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The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop--and Why It Matters

Tricia Rose

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Hip-hop is in crisis. For the past dozen years, the most commercially successful hip-hop has become increasingly saturated with caricatures of black gangstas, thugs, pimps, and 'hos. The controversy surrounding hip-hop is worth attending to and examining with a critical eye because, as scholar and cultural critic Tricia Rose argues, *hip-hop has become a primary means by which we talk about race in the United States*.

In *The Hip-Hop Wars*, Rose explores the most crucial issues underlying the polarized claims on each side of the debate: Does hip-hop cause violence, or merely reflect a violent ghetto culture? Is hip-hop sexist, or are its detractors simply anti-sex? Does the portrayal of black culture in hip-hop undermine black advancement?

A potent exploration of a divisive and important subject, *The Hip-Hop Wars* concludes with a call for the regalvanization of the progressive and creative heart of hip-hop. What Rose calls for is not a sanitized vision of the form, but one that more accurately reflects a much richer space of culture, politics, anger, and yes, sex, than the current ubiquitous images in sound and video currently provide.

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