

There Is Nothing Left To Do But Care

by Eric McKinley

My girlfriend is black. Dark. Back in the day, she would've been described as 'Nubian.' Fucking gorgeous. She has the cutest baby Afro. My girlfriend grew up in the Bronx. She plays violin, piano, cello. Plays the shit out of them, in fact. Julliard. My girlfriend hates hip-hop.

I got us tickets for a show in Harlem. Mos Def. I bought them a month ago. Been trying to convince her to go ever since. Been trying to get her open. Tonight's the concert. I managed to get her in the car.

"I don't understand."

We said this in unison. In traffic, I looked over to her. I said, "You first."

"I don't understand why I have to like rap."

"You don't have to. But why do you dismiss it?"

She sighed her regular sigh. "It breaks rules without showing that it even understands them."

"Yeah, that's called art."

"It's called ignorance."

"It's the most powerful cultural expression in three generations."

"Whatever . . . You know what, pull over. I'm not going."

"This is New York. There's nowhere *to* pull over. Plus, you're a black musician raised in the borough where hip-hop was born. You're going."

"So *what*? Why should I care about any of that?"

"The better question, love, is why *shouldn't* you care?"

My foot slipped when I tried to brake. I rammed the Escalade in front of us. Dented it pretty good. Two seconds, then the biggest Shaquille O'Neal lookin' dude emerged. He was wider than

his truck. He was the kind of cat who began lifting weights in the fourth grade.

Shaq wore Tims, baggy jeans and a three quarter leather. He wore a platinum link, the chunkiest watch I've ever seen and a pinky ring to choke a German Sheppard. The moment settled. Shaq scowled. I heard bass pounding from his mangled trunk. EPMD. I got out of my Honda. Slow. The first thing I did was tell him where we were going.

