



Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness, and a Global Race Consciousness (Refiguring American Music)

Nitasha Tamar Sharma

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Hip Hop Desis explores the aesthetics and politics of South Asian American (desi) hip hop artists. Nitasha Tamar Sharma argues that through their lives and lyrics, young “hip hop desis” express a global race consciousness that reflects both their sense of connection with Blacks as racialized minorities in the United States and their diasporic sensibility as part of a global community of South Asians. She emphasizes the role of appropriation and sampling in the ways that hip hop desis craft their identities, create art, and pursue social activism. Some desi artists produce what she calls “ethnic hip hop,” incorporating South Asian languages, instruments, and immigrant themes. Through ethnic hip hop, artists, including KB, Sammy, and DeeJay Bella, express “alternative desiness,” challenging assumptions about their identities as South Asians, children of immigrants, minorities, and Americans. Hip hop desis also contest and seek to bridge perceived divisions between Blacks and South Asian Americans. By taking up themes considered irrelevant to many Asian Americans, desi performers, such as D’Lo, Chee Malabar of Himalayan Project, and Rawj of Feenom Circle, create a multiracial form of Black popular culture to fight racism and enact social change.



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