

**April Gabrielle':**  
*A Mother of Hip Hop*

After April Gabrielle' shared with my graduate level course on "Hip Hop Aesthetics" the section on parenting and Hip Hop culture in her new book "The Myth of the Broken Home," I was left with one lasting impression: she a mother of Hip Hop. April's charismatic presentation embodied twin themes in the Hip Hop world – paying homage to those "back in the day" and "keepin' it real" for the youth (and adults) of today – in a way that only moms can. She spoke from her mind and her heart. While playing tracks by the likes of Public Enemy and Queen Latifah, ruminating on Mos Def's latest CD, and praising Eminem's linguistic abilities, April's insightfully traced out of her own experience of raising two kids many of the same fault lines found in the mass packaging and American consumption of Hip Hop. She didn't ignore issues of race, class, and gender. She noted for example how there's some rap she would allow her son to listen to and not her daughter growing up. She dispelled other myths about single parenting and coupled it with tough love strategies for self-empowerment. Her methodological approach to life-issues including parenting appeared to be a kind of African-American woman real world hermeneutic with an entrepreneurial and guarded-optimism spirit. Black mothers know that when life tears you down you still need to rise up for another day. Based on this presentation alone it's not clear whether April Gabrielle' would be of the same Hip Hop feminist ilk as a Joan Morgan; however what is evident is her carving out of space for a learned, single, motherhood perspective on the virtues and vices of this cultural expression for folks today. This ironically leads to a disagreement concerning the target audience of the book. I'd wager that this book with its pearls of wisdom would not only be useful for single parents from disadvantaged backgrounds but many a groups living in this "hip hop nation."

Roy Whitaker, Th.M. Harvard University (2002).

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