BLACK FEMININITY: HIP HOP FEMINISM AND IDENTITY

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My research focuses on the connections between radical feminists of color and contemporary hip-hop feminisms. Hip Hop culture is important to study in relation to women because of its negative perceptions of black women based in and derived from the larger American culture. These negative perceptions are further supported by the marginalization of black women within black communities. Thus, my study focuses on the ways in which some female rappers challenge negative representations of black women through espousing and supporting messages that can be identified with feminist agendas. In “Hip Hop Women Shredding the Veil: Race and Class in Popular Feminist Identity” (2005), Marcyliena Morgan argues that black women are living in a state of schizophrenia. She argues that black women are confronted by “voices and messages about what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a black woman in relation to men.” She further adds that these voices and messages have their source in white European culture (1). Yet, the circumstances Black female rappers face, are made even more complex because black women are marginalized not only by white culture, but by black men as well. This can cause even more confusion when dealing with issues of identity. Third wave feminist agendas provide the tools for examining formations of black female identities and terms through which they are constructed. In particular, Black feminism’s focus on self-esteem, representations, and value of black women in relation to other women can help illuminate the ways through which feminist rappers adopt these agendas while diversifying the roles and representations of black women.