

Title: "Life Experiences Become the Rhymes": A conversation between Dr. Luis Chavez and La from Underdog Music.”

Summary: In this episode, La from Underdog Music, and grad student at Sac State, discusses his music and influences with Dr. Luis Chavez.

Transcription:

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Luis Chavez: Welcome to Building justice, a podcast by Sacramento State University's Center on race, immigration and social justice, CRISJ. Your hosts for today are Luis Chavez, and Law. Thank you for joining us. And we begin by having a conversation about your research, how you developed your interests, and what's your latest project?

La: All right, well, thank you, Dr. Chavez for having me on. Sacramento State University is my alma mater. I did both my undergrad and grad studies at Sac State. So, shout outs to My Sac State family. Also, I want to say Happy Black History Month on February 3 to, you know, all the human family in particular, you know, those of us of African descent, not just here in the US, but in the diaspora of my mother earth. So, yeah, at state I was a sociology major; Pan African Studies was my minor. I primarily did my tutelage under Charles Verano, in the Department of Sociology and Dr. Ricky green, and the Pan African Studies Department. And in grad school, I attended the sociology program with a focus on human rights, and how human rights may possibly be the next logical step in addressing social inequality such as race, class, and gender. Out of my research in grad school, developed, which is the title of my thesis was an audio book project partner to the thesis titled, “Underdog Manifesto.” So, for anybody interested in checking out the literature itself, you can just go into the you know, CSUS database and there just type in underdog manifesto. That's the title of the literature research. And there's also an audio book component that you can find it Bandcamp and SoundCloud, there's a couple of videos visuals that we put to the audio book part you can find in YouTube all typing in underdogs manifesto. So, the album is titled underdog manifesto, as well as the body of research. And what that was, was a journey through the past, to the present, so that we can look at how you know time is not a straight line, but it's a circle, you know, and if you hear jingling in the back. That's my cosmic companion Jack's over there. My dogs that he's kind of hearing about and he's got a little, little dangler on so apologize if chimes are in the back, your ears aren't ringing.

Luis: How you doing out there Jax?

La: He's saying what up to you Jax, He's wagging his tail. He's good. He's having a good day. So uh, yeah, man, the research was on social inequalities, you know, analyzing them as problems. But you know, being a student of Pan African Studies, it gave me an interesting inflection into scholars such as W.E.B. Dubois, one of the founding scholars of sociology and pan Africanism as it's formally known, you know, I sought to revive sought to rectify the work of Dubois not just as a sociologist within the department, because in sociology, you know, this is CRISJ. So, I can be you know, all forthcoming. You know, we know and understand that these

disciplines within these academies are sciences that were predominantly formed in partnership with colonialism. Right. So, the idea of decolonizing anything everything to applies to sociology, as Science or psychology as a science or even history as a discipline, right? There's a certain level of decolonizing that needs to be done. So that's what I sought to do with the work of Dubois as a student of sociology and as a student of Pan Africanism. That's what I sought to do with the work of Malcolm X, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, you know, not just as a student of society, but as a student of Pan Africanism and other scholars. So interestingly enough, we published underdogs manifesto, the audio book on Bandcamp, February of 2020. And for anyone that's interested in looking at interesting, zeitgeist, type of art and literature, feel free to go check out underdog manifesto again at band camp calm because it's time coded that we narrated what proceeded over the next year and a half to two years, you know, from the Coronavirus, not by name, but by social circumstance. And, you know, if you look at history, you have a good bearing of where you are and things to come, you know. So, you know, we've been moving around with underdogs manifesto, the body of art the music since February 2020. As you know, students that have culture, I've been a member of the universal Zulu nation since 1993. Join Zulu Nation and 93 graduated from high school in LA and 92. And I joined both the Zulu Nation and the Rodney King riots, like, um, almost simultaneously without intention, you know, by circumstance, you know, ended up going to Atlanta to an historically black college, you know, back in the 90s, particularly around the unrest in LA, and as well as other places in America. But LA's the more noted, historically, a lot of unrest occurred in Atlanta, Georgia, I came to find out when I went down there a year later, a lot of unrest occurred in Florida, and Michigan, around Detroit, in Illinois, around Chicago, you know, and the media concertededly made an effort to not display the unrest around the Rodney King verdict, as it really existed, more so tried to turn it into a manipulation tool to you know, justify things to come. One of those being gentrification, you know. So, underdogs manifesto, evolved into the next level of vision, which is the project that we are currently mixing down and going to be releasing here in February of 2022. underdogs power cosmic, and underdogs power cosmic, takes us full circle, where to begin begins is where the end is where the beginning is, you know, 360 degrees. So, you know, what we have engaged in on this project was a study of and presentation of decolonization for us as people of African descent, at its most potent what we have, what we have put into place is a practice of you know, a traditional African process, which was disturbed by the Arrested Development of colonialism. You know, there's a natural order in the cosmos, you know, an African cosmology and African sacred science much similar and identical to other indigenous cosmologies. Right? Because the science is the same, the variations are cultural, because the law is universal. Right?

Luis: That's very interesting. Yeah.

La: Often we by conditioning by colonial conditioning, we get caught up in the cultural variations of what is at its base, the same teaching, because Cosmology is the root of all science, religion, mathematics.

Luis: Yeah, I like how you put that, time, your understanding of time is cyclical. So, you're living past, present and future all at once. There are certain events that have happened maybe in the past for somebody who has a linear understanding of history or time. But for people that have cyclical understandings, we know that those things are not over with. So, I'm curious how you

see yourself in connection to cyclical time, as currently still resisting colonization. I'm curious how you're understanding that in the present, as we're talking right now, that that process is still taking place, and that it's not something that has already happened in the past, but that you're continuous, continuing this resistance.

La: Well said, well said, you know, to the listener, this is indigenous ideology, regardless of the specifics of indigeneity. And, you know, that's our larger overarching unifier, you know, and I mean, if we redefined lines as an example, we could redefine lines, like okay, we're gonna make one line for the human family, and we want the colonizers on one side, and we want the colonized on another. Right? And that's not to per se, engage in any type of competition. It's just to reassess reality. It's just to reassess natural law here's Jack's, by the way, he's, he's wanting to get into the mix. Say, what's up, man, man, how you doing Jack's on the Underdog music? This is this is one of the one of the the main characters in the story here that's my cosmic white wizard that's white dog does dog star right there. That's him. He wants to get in on play. But this is a universal at its root, cosmic truth that is omnipotent, everywhere simultaneously. In the same place at the same time, everywhere. So as above so below, to your earlier point, Dr. Chavez of being in time, simultaneously. In reality, we are in time simultaneously. And one of the greatest forms of psychological warfare that we as colonized people suffer from the colonial project was calendar reform, created by Octavius then later Augustus, called you know, and then it became the Gregorian calendar in the store whole thing but re starting time over according to Greco Roman aka Western society and civilizations time code, and this was based on conquest of indigenous people from Africa to the Olmecs, and the Mayans and the Aztecs and everyone in between. Right, so decolonizing at its root, is the recalculation of time and a reassessment of one aware one stands in time and space. You know, elder, Kaaba, common name, my Seba, he'll be featured on a underdogs power cosmic. He was also in the series put out by Tariq machine hidden colors, as well as a 1903, about the Haitian revolution. You know, he's a great elder in our community, as I was referring to earlier, in engaging in the indigenous African and indigenous overall practice of consulting the elders, who, by nature, and naturally and by natural law, connected to the ancestors, you know, who, by nature and naturally by natural law, are connected to the heavenly mother and father, you know, and in African cosmology, as well as in most to all other indigenous cosmologies you know, that most high thing is a mother and a father that's a it's a masculine and a feminine, you know, that's what makes the collective whole there's nothing born without the womb, or the wuman as the word is a derivative, you know, and I mean, so and traditional sacred science. You know the duality not the not the dichotomy but the duality of that masculine feminine a yin yang it makes the whole the whole and that understanding of self and each other that was one of the problems that Jack Jack's so okay he hears somebody driving by back and base and that makes him bark Jacks but pardon self on that, but just that that natural understanding that we had of each other in our pre disturbed cultural frames of mind that sense of understanding has just almost been nearly obliterated through this wasp, white Anglo Saxon male Protestant culture society. And then like the culture, the culture, and the society weaves the economic structure together so if you ain't that then like you become a bottom feeder without you know, whether you're trying to or not, you know, one of the things I discovered in mastering, and I put the quote fingers up, "mastering sociology," because that in itself could be debated, you know, was looking at sociology as a colonial project and the theories of Karl Marx and Max Webern and you know, the various bounding sociological fathers, you know, essentially they were studying colonial subjects, where colonialism was happening. Now,

you know, some might argue that Karl Marx study was more based around indigenous Europeans in Russia under Russian oligarchies yet and still Webern and some of the others did venture into the various colonial lands and, you know, sociology, you know, as a result is a derivative of colonialism and slavery, right, because even the economic structure in Europe was predicated and built on the resources in the labor that the colonizers got from colonial lands, that they that they conquered, right. So, there was little to no economy in Europe, historically speaking, you know, until European expansion occurred and discovery of silver pairing and north you know, middle and southern Americas and gold in the continent and gold in India, you know, and, and you look at how, you know, the development of Europe, through the Enlightenment period and the Reformation period, and the industrial revolution is directly connected to colonialism and the resources that they pirated because of it, right. So, you know, underdog music is the name, win, lose or draw is to game, you know, because time is simultaneous like that, you know, we quantum physicians, we students have that quantum physics, you know, like, music and sound and vibrations, we students of that, you know, my partner and I Rod about notes, music, you know, we essentially make up Under Dog music. When we're in the lab, that's the Millennium Falcon 713. You know, there's a cosmic fleet and we 713 in that cosmic fleet, you know, and conceptually and lyrically, literally, you know, on one side of that cockpit, and musically and sonically, you know, my brother Rod is the other side of that cockpit, you know, and we fly like Mandalorian and Han Solo and Chewy and Yoda. You know, we the rebellion. We've been putting out records for a long time. The first actual album that we put together is so old, it's on a cassette tape. You know, I'm saying that we recorded it on an eight-track cassette recorder, it was called lizards lounge. We're going to have to have we're trying to find the you know, the outboard material to put the cassette in and digitize it, so that we could put it online. You know what I mean? And we put out a coup d'etat. And 2009, 2012 we put out underdog's lucky streak cardroom 2017, we put out declare your nationality, the mixtape. That was an interesting project, I put that out while I still was attending state, I put that out the fall that I returned to state. As a matter of fact, the when I returned to school to get my master's degree, and that album was, you know, reflective of the time and space that we were in. So we titled that project declare your nationality because, you know, we were studying the literature and the history of historical figure from the black world, known as profit Noble Drew Ali, and profit Noble Drew Ali was the founder of the Moorish divine national movement, more commonly known as the Moor science temple of America. And you know, what, profit Noble Drew Ali started telling the population of African descendants, particularly here in North America, and as early as 1911, was that those that were labeled Negro colored black, Latino, Indian, etc, were descendants of the Moorish empire. And these labels were labels that the colonizers, the British, the Dutch, the Portuguese, and the Spanish, had placed upon descendants of this global indigenous empire. So when you start to look at like etymology, and just doing a holistic study of history, and just taking different bits of pieces, you know, take literature, profit noble Ali, take the literature, honorable Marcus Mosiah, Garvey, you know, take the literature of WB Dubois, you know, George G. George J. James jacilla, Dungey Houston's you know, these, these, these who our ancestors now, you know, and look at what they have presented, you know, the story becomes clearer, because what his story does in institutional system of education, is it tells us that his story, and when you look at history, interestingly enough, far back the points out that his story is called just that, because it's an ancient war one, right? Whichever nation is the victor, that nations version is going to be the more popularly spread version of the story, around civilizations and to other people around the

world. And, you know, that's essentially what history is, or social studies is, or English is or the way they teach us math, and about all these Greeks is when they teach us about science, and we only learn about science, you know, scientists of European descent, you know, and I'm saying, and I'm including white people, because somehow on the 2022 we don't look at white people and people of European descent as quite the same thing. Right? So, you know, it just shows how the social constructions were, were a bluff from the from the gate. And, you know, like, in the words of the Rasta man, Bob Marley, time will tell you know, and at this point, time is telling, you know, I mean, in 2020, we saw statues of Christopher Columbus ripped down probably more than half the places that they stood on his whole planet.

Luis: And a lot of people were shocked that that even happened, they never thought it was a possibility. You know, and there's also other things like repatriation of land, back to indigenous peoples currently happening as well. In the United States, it doesn't get a lot of attention. But you do, these things are happening, I guess, for the first time in my lifetime that I've ever seen in a very real way. I think I hear you and your music. And those influences are not just types of recordings by artists, but you're also being influenced by ideas. You're being influenced by your background, your connections, your connections to indigeneity your connections and making sense through, for example, academia. And so I hear you making all these wider connections and putting all this into your music. I'm curious how you think about the creative process in filtering ideas through sound. So, if you can talk a little bit about that, and then maybe touch upon your creative process or ideas behind our theme song or title song for the podcast building Justice.

La: Over time, as, as one can imagine, it evolves, it changes, right? And it just so happens, that I'm still, at this point recording with the same people that always recorded with, right, because, like one of the, you know, traditions in hip hop is like no front, keeping it real, staying true stand down. And I think that, like, the real meaning of that has been lost in interpretation, not to the fault of the next generations, but just the way that marketing and advertising and BET and MTV and social media and machine work mainly, you know, and I mean, you know, in the, you know, when in, in a golden era, you know, we were watching MTV, it was young TV raps, which was raw and authentic, like, you know, they have to remember that, you know, I mean, like, they hadn't yet started trying to puppet master it the same way they do now, and the same thing with Rap City on tv, when it started, you know, these things were more authentic to the culture when they first happened. So back then, nationally, you know, not only were we do like MTV and BET getting a decent representation, therefore, a decent education about the culture, but we were also getting a being brought together in this you know, what I'm saying, I've been blessed with the gift and I'm bi coastal, you know, I'm saying I've lived in LA, I've lived in New York, I've lived in Atlanta, I've lived in Ohio, lived in Northern and Southern California. You know, for those of us that are from Cali, we know those are sometimes like two distinctly different cultures and environments, right? The Bay Area Sacramento in in LA, San Diego and in his, you know, you know, we all know there's mad differences to that right so in having those travels, you know, I, I became a sociologist like organically this that's part of my creative process, like my cousin majored in Sociology at at UC Davis. And you know, one day we were sitting in a park you know, doing what we do chiefing during the 40s and was building on like the boys and Garvey and he was like, Yo, man, like this stuff, we are here you know, getting getting f'd up to like, you recite this stuff off your head while you're you know why while we get faded, bro, he's like, You should major in sociology. He's like this stuff did you know because of whatever reason, you've

chose to like commit to memory. This is stuff I'll be having to read for homework at night. You know what I'm saying? And I put that to the back of my mind. And years later, I went to city and just, you know, really with the focus on African Studies, took social problems and Wayne mighta I don't even know if Dr. Maida is still living but he's a renowned sociologist. And I took social problems from Dr. Maida at City to my understanding might be the last semester that he even even taught sociology at City I came to learn that after the fact and it was the way to doctor my ADA taught social problems and what social problems focused on and then like what my cousin Curtis told me the light bulb came on. And I was like, but I went back at home to him. I was like, I'm a major in that and I said I see why you said that. And I said but look this is why it's like that. And he really like I've read a lot of stuff Dawg we just above the age where we've lived through a lot of this what they're calling sociological data to us as I like. I'm saying I was in I did Rodney King bruh, like, you know what I mean? So at that point, I made a focused from City, I got my associate degree, and I focused on Music Fundamentals, history and literature first, so I spent four years at City studying because at first I was going to transfer with my music degree but then when I took the history of American pop music and blues in the Mississippi Delta and it being the foundation of music and America rock and jazz and all of these one once all in and things started getting connected like the point that I'm making and all this all you asked me my creative process I'm describing to you my creative process, right? The inundation of all this knowledge. Right? And then I happen to rhyme you know what I mean? Like I told you I joined the Zulu Nation in the Rodney King era, you know, I mean, so I didn't join no Rudy poo, you couldn't be no Rudy poo. So you don't lie in your raps, you know, I mean, like, you don't make nothing up. Like, you know, you either got a story to tell you don't, you don't come in here saying you did something you didn't do, there's more out from people who know you don't check in for that, you know, I mean, it don't have to be strangers because strangers is going to do it to usually out of jealousy of attention and success, but your homies that also you got to look out for because the people know you in it. Like, if you ain't really reppin real, like, they got something from exposing you that you're not, you know, and today, they call that, like snitching, and back in the day, we didn't have no Internet, and we wouldn't go to the cops either. So we would like had a system of self-check and checking each other. You know what I mean? And I think that that just kept a system of checks and balances more where raps were concerned. So I always have had that in mind, I've been rapping for longer than probably a lot of people that might have an a listen to this podcast might have been on this earth, you know what I mean? And, and that time, you know, back to, you know, decolonizing the mind and everything else, you know, we come to see that this art of rap is just a long continuation of, you know, what might be referred to as a grio in larger circles. And, you know, we recognize the importance and the power and the responsibility in maintaining that tradition. Right. And, you know, while I love my younger brothers and sisters who are out here, I'm doing what they're doing and is next generation doing it, how they know how to, to their defense, much of that is, um, are called guru from Gangstar, the educational system presumes you to fail, the next place is the corner, then after that jail, you got to understand that this is all being conspired to put strain on the brain so that the strong world tie, it even exists when you go to your church. Because up on the wall, a white Jesus looked that Guru from conspiracy Gangstar 1992, all ropey guru, you know what I'm saying? Like, you know, my Godbrother got killed on Amhurst and metal view in this city. And you know, me and my, you know, family was riding in a car with a pistol to do something about that, you know, Gangstar song title, say your prayers came on. And you know, that, like, my life might have been a different place right now, if a rapper didn't take a serious sense of responsibility in those that

were listening to his voice, right? And that has strategically been maneuvered out of the focus of what is known as hip hop culture in today's time, you know, and I'm quick to blame the system, and slow to blame the next generation, you know what I mean? Because it is what it is, and that's what it is, you know, so underdog music is just that, you know, fighting for the title. You know, it's a no man's land. The life experience become the rhymes at the same time maintaining lyrical reputability. Hip hop is like martial arts, you know what I mean? There's like different styles in Kung Fu or karate. Some of them focus more on the legs and kicking. Some of them focus more on the hand and elbows and hitting, you know what I'm saying? So hip hop and the different styles of MC, all the different styles of beat making, or the different styles of breaking, popping and breaking were two totally different styles within dance, within hip hop. Pop lockers weren't doing what breakers were doing and vice versa, or there's different styles within DJing, which is the foundation of hip hop culture, I might add. And I have to add it when you stop and think about it, it's crazy how the DJ is almost non-seen and insignificant when considering hip hop in today's time, right?

Luis: Yeah, I like that you say that the DJ is kind of the center of that world. You just remind me of a lot of connections you're making, even within my own life. So, talking about Rodney King, I was in East LA at that time as a child. That had an impact on me. The connections between black and Brown communities. I grew up with seeing that. So, I'm talking about Maywood, California, South Central. And I'm just thinking about the connections that you're making some music, expressing your lived experience with all of this as a way to almost like an unfiltered way to express yourself. Right? You're outside of a type of policing over your body, your mind, your lyricism, and the DJ at the center of anywhere that could be. That could be a house party. Me grown up. It was house parties. My cousin was this DJ in the early 90s. I looked up to him with his crates just laid out all over the living room and him practicing and with our Mexican families, that became a thing, a very influential thing, all part of those communities together, the black and Brown communities. So, he also, I think, found ways to express himself through that. But at the heart of that, I like that you bring it back to the DJ in control of that music, playing that beat, and it brings it to this kind of rhythm and connecting your body with the music. So you're feeling it too. So I'm curious how you view the DJ role as far as back in the 90s, we used to call it underground music, or underground hip hop. There was a difference there. Right, right? I'm really curious about these forms of musical expression that communities own. Right? Nobody's telling them how to play or perform. It's not some sort of thing on a stage where you have an audience sitting down and passively listening, but it's more participatory, everybody is involved with this performance. Right? So I'm curious about how hip hop and you really saw kind of like the creation of that as it grew real quickly? How that was such a tool that I want to use the term underground, again, to get a message out that was undetectable at the time, as far as mass media is concerned, because I think we need to remind everybody at that time, hip hop wasn't this globally popular phenomenon like it is now. And so it really was a radical revolutionary thing that just exploded on the scene. So, I'm curious about some of your thoughts about that revolutionary potential, because you're kind of still thinking about it that way. And I'm curious if you can talk more about that.

La: Yeah. Interesting story. We moved to Los Angeles from Sacramento, California to record music on Priority Records. There are three Puerto Rican sisters from Sacramento, Madinada and Glenda. And they made up a Puerto Rican house trio known as Tres. And through Madinada and

Glenda, we met their then manager, Maria, who was also Ice Cubes manager. And when Ice Cube was just separating from NWA, he started his own derivative record label on Priority. Like Easy had Ruthless Records, ice Cube started Street Knowledge Records. So, when we were still here in Sacramento, the group was known as Chaos. And we later had to change the name because the name was already licensed as we were using it. So, the name of the group later became Funky Socialistics. And around Sacramento, the group was known as Socialistic. Signing the Priority Records took us to LA first negotiated with Ice Cube to sign the Street Knowledge. But he gave us a crappy contract when we had the lawyer look at it. So we ended up signing the Priority Records and early had the experience on a label of what today is commonly referred to as, like the independent movement and the independent artists industry and all the reasons why artists became independent. We had those experiences on Priority Records. We did not have a positive experience on the label. The label even went as far as trying to take us to court to recoup some of the money that they had spent housing us and feeding us and funding us for the year that we spent on the label. So very early as an artist, that's my DJ, Khalid Aleen, DJK genius of K-O-S. Crew, Kos is an acronym for Knowledge itself. So that was influenced by being around Ice Cube as a label mate when he put out America's Most Wanted. So as a student of hip hop and as a student of MCing on a label where I was getting paid to make music, I learned early to take that seriously. And Cube was one of the most renowned, probably the most renowned MCs in California at the time. And at this time, I also was sent to live with my family in New York. And when I was living in New York, Ice Cube was one of the few emcees from California that people in New York were listening to. Were paying attention to at the time. So these experiences brought Ice Cube to have a great influence on what I did and how I did. Graduating from high school in LA, Ice Cube came to have a big influence on how I did and what I did. Coming to be related to a neighborhood that's not far from his West Side blocks neighborhood came to bring Ice Cube to have a big influence on what I did. So when I listen to myself, I hear the influence that particularly that era of Ice Cube from America's Most Wanted to Kill at will. I see the influence that had Public Enemy major influence on me. And it was through experiences. I was sent to stay with my uncle the year Yusuf Hawkins was killed in Brooklyn. And I attended the March, and the March became a situation of uprising and unrest when somebody in a car in the neighboring area started playing the song Fight the Power by Public Enemy, that music was like what the drums were to the Zulu marching against the British.

Luis: That's powerful man, that's powerful.

La: And this is what Africa. Bambata, one of the founding forefathers of hip hop as a culture, saw in what inspired him to form the Zulu nation, coming from gang culture in the 70s, Bronx himself. And if you look at pictures of the Bronx, Google some Bronx pictures of the Bronx in the 70s, you think you come from hard times. Google some pictures of the Bronx in the 70s. Right? People were actually living there. Children were actually living there. You know what I mean? And this was the environment that bred Bambata to have that cosmic again, things go in circles. So conversation comes back to cosmic because that's the a foundation of all science, religion, mathematics, economics and economy and culture and government and everything that humans do. Right? So when Bambata was hit with that cosmic beam and inspired Planet Rock, you know what I'm saying? He's one point on a triangle in the formation of a culture. Kuhlkr and Grandmaster Flash and the other two. And when you look at the history of Kuhlkr, reggae is one of the predecessors of hip hop culture. A lot of the time we hear jazz talked about and disco and

funk and James Brown. Absolutely. There's a square to the foundation of hip hop, you know what I mean? And those four points are made up of other aspects of black music that came before hip hop, soul, funk, jazz, reggae. Right? And the same time that hip hop was developing here, Afrobeat was developing in Africa. So people that are into Felakouti or King Sunny a Day or Nigeria 70, you know what I'm saying? And you look at the development, you ask Felakouti, you go watch Music as the Weapon by Fela Kuti is a great documentary on him and his life and his music. And he said they were just trying to mimic James Brown. When James Brown was being interviewed. He said he got that from some Cat and Harlem at the club playing what he called Boogaloo. Right? And then if you look at the derivative of what they were calling boogaloo at that time, you know what I'm saying? It goes back to what they call Juju. It comes directly off the continent. You know what I mean? A lot of people talk about Blues music developing in the Mississippi Delta. Well, I invite anybody who's into Albert King or into BB King or into Robert Johnson or any of those early John Lee Hooker into any of those early Blues artists. I invite you to Google a sound style of music called high life, West African highlife. And you're going to be thinking that you're listening to Blues guitars. There's nothing new under the sun. And these are traces of Indigenous African culture coming out through our chromosomal memory, through our epigenetic memory, our axiological memory. That science and research by a doctor by the name of Edwin Nichols.

Luis: Yeah, you really touched on it there. You're reminding me of all kinds of things, of just Blues and double meaning, sometimes triple meaning, hidden messages, even old Blues music. And that's an old tradition. You just remind me of a lot of connections and proof that we're in the process of fighting back against colonialism because it's not done, right? If it was truly something that happened in the past, you and I wouldn't be having this conversation. Correct? And that's really powerful to hear you making all those connections. I'm just thinking in terms of now, like we've talked a lot about the past, the present. And I'm also curious about the future, where you are working on, what projects you are working on or what you want to work on in the future, what you're seeing coming up.

La: Yeah. Thank you for that. Well, real quickly, I just want to touch on part of the question you asked me earlier that I have not forgotten to the podcast theme song and Building Justice. I want to give a shout out to Dr. Barrajas. He's my friend and my big brother. He's my elder and my mentor. And it is because of Dr. Barrajas direct invitation that I even found out about CRISJ when I came back to grad school. And he made that initial invitation. And Dr. Odin and many others, Dr. Sarabia and many others in CRISJ. I have great reverence, respect and appreciation for. So in this time, I want to first stop and give them a shout out as a thanks for even making the initial invitation, which led us here to talk. Dr. Chavez, it's great to make your acquaintance as well.

Dr. Barrajas made us aware of it, knowing what we do, being aware of Underdogs Manifesto and some of the other earlier work that we did. It was Barraja. It's a given. Bro, get in the Con. This is hip hop. We compete. You know what I mean? So other dog music, we like, we just are excited about the raw opportunity to just compete, right? Because that's the spirit of hip hop.

That's an old school issue for us. Like, oh, they want a song competition. We down by law, you know what I mean? Zulu nation can't stop us. Hit style supremacy. We down for ours.

Luis: And I know I didn't say this before, but you can cuss on this. I forgot to tell you.

La: Okay, word catching myself a couple of places.

Luis: Yeah, I don't want to censor anybody's expression.

La: I appreciate you saying that, but we was like, no, we're down for ours. Do you know what I mean? We're just confident of our raw talent off just the raw sound, you know what I mean? So we just embraced that exercise in itself. Hip hop being like martial arts. It's like a sparring match or opportunity to test your style or your skill. That's exactly what it is, you know what I mean? So that was the first level and just the practice of my brother Rod and I. Four or five albums later, I'm not even going to tell you how many years later saying, hey, it's this contest. We was in lab like we do. We are in a Falcon flying through time and space walk, speeding, you know what I'm saying? And that's often what the process consists of. Rod is the music side. He's a keyboard player. He's a band leader. He's a producer. He's a beat maker. He's a songwriter. He's a visionary. You know what I mean? Like, I get my brother flowers now because it's time to come. Like, we Revere Dilla and some of them like, too late. Rest in peace. His born day is tomorrow. Happy born day. Jay Dilla. Long live J. Dilla. You know what I'm saying? The process often consists of us in the lab. Rob's doing that. He's doing that music stuff. And during undergrad and in grad school, often I would go by his career because that's where the lab is, where we take flight. And I'll be doing my homework there, you know what I mean? I come from the hood, dog. Like fools. Wasn't believing that, like, once I got accepted to state that I was going to go or I was going to finish with my bachelor's. Like, I come from a population of people like that, you know what I mean? Like, once I got my bachelors, I had homies coming out the woodwork like, nigga, I didn't think you were going to do it. So then in my circle of people, once I went back and was going for something called a master's degree, shit, I became like, Gandalf or Obiwan around my circle, you know what I mean?

Luis: I'm still uncomfortable with the doctor thing. So you can call me Luis.

La: I don't give a shit about that shit, fool. You just still Tyrone, Tony. You still La. Whatever. I go home and that's the last thing they're going to call me. You know what I'm saying? For real. Sometimes they don't understand where we come from. Sometimes that create collateral damage. Sometimes it ain't in your benefit to let nobody know that real ish. You know what I'm saying? Y'all think you understand inequality. So you have to think about that with some of you all come from your whole identity built on your status quo. But anyway, you know what I'm saying?

Luis: Yeah. I tell students sometimes on day one, you don't have to call the doctor. You can call me Luis. And everybody's eyes are just shocked. They can do that.

La: Conditioning, man. Social conditioning. Fight it. It's the Matrix. Fight it straight up. Said by a sociologist, grad student from your University. But we in the lab, and particularly by grad

school, it got from, like, what is you over there reading to, man? What are you over there reading? You know what I mean?

Luis: You're putting that theory into practices. You're putting into practice. It's not just sitting on a shelf.

La: That's how all songs was made. If you go and listen to the Masters thesis underdogs Manifesto, that's how every song was made. It's an organic process. You know what I mean? We don't have much premeditated artistically. In the beginning, we did. There's a doctor out of San Francisco State over to Shock, and he talks about the evolutionary sixfold stages of evolutionary consciousness. And he talks about there's six levels. So La is short for the name Lockhim. And people who are not familiar with the 5% Nation often think that when I'm telling them my name Lock him, I'm saying Rockhim. So early, when I was given that name by Prince at the law school Uptown, I took on the nickname La because I did not like being mistaken by 80 Fivers for Rockham, you know what I'm saying? So my rhyme moniker is just the nickname I'm known by. And I'm known by that nickname for those reasons, you know what I'm saying? My name Tyrone. I was given by my brother and my cousin in memory of a brother who was a friend of theirs who lost his life around the unrests in Watts around 64 and 65. So I carried the name Tyrone Honorably because Tyrone was a freedom fighter and he lost his life for the people and in the name of the people. Underdog music is just that. If you're overworked and underpaid, this music is for you, right? If you experience in any type of social inequalities, whether that be racial, whether that be class, whether that be your gender, whether that be your religion, is music is for you, right? We better United than divided. Capitalism has made a slave of the whole human race, right? So much to the point. That what Karl Marx predicted in the spirit of capitalism, that humans will come to their sense one day and say, okay, capitalism, you've had your fun. But you're destroying us and everything else around us. So it's time for you to go. Goodbye. Well, capitalism would grow something called artificial intelligence and say, Fuck you, human race, I'm in control now.

Luis: That's interesting. You bring up how capitalism just keeps eating new markets or creating new commodities. You just say, AI, think about when YouTube started or maybe these other platforms. They were very different. Right. And so now you got a lot more of markets being driven by this new technology. So that's really interesting point that you're making really powerful.

La: Well, capitalism is about absolute power and absolute power absolutely corrupts. Right. So in a world where all living things are secondary to monetary gain because of the power seeming power it creates, that's what Indigenous ideology calls wetteco disease. Right. That's the pathological sickness that comes along with what Pocahontas was singing about in a song. You think you own whatever land you walk on. The John Smith's of the world. Right. The John Harding Hawkins of the world. Right. The Pope Alexanders. Right. Cortez, Columbus, Cologne. The bloodcot. Right?

Luis: Yeah. That's interesting. Just like you're making all those wide connections. And then you bring up Pocahontas. There was an author, Paula Gunn Allen scholar, who wrote about Pocahontas and another story, maybe from a native perspective to understand that story. Right.

Truly. Because Pocahontas wasn't original name. So in Paula Gunn Allen goes into all these different tangents about what could have been happening, what she could have been thinking while being with John Smith. And it's a really interesting story for everybody out there listening to go and find Paula Gunn Allen's messing up the name over and over again.

La: Polygon Allen's book on Pocahontas sounds interesting. Decolonization. Right. Like seeing, hearing, thinking, looking, listening, observing outside of the engineering that you got mainly in your K to twelve up to this point, everybody. And then if you come from a background where you visited any religious institution growing up, that just complicated things. Now, what I'm not doing is taking sides on ethics, morality, or ideologies or beliefs here. What I'm doing is talking about your natural human state that we're all born in equally as children and everything that we see here in observed conditions, what we do and say thereafter. You know what I'm saying? So none of us are in this world living disconnected from what we've seen, heard and observed over the course of our lives, right? So it's useful. I would even go as far as to say it's imperative that every man, woman and child, as my father told me, while stopping to look at all of the obstacles ahead of you, don't forget to stop and take account of all the obstacles behind you. These words that we're speaking are resistance.

Luis: I want to continue this conversation for sure after this podcast. There's a lot of things that I want to talk to you about now. Thank you lot for this wonderful conversation. Thank you all and to all the listeners out there thank you for listening and we hope our ongoing conversation spark understandings, empathies and motivations to join the struggle for a better future for all

La: Real quick plug check us out at underdogmusic seven one three at IG that's underdogmusic seven one three. You can also find us with that same URL at YouTube and at band camp underdogs manifesto underdog music seven one, three underdogs power cosmic the solution will be here soon. Peace world, better United and divided.