

# Ms. Lauryn Hill

***Why her music will forever trumpet freedom, soul and equality...***

*By Onycha Walford*

A transcendent body of musicality, the album entitled 'The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill' recently attained diamond status. I do think it is important to acknowledge that Lauryn Hill is the first female rapper to achieve this outstanding accolade. From the start of her career, Lauryn Hill's rapping, singing and songwriting firmly distinguished her place in musical stardom and accrued her eight Grammy awards. Unlike Lauryn Hill, some hip-hop and RnB artists refrain from addressing social injustices often being more 'concerned with marketability than righteousness'<sup>1</sup>. Many of Lauryn Hill's songs are mission statements of ethics; powerfully reminding us that we are all very human. Her songs have successfully continued to sooth, advise and advocate for what is just, what is wrong and simply what is life.

As an original member of the hip-hop group the Fugees, Lauryn Hill was already on the path of inspiring social consciousness in listeners. Her unique tone and intimate delivery leaves an indelible impression on her audience. The intersectionality of her work adds to its universal appeal, meshing a community of fans who appreciate her words of wisdom.

Many artists make songs we would describe as ultimate tunes, but it is a rarity that a discography of one album dictates a singer's ongoing success for two decades. This in itself is a testament to how special Lauryn Hill's first studio album is, released just one year after the Fugees split in 1997. The epitome of musical eminence, Lauryn Hill's solo neo soul, hip-hop album gave enough to sustain her fans for years and continues to replenish after every listen. On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020 I journeyed into London for the Black Lives Matter protest. Lauryn Hill's pure lyricism accompanied me through my earphones, deepening my fervour to march in the name of all the black lives unlawfully lost to police brutality.

***'I wrote these words for everyone who struggles in their youth, who won't accept deception instead of what is truth.'*<sup>2</sup>**

A few years later, following the release of her album, Lauryn Hill found herself having to 'go underground'. She described this as a prerequisite for protecting herself and her family from harm's way. Her right to a private family life and freedom of speech was destabilized by figures in the music industry. Whilst serving her sentence for tax evasion Lauryn Hill wrote a public letter to her fans in which she stated:

---

<sup>1</sup> Ms Lauryn Hill

<sup>2</sup> Everything is Everything - Ms Lauryn Hill

***‘..it was critically important that I find a suitable pathway within which to exist, without being distorted or economically strong-armed’<sup>3</sup>***

Just like that she vanished from the public eye. This should not have come as a surprise to us as Lauryn Hill states in her song ‘Lost Ones’ that ‘my emancipation don’t fit your equation’<sup>4</sup>. Unapologetically honest, in the same letter Ms Hill informed us that,

***‘...addressing critical issues like pop culture cannibalism or its manipulation of the young at the expense of everything was, frowned upon and discouraged by limiting funding, or denying it outright’<sup>5</sup>***

Whilst incarcerated, Lauryn Hill assured millions of devoted fans that her missed tax payments were not intentional but purely to keep her family safe and unreachable. The tax evasion charges she faced are wholly justified by law, nonetheless morality-wise, Lauryn Hill was certainly dealt an unfair hand as she chose to prioritise her family’s safety. In 2013 she served three months in prison, hereby the law affirmed the idea that owing the state money often trumps preservation of human life.

Back on the music scene and definitely on her own terms, Lauryn Hill can be found touring across the globe. ‘Guarding The Gates’ is her latest single featured in major Hollywood film ‘Queen and Slim’, the track oozes the same soul and depth present in her first album. It could be said that Ms Lauryn Hill’s life depicts a solo ‘journey to justice’ in a righteous pursuit of her own freedom and choices. Ms Lauryn Hill has become an inspirational voice, producing lyrics full of substance that stand the test of time.

***‘If everyone is a product of this society, who will say the things that need to be said, and do the things that need to be done, without compromise?’<sup>6</sup>***

---

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Fans - Ms Lauryn Hill

<sup>4</sup> Lost Ones- Ms Lauryn Hill

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Fans - Ms Lauryn Hill

<sup>6</sup> Ms Lauryn Hill