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Eight tracks that use hip-hop creative and compositional practices to interrogate the idea of home

i used to love to dream is a mixtap/e/ssay that performs hip-hop scholarship using sampled and live instrumentation; repurposed music, film, and news clips; and original rap lyrics. As a genre, the mixtap/e/ssay brings together the mixtape—a self-produced or independently released album issued free of charge to gain publicity—and the personal and scholarly essays. A.D. Carson names Decatur, Illinois—his hometown—as a reference point for rapped ruminations about the ideas of growing up, moving away, and pondering one's life choices. The tracks attempt to account for moral, philosophical, and ethical dimensions undergirding unease about authenticity and highlights outlooks on Black life generally, and Black manhood in particular, in the United States.

The tracks are presented along with liner notes and a short documentary about the making of the mixtap/e/ssay, and accompanying articles to provide context for listeners both in and outside of classrooms.

“While a slew of scholarship over the past twenty-five years has situated hip-hop as artistic expression with both didactic and symbolic intellectual content, Carson’s professorial and artistic concerns pushes this assumption to another level. Carson uses the art of music to participate equally with literature as a form of cultural criticism.”

—Guthrie Ramsey, University of Pennsylvania

“*i used to love to dream* breaks new ground, speaks to compelling issues in our time, and is clearly rooted in both scholarship and Black rhetorical traditions, even as it intervenes in both.”

—Adam Banks, Stanford University

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i used to love to dream

A.D. Carson

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