

# MOHAMED BOUROUISSA





TUPAC, CHANGES, 1998

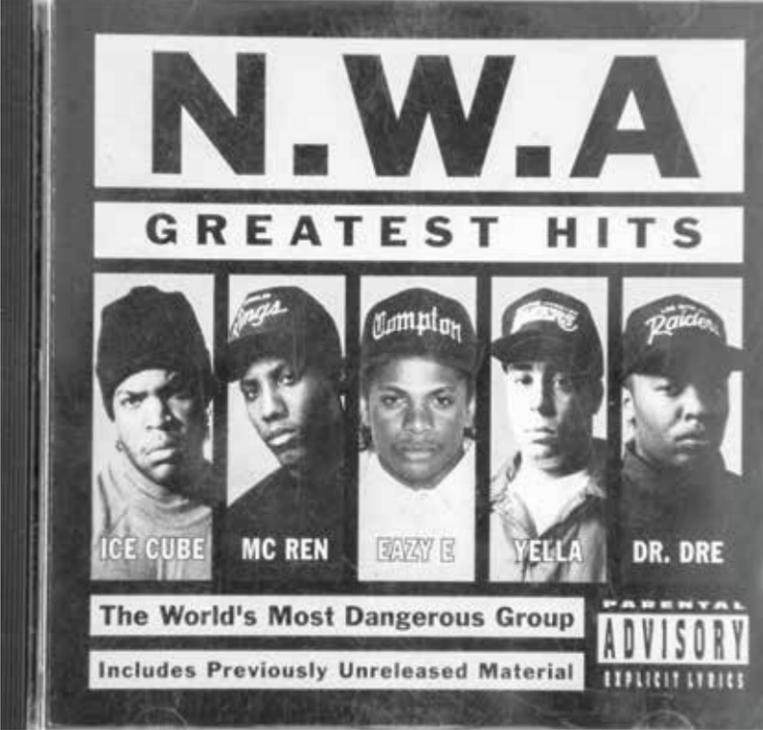
Come on come on  
 I see no changes wake up in the morning and I ask myself  
 Is life worth living should I blast myself?  
 I'm tired of bein' poor and even worse I'm black  
 My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch  
 Cops give a damn about a negro  
 Pull the trigger kill a nigga he's a hero  
 Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares  
 One less hungry mouth on the welfare  
 First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers  
 Give 'em guns step back watch 'em kill each other  
 It's time to fight back that's what Huey said  
 Two shots in the dark now Huey's dead  
 I got love for my brother but we can never go nowhere  
 Unless we share with each other  
 We gotta start makin' changes  
 Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers  
 And that's how it's supposed to be  
 How can the Devil take a brother if he's close to me?  
 I'd love to go back to when we played as kids  
 But things changed, and that's the way it is  
 That's just the way it is  
 Things will never be the same  
 That's just the way it is  
 Aww yeah  
 That's just the way it is  
 Things will never be the same  
 That's just the way it is  
 Aww yeah





PNL, LA MISÈRE EST SI BELLE, 2019

J'suis triste comme d'hab  
 Fuck c'est pas la peine de réfléchir  
 La mélodie me fait du bien  
 J'pense plus à Gucci pour me vêtir  
 Parfois j'm'habille en geush, bats les couilles  
 Plaire à qui, à quoi, pour quoi faire?  
 Les années passent comme la galère  
 J'rêve toujours de cette maison sur la mer  
 Y'a eu des bons moments mais beaucoup moins que ceux noirs  
 Qui s'installent dans mon regard, dans mon miroir  
 Igo c'est no comment, vécu de poissard  
 Va savoir pourquoi j'ai plus rien dans le tiroir  
 J'sors un sourire, j'me dis qu'il est faux  
 C'est pas normal d'être si malheureux  
 J'dors pas à deux heures, j'me dis qu'il est tôt  
 J'vois mes démons mais j'suis pas peureux  
 La solitude c'est juste une te-pu  
 Être accompagné de ces faux serait une partouze  
 Et ce soir j'fume, j'suis torse nu  
 J'suis devenu aussi vide que ma trousse  
 Faut s'en sortir Tarik  
 La vie c'est ça Tarik  
 Tu les encules Tarik  
 Un jour viendra no panic  
 Ma foi, les larmes sont brûlantes  
 Oh mon dieu, j'attends les dés et vite  
 La roue a tourné ou peut-être pas  
 Au fond tout ça c'est toi qui décides  
 Y'a pas d'amour qui tienne  
 J'les laisse croire qu'ils connaissent tous ça  
 Si ils savaient ce que ça veut dire, ce que ça comporte  
 Mais bon comme on dit qui vivra verra  
 Hey, c'est la vie, la vie ma belle  
 Wow, ce pauvre récit moi j'le trouve beau  
 T'façon la misère est si belle  
 Khey  
 Hey, toute l'année je les aime  
 J'rêve d'un avenir heureux pour eux  
 Car au fond sourire nous va à merveille  
 La misère est si belle (zoo)





RACHID TAHA, YA RAYAH / THE EMIGRANT, 1993

Ya rayah win msafar trouh taaya wa twali  
 Chhal nadmou laabad el ghafliin qablak ou qabli  
 Chhal cheft al bouldan laamrine wa lber al khali  
 Chhal dhiyaat wqat chhal tzid mazal ou t'khali  
 Ya lghayeb fi bled ennas chhal taaya ma tadjri  
 Tzid waad el qoudra wala zmane wenta ma tedri  
 Ya rayah win msafar trouh taaya wa twali  
 Chhal nadmou laabad el ghafliin qablak ou qabli  
 Aalach qalbek hzine waalach hakdha ki zawali  
 Matdoun achadda wila tzid taalem ou tabni  
 maydoumou layyam walay doum seghrek ou seghri  
 Ya hlilou meskine li ghab saadou ki zahri  
 Ya rayah win msafar trouh taaya wa twali  
 Chhal nadmou laabad el ghafliin qablak ou qabli  
 Ya msafer naatik oussaayti addiha el bakri  
 Chouf ma yeslah bik qbal ma tbia ou ma techri  
 Ya nnayem djani khabrek ma sralek ma srali  
 Hakdha rad el qalb bel djbine sabhane el aali  
 Oh emigrant, where you going?  
 Don't hurry up you'll end up returning  
 Just like many ignorants before you  
 Just like many ignorants before me  
 Have returned

How many overpopulated countries and desert lands have you seen?  
 How much time have you wasted? How much more are you going to lose?  
 Oh emigrant, do you know what is going on?  
 Destiny and time follow their race but you don't know about it  
 Why is it your heart so sad?  
 Why are you standing here so miserable?  
 Failure will be the result of your closed mind  
 The days will pass, just like your youth  
 Poor boy, you missed your opportunity just as I missed mine  
 Oh travel, let me give you an advice  
 See what suits you before you buy or sell  
 Hey, sleepy one, I've heard about you  
 What happened to you has happened to me too,  
 So the heart returns to its creator, God

In his multi-layered practice spanning photography, film, installation, sculpture and drawing, Mohamed Bourouissa (born in Blida, Algeria in 1978, lives and works in Gennevilliers, France) addresses systems of power and domination, and questions the circulation of images, ideas and money. Enrooted in the post-colonial French suburban culture, his work articulates notions of transgression, subjectivity and appropriation and interrogates the social role of the subaltern—the immigrant, the poor, the voiceless. Over the past fifteen years of a prolific and complex body of works, he photographed the French suburban youth of immigrant descent (*Périphérique*, 2005-09), depicted African-American cowboys in Philadelphia (*Horse Day*, 2018), created a community garden in Liverpool inspired by a patient of the psychoanalyst Frantz

Fanon (2018), produced coins showing the effigy of French rapper Booba (*All-In*, 2012), or exchanged images with a friend in prison through a smuggled phone (*Temps Mort*, 2009), constantly attempting to convey and deconstruct the tension between reality and its stereotyped representations.

The visual essay *That's Just the Way It Is* builds a relationship between music and images in Mohamed Bourouissa's practice. In his early series *Nous Sommes Halles* (2003-05), produced around the neighborhood of Les Halles—a central suburban train station in Paris where youth often gathers to hang out—he photographed young people from the suburbs randomly met on the streets. Referring to the New York street photography of Jamel Shabazz or the iconography of Philipp Lorca-diCorcia, the images strike by their

proximity with the subject staring straight into the camera. The series *Blida* (2009) is composed of medium-format photographs taken in the eponymous Algerian town, where Bourouissa was born and raised as a young child. Here we see faces of younger and older inhabitants of Blida, sometimes posing at home, sometimes captured in public places, paired with views of landscapes and animals. They convey a kind of softness, a nostalgia maybe, a reserve certainly.

To accompany these images taken in France and Algeria, I asked Mohamed to scan the covers of his old CDs and to select some of his favorite songs, the ones he grew up with, or still listens to. We decided on transcribing the lyrics of three tracks—one in English, one in French and one in Arabic. First of all, West Coast rapper Tupac and his iconic *Changes* from 1998,

in which he comments on the life in the ghetto, the treatment of black people by the police and more generally racism in America. Then, *La Misère Est Si Belle* (*Misery Is So Beautiful*), a 2019 tune by PNL, one of the most popular French hip-hop bands acclaimed for their hazy arrangements and romantic yet rough lyrics. Here self-reflective, dark lyrics express a certain disenchantment of the everyday. Finally, a classic Algerian 1970s chaâbi song, covered in 1993 by French-Algerian musician Rachid Taha, whose musical influence draws from traditional Northern-African compositions to British punk. *Ya Rayah* (*The Emigrant*) is a nostalgic ballad, an ode to the immigrant and the traveler longing to return to his native country.



