



Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity (Latin American and Caribbean Arts and Culture)

Tanya L. Saunders

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In the wake of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, a key state ideology developed: racism was a systemic cultural issue that ceased to exist after the Revolution, and any racism that did persist was a result of contained cases of individual prejudice perpetuated by US influence. Even after the state officially pronounced the end of racism within its borders, social inequalities tied to racism, sexism, and homophobia endured, and, during the economic liberalization of the 1990s, widespread economic disparities began to reemerge.

Cuban Underground Hip Hop focuses on a group of self-described antiracist, revolutionary youth who initiated a social movement (1996–2006) to educate and fight against these inequalities through the use of arts-based political activism intended to spur debate and enact social change. Their “revolution” was manifest in altering individual and collective consciousness by critiquing nearly all aspects of social and economic life tied to colonial legacies. Using over a decade of research and interviews with those directly involved, Tanya L. Saunders traces the history of the movement from its inception and the national and international debates that it spawned to the exodus of these activists/artists from Cuba and the creative vacuum they left behind. Shedding light on identity politics, race, sexuality, and gender in Cuba and the Americas, *Cuban Underground Hip Hop* is a valuable case study of a social movement that is a part of Cuba’s longer historical process of decolonization.

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