

In August 2020, American rappers Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion released their hit song, *WAP*. The two women immediately faced harsh criticism for the song's sexual nature and explicit lyrics. Defenders of the song were quick to point out the lack of criticism male rappers receive for their sexually explicit lyrics. It was evident that critics were uncomfortable with women embracing their sexuality through music in the same way men already have done for years. The two rapper's identities as Black women in America played a huge role in how the song's message was received by the public. In this paper, I will argue that Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's hit song, *WAP*, is a sex-positive anthem for women that embodies modern feminism.

The song's lyrics depict sexual experiences from the female perspective. Often focusing on female pleasure, this is a strong contrast from most of the music made by their male counterparts in the rap industry that often degrade women's sexuality, stripping them down to their ability to please a man. Instead, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion are embracing and celebrating their female sexuality through their lyrics. The message is inherently feminist because it features two women who are breaking the gendered norms of sexuality in rap music. Let us look at an example of popular rap music that portrays sex and sexuality from a male artist's perspective. In rapper Future's song *My Collection*, he states "any time I got you, girl you my possession. Even if I hit you once, you part of my collection," (Future, 2017). In these lyrics, Future is saying he views women as his possession that he has the ability to control when it comes to sex. This is just one of the hundreds of male-written lyrics that aim to portray women as sexual objects who only exist to satisfy a man's sexual needs. In *WAP*, there is a clear emphasis on the female's sexual experience and the ability to embrace sexuality as an aspect of their femininity.

Black female artists are often degraded and sexualized by the music industry, especially in hip-hop. Misogyny against women in the music industry is institutional; it has always been there. Society's dehumanization of Black women, in particular, is harmful and can result in real physical violence towards them. It demonstrates that Black women have very little control over how society views them. Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion have used their platforms through this song to try to redirect and control society's perception of them. Before letting society decide they should be sexualized, the two rappers embraced their sexuality themselves in an empowering fashion. Any arguments that claim *WAP* is degrading and dehumanizing are a thinly veiled racist critique of Black women's expression of themselves and their sexuality. When White feminists burned their bras and proclaimed "free the nip" they did not face as much criticism as Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion have over this one song. White feminists are often celebrated for embracing their sexuality and reclaiming their bodies for themselves. When Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion do the same thing it is met with harsh critique. It is clear that Black women are not afforded the same protections as other women because of how they are perceived by society and yet it is Black women who continue to lead the charge in advocacy and support for the Black community. The intersectionality between Megan Thee Stallion and Cardi B's identities as both women and Black women becomes apparent when analyzing the reasons the women faced such intense judgment for their celebration of female sexuality.

So what about the lyrics in *WAP* actually depicts the empowerment of female sexuality? Here is a look at some of the lyrics "gobble me, swallow me, drip down the side of me. Quick, jump out 'fore you let it get inside of me. I tell him where to put it, never tell him where I'm 'bout to be. I'll run down on him 'fore I have a n\*\*\*\*\* running me," (Cardi B & Megan Thee Stallion, 2020). These lyrics stand out in particular for their emphasis on female sexual empowerment.

The two rappers are articulating exactly what they want sexually and the empowerment that comes with doing so. They also stress how they are not going to let a man control them. The song encourages women to embrace their sexuality and desires while still remaining in control of their bodies and life. This directly challenges the patriarchal structure around sexuality in hip-hop music by highlighting the female sexual experience. As most hip-hop music aims to paint women out as objects that exist only to please their man, this song takes back that narrative by depicting two women in complete control of their sexuality.

The lyrics in *WAP* represent the modern expression of gender and sexuality for women. They portray feminism as having control over their bodies and seeking out pleasure where and when they want to. The emphasis the song places on seeking sexual pleasure from men in a manner that is not submissive is a challenge to the patriarchal structure that has previously existed in hip-hop music. Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's identities as Black and as women intersect in this expression of themselves. All of these elements add up to make *WAP* a song that represents the present era of feminism. In conclusion, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion have created a cultural representation of contemporary feminism through the lyrics of *WAP*.

### **Works Cited**

Cardi B & Megan Thee Stallion. "WAP" *WAP (feat. Megan Thee Stallion)*, Atlantic Records, 2020.

Future. "My Collection." *HNDRXX*, Epic Records, 2017.