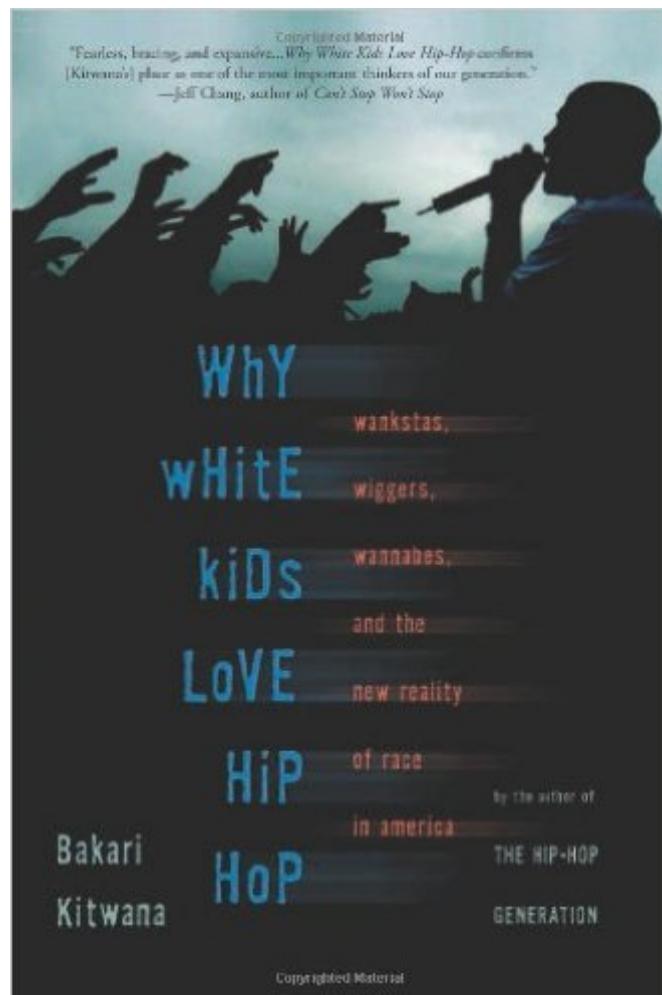


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# Why White Kids Love Hip Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, And The New Reality Of Race In America



## **Synopsis**

Our national conversation about race is ludicrously out-of-date. Hip-hop is the key to understanding how things are changing. In a provocative book that will appeal to hip-hoppers both black and white and their parents, Bakari Kitwana deftly teases apart the culture of hip-hop to illuminate how race is being lived by young Americans. This topic is ripe, but untried, and Kitwana poses and answers a plethora of questions: Does hip-hop belong to black kids? What in hip-hop appeals to white youth? Is hip-hop different from what rhythm, blues, jazz, and even rock 'n' roll meant to previous generations? How have mass media and consumer culture made hip-hop a unique phenomenon? What does class have to do with it? Are white kids really hip-hop's primary listening audience? How do young Americans think about race, and how has hip-hop influenced their perspective? Are young Americans achieving Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream through hip-hop? Kitwana addresses uncomfortable truths about America's level of comfort with black people, challenging preconceived notions of race. With this brave tour de force, Bakari Kitwana takes his place alongside the greatest African American intellectuals of the past decades.

## **Book Information**

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Basic Civitas Books; First Edition edition (May 31, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465037461

ISBN-13: 978-0465037469

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 5.8 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (15 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,102,547 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Race Relations > General](#) #407 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Rap](#) #950 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Children's Studies](#)

## **Customer Reviews**

\*sigh\*... I'm always on the lookout for books about hip-hop (as a music form, culture, and generation) as it relates to American culture. More specifically, I'm interested in the social ramifications of the culture as a whole. Thus, when I was given this book by a friend, I was hoping for a good social science read. Unfortunately, I was highly dismayed, finding this particular selection

to be a sloppily written manuscript with virtually no empirical evidence anywhere. For much of this book, the author makes vague statements which are supposed to be evidence (I.E. - "First and foremost among the reasons white kids love hip-hop is the growing sense of alienation from mainstream American life they experienced in the 1980s") but then makes little or no effort to show proof of such theories. This is discouraging. What makes matters worse is that the author later goes on to dismiss the limited evidence that does exist showing whites are the dominant purchasers of hip-hop albums, and instead of inserting evidence which shows otherwise, he launches into page upon page of bizarre hypothesis' for potential ways blacks might still be the majority purchasers (ironically mentioning bootleg CDs). Ultimately I grew tired of reading his writing which became increasingly less academic. His "expert" sources are also questionable - while at times he does move towards legitimate figures in the hip-hop community - I felt he vastly stretched for some of the opinions gathered for this book. For instance, I seriously wonder whether it was wise to include a very long section on a 19 year-old white female for who "hip-hop has been mainstream culture" for her entire life. Her principle credits for being mentioned appear to be that she once dated a black guy, doesn't mind the b-word, and got hooked on hip-hop when she heard "Hypnotize" while developing film. I was not impressed. If you are looking for an actual intelligent and informed book on hip-hop, please look elsewhere. Reading this, you'll mainly come away with disjointed personal theories of the author, as well as numerous plugs for THE SOURCE magazine. 1/5 Stars

I think that the issue Kitwana attempts to explore in Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop is interesting. But his approach to taking on this topic was both sloppy and simplistic. It starts in the preface, where he says that the hip-hop generation (which in reality covers two generations) is the first one to grow up without experiencing de facto segregation. I'm sure that White suburbanites in Scarsdale and Orange County would be interested in knowing that there are phantom people of color floating around their communities. Kitwana also overemphasizes the impact of hip-hop on the emergence of African Americans in popular culture and their impact on young Whites during the 1980s and 1990s. He concentrates so much on Michael Jordan and his first Nike ads with Spike Lee that he forgets about Dr. J, Mean Joe Green, and a host of others that paved the road for Jordan in the first place. But Kitwana's biggest error is in glossing over the distance between Whites embracing hip-hop culture and Whites living anti-racist, social justice oriented lives. Like John Turturro's character in Do the Right Thing, there are at least as many Whites who are hip-hop lovers but have as stereotypical an opinion of Blacks and other people of color as Whites who listen to honky-tonk. I don't think that everything Kitwana says in Why White Kids Love Hip Hop is incorrect -- his book is just

selectively incomplete.

This book offers a non-academic analysis of hip hop and why white kids love all aspects of hip hop culture. The book also uses hip hop as a lens to examine race relations in the US. This is not a dry, academic read, and it is well-researched without listing the litany of facts. The book is written for a lay audience. Parents might find this useful to get a "handle" on their kids' fascination w/ hip hop culture. The audience for this book is a wide lay audience. It's an engaging read and most will read it quickly. The author's section on Wiggas/Wanistas was the most compelling to me. The author did a great job of exploring how people (whites) might feel powerless in their own lives based on issues of class or just being angry about their situation and how hip hop music might speak to them, might take them to a different place. I appreciated the tone and the writing style. This a book worth reading.

Does not backup his conclusions with sufficient evidence, makes assumptions about the motives of groups without sufficient samples of groups who he speaks about. As a historian I found this work lacking in evidence, however it does present good questions. To me the work is more of a proposal for research that needs to be done, or opinion piece.

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