

Slash They Ass Up

A Black Punk Manifesto

By

Yumii Thecato

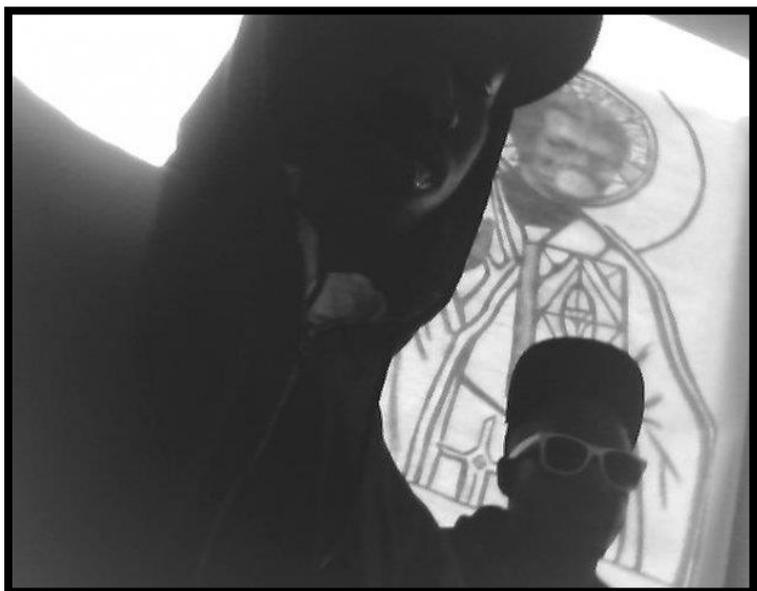
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Before we go into this I'm going to most of the shit I'm about to say nobody likes to discuss. Some things that I will be talking about are triggering especially for survivors of assault and violence. If you need to avoid those topics I suggest you put this down and pick it up later or skip the chapter titled Violence. I care about black people and the things we are going through especially within this subculture. Not everyone is even aware of our existence here. Being a survivor myself of many things I am also using this as a healing agent. Everything here comes from my life experiences as well as others experiences close to me. Mostly everything I've ever done in my life wasn't made with me in mind. I am really not supposed to exist and if I do it is not by my name but merely the forgettable "black guy" or "minority member". As Malcolm X states "Black People aren't a minority, they are a world majority." As true as that is I'm never represented in black media or white media. So here I am writing this shit like a ghost or better yet an invisible man, representing my damn self. For some I don't want to be your friend and I don't want to be accepted by you. I don't believe in your rules, games, awards, jokes or culture. Your existence and achievements means nothing to me, fuck you. For others I'm just moving shit out of the way for us to come through. I along with many have always had to adjust our souls to this fucked up society/world and somebody is going to pay for it, dearly. There is a possibility to separate punk from whiteness, and white people, this it for me, this is the beginning.

Being a Black Punk



*“Being a black punk is a weird feeling”
piece was what I initially wrote as an article for
Afro-Punk describing my experiences as a black
punk. Since I wrote that piece up I’ve
experienced little more than what was initially
said thus making my experiences more
complex. Being black is a weird experience but
there’s more to it than just being weird. There
isn’t any room for our blackness.*

First the fuck off, Rock n’ Roll is black music just like damn near any other popular and not so popular genre of music. So what exactly is it to be a member of one of its hardest/honest forms? Well, being a black punk is living far away from your local scene with no friends or peers to explain to you how it works or what it is. Being a black punk is learning about punk on your own because all the resources (record stores, zine/comic shops) are in white privileged neighborhoods. Because of a real lack of funds being a black punk is really like inventing yourself the old school way so much so that you look exactly like 70’s punk which makes you unacceptable for modern punk kids.

Being a black punk is never having a platform of your own. That is unless you

convince the gate keepers of shit to let you have some access by having white people flanking you on both sides. Being a black punk is rediscovering what punk rock truly means by building your identity from the ground up with little to no scene references even though much of punk is mimicry of different forms of the black experience. Though there are many that come before you, most of their contributions weren't important to those white people documenting the scene as a whole. Being a black punk is taking documentation into your own hands so that you and other black punks won't be written out of existence just because



of biases established long before you got here.

Being a black punk is dealing with the fact that black rock n' roll has never been a

priority for the black community or black entertainment unlike the support that goes for white people in any genre of music. In a way black punk doesn't exist in black culture for the simple fact that all rock of any kind is automatically labeled white boy music (aren't I black too?).

Being a black punk means to be dangerously isolated. It's always an uneasy feeling to be in an environment or around people who see you as an easy target because you are black. Trying to educate white people and other people of color on your life experiences is a waste of time. Most old punks from the 70s-present harness the "Minor Threat, Guilty of Being White" approach to race relations. It's useless to try and change seeing as it is already an institution. Blackness is a unique flavor and no matter how you cut it some other people are allowed access and privileges not available to brown/darker skinned people/black people. That's just the way it is.

To be a black punk you do not own your body. Your body is to be used as maker for tokenism. The shit may range from alternative models whose pictures are used and never

cited (Nikki Nuit, Amanda Tea) to everybody forgetting the names of well-known black musicians and artists. “Hey, that’s the black guy from Thin Lizzy.” To be a black punk is to be nameless and insignificant, like living wall paper. To be a black female in punk is to be left out one of main movements that empowered women in the scene and still never be accepted to this day. Again you can’t expect people to give a shit when they are constantly reinforced from birth not to.

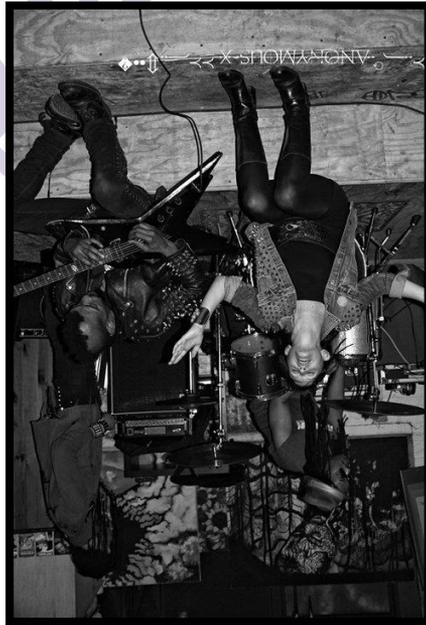


I am a black punk but I am not a slave to it as a culture. My life doesn't revolve around whatever other people say makes me a punk or not whether it's appreciating unknown

hardcore bands from Sweden, d-beat shit, or veganism. My influences aren't limited to time, genre, place, skin color or ideals. I am my own person and ill dress, think, and act however I feel. I am human and I don't need anybody to reinforce that fact. I am black and my politics are that of Black Power. I am never ashamed of my skin color, hair texture, facial features or body type. At this time in my life I can't afford to give a shit about anybody else's problems but those that affect me and my community. It is room for black power in punk. It exists outside of white folk's scene reports and zines, away from blogs and magazines. Black People are making things happen with or without white acceptance. Now is the time to build up our own shit.



Respectability Politics



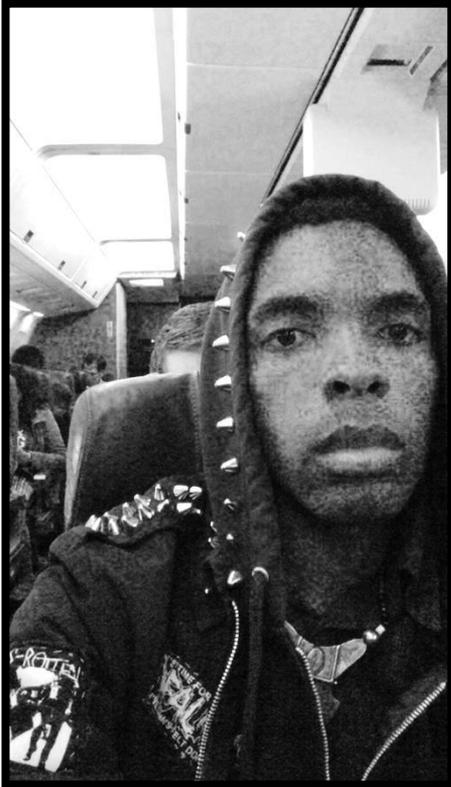
I want to dedicate this chapter to all the kids who wouldn't fuck with me cause I didn't have the latest Jordan's or elderly black folks who police our community on how to better fit in with the white establishment by teaching self-hatred. Fuck yall.

I know I don't fit into what is expected to be black and I don't give a fuck about it. For anybody who may not know what respectability politics are or where they came from they were rules developed in the black church by black women around the end of the 19th century to make black people seem worthy of white acceptance and respect. Even though a lot the original rules don't apply to how folks are living today some still do. For me some of them morphed into whole new ways of isolation and upholding class differences. In turn holding many back in the black community.

When I was growing up some of my friends could only afford to wear Payless shoes and buy their cloths form K-Mart. They were the best band students and the smartest kids in class but their folks could not afford to waste money on expensive trends. These things would set you apart from other kids at school and I know it hurt them when kids

would use K-Mart and Payless as insults. Making fun of how much money their parents couldn't and could afford to dress them with was and always will be low.

My grandmother, mom and I use to go to Goodwills and resale shops to buy clothing. I saw nothing wrong with this although if you were to say this to other kids they would judge you. When shopping there we could always



find things we weren't looking for but were cool regardless. I occasionally got clothing from Kmart but I convinced my mom to take me to JC Penny's for some things. I didn't want to be harassed in school so I figured if kids knew the

brands of my clothing my days wouldn't be so much hell. That didn't work.

Another thing I'm am kind of realizing is how me being part Nigerian played into how I was treated. If it wasn't my clothing it was my face or how tall I was or my last name. For me it wasn't just a class issue it was a lot more complex. The black American community looks down on Africans as being backwards and inherently poor. Many are so ignorant to Africa they only know what they see in movies and news which isn't too much other than reoccurring stereotypes. So with that mindset, that's how they treated me. All the African booty scratcher/poor malnourished jokes and the mis-pronunciations/puns with my name set off my demon hell rides for the day. These things propelled me to give up on them and everything that was black in their minds.

I tried to be a part of their madness but I wasn't good enough. So instead I got into roller hockey and skateboarding and aggressive skating and rock music and punk. Through these transitions I've experienced all kinds of backlash due to respectability. A lot of black people never knew how to insult me because they didn't know what I was. I had layers of identity they just couldn't pull away so I was just weird to them.

I know there are kids going through this today. The young metal band “Unlocking the Truth” are going through this even as I write and not even being on television or playing technical/hard ass music can save them from it. Even for black woman the number of ways we considered those to be harlots outnumber the ways in which we see them as survivors building and keeping families together. The many actions black people take in policing other black people must die. We are not a monolithic race. If any progress is to be made all forms of black identity have to be included



in our narrative and media/art.

I don't want to be a gate keeper for access to whiteness and its privileges

. My mother always said “With privilege, comes responsibility”. For those few black people who have made it like freshman at a frat party they’ve gotten drunk of their privileges and forgot about the responsibilities. This guarding the glass ceiling hasn’t gotten us anywhere. If anything trying to adapt to whiteness has made it harder for us to be who we are.

The truth is that as a black person, no matter how much money or acceptance you have you will and always be inherently subhuman unworthy of respect. You can fight in every war, own every piece of designer clothing, live in a beach house on edge of South Pole, nothing will ever be enough. From African Americans to the Black British to South America, the way we are judged and treated is universal. We keep trying to fix what cannot be fixed. Stop it! It’s not us who are fucked up, its how we are judged by other people and how we judge ourselves based on what other people think/do. Fuck, it’s like we are fighting over scraps instead of making our damn dinner. We have got to build our own shit.

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Preview