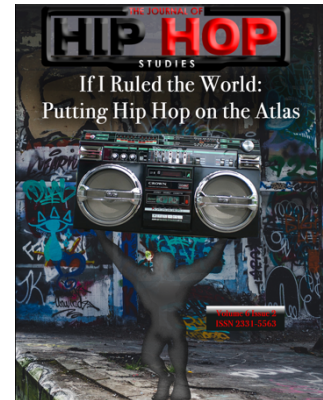

Native Son

Ikeogu Oke

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The Tupac Shakur Memorial Poems/Songs

Ikeogu Oke

A Sequence

A warning to our readers: Please note that this poem contains a reference that might be upsetting and painful because the *n-word* is used (in the fourth verse). We were not able to ask the poet to provide a commentary on his choice of this word since he passed away in November. The journal has decided to print the poem as it was originally written, in order to honor the memory of Ikeogu Oke (1967–2018), one of Nigeria's most highly respected and venerable wordsmiths.

No. 9: Native Son

(For Rap Music, to the Memory of Tupac Shakur)

I come from where I was to where I had been;
And watching our new ways, what have I seen?
What have I seen in changed America?
Our hopes get slimmer, their plot gets thicker.

Chorus: Here's the return
Of the native son
To where it seems fun
To hit and run.

} *To be sung,
the other
stanzas rapped*

So ever are we running from hit and harder hit;
And ever are they chasing to hit us more and more.
Their cops remain as eager to turn on us the heat,
As they'll be tomorrow, and had been before.

I come to see my folks, my homies and my niggas,
To know how well they're faring, the ones I left behind;
And their state of being, and the thought it triggers,
Still upsets my feelings, and irritates my mind.

Repeat chorus.

I wish their lots were better;
I wish their paths were free,
Free from every clutter
In this land of liberty.

But some system locks your padlock
And throws away the key;
And thus begins your hard luck
To set your fortunes free.

Repeat chorus.

And you won't break the door
To avoid their law's disgrace
(That haunts the black and poor)
Though it is your own place.

And so their padlock stays
Until you find their key;
Or seek to press your case
And end up just like me.

Repeat chorus.

March 1, 2018