

Mothering and Hip Hop Culture

edited by Maki Motapanyane

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spring 2012

250 pages \$34.95

ISBN 978-1-927335-00-0

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Motherhood is an experience that is ever-present yet invisible in the global music genre of hip-hop. This aspect of women's experience has garnered little attention from journalists, writers and scholars of hip-hop culture. Nor do we have any understanding of how mothers who remain hip-hop culture enthusiasts negotiate their relationship to the culture of hip-hop and its music with their children. Furthermore, what are the discursive spaces that motherhood occupies in hip-hop? Are there ways of understanding mothering in hip-hop along a historical continuum? What are some of the ways that motherhood complicates the hyper-masculinity so dominant in hip-hop? What does empowered and feminist mothering in the context of hip-hop look like, and how might it challenge the status quo? How are mothers engaging with hip-hop, both locally and globally?

This volume covers three overarching themes: representations of motherhood in rap, feminist analyses of mothering in hip-hop, and experiential reflections on mothering in the process of artistic production. Contributors examine the relationship of motherhood to hip-hop from a number of vantage points. In an effort to unpack popular representations of motherhood in hip-hop, Travis Gosa, Erik Nielson and Nicholas Powers analyze the trend of 'Dear Mama' tributes among male rappers. In these pieces, the authors examine the meanings and place of these tributes in a larger context of generally condoned sexism and misogyny in hip-hop. Alexis Pauline Gumbs reflects on the contributions of feminist mothering to hip-hop culture. Referring to the work of musician Meshell Ndegeocello, Gumbs takes readers from the counter-productive "slandering of mothers (in the 'your mama' tradition), the criminalization of baby mamas as gold-diggers and the debasement of women's sexuality and reproductive agency in general" in rap and hip-hop culture - to a "body of work [that] reminds us that hip-hop can also be a queer dialogical space where the meaning of parenting is up for grabs." In the third section of this volume, Shana Calixte, Ruth Henry, Shantelena Mouzon and Sharon Miller, and Mark Campbell and Maki Motapanyane provide a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of women artists balancing and negotiating their art and professions with motherhood.

Maki Motapanyane is Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at Saint Louis University. She has published in the areas of feminist theory, transnational feminist research, and cultural studies. Her research is focused on feminism in Africa, gender and international development, and women in hip-hop culture. She is currently completing a monograph that examines the legacy of African feminist thought in South Africa.

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Motapanyane, ed., *Mothering and Hip Hop*
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