



“Hip-hop from each region has its own flavor and history.”

Although Yvonne Bynoe doesn't exactly have a music career, she has become one of the most respected voices in the hip-hop community. Starting out as an entertainment lawyer, she discovered the need to help educate new artists on the ins and outs of business and legal issues. She also created a free newsletter, *Full Disclosure: The Business of Hip Hop*, which she wrote “in plain English so anyone could understand it.” Yvonne continued to be involved in issues related to the hip-hop generation, and wrote her first book, *Stand & Deliver: Political Activism, Leadership, and Hip Hop Culture*. Based on her outstanding work, she was asked to consider writing the *Encyclopedia of Rap and Hip Hop Culture*, a volume that she thought was long overdue. Yvonne kindly gave us the 411 on how she tackled this massive endeavor, including some sneak peeks on this guide pertaining to anything and everything hip-hop.

**who:** Yvonne Bynoe  
**Job:** Author & Lecturer

### How did you gather information for the encyclopedia?

Hip-hop from each region has its own flavor and history. I'm from New York and knew a lot about East Coast music, so I had to really be conscious about getting the stories about the West Coast, the South, and the Midwest. I had to get beyond the big names and uncover the stories of how those particular sounds and stories developed. Not to take anything away from the people who are in heavy rotation, but there are plenty of other people out there who have a very different message, look, and sound.

### What was the biggest challenge?

You can write volumes on this topic, so the biggest challenge was trying to find the most representative stories, occurrences, and music, given the page limit. I did my best to make sure that everyone was represented and that there wasn't just one coast or sound, or only the big names or sellers being presented as hip-hop.

### How will the encyclopedia be beneficial?

I think the media tends to oversimplify hip-hop by saying over and over again that it was a bunch of poor kids in the Bronx who started it. That's the most inaccurate story that can be told. The full story is very complex with a long list of players. Some of them certainly came up in disadvantaged surroundings, but there were plenty of people who were middle-class and very well educated. For example, Will Smith

was accepted to MIT, one of the most prestigious schools in the country. We have a varied group of rap artists, so we do a disservice by repeating that same old tired story.

### What's the difference between rap and hip-hop?

The best way to look at it is that hip-hop is the umbrella, and in the beginning it was composed of four elements: emceeing, deejaying, b-boying—most commonly known as break dancing—and graffiti art. What happened was that the MCs or rappers were the easiest for record labels to sign. That's what became the most popular, so that's why people make the mistake of interchanging the two terms.

### Why did you include non-rappers like Mary J. Blige?

There's a whole school called hip-hop soul, so there is an acknowledgment of R&B music that is heavily influenced and includes rap elements. Mary, who is known as the “Queen of Hip-Hop,” had to be included because she EPITOMIZES that sound and the marrying of the traditional R&B singer with a rap artist.

### In your opinion, why is hip-hop so culturally significant?

Hip-hop is another step in the development of black culture, which is an integral part of American culture. It tells the stories of populations that are not given a voice in the mainstream. For many people, it has a RESONANCE that will remain for some time to come.

—Veronica Dominguez-Garcia

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