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Rhetorical Outline

(21 Savage’s Hidden Messages & Life Right Now)

Some know 21 Savage as the famous Atlanta rapper, his “issa knife” phrase, and his ability to turn to music when he faces certain obstacles. Recently getting arrested from ICE (U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and put into ICE detention for 9 days, his song on his recent album i am>i was “a lot,” has messages that reflects on his childhood, trauma, and lifestyle right now. 21 Savage was targeted due to his visa being expired because he was actually born in the U.K.

“A lot” ft J.Cole, being 4 minutes and 49 seconds long, expresses the several problems that come with the music industry, his childhood trauma, how his mindset changed because of it, having a lot of money comes with having a lot of problems, etc. This song is the epitome of going through hardships in life but still being able to overcome it no matter how hard things get.

One lyric to analyze is “Everyday that I’m alive, I’ma ride with the stick.” According to Genius, they interpreted this line as a connection to 21 Savage getting shot 6 times on his 21st birthday while also witnessing his best friend dying because of the shooting. He feels like because of this situation he always has to have some type of weapon or protection from any outside bad forces. As anyone can imagine, getting shot multiple times and watching one of your bestfriends get shot can be very traumatic in someone’s life and can change how they perceive the world.

When 21 Savage says “I been through the storm and it turned me to a G, but the other side was Sunny, I get paid to rap on beats,” Genius goes into detail that 21 Savage has gone through some wild situations that he has to cope with, but being signed to Epic Records which is under the umbrella of Sony (homophone of Sunny) has helped him get money in his pockets to simply rap on beats and tell his story to the world. The “Sunny” part is the lifestyle of what being a rapper consists of. Regardless of what 21 Savage has witnessed and encountered, he still finds a way to turn it into positivity. Making music is basically his gateway to getting his feelings out on a track, and this song “a lot” so happened to be that one impactful song.

As the song goes on, you may hear by now that he has gone through some rough times when he was younger and even now. You’d think he’s been through it all but unfortunately it hasn’t. In early February, 21 Savage (real name: Sha Yaa Bin Abraham-Joseph) was targeted, got arrested by ICE to then reveal that he’s actually British and grew up originally in the United Kingdom. Memes all over social media like Instagram started to mock his true identification, but not much were concerned on his well being. He spent 9 days in custody and as a fan of his music, I began to question, “would he even get out?”. In one of the first interviews he went on since his 9 day arrest, a New York Times article gets information on how he felt like “it’s like one of [his] worst nightmare[s].” He began to question if he would ever get out or be able to stay in this country still. He explains “we gon’ fight all the way till the last day even if that mean I sit in jail for 10 years” which shows once again his determination and optimism through any problem he faces.

J.Cole’s verse “I been playing a bet from a lack of promotions I never was one for the bragging and boasting I guess I was hoping the music would speak for itself, but the people want everything else” speaks about what the music industry consists of and how people are begging for an audience by doing obnoxious things to gain any type of awareness for themselves. The merit in J. Cole’s music is more important than anything else , but in today’s music industry the numbers matter more than the quality of someone’s content. Such as having a certain amount of views on a video, likes on a photo, or ranking on an artists song or album on the charts; is what people seem to gravitate more towards to nowadays. Not only does J.Cole witness what people say towards his own music, but he witnesses other artists face obstacles as well. “Pray for Tekashi, they want him to rot I picture him inside a cell on a cot ‘Flectin on how he made it to the top Wondering if it was worth it or not” is where J.Cole and pretty much lots of other people in today’s generation witness rapper Tekashi 69 rise to some of the top songs on Billboard charts but get sentenced to a crazy amount of years in jail for acts he got caught up with in the past and didn’t realize it would stop him from excelling with his music career.

Society today has several standards and expectations for celebrities or any public figures. Not everyone can look at a music artist and see through their music. Some hear lyrics and others listen. A perfect example of an artist having similar problems to any other regular person outside of the music industry would be 21 savage. This interpretation of his song “a lot” should bring awareness that can problems like this can happen to anybody no matter how much money or jewelry they have. Celebrities may live a luxurious life but they have feelings just like any regular human being does.

Sources Used

Caramanica, Jon. *New York Times.* “21 Savage on ICE Detention, the Grammys, and his Uncertain Future”, Web.

Genius Lyrics. <https://genius.com/21-savage-a-lot-lyrics>