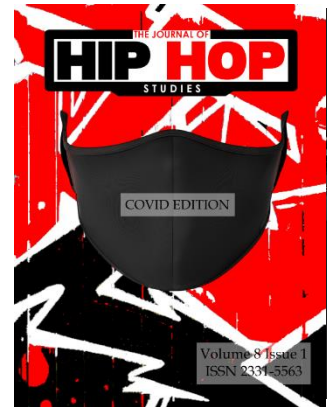


Foreword

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Foreword

Travis Harris

The world is still fighting the deadly and devastating COVID-19 virus. While the virus's disproportionate harm to Black lives is clear, I contend that we have yet to fully measure its damage. The world paused in 2020 and effectively put the majority of the academic world on hold. COVID has tremendously impacted our operation. *JHHS* was affected in a variety of ways by the virus. It should be noted that all our editors and reviewers are volunteers. At the beginning of the Fall 2021 academic year, there was great uncertainty about whether or not we were returning full time or staying online. In the midst of this uncertainty, many professors were trying to figure out their pedagogical approaches and whether sessions would be in person or online. Additionally, tenure track professors continued to be responsible for meeting their requirements for tenure. This narrow academic view does not in the least take into account the wave of death and sickness that hit many Black communities. In addition to the journal's editors and reviewers being affected by COVID, the authors were also hit by this vicious virus. From those who were on the editorial board, to reviewers and authors, some experienced death in the family, others took on additional responsibilities; we all felt the weight of COVID.

As a result, COVID affected our publishing schedule and delayed the publication of this issue. The fact that we even have an issue to put out is a testament to all those who were involved. But before discussing this issue, what COVID has made explicitly clear is that we need to appreciate people and give them their flowers while we still can. First, I would like to appreciate our former Managing Editor, Shanté Paradigm Smalls. They made immeasurable contributions to the journal. *JHHS* would not be where it is today if it had not been for their leadership, guidance, direction, and work. They drastically changed the ways in which the journal functions, made clear guidelines and directions for all members of the team and the authors. Peep their new book *Hip Hop Heresies* (NYU Press, June 2022). Next, I want to show love to our former editors: Lakeyta Bonnette-Bailey, Ashley Payne, Marcus Smalls, and Sameena Eidoo. All these editors greatly contributed to the overall functioning and success of the journal. They shared their talents, academic wisdom, and insights into publishing top-notch Hip Hop scholarship. Bonnette-Bailey also served as the General Editor. Be on the lookout for her forthcoming book cowritten

with Adolphus G. Belk, Jr and being published by University of Michigan Press, *For the Culture: Hip-Hop and the Fight for Social Justice*. Ashley Payne was one of the coeditors of the Hip Hop Feminism Special Issue *Twenty-First Century B.I.T.C.H. Frameworks: Hip Hop Feminism Comes of Age*. Without her and Aria S. Halliday's work, we would not have published an issue during the pandemic. Both Marcus Smalls and Sameena Eidoo provided Hip Hop perspectives that were not confined to the academy and the United States. Eidoo also worked on strengthening *JHHS's* relationships with other Hip Hop educators and institutions. This issue will highlight the work of Marcus Smalls.

Smalls' review of *An American Saga* sets the standard for Hip Hop scholarship. It is not a coincidence that a Hip Hop scholar outside of academia offers keen insight into Hip Hop in general and Wu-Tang in particular. His review seamlessly weaves together additional primary sources, such as the *Of Mics & Men* documentary, songs, music videos and his own personal knowledge of the culture. This is coupled with a vivid writing style that brings his article to life. "Clan in Da Front" offers a rare combination of Hip Hop knowledge and excellent writing. This will be our opening article for this issue.

I highlight Smalls' article because this is the future direction of *JHHS*. The journal will move past simply analyzing lyrics and offering arguments that Hip Hoppas cannot even reach. Hip Hop studies have been analyzing lyrics for thirty years now. We are no longer going to focus solely on one element, emceeing. Submissions that examine all the other elements of Hip Hop will have a high acceptance rate. Hip Hop deserves more. As COVID and living through the most recent historic events, from police killings to worldwide uprisings in the middle of a pandemic have shown, academia must step it up another level. It is *JHHS's* responsibility as a Hip Hop journal to provide scholarship that provides hope in the middle of despair. In the same way Hip Hop rose from the ashes of burning buildings and benign neglect, Hip Hop studies can rise from the devastation of COVID and provide knowledge, resources, and information to strengthen our Hip Hop communities.

I conclude this foreword by acknowledging and thanking our Senior Advisor, Daniel White Hodge and current editors, Cassandra Chaney, Jeffrey Coleman, Javon Johnson, and Elliot H. Powell. Hodge, the original Editor in Chief, has been instrumental in providing his expertise on running the journal. His wisdom has been valuable to me as I navigate all that comes with being Editor in Chief. Chaney and Coleman are OGs. They have been with the journal since the beginning. I cannot honestly explain how much they have contributed to the journal over their seven-year tenure. It is quite remarkable to think about their work with the journal over that long period while also maintaining all their full-time tenure responsibilities. For those outside of the academy, the biggest job that carries the most weight and stress for these two is being Black in academia. In fact, what I am about to explain about Chaney and Coleman applied to all our editors who

have ever worked with the journal. In addition to being Black in academia, they sit on search committees, chair Master theses and dissertations, attend faculty meetings, research and publish their own work, teach and mentor Black students. Chaney and Coleman have done all this for close to a decade while also serving on *JHHS*'s editorial team. Johnson and Powell are two of our newest editors. They too have fulfilled the responsibilities of being tenure-track professors and volunteering on the editorial team. Johnson jumped right in and worked with Coleman on this COVID issue. Powell is working on the next issues that will be coming out in Volume 9. The *JHHS* would not be able to move forward and meet its goal of setting and raising the standard of Hip Hop scholarship without this editorial team. Another important group I want to shout are our reviewers. We have more than fifty reviewers, so it would be difficult to name them all. Their work is important to ensuring that all work being published meet the standards of Hip Hop scholarship. Last but not least, I need to show a tremendous amount of gratitude to our copy editor Sabine Kim. She volunteers an incalculable amount of time grammar checking, fact-checking, going through footnotes and bibliography entries, and reading every scholarly article that we publish. To put her work in context, professional copyediting services can charge hundreds to thousands of dollars for this work, and Kim volunteers.

We are hyped to finally get this issue out and looking forward to the future of Hip Hop Studies.