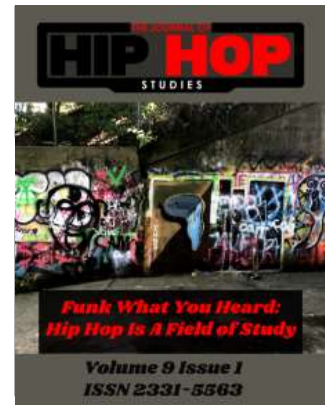


“Imbedded” Belonging and Black Being: A Foreword

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Foreword

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I ain't going to hold you, we really set out to change the game with this issue. This issue has been a long time coming. We first started working on it in 2021. During this time, people were starting to come back outside after being on lockdown from COVID. We had received a number of submissions that had promising potential but many of the submissions were repetitive. By repetitive, I mean that they used the same methods, did not offer any new insights into Hip Hop theory, and did not build on the field. Along with reviewing the submissions, I noticed the same thing was happening throughout Hip Hop scholarship. More and more I read about trends in "Hip Hop" that were really trends in popular culture. I could not distinguish between academic Hip Hop scholars, bloggers, and journalists who wrote about Hip Hop. They were all taking some themes or rap music that they were interested in and presenting their ideas about Hip Hop based on the music. At times, Hip Hop was being used to confirm what they were already thinking. Then, at other times, academics did not properly position themselves in alignment with Hip Hop. The logic seemed to be that since they grew up listening to rap music, they understood Hip Hop. Even more problematic were those who did not recognize how their race could potentially play a role in perpetuating White Supremacy while researching and publishing on Hip Hop. While I was engaging with the scholarly texts, I was also confronted with the harsh realities of a quasi-COVID world. We are still dealing with death, a decrease in life expectancy, police terrorism, food apartheid, high unemployment, sickness, physical and sexual assault, abuse, a failed democracy, oppressive laws that restrict what we can and cannot do with our bodies, and mass killings. In light of these waves of oppressions, I realized that we could not keep going in this repetitive cycle. We needed something more.

With that being said, we present the only issue of Volume 9. To bring this issue together, I reached out to all the authors of submissions that had the potential to break the cycle that has been widespread throughout Hip Hop studies. I built relationships and met with each author. We discussed the vision they had for their article and the vision I had for the future direction of the journal. After multiple meetings, I realized that it would be beneficial if all the authors of this issue could meet. During this meeting, I laid out the vision for the future of the journal so that we could all get on the same page. Next, each author shared their individual projects. As each author shared, everyone was able to provide feedback to that particular author. The goal was to ensure that every author was

clear on the mission, allow for authors' work to be in conversation with each other and present as unified a perspective on Hip Hop and Hip Hop studies as possible in a general issue. Our hope is that as you read through this issue, you will see the fruits of our collaboration.

While we were working on this issue, I was teaching AMST 390 "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: A Hip Hop Understanding of the Revolution." "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" examined revolutionary aspects of movements and revolutionary figures from a Hip Hop perspective and within Hip Hop. I was working out ideas about Hip Hop and the vision for the journal became crystal clear. In this class, one of the students conducted research on and analyzed graffiti. They took photos of graffiti behind the old Black Prince Distillery in Clifton, NJ. The cover photo of this issue is one of the pics that they shared with me and gave me permission to use. This wall represents a graffiti battle. If you examine the photo closely, you can see where writers sprayed over other writers. One of the key points that I discussed with my class and is important to Hip Hop is how battling develops creative energy that only comes from the Hip Hoppa sharpening their skills. Also, when it comes to graffiti, there is a unique visual representation of and from battling that can only be created by battling. This image presents explosive, dynamic, and creative energy from writers who created a new identity and left their tag on this wall that could last for decades or centuries to come. In the same way these writers did their thing, this is what we want to do with this issue, leave our mark.

In wrapping up this foreword, I need to give some shout outs. First, I need to shout out the authors of this issue. They did not have to meet with me. Honestly, I was hard on them in my critiques and what I required, yet they delivered. Their articles went through several rounds of editing. In addition to the normal blind peer review process, each piece was edited several more times. All the authors published here stuck to it and made the necessary changes. Authors, you know the work you put into writing, changing, fixing, and updating. Thank you and strong work. I also need to show some love to Lyfestile. Lyfestile is an emcee out of the Lou, St. Louis. I met him through A&R Kazia Steele. I wanted to get someone from the culture to be a part of this issue. Kazia delivered and Lyfestile came through. He helped to edit and coauthor. His input is important and on point. Lyfestile's presence offered a level of accountability that we are not usually afforded in academia. I also want to shout out my editorial board. I know I highlight their work every issue but without them, this journal would not be possible. Thank you to every Hip Hop scholar that offered a blind review. Thank you to every Associate Editor that worked on this issue in any capacity. Thank you Sabine Kim for your line-by-line copy editing. Finally, thank you to those who contributed through Hip Hop's collective consciousness. There was a rhythm and flow to putting this issue together. This joint was rocking. Now my hope is that this joint hits and changes the game.