



1980s-90s Hip Hop Timeline

1981

“Crack” cocaine, a cheaper version of powdered cocaine, begins to infiltrate urban American cities.

1982

President Ronald Reagan declares his “War on Drugs,” which is a continuation of Nixon’s “War on Drugs” from the 1970s. It includes ineffective initiatives such as the “Just Say No” campaign and the passing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which establishes a mandatory minimum sentence for any drug-related infraction.

Late 1980s

Media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Time Magazine* run numerous stories on “crack babies,” portraying them as a hopeless generation plagued with unforeseen issues and being a potential burden to society. The stories also demonize the mothers, often women of color, for using and giving birth to children exposed to the drug. It wasn’t until twenty years later that the crack baby epidemic perpetrated by the media was revealed as a myth.

1991

Anita Hill’s accusation of sexual harassment by Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas is leaked to the press. He accuses his opponents of staging a “high-tech lynching.” Hill testifies against him, but Thomas is still sworn in to the Supreme Court.

1992

Three white police officers are found not guilty in the on-camera beating of Rodney King, an African-American motorist, leading to six days of widespread riots in Los Angeles, in which 53 people are killed.

803 people are killed in gang-related murders in Los Angeles.

Bill Clinton compares activist Sister Souljah to former Klu Klux Klan leader David Duke due to her comments regarding race. The moment leads to the political term “Sister Souljah Moment” in which a politician publicly denounces an extremist figure, position, or idea within their base.

1993

A national gang peace summit held in Chicago.

1994

Bill Clinton introduces the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which increases the number of police officers, allots \$9 billion for the construction of new prisons, and expands the death penalty to more offenses. The bill leads to the further incarceration of people.



1995

Former football great O.J. Simpson is found not guilty of murdering his ex-wife and her companion.

The Million Man March, an event promoting unity and responsibility among African-American men, is held in Washington, D.C.

1996

Hillary Clinton uses the term “super-predator” in a campaign speech to describe inner city youth as more dangerous than the average gang member. Many critics considered the use of the term and the rhetoric racially coded and indirectly stereotyped black inner city youth.

Rapper Tupac Shakur is murdered in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas.

1997

Rapper Notorious B.I.G. is murdered in Los Angeles.