



## Homeschooling While Black™ Unit Study

Honoring Ermias Asghedom  
a.k.a. “Nipsey Hu\$\$le”

## Key Words

Alchemy

Educate

Mentor

Ancestor

Entrepreneurship

Prolific

Community

Eritrea & Ethiopia

Ancestral Veneration

Haile Selassie I

Gentrification

Colonialism

## Early Life

Ermias Asghedom, also known as Nipsey Hussle, transitioned from this earth plane on March 31, 2019 at 33 years old in his hometown of Los Angeles, California. He is now an **ancestor** whom we honor for his life as a family man, a community soldier and advocate, a social influencer, a skilled artist, thriving entrepreneur, and overall change maker.

Nipsey's father was born and raised on the "horn of Afrika" in the country known as Eritrea. **Eritrea** is a country that was once a part of the country of **Ethiopia**. Although they are politically recognized as two separate countries, they share many of the same cultural and social traditions. Baba Asghedom and Nipsey's mother met and married in Los Angeles,



California. In many interviews, Nipsey recalled happy times spent with his family to include his parents, his grandparents, and his siblings during his youth. Around 1987, his parents divorced

and he lived with his mother and siblings. Due to a lack of adequate finances in the home, Nipsey began working at the age of 14 shining shoes to provide clothes for himself.

Poverty and violence were the cause of the formation of gang organizations in many neighborhoods across the United States of America in the early to late 1900s. The Crips was an organization founded in order to provide protection and financial gains in Los Angeles, California in the late 1960s. The organization was (and still is) comprised of young Black teenagers and men. As time went on, the gang later became more known for their violence against other gangs as well as illegal drug activity. Like many of his friends, Nipsey became a member of the gang known as the “Rolling 60s”, a small set or group of the Crips. During this time, a younger Hussle also played basketball and began his journey into the rap game.

## **Hussle, the Alchemist**

When he was 19 years old, Nipsey took a trip to Eritrea, his father’s home. He was introduced to and spent 3 months with his Afrikan relatives. Embedded in the culture and gaining new knowledge of self and cultural identity, Nipsey ultimately returned home to Los Angeles, California as a changed young man. His new mission was to utilize Hip Hop and his artistry as a way to rebuild himself and his community. In his hit song, “Grinding All My Life” he rapped, “I say self made/ meaning I designed myself” as a reference to the road of self improvement and empowerment he undertook after his pilgrimage to his father’s homeland. Hussle envisioned himself as an individual with a higher level of consciousness and pictured himself as a thriving entrepreneur who could bring much needed positive change to his family and local community.

Nipsey knew that leaving the life of illegal drug dealing and neighborhood violence would require much mental and physical energy, devoted time and dedication to personal and community development. He became tenacious in his pursuit. He once stated that he was in no hurry to succeed but rather was willing to pace himself because he saw his journey as a

marathon, not a sprint to the finish. Hussle filled his days with reading books on personal development, talking to thought leaders and mastering his craft of creating righteous and higher vibration music. This **alchemy** would change his life's trajectory.

During this journey, his brother Samiel, became his business partner and biggest supporter. With his musical work speaking for him, Nipsey gained a strong following within his hometown, within the music industry, and across the country. He even became well known among Eritrean descendants across the USA as a symbol of what they could aspire to in a new country. With the goal of ownership/**entrepreneurship**, Nipsey started his own record label "All Money In, No Money Out Records". Additionally, he purchased a popular local plaza in his neighborhood. Within this plaza he opened "Marathon Clothing" where customers could buy clothing and purchase his music as downloads. He also set up a STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) center for local youth. His ultimate goal was to innovate and have Hip Hop in all sectors of business to include STEM and even housing- not just in food, drinks, and clothing. A local hero, Hussle was known to sponsor the education of the community youth, financially donate to local causes and served as a **mentor** to those in his circle. He once stated that he had chosen to "redirect" his energies to endeavors that were of a higher consciousness and live for a purpose greater than himself. Because he chose to stay within his hometown and develop the talents of the local people, Hussle was seen as "a hometown king".

Though he had significantly changed his life and removed himself from violence, the local police force, the Los Angeles Police Department, would at times raid his store in an attempt to find "illegal activities". Nipsey had a "no gun" policy because of this. He knew he had to establish trust with the local police department and he maintained the position that the plaza should be a safe space for the neighborhood. On March 31, 2019, Nipsey was gunned down in front of his store, Marathon Clothing. Neither he nor the individuals with him were

armed. Nipsey chose to live higher than the streets he grew up on. He was scheduled to meet with the Los Angeles Police Department the day after his murder in an effort to reduce gang violence and activity. Although Nipsey Hussle is no longer with us in the physical realm, his Energy and his legacy lives on. Rest in Power King Ermias “Nipsey Hussle” Asghedom.

## **Suggested Discussion Prompts**

1. Nipsey’s parents named his Ermias which means “God is Risen or God will Rise”. In our Afrikan tradition, we know that names are very important and carry great significance. How did his given name, Ermias, connect with his life?
2. Many people knew and called him “Hussle” (a play on the word hustle). Do you think Nipsey lived up to this name? We all have names that our parents may have given us at birth. Sometimes in families, we are even given nicknames by our loved ones. What is the importance of choosing a name for yourself?
3. The word chemistry comes from the word “alchemy” which loosely translates “Of the Kemites” (chem) or “of the knowledge”. Alchemy is the process by which something changes or transforms. What was Nipsey’s alchemy?
4. Nipsey Hussle named his record label “All Money In, No Money Out Records”. Why is it important in business to have money constantly coming in and limit the amount of money going out? What is the benefit of having your own music company versus being signed to someone else’s company?

5. Nipsey had the word “PROLIFIC” (for life) tattooed over his right eye. The Latin word “pro” means for and “lific” comes from the English word life. What do you think is the meaning of this tattoo for Nipsey?

6. **Colonialism & Gentrification.** Eritrea was once included in the land of Ethiopia. Ethiopia (formally known as Kush) comes from the Greek word “Ethiop” or “Aethiop” which means dark. The Greeks called the land Aethiop because of the dark skinned people who inhabited the region. Ethiopia stands as the only country in Afrika not colonized by Europe. Emperor Haile Selassie I fought European invasion and was able to bring incredible social and economic changes to his nation.

As a descendant of the people of Ethiopia, Nipsey Hussle, like **Haile Selassie I**, sought to resist the attempted take over and cultural change within his community of South Los Angeles. Gentrification is a process whereby people, usually from another culture, take over an area through economic means. This process dislocates people from their communities and homes by making the local property and products too expensive for people living in poverty. Nipsey’s strategy was to “buy back the block” by purchasing and returning to the community property once owned by outsiders.

### Questions:

If someone tried to force you from your home, how would you feel? What would you do?

If someone came in and tried to change your family’s positive cultural traditions, what impact would this have on you?

7. California has been home to change for Afrikans in America for many years. The Black Panther Party was a group started in the late 1960s by Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Many of their members were young men and women from the community of Oakland, California. Nipsey Hussle was a member of the organization, the Rolling 60s Crips. How are these 2 organizations different? What do you see as Nipsey's ultimate vision for the Rolling 60s Crips?

8. Ancestral Veneration. In true Afrikan tradition, special ceremonies and rituals are held and performed to honor or "venerate" our people who have transitioned on to be ancestors. What ancestral veneration ceremonies have you witnessed for Nipsey Hussle. Do you or your family have ancestral veneration rituals that you perform on a regular basis?

Homeschooling While Black™

[www.homeschoolingwhileblack.com](http://www.homeschoolingwhileblack.com)

[Homeschoolingwhileblack@gmail.com](mailto:Homeschoolingwhileblack@gmail.com)

Written and produced by Traverro L. Harden-Ali