Glossary

Agency  Actions to shape or construct one’s social, cultural, political and economic world.

Beat-boxing  The act of transforming one’s mouth and vocal abilities into sounds and beats expressed alone or with lyrics.

Black Church  Congregations in seven mainline denominations in which the leadership and membership is largely African American.

Black freedom struggle  African Americans’ activity in search of dignity and full citizenship rights throughout their history in the American colonies. The term acknowledges that this activity was not restricted to the 1960s civil rights movement and that on this soil, Africans and persons of African descent have used a variety of approaches at the individual and institutional levels, including black nationalist, integrationist, armed, nonviolent, and economic protest, to name a few.

Black religion  The responses to the horrors of separation, torture, enslavement, and the good and bad circumstances that shape people’s desire to ask the big questions of life—the who, what, when, where, and why of theirs and their community’s existence.

Bling  Flashy, materialistic possessions that are worn by hip-hop artists to signify individual economic prosperity.
Blues A style of music associated with African Americans and developed first within the deep South. It celebrates the everyday practices of life and chronicles the hardships and heartache of life. It incorporates a variety of styles including European folk music, work songs and field hollers.

Break dance See Breaking.

Breaking A unique form of dance developed in New York City and emerging within what we now know as hip-hop culture; characterized by bodily movements corresponding to breaks in songs; often based on highly acrobatic and athletic movement. The physical, bodily expression of hip-hop’s creative impulse.

Capitalism An economic system that promotes ownership of private property and seeks to maximize profits through controlling the means of production and maximizing the sale of goods and services within a free market.

Christianity Religious tradition based on the teachings and ethics of Jesus the Christ, believed to be the “Son of God”.

Christian Signs and Symbols: symbols associated with Christianity. This ranges from Jesus and the cross to heaven and hell.

Cipher A group of at least two rappers performing freestyle verses.

Cultural Production: art, music, literature, film, and folk stories.
**DJ** An artist who makes use of a sound system and turntables during a party or concert.

**Djing** The act of playing two records, side by side, moving between the two to create breaks, which increase the enthusiasm of crowds and offer dancers a unique embodied form of expression. The central feature of hip-hop culture historically. The musical expression of hip-hop’s creative impulse. *See also* Scratching; Emceeing.

**Doctrines:** the teachings of a religious institution.

**Emcee** An artist who raps over the beats provided by a DJ or at times without a beat. The emcee is responsible for the lyrical expression of the creative impulse.

**Emceeing** Applying spoken words and lyrics over the sounds provided by DJs, meant to excite and motivate a crowd. Emceeing is rapping, which often includes bragging, elevating the excitement of a crowd and reflecting on a variety of social and cultural situations to present a portrait that creates a mood experienced by the emcee and her or his listeners.

**Five Percent Nation** Also known as the Nation of Gods and Earths, this tradition develops in New York during the mid-1960s, through the efforts of Clarence 13X (also known as Father Allah). The tradition argues black men are gods and black women are earths, and they frame their doctrine and teachings on mathematics and the deconstruction of language to discern its meaning.

**Four Elements of Hip Hop** Includes breaking, djing, emceeing, and graffiti.
**Fruit of Islam (FOI)** The members of the Nation of Islam responsible for discipline within and security for the Nation of Islam community.

**Gangsta rap** A form of rap that provides a critique of society by highlighting the damage that has been done by humans because of capitalist greed and oppression.

**Gangsta Heaven** The construct of heaven provided by hip hop artists such as Tupac and Notorious B.I.G. This heaven is one that allows for people to live their lives in Heaven similarly to the ways that they lived it here on earth.

**Gender** A social construct highlighted as standards and norms for appropriate (read “acceptable”) male and female behaviors and attitudes.

**Globalization** A process of accelerated flows or intensified connections—across national and other boundaries—of commodities, people, symbols, technology, images, information, and capital, as well as disconnections, exclusions, marginalization, and disposition.

**Graffiti art** The art of employing spray paint to mark one’s signature, or “tag,” on public buildings, trains, or anywhere else. An artistic cultural expression that makes use of spray paint to fashion names and images onto artifacts of postindustrial urban life such as building walls, trains, and subways. The visual expression of hip-hop’s creative impulse. See Tagging.

**Higher Power** A reference to God or gods, or some cosmic force that informs and influences human life.
**Gospel Music** A form of musical expression of the 20th century that combined the rhythm of the blues and the theology of the spirituals.

**Hip-hop** A multivocal, multiethnic cultural phenomenon and movement framed and emerging from African American musical expression and characterized by certain key features, including the DJ, breaking/break dance, the emcee, graffiti art, human beat-boxing, and individualistic expressions of clothing. These features are built from creative appropriation of the cultural materials and social resources.

**Hip Hop Aesthetic** Comprised of four characteristic features, (1) sampling, (2) layering, (3) rhythmic flow and asymmetry and (4) parody or irony.

**Hip Hop Churches** Church practices and worship that is marked by hip hop sensibilities and a

**History** A story of a people; a story of ideas, of events concerning an individual or a group of people’s ways of thinking and being in the world, and of who a person or a people think they are, or their sense of identity.

**Holy hip-hop** A brand of hip-hop created specifically to glorify Jesus Christ and bring the good news of Jesus Christ to those who are living in and influenced by hip-hop culture.

**Ideology** A systematic body of concepts, especially about human life and culture, that integrates assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.

**Islam** A religious traditions based on five pillars: (1) belief in the oneness of God and Muhammad as the Messenger of God; (2) prayer five times each day; (3) charity – giving of
one’s income to help those in need; (4) fasting during the Month of Ramadan; (5) pilgrimage to Mecca once, if one is financially and physically able.

**Jelly Rolling** A euphemism in the blues for sexual activity.

**Jesus Piece** A piece of jewelry depicting Jesus Christ. Notorious BIG was the first to popularize this piece of jewelry.

**Kufi** A hat without a brim often associated with Africa.

**Kurtis Blow** The first commercially successful rapper who, in 2009 developed hip hop churches.

**Metaphysics** An area of philosophical study that is concerned with the areas such as the nature of being and knowledge.

**Nation of Islam** A religious tradition dating back to the 1930s in the United States. Defined primarily through the ministry of four figures – Master Fard Muhammad, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan – the Nation of Islam blends black nationalist sensibilities with elements of Islam.

**Nella Larsen** An author whose writings challenge the idea of God.

**Original People** The Nation of Islam argues that African Americans represent a division of humans created by Allah – the original people – and designed for greatness.

**Other-Worldly Orientation** An approach to religious life that is concerned with personal salvation rather than attention to the needs of the larger community such as social justice.
Patriarchy  The privileging of men over women in virtually every aspect of interpersonal and social existence.

Pillars of Islam  The five fundamental beliefs/practices that define adherence to Islam.

Poverty  An economic condition in which a person or group of people lack essential material goods and resources and are incapable of meeting their basic human needs for items such as food, clothing, and shelter.

Progressive rap  The lyrical form of hip-hop that interprets the cycle of poverty and dehumanization producing limited life options and despair.

Prosperity gospel  The theological position that Christians can experience spiritual and material blessings or healing and prosperity through having faith in Jesus Christ and through properly interpreting and applying Scripture.

Quest for Complex Subjectivity  This is the understanding of religion as a quest to make life meaningful by wrestling with the fundamental questions of human existence: who are we? What are we? Why are we? When are we? Where are we?

Racism  The belief that certain races are inferior or superior to others.

Religious Institutions: formalized organizations, with creeds, doctrines, and teachings, that can serve as historical manifestations of the quest for complex subjectivity. Islam and Christianity are two examples of religious institutions.
**Respectability:** a position wherein people seek to lead lives that are more in line with mainstream and dominant cultural codes of conduct and self-presentation.

**Richard Wright:** An author whose work challenged the legitimacy of Christianity.

**Ritual** Borrowing from Ronald Grimes and other ritual studies scholars, ritual can be understood as a repeated activity in founded space.

**Sacred** A typical way of referencing that which is separate from normal human activities and thought and therefore more closing corresponded to the more pure dimensions of the faith.

**Scratching** A feature of DJing; including the sound of a vinyl record being scratched by the needle of the player as though it were another part of the rhythmic composition. See also DJing.

**Secular** A term used to describe mundane activities and thought that have no deep relationship to religious faith and commitment.

**Social Gospel Movement** A liberal theological Christian movement that originated in the early twentieth century in the United States and sought to improve oppressive social conditions by emphasizing salvation of social groups and working to advance the kingdom of God on earth.

**Spirituals** An early form of African American music that expressed Christian commitment.

**Tagging** Making graffiti by painting one’s name or an image or mural on a public location; spray-painting an artifact to create graffiti art. See Graffiti art.
**Temple of Hip Hop** An organization and information platform developed by KRS-One to provide a proper understanding of what hip hop is and what it accomplishes.

**This-Worldly Orientation** An approach to the religious life that seeks to apply faith to the needs of the larger community—such as social justice.

**Tricknology** Reference within the Nation of Islam to the practices and false teachings used by white Americans to control the black population.

**Trill** A combination of true and real.

**White Supremacy** An ideology and practice that assumes people of European descent are superior to all races.

**Word is Bond** What is being said is true and an actual fact.

_Sources: Urban Dictionary, Parodies of ownership: hip-hop aesthetics and intellectual property law._