

Early 1980s: Contexts for Hip-Hop Culture



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- 1980: former California governor **Ronald Reagan** wins the presidency
 - on a wave of reaction against moral ambiguity
 - 1970s = a decade of disco, psychedelics, cynicism about government and leadership
 - promised to make “America great again”
 - preached small government = divestment from urban public housing projects

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- Wave of **deregulation** 1980-1982
 - “Reaganomics” = California-style economy on Wall Street
 - 1981: three record companies’ market share x2 (40% -> 80%)
 - exploding value of radio and TV ads
- **cassette technology** (1979-1990s) empowers consumers
 - boomboxes, walkmen --> music more portable, personal
 - unrestricted copying; “mix-tapes” = haven for consumer re-appropriation and redistribution of pop culture
 - Expansion of U.S. culture in USSR & developing nations

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- **SOUTH BRONX: 1980s cuts in public services, breakdown of inner-city infrastructure**
- **Capitalist/Collectivist Tension in Urban African-American response**
 - › **Capitalist:** *Search for individual wealth and security = promise of cultural liberation*
 - easy/profitable drug market
 - protecting a market share through militarization
 - › **vs. Collectivist:** *search for social space, community identity.*
 - Autonomous, self-reliant groups
 - Replace failed institutions
(police, traditional families, employers, and the welfare state)

- Marcus Pohlman, ed. *Capitalism vs. Collectivism: 1945 to the present. African American Political Thought*, Vol. 4 (New York: Routledge, 2002)