront as its own Black diasporic assemblage.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Tupac spoke at length about his own mortality and about a form of struggle that was intergenerational. The ancestors and the as-yet-unborn were prominent in his cosmology. The return of no other Black public figure would have elicited such a powerful reaction. Nor is any other figure so appropriate for a meditation on race and religion.

If Tupac sits on anyone’s shoulder as an angel guardian, it is Kendrick Lamar. One of the most commercially successful rappers of the moment, Kendrick Lamar (simply referred to as “Kendrick”) is also arguably the most insightful rapper of hip hop’s newest generation. Kendrick is from Compton—more specifically, Bomp-ton (the region dominated by Blood gang affiliations). If being iconic, insightful, and indefatigable as the leader

of hip hop’s westernmost kingdom were not enough to foster associations with Tupac, Kendrick routinely pays homage to his ancestor and inspiration.⁶ On his 2017 album, *Damn*, Kendrick opines that the stress and hassle of this world might provoke a dramatic response: “Fake my death. Go to Cuba. That’s the only option” (Lamar 2017). Here, Kendrick toys with the rumor that Tupac was never mortally wounded on September 12, 1996, but is an “escaped slave” like his godmother Assata taking refuge in Cuba.

Ironically, Tupac’s holographic Coachella performance reinforces the idea that he is dead. He did not phone in from Havana from crackling, wiretapped phone lines to rap in real time. Instead, we were treated to a replica of the rapper, suggesting that perhaps Tupac is not alive and well. However, most fascinating is how people continue to believe (and hope for) his resurrection.

Tupac’s first posthumous album, of six, was named *Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory* (Shakur 1996). Listeners wondering how Tupac could have recorded an album so soon after he died were treated to suggestive religious references (*Come with me, Hail Mary...*). Even more intriguing, Tupac’s first posthumous album marked the debut of his alias, Makaveli. This pseudonym is, of course, inspired by the fifteenth-century Florentine political theorist, Niccolò Machiavelli, who outlined a series of strategies for negotiating power in a contentious political landscape. Machiavelli faked his own death, giving rise to the widespread belief that Tupac had followed his hero’s example.

On “Mortal Man,” the last track of his 2015 album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, Kendrick uses the life of Nelson Mandela to develop a sophisticated reading of leadership in a diasporic framework (Lamar 2015). Kendrick challenges his listeners to introspect—to assess whether they have the humility and integrity to navigate the horrors of systematic oppression. As his analysis ranges from the evils of apartheid to the legacy of Jim Crow, Kendrick closes “Mortal Man” with what feels like a spoken word poem:

I remember you was conflicted—misusing your influence. Sometimes I did the same. Abusing my power, full of resentment—resentment that turned into a deep depression. Found myself screaming in a hotel room. I didn’t wanna self-destruct. The evils of Lucy⁷ was all around me. So I went running for answers until I came home. But that didn’t stop the survivor’s guilt. Going back and forth, trying to convince

myself of the stripes I had earned. Or maybe how A-1 my foundation was. But while my loved ones was fighting the continuous war back in the city, I was entering a new one. A war that was based on apartheid and discrimination. Made me wanna go back to the city and tell the homies what I had learned. The word was respect. Just because you wore a different color than mine's doesn't mean I can't respect you as a Black man. Forgetting all the pain and hurt we caused each other in these streets. If I respect you, we unify and stop the enemy from killing us. But, I don't know. I am no mortal man. Maybe I'm just another nigga ...

Kendrick's words, "I'm no mortal man" in contrast to the song title, "Mortal Man," leads the listener to think he is saying he is "immortal." Yet, in saying, "I'm no mortal man. Maybe I'm just another nigga," the key contrast is not "immortal"/"mortal" but "mortal"/"nigga." In Kendrick's analysis, "nigga" is not a "mortal" man but a consequence of the violent saga that has defined the history of the African diaspora—from "apartheid [to]...discrimination." For Kendrick, "nigga" is a concept steeped in systematic oppression that has come to refer to those who prevail against it.⁸

The music ends just before Kendrick spits his plaintive acapella verse. Here, Kendrick finally reveals he has an interlocutor. Explaining that the words in his heart do not amount to a finished performance piece, but instead are part of questions he needs help answering, his poem is now revealed as a prayer:

Shit. And, that's all I wrote. I was gonna call it, "Another Nigga." But, ain't really a poem. I just felt like...it's somethin' you probably could relate to.

Yet, before we know who Kendrick is speaking with, he shifts gears from this unfinished poem—this tribute—to something burning in his heart:

Now that I finally got a chance to holla at you, I wanted to ask you about a certain situation about a metaphor, actually. You spoke on, "The Ground." What did you mean about that? What does "The Ground" represent?

The listener finally hears who Kendrick has been speaking with as Tupac, his hip hop angel guardian, responds with a cryptic explanation:

The ground is gonna open up and swallow the evil... "The ground" is the symbol for the poor people. The poor people are gonna open up this whole world and swallow up the rich people, 'cause the rich people are gonna be so fat—they are gonna be so appetizing. The poor are gonna be so poor. And hungry... There might be some cannibalism... They might eat the rich.

Kendrick asks Tupac to elaborate on his assertion that economic disparity will become so great that the poor will eat the rich who have become corpulent with their greed—a reference to the gluttony of capitalism. They discuss plans to end economic exploitation and the virtues of Black economic autonomy. Meanwhile, Tupac affirms a commitment to social justice through the Black radical liberation tradition that reared him, arguing that rappers must fight back:

I like to think that at every opportunity [where] I have been threatened... it's been met with resistance. And not only me, but it goes down my family tree. You know what I'm sayin'? It's in my veins to fight back.

Tupac makes it clear that "fight[ing] back" is no mere metaphor. As Kendrick prods him to clarify his stance, Tupac anchors his vision for social change in a revolutionary tradition that dates back to the era of legalized enslavement and the prospect of insurrection:

I think that niggas are tired of grabbin' shit out the stores and next time it's a riot there's gonna be bloodshed for real... It's gonna be like Nat Turner, 1831.

For both Kendrick and Tupac, this vision for armed resistance is nestled within a cosmology that ties people together across the generations. In true African diasporic fashion, Kendrick's prayer in conversation with Tupac is answered back. Tupac shares lessons from the past in the present. Similar to the agency of African diaspora deities and spirits who commune and communicate directly with their worshippers, Tupac invokes Nat Turner's slave insurrection as part of his liberation strategy and advice for Kendrick and future rappers. In African diasporic cosmology, the mortal form (living body) is not the beginning or end of life. The rebel slave, like Nat Turner, also serves as a copresence who continues to fight for liberation on behalf of those still enslaved.

Indeed, if Tupac could be likened to a particular African diasporic “saint,” it would be the Yoruba orisha (deity) Sàngó (also known as Xangô in Brazil or Changó in Latin America and the Caribbean). Sàngó was once a living human who ascended into sainthood to become an orisha. Once the great third king of Oyo, Sàngó is now worshiped as the ruler of music, art, and entertainment, the god of thunder, keeper of fire, and defender of justice. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Sàngó’s Catholic avatar is merged with Saint Barbara, who was tortured and survived death because of her devotion to Jesus Christ. It is said a lightning bolt killed Saint Barbara’s father as he tried to decapitate her because of her faith. Sàngó was said to have died and then been resurrected as an orisha. Like Tupac’s prowess in music and battle, Sàngó uses thunder, lightning and music to draw power against his enemies. The energy that Sàngó gives off is understood as nourishing the fight against African enslavement and European colonization.

During the discussion with Saint Tupac, Kendrick confesses his own personal struggle to grapple with the energies of life and soul, what he describes as the “vibrations—the energy,” the inspirations he senses while rapping, although he does not know “where it comes from.” Like the energy of Sàngó’s battle music which aides the fight against oppression, hip hop is another source of Black liberation. This music also draws on the spirits as a conduit of this expression. For example, Tupac explains how the vibrations that Kendrick feels while rapping are actually forms of possession—they are proof that the rapper’s message does not originate with the individual but in the spirit realm. Tupac tells Kendrick:

Because the spirits—we ain’t even really rappin’. We just letting our dead homies tell the story for us.

Because life and death are tied together in a cycle, we commune with people in different realms all the time. Tupac might have died a violent death at a young age, but he is still with us in spirit. Yet, this presence is partial and fleeting as Kendrick demonstrates at the end, when he tries to share “one last thing” with Tupac, but gets no further response:

‘Pac? Pac....? Pac?!

Perhaps Kendrick shows that no matter how we might edit interviews, or piece together a

hologram from digital detritus, Tupac is gone. Or, maybe Kendrick is suggesting that this conversation is a visit from his guardian angel who has now returned to the spiritual realm. Tupac’s own words, “we ain’t even really rappin” but just “letting our dead homies tell the story for us” speaks to the type of Afro-diasporic project that allows for the injustices of the dead to be conjured and redeemed by the living. It also addresses how Tupac, as a spirit, might see his own work: he returns and speaks through his homies. In this, Santo Tupac indicates the intimate obligations that homies engage in with each other through life and death—practice of conjuring. They allow the dead to possess them through their lyrics, they pour out liquor on the ground as libation, and they even roll them up and smoke them in a blunt. As we examine next, spiritual insights does not merely derive from sacred texts and ritual practices but from street’s disciples.

STREET’S DISCIPLE

Hip hop is arguably the most influential aesthetic genre of the past few decades. It is likewise implicated in some of the most contentious political debates of our time, and has an abiding relationship with law enforcement initiatives. But hip hop has also shaped perceptions of spirituality— notions of faith and purpose. Observers have noted that Kendrick traffics in Black Hebrew Israelite doctrines.⁹ Nas (formally Nasir Jones) routinely refers to insights promoted by the Nation of Gods and Earths (the Five Percent Nation), in addition to biblical concepts. Lauryn Hill and Black Thought (of the ROOTS) reference Islamic thought and practice. In these and other ways, hip hop facilitates extended meditation on questions of life, death, and resurrection, fostering the emergence of what Nas has termed “street’s disciples.” Street’s disciples provide religious alternatives to mainstream forms of Black Church respectability. Couched in the spiritual acumen of street credibility and truth sayers on the impoverished realities of Black urban America, street’s disciples forge a distinct sense of religiosity (Ralph 2009). Drawing on disparate forms of Black Christianity, Islamic texts, Hebrew Israelite doctrine, and other Afro-diasporic spiritual sensibilities, hip hop has created a new cosmology of Black liberation theology that goes beyond a simple art form. In its performance rituals, musical prayers, and repertoire of tools for battling oppression, hip hop deserves to be considered alongside other Afro-diasporic religions. Nas, in particular, helps us to assess hip hop’s religious implications.

Hip hop's most acclaimed lyricist, Nas bragged in his debut appearance not simply that his lyricism "pleases" but that when he "was twelve" he "went to jail for snuffin' Jesus." Nas' body of work includes biblical references in songs like, "Streets disciple," and "Nazareth savage." But one of Nas' most powerful forays into religion involves a posthumous collaboration with Tupac, where he uses religious imagery to explore the religious contradictions that accompany the plight of prosperity in the postindustrial United States:

I am capable of anything. My imagination can give me wings to fly like doves over the streets watching many things. Kids walking home from school on drug blocks. Missionaries pass out papers that read, "Love God."

Nas uses his imagination to fly above the streets on wings "like doves," a reference to the Holy Spirit. Nas suggests that his lyricism derives from a higher power. He frames "Thugz Mansion" as a sanctuary from the conspiracy to criminalize Blackness. Drawing his verse to a close, Nas summarizes the links between police brutality and Black urban reality:

Detectives act like maniacs, chasin' him. His asthma's flarin'. Smokin' like a chimney. On Remy. Of course, he's not caring. He needs a place to go to keep his mind expanding. I give him a helping hand—take him out to Thugz Mansion.

Tupac comes next, delivering his verse from heaven:

Dear Momma, don't cry, your baby boy's doin' good. Tell the homies I'm in heaven and they ain't got 'hoods. Seen a show with Marvin Gaye last night, it had me shook. Drinkin' Peppermint Schnapps with Jackie Wilson and Sam Cooke. Then, some lady named Billie Holiday sang, Sittin' there, kickin' it with Malcolm 'til the day came.

Tupac, the guardian angel, foregrounds his role as heavenly protector:

Little Natasha [is now] sure grown—tell the lady in the liquor store she's forgiven, so come home. Maybe in time you'll understand only God can save us. While Miles Davis is cuttin' loose with the band, just think of all the people

that you knew in the past that passed on. They're in heaven—found peace at last. Picture a place that they exist—together. There has to be a place better than this—in heaven.

In contrast to the Tupac referenced in Kendrick's album whose liberation theology argued the poor will overthrow the rich, Tupac here appears to advocate for peace in heaven instead of on earth. "Thugz Mansion" references the King James' Bible translation of John 14:2-3, where Jesus tells his disciples: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The gift of the "eternal house" or "heavenly dwelling" of a true believer has been literally interpreted as a giant home or mansion to those who remain faithful to their Lord and Saviour. But in "Thugz Mansion" by including Black revolutionary figures of multiple faiths, Tupac puts a twist on where one's faith should be placed. Bringing together Black artists such as Sam Cooke, Billie Holiday, and Marvin Gaye with assassinated Nation of Islam revolutionary and Black American political leader, Malcolm X, speaks of a different type of heaven—an eternal dwelling where one is celebrated for a commitment to Black liberation and culture.

Similar to Tupac, Nas invokes Christian themes in hip hop as a way to fight Black oppression. During a 2016 interview with DJ Khaled, Nas discussed his controversial decision to be portrayed as Christ, crucified on the cross, for the smash hit song, "Hate Me Now" (Jones 1999), featuring Puff Daddy. Although during filming both Nas and Puff Daddy were featured on the cross, in post-production Puff Daddy backed out and asked to have his crucifixion removed from the final cut. Nas describes how the imagery was prompted by criticism then New York City Mayor, Rudy Giuliani, unleashed against a play where an African American man had played Jesus Christ. By putting himself in Jesus' shoes, Nas wanted to show how Black people are crucified. Nas was being a "streets disciple," as he put it, showing his own crucifixion as a way "to get back at all those people that don't want to see a black man doing his thing." Indeed, the first two words Nas ever uttered on wax were "Street's Disciple." His first album appearance featured in Main Source's (1991) song "Live at the BBQ," generated a flurry of interest in the then 18-year-old rapper:

Street's disciple, my raps are trifle I shoot slugs from my brain just like a rifle. Stampede the stage, I leave the microphone split. Play Mr. Tuffy while I'm on some pretty tone shit. Verbal assassin, my archi-tec pleases, when I was twelve, I went to hell for snuffing Jesus.

Here Nas sees himself as a streets disciple, where he "kills" (beats out the competition) with his lyrical prowess. The idea that Nas was incarcerated for killing Christ uses hyperbole to expose the injustice of mass incarceration.¹⁰ It is also a reference to the loss of faith that accompanies Nas' grim reality. Nas' reference to being incarcerated for killing Jesus is telling for he was also the rapper who announced that he "raps in front of more niggas than a slave ship," indexing the concern with the "apartheid...discrimination" that Kendrick references during his conversation with Tupac. Here again, the "nigga" is framed as a transhistorical category that highlights racial oppression and battles against it. As Nas protégé Dave East raps in his debut album, *Paranoia* (East and Jones 2017), "They hated Jesus, hated Malcolm, hated Martin. Hate niggas livin' in a two-bedroom apartment. No lights up in the crib, I guess I came up out the darkness." Both rappers tie street science to systematic exclusion, yet ultimately insist upon using an Afro-diasporic intellectual tradition as their guide. They also reference how economic disparity and routine violence can diminish faith.

As streets' disciples, Nas and Tupac wield the authority to speak truth to the need for hope, prayer, and belief in higher powers as resources to combat oppression. What hip hop shares with other diasporic forms of religious experience is that it does not merely encourage adherents to reflect upon their predicament—it provides them with resources for managing it. Scholars have debated whether or not twenty-first century incarnations of structural racism can adequately be referred to as a "New Jim Crow" (Hinton 2016). But, there is consensus among all credible social scientists that there is continuity with historic forms of surveillance, punishment, and economic and political exclusion. Diasporic traditions forged in the Black Atlantic foreground how slavery, colonialism, and Jim Crow have inaugurated disciples to the streets with a unique sense of religiosity. Next, we explore how Afro-diasporic logics of spirit and materiality offer a broad range of possibilities for Tupac's life and legacy.

SPIRITUALLY CRAFTED

Afro-angels, hide my weapons in tangles ... Mother Earth's ribs crashed in, armed with cowries, I'm blastin'. As the Earth rebels, my womb swells. The birth of Black magic. Saving my people, force of habit ... Spiritually crafted, black-listed, hair-twisted. Ghetto embargo lifted. Power-shiftin', comb-fistin'. I predict goddesses. You're runnin' after witches. I kiss my fourteen stitches. Keep all my baby girl wishes. I predict all the oceans turn dry. Not one baby girl will cry as you attempt to grow broccoli from the dessert. We will take our pregnant bodies. Drink from underground rivers. Wash your face between our legs while recreating humanity. We will summon Yemaya—search for our fertility.

—Jessica Care Moore in "The Prediction,"
from Nas' 1999 album, *Nastradamus* (Jones
2002b)

It is important to clarify the difference between Abrahamic and Afro-diasporic notions of the afterlife. In African diasporic logics that are especially prevalent in the Black Atlantic, the work of the dead is far from over. As highlighted in the above quote, "Afro-Angels" draw on religious agencies to enact their power—including Black magic. Thinking Tupac through the realm of Black magic illustrates the complexity of religious power that hip hop draws from. This also entails disrupting negative associations identified with these practices.

Jessica Care Moore's hypothetical emcee is armed with cowries, a reference to the use of divination in Yoruba diaspora religions. The enslaved spirit has been hailed by the world of the living by practitioners of Afro-Cuban ritual traditions known as *regla ocha* or *santería*, referenced in the above song, as well as in *palo monte* or *palo mayombe*, sometimes described as Black magic or the "left hand" of *santería* (Ochoa 2010). These religions use the term "angel guardian" to discuss the power of the *orisha* (Yoruba divinities) and *egun* (ancestors) as part of their daily labor to protect and guide practitioners. In *santería*, the "saint," or *santo* usually refers to a Yoruba diaspora divinity, or *orisha* that is tied to energies of nature such as the ocean, mountain, river, or forest which is also blended with the deceased spirits of past priests. As we discussed previously, the *orisha* *Sàngó* was one of the few saints who was once human and

then became a deity. According to these practices, each person has an angel guardian (*santo*) which guides their life paths and “owns their crown” (the master of their head). African diasporic religions provide a practice by which a person can spiritually and physically unite with this angel guardian.

In Afro-Caribbean *espiritismo* (Spiritism) mediumship practices, angel guardians are spirits of the deceased who look after human beings to whom they have become attached through ties of mutual affinity (Beliso-De Jesús 2015; Espíritu Santo 2015). Emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century, Caribbean *espiritismo* came to unite French Kardecist mediumship practices and North American Spiritualism with ideologies of scientific and technological progress, and enhanced the resulting blend with “spiritual guides” of African or Native American origin. Nas references African-American affinities with the spirit world by recalling the Toni Morrison novel, *Beloved*, about the ghost of an enslaved girl whose mother killed her so she would not have to endure life in bondage:

My name is Beloved. I come from the past, with insects crawling on me like I'm dead. I don't eat—I just fast. I don't beef—I just blast... (Jones 2002a)

The girl ghost of *Beloved* haunts her former family, exposing the violence of kinship under conditions of enslavement. Much like a troubled “*muerto oscuro*” who was wronged in life and afflicts the living in the search for justice and peace, *Beloved*'s revenant awaits the kind of ritual redress that a series of *misas espirituales* might provide the spirit of a slave who died an untimely and violent death, so as to transform a haunting presence into a guardian angel. A redemption of the past for the sake of healing the living. Might Nas' invocation of *Beloved*'s spirit serve such a purpose?

Santería copresences travel through energetic momentum, affecting people's bodies, and worlds (Beliso-De Jesús 2015). In addition to trance-based possessions, there are myriad of ways that deceased spirits, energies of nature, and other entities work in, on, and around people's body-worlds. Most importantly, these spirits and deities are agential. They speak when spoken to, eat food and offerings, and engage with people. In this sense, Tupac as hip hop angel guardian continues to operate as a diasporic copresence. We can see the ascension of Tupac to angel guardian or saint

(in the Afro-diasporic sense) in the way he has assisted Kendrick, Nas, and so many other young lyricists. He continues to rap, write lines, give advice, and even predictions, as we saw with his assertion that the poor would eat the greedy rich. He even suggests that the raps themselves are forms of possession by the dead.

Yet from another perspective, we can also see how the Coachella resurrection might constitute a moment of enslavement. As the protracted legal battles between Tupac's mother and the Canadian Entertainment One corporation (which acquired the rights to Tupac's audiovisual remains upon Death Row Record's bankruptcy in 2003) demonstrate¹¹, Tupac's capacity for value generation had by no means ceased with the demise of his mortal body. Significant parts of his personhood — his video likeness, the lyrics and beats he created when still alive, even interviews he gave — were appropriated and owned by corporate others (people he might have “dissed” or even parted ways with, at any moment, while occupying a biotic, and so legally capacitated body). Not now however. It would seem that the “hologram” that Snoop and Dre interacted with back then in Coachella was ultimately doing the bidding of, and making money for, whatever corporation owned the brand 2Pac at the time.

Here it is not hard to come up with references to other Afro-Atlantic ritual traditions that raise the dead in order to coerce them into servitude and forced labor (cf. Matory 2008). Seen through the lens of one of these traditions, Afro-Cuban *palo monte* or *palo mayombe*, for example, the lifting of dead rappers from corporately owned digital storage thus has an ostensibly far more ominous ring to it. Practitioners of *palo monte* enter into ritually mediated pacts with dead humans (*muertos* or *nfumbis*) that promise the dead a new embodiment in synthetic power objects known as *ngangas* or *prendas* (variously translated as “jewels,” i.e. treasures, or “pawns), in return for services (*trabajos*) the dead must perform at the bidding of the *palero* who provided them with a new form of sublunary existence and the capacity to once more agentively interfere in the world of the living.

In a sense, a *nganga* object is a medium of storage and reactivation for the dead, not entirely different from the magnetic tapes and computer chips that house Tupac's commercially salient remains (his “catalogue”). But in contrast to the hologram at Coachella and the posthumous albums that Tupac released from the digital

afterlife, palo monte literalizes rather than obscures the moment of capture and coerced post-mortual labor that renders Tupac “the hardest working dead man alive.”¹² Unlike the “hologram” that gave Tupac a recognizable (if translucent) human shape, there is nothing anthropomorphic in the visual appearance of nganga. A nganga is an iron cauldron or clay pot stuffed with a bewildering array of magical substances. Often tightly bound with iron chains (to contain their willful and wily dead denizens), nganga objects dazzle and confound occidental senses and sensibilities. Packed with wooden sticks, soils from various social locations (a cemetery, hospital, market, police station, etc.), water from a river and the sea, plants, minerals, feathers, seashells, knives, padlocks, bones, blood, and animal carcasses, nganga objects are invariably crowned by a human cranium that rises above what non-initiates tend to perceive as an ominous, putrefying mess. It is the remains of a deceased human (ideally the skull, or kiyumba) that allow paleros to transform the dead person into a nfumbi, install them in such nganga assemblages, and so capacitate them to perform mystical works (trabajos) at their bidding.

Unlike Tupac’s “hologram” which appeared to interact with Dre and Snoop on equal footing, palo rituals involving nganga objects are shot through with images of violence and domination that animate histories of slavery and other coercive labor practices¹³. This is evident from the moment a palero initiates a relationship with a dead person by identifying the grave of someone who died a violent or untimely death. Such muertos may not realize that they are no longer alive and crave a return to embodiment and worldly existence. The palero will then seize upon this desire to propose a pact (trata), promising to give the dead person in question renewed existence in a nganga object in exchange for the muerto’s delivering “works” (trabajos), i.e. perform mystical actions, in the paleros service. Once the muerto expresses consent (usually through divination), the palero deposits a payment at the graveside, and then extracts bones that will be used as the foundation of a nganga power object.

In one sense, these ritual practices draw on the imagery of wage labor under market conditions. So, when “works” are completed, the palero delivers payment in the form of blood sacrifices, liquor, food, or tobacco. Yet as the muerto only becomes capable of performing such services through the ritual means that give him or her new

embodiment in a nganga object, the palero constructing the nganga also acts in accordance with classical liberal principles of appropriation: in mixing his will with otherwise unutilized resources (bones of the dead), the palero transforms the muerto who consented to being objectified in a nganga object into a species of property. In this way, the relationship between palero and muerto comes to resemble that between master and slave—an interpretation patently confirmed in palo ritual, such as when paleros verbally abuse or whip their ngangas to drive them into action, or when nfumbis address the owners of the nganga in which they have come to exist as “my master” (mi amo).

But in keeping with this symbolism, a sense of agonistic, even antagonistic struggle pervades all palo practice. As Ochoa (2010:91) puts it, palo monte revolves around “a sense of fate-shaping capacity by investing prendas-ngangas-nkisos with the power to harm or kill not only their enemies of their keepers but the keepers themselves.” This is so because the nfumbi always participates in a larger structure of command and submission where the enslaved can also potentially revolt. The master may command the spirit, but in accordance with the symbolism that governs palo monte (and does so for historical reasons—cf. Palmié 2002) the nfumbi is the slave driver who delivers commands to other objects and spirits active within the nganga. Part of the danger of manipulating nganga objects is that revolts may radiate outward to endanger the entire structure of command. If treated improperly, ngangas may be rendered ineffective. But they may also turn against their owners, consuming their persons in a phantasmagoric reversal of the Hegelian image of the dialectic of dependence between lord and bondsman.

Viewed from this angle, the use of Tupac’s digital archive in hologram form appears very different from Kendrick or Nas’s resurrection of Tupac as hip hop angel guardian. On this analogy, Coachella’s electronic wizards might be seen as enslaving Tupac’s digitized remains in a manner not unlike the way in which paleros harness ngangas and the nfumbis contained in them to their personal goals. But the contrast should not be overdrawn. It is not only that paleros activate their ngangas mostly for therapeutic reasons (if only to undo their clients’ sorcery-induced afflictions by forms of counter-sorcery). It is that Tupac likewise continues to work his magic—for good or ill—in the world in which he, much like a nfumbi, exists only mediately.

We can explore this insight, in a different register, to grapple with the “work of the dead rapper in an age of his mechanical reproducibility.” Part person, part object (material or digital), dead, but palpably agentive in the here and now, both ngangas and Tupac’s “hologram” systematically blur some of the most taken-for-granted bright lines of Western common sense metaphysics. For one thing, they communicate from beyond the threshold of death. They do so through a variety of media infrastructures: computers, sound systems and projectors in Tupac’s case, divinatory systems, possession trance, dreams or vivid sensations in the case of ngangas. Ngangas reveal hidden agendas and mystical machinations beneath the surface of everyday events; Tupac’s (still growing) catalogue of posthumous pronouncements continues to diagnose the systemic evils of American structural racism—the “apartheid and discrimination” to which Kendrick made him speak in near-oracular terms. But there is more that commends such a perspective, and Katerina Kerestetzi’s ethnography of the phenomenology of the interaction between paleros and their ngangas/nfumbis gives us good clues about how to further pursue it. “The nganga,” she writes (Kerestetzi 2015:148)

is the dead man’s materialization, his new body, so to speak, and it allows him to regain some of the attributes specific to life, such as growth, needs, desires, and pleasure. And because it has a shape, the spirit embodied in the cauldron enables the palero to physically interact with it (to talk to it, to touch it, to feed it, etc.), which makes religious experience in Palo Monte extremely rich on a sensory level.

Just so the Coachella “hologram” of Tupac—though clearly a commercially manufactured, commodified object—provided Tupac’s spirit with a materialized-immaterial body, capable of communicating with the living through complicated (but experientially similarly vivid) media infrastructures.

What is more, just like the human remains in a nganga object provide it with its “inspired force,” so did the digitized remains of Tupac animate and enable his “hologram” not only to rap with Snoop and Dre, but to speak to us all in his own former human shape and to issues that continue to be of pressing concern. Perhaps no matter then that Tupac’s voice and likeness was corporately owned at the moment: had the digital remnants of his former person, creative genius, and political views *not* become subject to digital

archiving and commercial exploitation, his legacy might not have been carried onward to new generations of rappers and their audiences which continue to dialogue with him *anew*. This is a point that, we think, Walter Benjamin might have appreciated. If we conceive of hip hop in a manner akin to what Alastair MacIntyre (1984) calls a tradition—a long conversation whose participant need not agree on anything but the moral value of keeping it going—then dead rappers like Tupac still have their work cut out for them. Whether they do so as “slaves” to the entertainment industry may not be as important a question as it might seem at first glance. It is in the nature of domination to call forth resistance: slaves rebel; ngangas unleash mystical forms of counter-sorcery; dead rappers inspire.

The use of Tupac’s digital archive in hologram form is very different from the resurrection of Tupac as an angel guardian of hip hop who visits Kendrick or Nas.

Unlike the guardian angel role where Tupac’s spirit is free to provide us lessons of profound insight and inspiration, the enslaved hologram must act as a puppet, singing and dancing in a form of holographic minstrelsy. Whereas the nganga’s needs and desires matter to the palero, the needs and desires of Tupac (dead or alive) are not factors for the holographic representation. In this, Tupac’s Coachella hologram is eerily hollow. In other words, the Coachella hologram embodies the kind of capitalist exploitation that Tupac fought against in life. As the digital detritus of Tupac’s life and legacy is gathered and treated as proprietary by a corporate firm, his hologram can be owned, bought, sold, and rented.

As we have discussed, African diasporic logics provide the most comprehensive and most apt frame for understanding the life and legacy of Tupac. Whether as guardian angel or enslaved hologram, Tupac’s apotheosis affords a deeper look into the forms of religiosity he shaped and helped to engender. Be it from the grave, from an nganga object, or from the lyrics of possessed rappers, the deceased still have a lot of work left to do. As Tupac has shown, the dead take us to task. They are not bystanders but intimate components of hip hop’s power. In what follows, we explore how hip hop enjoys a complex relationship with the afterlife.

A PLACE BETTER THAN THIS

Not even the biggest of Tupac conspiracy theorists could have braced for the moment, and

immediately Twitter buzzed over the appearance, where he is still trending on Monday morning.

With snarky quips from Twitter users like “Tupac is the hardest working dead man alive (@kushcupcakes) . . . Another joked that now that he’s out of a job (obviously we’d disagree), he wanted to know how he “can audition for the next Grand Theft Auto?”

Could we be looking at our first digital superstar?” Coachella 2012: Tupac ‘responds’ to his reincarnation,”

— Los Angeles Times, April 16, 2012¹⁴

*Gold rushed tongues buy dreams too loose
Sporting electronic nooses . . .*

— Jessica Care Moore, “The Outcome,” *Nas-tradamus* (Jones 2002c)

Years later, the spellbinding power of Tupac’s return is still with us. In August 2017, popular culture and apparel firm, Undefeated, noted the importance of Tupac’s Coachella resurrection in an article whose title was really a thesis statement: “The strange legacy of Tupac’s ‘hologram’ lives on five years after its historic Coachella debut.”¹⁵ As we have shown, the spirit resurrected in Tupac’s hologram has force beyond the digital apparatus used to raise him from the dead. But what does that legacy entail?

Hip hop is replete with extensive commentary on the afterlife. Part of the inspirational message Tupac brings from the afterlife to friends and family in “Thugz Mansion” is that there has to be a place “better than” what they know in the twentieth-century United States. But, how does his Coachella resurrection shape the way we understand that claim? Did hip hop’s most beloved ancestor merely pay us a visit at that April 2012 Coachella, or did he wish to bring us enlightenment from beyond, like the Ghost of Christmas Past in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*? Or, might there be even higher stakes for coaxing Tupac’s spirit from the beyond?

From the story he tells in “Thugz Mansion,” Tupac spent his initial time in the afterlife “kickin’ back” with Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, and Sam Cooke, as well as Martin and Malcolm. Did Coachella mark the moment he was called to service? Could he be like one of the ancestors enslaved in nganga, who will now participate in a system of exchange and reciprocity with his descendants? Maybe Tupac was leaving us hints all along. If “Thugz Mansion” is not a plantation

paradise, might it be a kind of cabaret? Are jazz greats pressed into service for privileged consumers, and might civil rights veterans still be obliged to advocate for their constituencies in the hereafter? That on the first day of the first Black History Month of his Presidency, Donald Trump praised the 19th century abolitionist and suffragist, Frederick Douglass, as “somebody who’s done an amazing job and is getting recognized more and more,” suggests Walter Benjamin was correct to insist, “even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And that enemy has not yet ceased to be victorious.”

As we have discussed, seeing Tupac through Afro-diasporic cosmologies foregrounds the powerful role he plays as an ancestor and guardian angel to rappers like Kendrick and Nas. In these traditions, Santo Tupac’s spirit can shower blessings upon his progeny in exchange for sustenance and financial compensation. He possesses his disciples, spitting knowledge of oppression and resistance—even as he demands that those who have come after him pay respect. Whether smoking his cremated remains in a joint, having a conversation about his radical philosophy, drinking Peppermint Schnapps with his spirit at the ocean, or conjuring his lyrical dexterity—Tupac’s progeny continue to draw upon his uncanny influence.

What is at stake in understanding the complex religious diversity of hip hop cosmology?

As we have shown, the different social roles Tupac’s spirit can assume are illuminating in trying to understand hip hop’s potential as a site of religious expression. We close by returning to hip hop’s most prolific theorist of religion, Nas, to flesh out the cosmology upon which the apotheosis of Tupac is premised. In “No Idea’s Original,” Nas (2002d) states, “If you could look inside my mind you’d find, where bodies are buried.” Here, Nas ties the bodies of the deceased to his spiritual imagination—referencing how hip hop and the buried bodies in his mind have helped him to navigate a contentious political landscape. It has been said by Afro-diasporic practitioners that the dead reside in the unconscious mind but cross over to living spaces. As Tupac suggests, Nas’ buried bodies that reside in his mind also possess him – providing for a complex interaction with authorship and authority. Indeed, Jessica Care Moore’s spoken word verse from “The Outcome,” the last track from the Nas (Jones 2002d) album, *Nastradamus*, accentuates this spiritual power in hip hop expression:

My skin layered in diamonds and sage, left
alone in confused forests. Enslaved by days.

Time keeps on whorin' us. Ghetto saviours can't keep ignorin' us . . . Resurrected from bones and dirt. She made hard niggaz smile. Left her seeds inside the Earth. Gave hustlers and killers life's worth . . . Gold rushed tongues buy dreams too loose sporting electronic nooses . . .

"Resurrected from bones and dirt," the conjured remains of Tupac's hologram must reckon with the dead artist's creative spirit, unleashed by his many disciples. While the hologram and record label's contracts might be considered "electronic nooses" that attempt to tame the creative and spiritual potentials of hip hop, it is undeniable that the power of this Black diasporic practice is much broader than capitalist enterprise can contain. As a creative Black expression of and against oppression, hip hop draws upon a myriad of religious traditions to forge its own lyrical spiritism. Indeed, the incantations of urban realities, conjoined with grief, tragedy, promise, and aspirations can themselves be likened to prayers. Like many other Afro-diasporic religious strategies, hip hop's religiosity resists definition.

Hip hop may not have clearly identifiable priests and scribes, or visibly devoted initiates, but it does have a robust spiritual tradition, and it has a new saint: Tupac. The few examples we have shared are enough to illustrate that rappers have been working with and relying on the ancestors as integral parts of their work and practice. Of course there are many people who—even when presented with evidence of the ritual practices, strategies, and concepts that are mobilized in hip hop's activation of the spirit—nevertheless insist upon its secularism. To folks invested in occidental identifications of "the religious" versus "the secular" that restrict religion and spirituality to particular histories and representations, it might be difficult to understand the power of these diasporic relations with spirits. To this we would say, they might try theoretically rollin' up the ashes and puffin' on some Pac.

Michael Ralph, Aisha Beliso-De Jesús and Stephan Palmié *New York University, Harvard University and University of Chicago*

NOTES

1. Aaron Dodson describes, "The strange legacy of Tupac's hologram lives on five years after its Coachella debut," in the 2017 Undeated

article, accessed August 17, 2017 at <https://theundefeated.com/features/the-strange-legacy-of-tupacs-hologram-after-coachella/>

2. See the CNN article. Last accessed August 22, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/23/showbiz/celebrity-news-gossip/tupac-last-words-rs/index.html>

3. See the Daily News article which discusses how Young Outlawz admitted to smoking Tupac's ashes, last accessed on August 22, 2017 at, <http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music-arts/young-outlawz-admit-smoking-tupac-shakur-ashes-mixed-marijuana-1996-article-1.950906>; Also, another article on BET.com discusses Tupac's family's response, article accessed on August 22, 2017. <http://www.bet.com/news/music/2011/08/31/tupac-s-family-responds-to-outlawz-smoking-ashes-tale.html>

4. Found in the BET article, last accessed August 22, 2017. <http://www.bet.com/news/music/2011/08/31/tupac-s-family-responds-to-outlawz-smoking-ashes-tale.html>

5. In Daily News article, last accessed August 22, 2017. <http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music-arts/young-outlawz-admit-smoking-tupac-shakur-ashes-mixed-marijuana-1996-article-1.950906>

6. Of course, Kendrick's delivery is more reminiscent of Nas, who he also credits with being one of his mentors and inspirations. Yet, true to the argument of this essay, Nas is still living and thus occupies a different place in Kendrick's formation, and in hip hop more broadly.

7. A reference to LSD, or "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds."

8. As the Last Poets note in the Nas (2008) song, "Project Roach": "Niggas are like roaches. They will never die."

9. See the 2017 article by Sam Kestenbaum, "EXPLAINED: Rapper Kendrick Lamar's Hebrew Israelite Connections." Accessed August 20, 2017 at <http://forward.com/news/369749/explained-rapper-kendrick-lamar-hebrew-israelite-connection/>

10. In this connection, it's telling that one of Nas' aliases is "God's son," which he has tattooed across his stomach.

11. Only settled shortly before Asfeni Shakur's death in 2016, when Jay Z and Roc Nation bought Tupac's entire catalogue for \$384 million with a promise of 10% of all royalties to her. Accessed September 27, 2017, <http://www.atlantspots.com/jay-z-roc-nation-purchase-tupacs-entire-catalog-for-384-million/>

12. As @kushcupcakes claimed in a tweet referring to the original LA Times news release.

Accessed September 27, 2017, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/music_blog/2012/04/coachella-2012-tupac-responds-reincarnation.html.

13. See Palmié 2002:159–200, 2006, Routon 2008 for examples.

14. “Coachella 2012: Tupac ‘responds’ to his reincarnation,” accessed on August 17, 2017, at http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/music_blog/2012/04/coachella-2012-tupac-responds-reincarnation.html

15. See note 1 above.

REFERENCES CITED

- Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha. 2015. *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Cabrera, Lydia. 1979. *Reglas de Congo-Palo Monte Mayombe*. Ontario: Peninsular Printing.
- East, Dave and Nasir, Jones. 2017. “They Hated” *From the Paranoia*. Mass Appeal Records.
- Espírito Santo, Diana. 2015. *Developing the Dead: Mediumship and Selfhood in Cuban Espiritismo*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Hinton, Elizabeth. 2016. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Jones, Nasir. 2002a. “Bravehearted.” *From God’s Son*. Ill Will Records.
- Jones, Nasir. 2002b. Featuring Jessica Care Moore. “The Prediction.” *From Nastradamus*. Columbia Records.
- Jones, Nasir. 2002c. Featuring Jessica Care Moore. “The Outcome.” *From Nastradamus*. Columbia Records.
- Jones, Nasir. 2002d. “No Idea’s Original.” *From The Lost Tapes*. Columbia Records.
- Kerestetzi, K. 2015. “Making a Nganga, Begetting a God: Materiality and Belief in the Afro-Cuban Religion of Palo Monte.” *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*. Storia e letteratura. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/22295918/Making_a_nganga_begetting_a_god_Materiality_and_Belief_in_the_Afro-Cuban_Religion_of_Palo_Monte
- Lamar, Kendrick. 2015. “Mortal Man.” *From To Pimp a Butterfly*. Top Dawg Entertainment.
- Lamar, Kendrick. 2017. “Elements.” *From Damn*. Top Dawg Entertainment.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1981. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.
- Main Source. 1991. “Live at the BBQ” (feat. Nas, Joe Fatal and Akinyele). *On Breaking Atoms*. New York: Wild Pitch Records.
- Matory, J. Lorand. 2008. “Free to Be a Slave: Slavery as Metaphor in the Afro-Atlantic Religions” in Stephan Palmié (ed.) *Africas of the Americas: Beyond the Search for Origins in the Study of Afro-Atlantic Religions*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 351–80.
- Ochoa, Todd Ramón. 2010. “Prendas-Nganga-Enquijos: Turbulence and the Influence of the Dead in Cuban-Kongo Material Culture.” *Cultural Anthropology*. 25: 387–420.
- Ortiz, Fernando. 1959. *Historia de una pelea cubana contra los demonios*. [History of a Cuban fight against demons]. Santa Clara, Cuba: Universidad Central de Las Villas.
- Palmié, Stephan. 2002. *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Palmié, Stephan. 2006. “Thinking with Nganga: Reflections on Embodiment and the Limits of ‘Objectively Necessary Appearances.’” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 48 (4):852–886.
- Palmié, Stephan. 2013. *The Cooking of History: How Not to Study Afro-Cuban Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ralph, Michael. 2009. “Thief’s Theme.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108:541–562.
- Routon, Kenneth. 2008. *Hidden Powers of the State in the Cuban Imagination*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Shakur, Tupac. 1996. *Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory*. Death Row Records.
- Wirtz, Kristina. 2007. “Divining the Past: The Linguistic Reconstruction of ‘African’ Roots in Diasporic Ritual Registers and Songs.” *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 37:242–274.