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## **fncKING WITH WHITE FRAMES: Teejayx6 SCAM RAPS THE DIGITAL**

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Teejayx6 lays it all out:

First you gotta find a site for you to load on  
You gon' hit the Bitcoin, you can't be petty though  
Put your money in, can't be nothing under a hundred though  
If you want to hit for more big shit, put a hundred mo'  
Log into your site and it's going to tell you which address to load  
Then you type that same address on the bitcoin machine  
Put the right address, it should pop up green  
Then from there, you are done with that bitcoin machine  
Hop in your whip, but you gotta play it low key  
Cause remember bro, you just loaded up on kerm  
Go to Starbucks, but make sure you brung your computer  
Go on the internet and log into ya site  
Wait 10 minutes and the money should be on your account...  
(from *Swipe Lessons*)

Teejayx6 is a scam rapper from Detroit, who puts to shame the notion that the internet is a cyberspace frontier where you can be all you wanna be. Instead, he presents it as a rich field to be harvested, and through his music provides insights about race and the internet. Ever since Kolko et al. (2000) published *Race in Cyberspace*, internet studies has tried to tease out how race plays out on the internet. But, as scholar Jessie Daniels

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(2012) shows, the field has come up way short. Maybe that's because academics are too focused on what's going on "in there" with race. There's too much of a focus on the traditional analyses of representations of blackness, or of brownness, or of yellowness. Instead, in line with Daniels (2012) urgings, we should be figuring out how *whiteness* is embedded, so deeply, in the internet. And so, we ask: What does Teejayx6's scam rap, and the scam rap of his predecessors, tell us about whiteness and the internet? Teejayx6 lyrics and online interviews help expose whiteness mythologies entrenched in internet discourse. We see how the open frontier of cyberspace masks territorialization; how identity fluidity is more of an elite fantasy than a pluralistic fact; and, how the promise of leisure and prosperity is false consciousness at best.

Scam rap is a hip hop song that talks about using the internet to steal credit card numbers and identities, Bitcoins, whatever, so that the scammer can then go buy offline merchandise. Rappers who scam rap include: A\$AP Rocky, City Girls, Guapdad 4000, Money Man, the Pop Out Boyz, Band Gang, Kasher Quon, Bossman Rich, Shred Gang Boogz, and Selfmade Kash (Fu et al. 2019). At the forward edge of scam rap stands Teejayx6, a 19 year old from the Detroit rap scene who tells the "how to":

The government tried to ban me from the dark web (Tried to ban me)  
I downloaded TOR browser then got back in (Back in)  
Went and got a VPN (VPN)  
Just bought another BIN  
Imma keep searchin these bitches on my site  
Till I can slide a Benz  
(from "Dark Web")

With these directions and hard style rapping, Teejayx6 helps undermine the normative, technology gatekeeping, cliché of the Black Geek (Eglash 2002); and he chips away at the "whiteness" equals "progress", "technology" and "civilization" racialized ideology lurking in new media (Hobson 2008).

Following Derrida, Teejayx6 is "destroying the concept of 'sign' and its entire logic" (p. 7, Derrida 1976) by messing with the logos of race. It is the "destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the deconstruction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos" (p. 10). Teejayx6 erases the imagined solid lines between world and cyberspace, pulling the floating signifiers out into the street. He is a trickster (Radin 1988), a rapper, exploiting white tropes about blackness, using them as "metaphoric tools for expressing power" (pp. 47, Perry 2005).

But Teejayx6's sign system is less important for what it tells us about blackness, and more significant for what it exposes about whiteness. Inverting Stuart Hall's (1997) practices that sift out the black racial other from media representations, we are making visible the invisible whiteness of the internet. Dyer (1997) called out this invisibility as a white power strategy that bolstered dominance through a taken-for-granted ubiquity (also see, Sullivan 2006; Clarke and Garner 2010). This invisibility and ubiquity extends

deeply into the internet of today. Our project (an analysis of scam rap) is not merely an academic exercise, though, it is also an attempt at “Exposing, challenging, resisting and disrupting structures of whiteness...for the purpose of dismantling the system of racial oppression” as it plays out through the internet (P. 218, Owen 2007).

Methodologically, our study utilizes frame analysis (see Goffman 1974; Entman 1993), examining scam rap lyrics, interviews with artist, and news stories about the genre. The project sifts out the white racial frames (Feagin 2013) that the internet generates, cloaks and erases. The trace of whiteness is still there, though, and scam rap can help us see that. Some of the frames include Whiteness as Property (Harris 1993), whiteness as Terror (Hooks 1997); White Spaces (Anderson 2015); the Iconic Ghetto/the Iconic Negro (Anderson 2012); and, White Fragility (DiAngelo 2018). Ultimately, Teejayx6 and other scam rappers tell us less about how blacks exist in cyberspace, and more about how the internet reinforces systemic racism and supports structural violence (Galtung 1969).

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