

Jason Kemp

Glenesha Berryman

English 125

10 October 2020

Racial Analysis of Dominique Jones' (Lil Baby) song, "The Bigger Picture."

The year 2020 brought upon events that raised debates worldwide. However, no single event or topic created more dialog in 2020 than police brutality and the Black Lives Matter Movement. From the beginning of the United States history, Blacks have been at the forefront of racial discrimination and have faced systemic racism. Events such as slavery, the Jim Crow Laws, and Segregation have caused Blacks to be racially discriminated against. Recently, police brutality and the discorporate killing of Black Americans have sparked debates and anger worldwide. During this period, many celebrities used their large social media platforms to promote Black Lives Matter ideals. Dominique Jones (Lil Baby) released a single, "The Bigger Picture" just eighteen days following the unnecessary killing of George Floyd. In Lil Baby's single, "The Bigger Picture," Lil Baby incorporates Black Lives Matter chants, overarching Black views of police brutality, and his own experiences as a young Black American to effectively give listeners insight on the racial discrimination many Black Americans face daily.

After the brutal killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, many individuals in major cities all across the United States began to protest the unnecessary killing and police brutality as a whole. During these protests, one chant that became the face of the protest was, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe." This statement was used to reflect upon how George Floyd was pinned for eight minutes with the inability to breathe while being detained by the Minneapolis Police

Department. In Lil Baby's introduction of his song, "The Bigger Picture," he uses real sound from protesters chanting, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe" to exemplify the harsh and unnecessary extents in which the police who killed George Floyd went through detaining Mr. Floyd. Furthermore, Forbes reports that Lil Baby's "The Bigger Picture" obtained more than "65.4 million audio and video streams" in just fourteen days after the initial song release (Freeman). By using meaningful Black Lives Matter chants in his song, Lil Baby effectively promoted the ideals of stopping police brutality and a fight for racial justice for Black Americans worldwide. Being able to have a voice that not only spreads a message to Americans, but also to worldwide listeners is a powerful tool that Lil Baby uses in this case to promote the messages that protestors are fighting against police brutality and systemic racism.

Another way Lil Baby effectively fights racism in his song, "The Bigger Picture," effectively reflects upon his own experiences with police. Lil Baby, or Dominique Jones, is an American rapper who grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. With Atlanta having one of the highest Black Race percentages when looking at major cities across the United States, often, police will accuse individuals of committing a crime with the basis of this accusation being that an individual is Black and male (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Atlanta City, Georgia). Lil Baby effectively reflects upon his experiences with the Atlanta Police in the following lyric: "I see blue lights, I get scared and start runnin' / That sh*t be crazy, the 'posed to protect us / Throw us in handcuffs and arrest us / While they go home at night, that sh*t messed up." It is not surprising that African Americans in the United States are afraid of the police. Following the incident with George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, many African American individuals are left fearing their lives even when they have not committed any crimes. Lil Baby criticizes how police forces are intended to

protect individuals and make them feel safe, but it is the opposite for Black Americans. African Americans all across the United States feel a sense of panic and anxiety when dealing with police officers, as alluded to in Lil Baby's lyrics. By expressing this feeling towards police, Lil Baby is effectively contributing to the discussion about how police are perceived by African Americans versus their intended purpose of serving the common good.

Although many look at racism as a challenging topic to discuss, recently, many celebrities and influencers have spoken out against racism and issues of racial stigmas. Again, Lil Baby touches upon this topic in "The Bigger Picture" by creating a chorus of: "It's Bigger than black and white/ It's a problem with the whole way of life/ It can't change overnight/ But we gotta start somewhere/ Might as well gon' 'head start here." By making this quote the chorus of the song, Lil Baby promotes the idea that racism is found in every part of an individual's daily life. He is spreading the message that the whole world must stop looking at individuals as being either black or white but instead look at them and evaluate their personalities. As Lil Baby states, the problem is not going to "change overnight." However, suppose every individual played their role in creating a better society, in which judgements are made off of appearances, but rather one's actions and beliefs. In this world, racism and social stigmas can finally be minimized in American society. Fighting for ending racism is critical in ending police brutality and the unnecessary harm that has been inflicted upon the Black society in America. Songs such as "The Bigger Picture" not only provide a window into the life of a young Black American, but it also spreads awareness of what can be done to end all racial stigmas through the world better.

Lil Baby's, "The Bigger Picture" not only gives listeners insight on the racial differences

between whites and blacks with regards to police, but it also calls for a more fair and just society. In the society that Lil Baby calls upon, Blacks can roam the street at night without fearing for their lives, Blacks would be protected the same way in which whites are, and most importantly, Blacks would finally be socially equivalent to whites. The world in which Lil Baby pictures in his song lays the foundation for change and the beginning of a revolution. Americans must come together in a time in which the world seems so separated and begin to fight against racism and injustice.

Works Cited

- Freeman, Abigail. "Lil Baby's 'The Bigger Picture' Is The Most Streamed Protest Track After Death Of George Floyd." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 2 July 2020, www.forbes.com/sites/abigailfreeman/2020/07/02/lil-babys-the-bigger-picture-is-the-most-streamed-protest-track-after-death-of-george-floyd/.
- "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Atlanta City, Georgia." *Census Bureau QuickFacts*, 2020, www.census.gov/quickfacts/atlantacitygeorgia.