

Hustle & Motivate: Nipsey Hussle’s Work to Bridge the Gap between Hip-Hop, Technology, Business, and Minority Communities

By Linda M. Blair, J.D. Candidate 2021 | April 8, 2019

The minority business community mourns an influential and monumental businessman [who passed away last Sunday](#) in the community he worked hard to redevelop. Grammy-nominated artist and Los Angeles native Nipsey Hussle, born Ermias Asghedom, was a pillar who [laid the foundation](#) for the change breeding in the Crenshaw district, change wrought with technological advances and financial freedom.

Nipsey has lived out the potential for change he once sought as a youth in inner-city Los Angeles, an environment that gang culture dominated. Hussle saw no outlets for youth to develop interests beyond entertaining or playing sports. Calling attention to the lack of diversity in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, Nipsey and his business partner David Gross [launched Vector 90](#), a combination co-working space and STEM center, in the Crenshaw District. The 2-story center will serve as a conduit between young talent from impoverished neighborhoods and corporate partners in Silicon Valley and beyond.

Emphasizing the importance of financial freedom and economic mobility through his voice and actions, Hussle pioneered a number of innovative measures in marketing and self-promotion. His strong entrepreneurial spirit led him to employ what he dubbed a “[Proud2Pay model](#),” making two of his mixtapes available for free download and selling a limited number of physical copies at a premium. He continued to leverage the relationship between [culture and commerce](#) through his business strategies. In achieving vertical integration, a business concept that combines multiple stages of production into one company, Nipsey controlled the musical fine-tuning from production to consumption, allowing his storytelling to yield authentic experiences that resonated with listeners instead of being controlled by “radio gatekeepers” or record labels.

His smart store, The Marathon Clothing, part of a sect of a strip mall he purchased and was working to redevelop into community-integrated commercial units, was only a start to his bridging the gap between culture, technology, and communities that so desperately need champions of their interests. Nipsey was one who understood the needs, struggles, and values that connected communities on both sides of the class system, having lived experiences on the street and in the boardroom, and his ability to communicate that through his brand is what made him genius. Hussle once said that the highest human act is to inspire.

