

## RAPPER'S DELIGHT

### Graduation, life subjects of student raps

By Lauren Smith  
THE BATTALION

*I'm glad I was finally given the opportunity  
To do what most brothers don't get to do in my community  
This is my ticket out the slum, you better believe it  
And it's probably going to be one of my life's greatest  
achievements!  
Never thought I'd see the day when I graduated*

So begin the lyrics to senior electrical engineering major Andre Williams' college graduation-inspired rap, "Graduation." Somewhere between the Dixie Chicken and the Memorial Student Center lies a hip-hop community full of people with a passion for painting pictures with words, bringing social issues to the forefront or simply making people get up and dance.

Williams started honing his rapping skills when he was 12 after his middle school football practices. He started networking, which he said is an essential part of making it in the hip-hop world, with an after-school job of putting up posters for a local hip-hop manager in Houston.

"When I first got to college, working was plan A, and rapping was only a hobby," Williams said. "Deep in my heart, I just want to take care of my future wife and family. Hip-hop has become my plan A. Even if I get a record deal, it will not compare to the pride I feel about graduating."

*Invitation, I'm going to need more than 888 of 'em!  
Better yet, reserve me a whole section of the stadium!  
A long hard road I finally made it  
May 14, 2004, plays I done graduated*

From the "gangsta rap" that originated on the West Coast with Dr. Dre and others to the more modern

"conscious" Common rap, Williams classifies his rap somewhere in the middle of the two.

"I call what I do 'reality rap' because I write about what I see day to day. Gangsta rap is a form that expresses what is going on in the slums with a lot of songs about violence, drugs and guns," Williams said. "Conscious rap is the more positive side of rap with more soul and more wholesome concepts."

Kingsley Okafor, a senior English major, has collaborated with Williams on three rap songs and has been rapping for five years.

"I have three different categories of how I rap: bragatocious (self-promotion), conscious (social issues like the struggle of inner city youth and problems like racism), the state of hip-hop, obsession with money, and fun-loving," Okafor said. "Sometimes rappers do not have to say something educational, and a lot of rappers tend to pigeonhole themselves."

Among the misconceptions about hip-hop is that rap and rhythm and blues are synonymous genres.

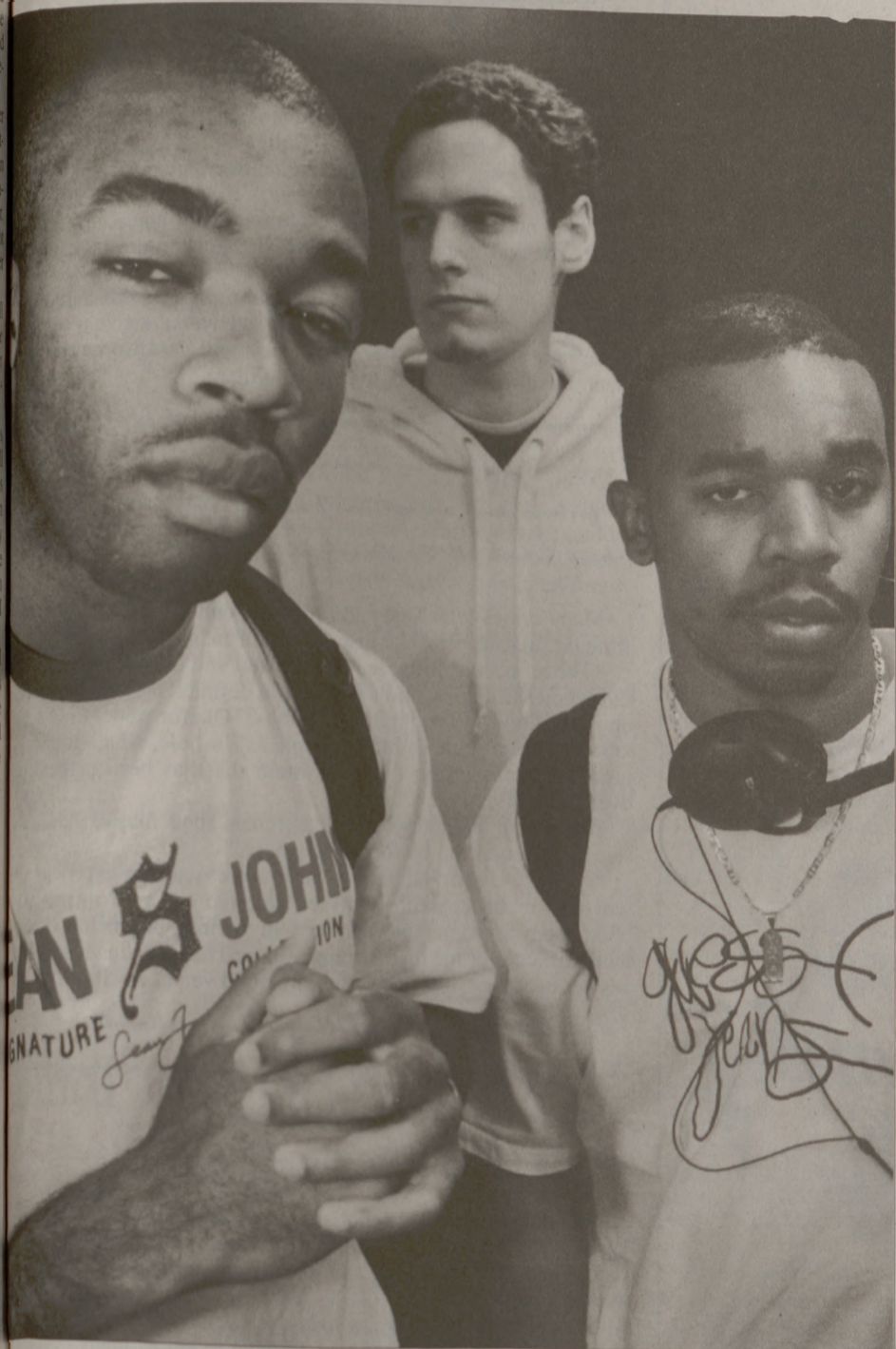
"Rap is a subset of hip-hop, and it is the more of the expressive spokesman for hip-hop," Okafor said. "R&B is based more on the emotion of love and pretty formulated. Rap hits on a range of topics, and there is no set way to do it."

With movies such as "8 Mile" and live coverage of MC Battles on MTV, freestyling has become a more publicized part of the rap world. While some argue that freestylers do not come up with their lyrics on the spot, there are others who will claim to the death that the words to their song came to them in the moment they are on stage.

"Freestyling and battling do not make you a good artist. The best artists are the ones who put songs together," Okafor said. "The way to spot if a freestyler is truly authentic is whether or not they are talking about something about the environment they are in. A lot of people have lines in their head."

Rapper and junior journalism major Kirk Ehlig

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JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Kingsley Okafor (left), a senior English major, Kirk Ehlig (center), a junior journalism major and Andre "Dre" Williams, a senior electrical engineering major are all rap artists attending A&M. Williams is the first member of his family to attend college and will graduate this month. His rap, "Graduated," chronicles his struggle and success toward graduation.

## How does your religion view organ donation?

ASSEMBLY OF GOD	Donation is highly supported by the denomination. The decision to donate is left to the individual.
BAPTIST	Organ donation is encouraged as an act of stewardship and of compassion for those who are suffering.
BUDDHIST	Donation is a matter of individual conscience. A high value is placed on acts of compassion.
CATHOLIC	Organ and tissue donation is an act of charity and love. Pope John Paul II has stated that Christians should accept this as a challenge to their generosity and fraternal love.
CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST	The decision to donate is left to the individual.
EPISCOPAL	A resolution in 1982 recognizes the life-giving benefits of donation. All Christians are encouraged to become donors "as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave His life that we may have life in its fullness."
HINDU	The decision to donate is left to the individual. Organ transplantation can be used to alleviate the suffering of other human beings.
INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL	The decision to donate is left to the individual. Nothing in Scripture contradicts organ donation.
ISLAM	Muslim scholars belonging to various schools of Islamic law have cited the principle of the priority on saving human life and have permitted organ donation and transplantation as a necessity to procure that noble end.
JUDAISM (ALL BRANCHES)	Organ donation is a contemporary Mitzvah. When a human life can be saved, it must be saved.
LUTHERAN	Donation contributes to the well being of humanity and can be "an expression of sacrificial love for a neighbor in need."
METHODIST	The United Methodist Church encourages all Christians to become organ donors as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ.
PRESBYTERIAN	Members are encouraged to be organ donors.

**Organ Donor Card**

I have spoken to my family about organ and tissue donation. I wish to donate the following:

Any needed organs and tissue

Only the following organs and tissue: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The following individuals have witnessed my commitment to being a donor:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

GET THE FACTS  
SIGN A CARD  
TELL YOUR FAMILY  
SAVE LIVES

Talk to your spiritual leader about organ donation. Then, talk to your family about your decision to donate.

Get an organ donor card online at [www.organ.org](http://www.organ.org) or call 458.8093.

[www.donorworld.com](http://www.donorworld.com)  
1.800.355.7427

[www.organ.org](http://www.organ.org)  
1.800.788.8058