



Thug Life: Race, Gender, and the Meaning of Hip-Hop

Michael P. Jeffries

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Hip-hop has come a long way from its origins in the Bronx in the 1970s, when rapping and DJing were just part of a lively, decidedly local scene that also venerated b-boying and graffiti. Now hip-hop is a global phenomenon and, in the United States, a massively successful corporate enterprise predominantly controlled and consumed by whites while the most prominent performers are black. How does this shift in racial dynamics affect our understanding of contemporary hip-hop, especially when the music perpetuates stereotypes of black men? Do black listeners interpret hip-hop differently from white fans?

These questions have dogged hip-hop for decades, but unlike most pundits, Michael P. Jeffries finds answers by interviewing everyday people. Instead of turning to performers or media critics, *Thug Life* focuses on the music's fans--young men, both black and white--and the resulting account avoids romanticism, offering an unbiased examination of how hip-hop works in people's daily lives. As Jeffries weaves the fans' voices together with his own sophisticated analysis, hip-hop is revealed as a tool listeners use to make sense of the world, as well as a rich, self-contained culture containing politics, pleasure, virtue, and vice.

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