

Argumentative essay on krumping a historical context analysis

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Krumping, also spelled Krumpin', is a street dance popularized in the United States that is characterized by free, expressive, exaggerated, and highly energetic movement involving the arms, head, legs, chest, and feet (Paggett 20). Krumpin' has its roots in the central parts of southern Los Angeles (The Heart of Crump). At first, it was reserved to African American neighborhoods but has grown to other neighborhoods and countries (The Heart of Crump). The dance style started emerging in early 1990s but it was not until the early 2000s that the style achieved significant popularity. The word Krump was derived from the words of a song that was released in the 1990s (McManus 4). It is often represented as K. R. U. M. P., which is a 'backronym' for Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise, presenting a faith-based art form. The ultimate aim of this paper is to demonstrate the connection between Krumpin' and the historical context in which it rose to popularity. A compelling argument will be made about what Krumpin' informs us about the historical period of time in which it was popular.

As stated earlier, Krumping originated in black neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Perhaps, before exploring the connection between the historical context in which Krumping was popularized and the dance style itself, it would be prudent to first analyze the dance style. The dance style consists of four principal moves: wobbles, arm swings, chest pops, and stomps (The Heart of Crump). The dance style does not involve any strategy. It is extremely aggressive and is almost completely freestyle (McManus 28). Due to its freestyle nature, this dance style is not well defined in terms of choreographic techniques. Dancers usually perform it while standing upright in the background of upbeat and fast-paced music (McManus 28).

Perhaps, no other source explains the relationship between the invention and subsequent popularization of Krumping and the historical context in which this happened as David LaChapelle's classic documentary *Rize*. In this DVD, *Rize* explains that youths who started Krumping saw the dance as a way for them to escape gang life (*Rize*). Various events culminated in the eventual formation and popularization of Krumpin'. The 1990s were years of hardships for most black children. They were living in neighborhoods infested by crime and extreme violence. Robbery, drug use and trafficking and many other ills affected black neighborhoods and had far-reaching consequences on the lives of African American children. Most of these youths lived in single-parent families headed by their mothers (McManus 30). As their mothers struggled to provide food and other basic needs, these youths became disoriented and unhappy about their predicaments and the poor state of affairs in their neighborhoods. They felt anger towards the government and authorities. They felt abandoned and neglected by the larger society. They were looking for acceptance and a way to relieve their pent up anger. Krumpin' offered the perfect avenue "to release anger, aggression and frustration positively and in a non-violent way" (Jones 4). LaChapelle's documentary includes the actual individuals who are credited with the invention and popularization of Krumpin' as a dance style. Just after the Rodney King riots which occurred in the formative months of 1990, South Central resident Tommy Johnson had visions of harmoniously integrating rowdy, violent-prone youths in his neighborhood and restoring normalcy in what was an extremely violent residence (Jones 4). He got a last-minute invitation to perform at one of his acquaintance's kid's birthday party. He

later got more invitations from other families who had got wind of his “dancing ghetto clown” act (Jones 4). Before long, Tommy had hired more performers and formed a crew of clowns who performed in various family parties. This led to more and more people getting to know and comprehending the dance style.

Other dancers in the crew such as Lil’ C and Ceasare “Tight Eyez” Willis formed a breakaway splinter group that started performing in clubs and backyards in a more raw style that was deemed unsuitable for kids’ birthday parties (Jones 6). This group performed a more aggressive dance style in the background of very fast-paced music (McManus 30). Tommy’s version was called ‘clowning’ while the splinter group’s version came to be known as ‘Krumping’. It became very popular with black youths, most of whom had led unhappy childhoods. Lil C explains that “Krumping and clowning are like two forces joining together to fight oppression by society” (Jones 8). It was a happy way of releasing tension. The book *Emotional Trend: Psyche > Creativity > Beauty to Fashion* explains:

Krumping is a dance derived from Hip-hop that fires young people with enthusiasm because of its powerful emotional expressiveness. Certain ‘Krump’ movements represent joyful and painful emotions that can help in alleviating anxiety and metropolitan depression in sharing emotions artistically. (Brunelli 130)

In conclusion, Krumping accorded poor African American youngsters in crime infested neighborhoods the opportunity to party in a high-energy, aggressive style that helped release their pent up anger and frustrations without actual violence. Arguments presented above have successfully demonstrated the

connection between the aggressive Krumpin' dance style and the historical context in which it rose to popularity.

Works Cited

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