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Rauw Alejandro: Music, Identity and Youth in Contemporary Puerto Rico

In recent decades, Latin music has undergone a global transformation, and few artists represent that change better than Rauw Alejandro. With a blend of reggaeton, R&B, pop, electronic music, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms, Rauw Alejandro has become one of the most influential figures of the new generation of Puerto Rican artists (TIDAL Magazine, 2019). His music has not only achieved international commercial success but has also helped redefine the modern image of Latin and Puerto Rican youth within global culture.

Born Raúl Alejandro Ocasio Ruiz in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and raised in Canóvanas, Rauw Alejandro grew up in an environment deeply connected to music. His father played guitar and his mother was a choir singer, so from a young age he was surrounded by sounds and artistic performances (TIDAL Magazine, 2019). However, for much of his youth, he dreamed of becoming a professional soccer player. He even played competitive soccer in Florida before returning to Puerto Rico and beginning to focus seriously on music after facing financial limitations and sports injuries (El País, 2025). That athletic experience would later influence the dynamic and choreographed style that characterizes his concerts.

Rauw Alejandro's musical influences reflect both Puerto Rican culture and the impact of African American and global music. According to the artist himself, his father introduced him to legendary figures like Michael Jackson, James Brown, and Elvis Presley, while he developed an admiration for R&B and pop artists such as Usher, Chris Brown, and Justin Timberlake (TIDAL Magazine, 2019). At the same time, Puerto Rican artists like Daddy Yankee, Tego Calderón, and Wisin & Yandel helped shape his identity within reggaeton and Latin urban music (El Periódico, 2021).

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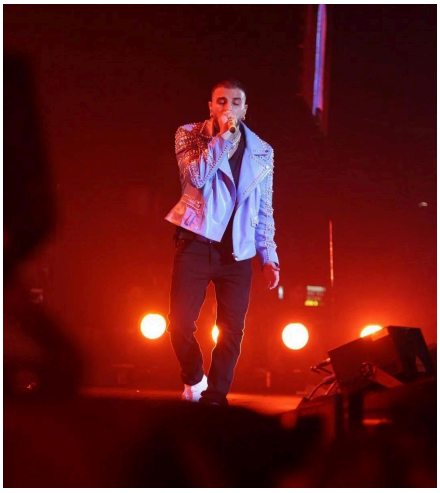
From his earliest musical projects, Rauw Alejandro distinguished himself by his willingness to experiment with different sounds. While many urban artists followed traditional formulas, he incorporated elements of dance-pop, electronica, funk, and salsa into his productions (GQ Spain, 2020). Albums such as*Aphrodisiac*, *Vice versa*, *Saturn* and *Our Thing*They demonstrated that Latin urban music could be innovative and diverse at the same time. Their song “Todo de Ti” achieved international success precisely because it broke with traditional reggaeton expectations and presented a sound inspired by pop and funk from previous decades (Harper’s Bazaar, 2023).



Part of Rauw Alejandro's impact on today's youth stems from the way he embodies a modern, global Latino identity. His concerts incorporate dance, fashion, visual storytelling, and cultural references that resonate with young people living amidst diverse cultural influences (NME, 2025). Furthermore, his music expresses themes of love, personal growth, vulnerability, and ambition in a way that many young people consider authentic and emotionally honest (Infobae, 2025). Through digital platforms and social media, Rauw Alejandro has connected with audiences in Puerto Rico, Latin America, the United States, and Europe, becoming a symbol of a more visible and culturally influential Latino generation.

However, to fully understand the cultural significance of artists like Rauw Alejandro, it is also important to consider the political and historical reality of Puerto Rico. Since 1898, Puerto Rico has remained under the control of the United States as an unincorporated territory, a result of the Spanish-American War. For generations, many Puerto Ricans have lived with the consequences of a colonial or imperial system in which the island lacks full sovereignty and full political representation within the U.S. federal government. This situation has profoundly influenced Puerto Rico's economy, migration, cultural identity, and artistic production. In this context, reggaeton and Puerto Rican urban music have become cultural expressions of resistance, pride, and national identity. When Rauw Alejandro states that "reggaeton is our heritage" and places Puerto Rico at the center of his music, he is participating in a long tradition of Puerto Rican artists who use music to affirm the island's cultural importance in the face of political and economic marginalization (Univision Puerto Rico, 2025; AP News, 2024).

In his most recent projects, especially*Our Thing*Rauw Alejandro has shown a deeper interest in exploring the musical and cultural history of Puerto Rico. The album incorporates influences from classic salsa, Afro-Caribbean music, and Nuyorican tradition, using live instruments and referencing figures such as Willie Colón and Héctor Lavoe (AP News, 2024). Music critics have noted that this work represents a process of cultural rediscovery and a more explicit connection to the artist's Puerto Rican and Afro-Caribbean roots (Pitchfork, 2025).

In addition to his musical work, Rauw Alejandro has also participated in social and environmental initiatives through the PaMaRa Project. Although the project is still evolving, its

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goal has been to promote environmental awareness, community engagement, and support for Puerto Rico (HOLA!, 2024). These initiatives reflect how some contemporary artists use their influence not only to entertain but also to foster social responsibility and cultural awareness among their fans.

Today, Rauw Alejandro represents much more than a reggaeton star. His career demonstrates how Latin and Puerto Rican music has gone from occupying marginal spaces to becoming a central force within contemporary global culture. Through artistic innovation, cultural pride, and a connection with youth, Rauw Alejandro has become an important figure for understanding the evolution of Latin identity in the 21st century.

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Classroom Discussion Questions:

1. How does Rauw Alejandro use music, fashion, and acting to express Puerto Rican and Latino identity? Why do you think this resonates so strongly with young audiences today?
2. The article explains that Puerto Rico has been under U.S. control since 1898. How might Puerto Rico's political and historical experience influence the themes and emotions found in Puerto Rican music and culture?
3. Rauw Alejandro combines reggaeton with R&B, pop, electronic music, and Caribbean influences. What does this mix of styles reveal about the experiences and identities of modern Latin youth?
4. Why is it important for schools and classrooms to include Latino artists and cultural figures like Rauw Alejandro when studying history, culture, and identity?
5. The article discusses the PaMaRa Project and Rauw Alejandro's community involvement. What role should artists and celebrities play in addressing social, environmental, or community issues?

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