

Down Rodeo - Rage Against the Machine ↕ Lyrics About Q&A Comments

They ain't gonna send us campin' like they did my man Fred Hampton  
Still we lampin', still clockin' dirt for our sweat  
A ballot's dead, so a bullet's what I get  
A thousand years they had the tools, we should be takin' 'em  
**Fuck the G-ride, I want the machines that are makin' 'em**  
Our target straight with a room full of armed pawns  
To off the Kings on the west side at dawn

[Chorus]  
Can't waste a day when the night brings a hearse  
Make a move and plead the fifth 'cause ya can't plead the first  
Can't waste a day when the night brings a hearse

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This is Marxism, rage-style. Take the means of production back from the rich (which is a central part of Marxist thought). Bling is not enough, we need to collectively decide for ourselves how production, and ultimately, society, is going to be run, rather than letting those in power (government and otherwise) decide for us.

Most rap focuses on getting money for a nice car: "G-ride". RATM says forget that, we want the machines that are making the cars.

(Rage Against the Machine, 1996)

### First impressions...

When I first heard the aggressive rhythm, chords, and rap lyrics of Rage Against the Machine (RATM), it sparked an emotional response. I don't remember learning about the meaning behind "Snake Charmer" or "People of the Sun". I was too young to comprehend the politically charged lyrics, historical relevance, or hidden meaning behind the chants for freedom and reform. In the song "Down Rodeo" by RATM (1996), Zach de la Rocha says "F\*\*\* the G-Ride, I want the machines that are makin' em," which just sounds like a bad ass line. It was only later, as an adult, that I reflected on the line and thought about the anti-capitalist headshot that it truly was. Zach, it should be noted, has a PhD in anthropology (Fricke, 1999).

### Lasting impressions...

When I first heard that Paul Ryan, a far-right Republican, loved listening to RATM when he worked out at the gym, I burst out laughing. I could excuse myself as a 14-year-old kid, but that Congressman from Wisconsin was in his 40s at the time. He should've known better. The lead guitar for RATM, Tom Morello -who is a Political Science graduate from Harvard (Morello) wrote in Rolling Stone Magazine, "Paul Ryan is the embodiment of the machine our music rages against". He's right. It would be like a Bride and Groom on their wedding day dancing to "Every Breath You Take" by The Police. But that's the thing about music, isn't? It can be compelling and hide gems of knowledge that go overlooked.

### The point is...

Ender and Varga (2022) argue that music acts as a "time capsule" capable of informing civic participation and challenging dominant narratives of "gender, class, and race". They see music as a tool to express "politically charged" poetry, noting that artists have long used "lyrical artistry and accompanying rhythms/vibrations" to address social injustices. However, to bridge the gap between enjoying the sound and understanding the power behind the lyrics, they propose

the set-list pedagogy. This transforms the music from a passive aesthetic experience into a text where students must "respond to social injustices" and theorize solutions.

While Ender and Varga provide the vessel (the set-list), Gibson (2018) provides the navigational tools necessary to decode the "indictment of injustice" found in such poetry. Gibson advocates for critical democratic literacy, moving students from "googleable questions" to "big questions" that analyze root causes of inequity. That's how we know "Killing in the Name Of" by RATM isn't just a song about killing... like "Animal Farm" by George Orwell isn't about a petting zoo.

### References

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