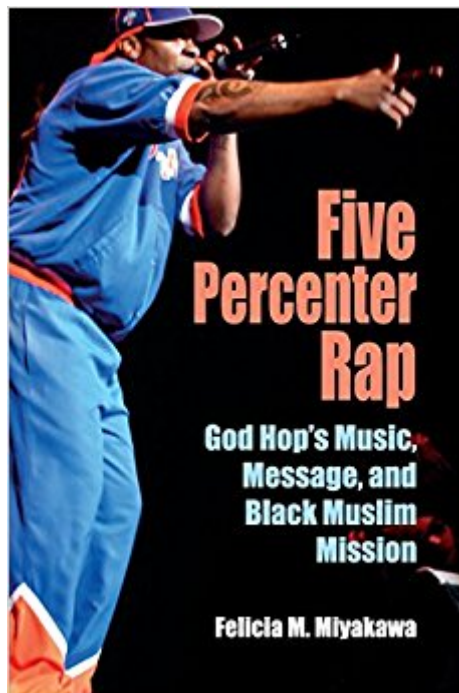




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# Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, And Black Muslim Mission (Profiles In Popular Music)



## Synopsis

"Few books on popular music treat their subject so comprehensively, with thoughtful attention to ideology, history, and verbal and musical rhetoric. Miyakawa's approach is at once comprehensive and streamlined, making for an especially effective presentation of the issues as well as a good read." —Albin Zak, author of *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* "Miyakawa provides a great deal of information and analysis that is impossible to come by elsewhere. A sterling example of culturally-engaged musicology, her book is also a significant contribution to American history." —Joseph Schloss, author of *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* The Five Percent Nation is a controversial organization and a substantial cultural force. Also known as Five Percenters, this offshoot of the Nation of Islam has employed commercial rap, or "God Hop," to teach its beliefs, comment on relevant issues, and recruit new members. Rap artists such as Erykah Badu and Queen Latifah are past members of the Five Percent Nation; GURU and Wu-Tang Clan are currently affiliated. *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission* examines the phenomenon from musical, historical, and cultural perspectives. Such a kaleidoscopic approach is necessary given the Five Percent Nation's complex theology—grounded in Black Muslim traditions, black nationalism, Kemetism (ancient Egyptian) symbolism, Masonic mysticism, and Gnostic spirituality—its historical ties to major movements and moments in American history, and its deep involvement with popular culture. After establishing the theological and historical underpinnings of Five Percenter Rap, Felicia Miyakawa considers its marketing approaches and its use of specific musical techniques such as sampling, groove, and layering (often in significant numerical groupings). These techniques, she argues, are in service to the greater goal of Five Percenter rappers, who see themselves primarily as teachers and as bringers of a specific type of redemption and self-knowledge to benighted souls. Vividly written and solidly researched, *Five Percenter Rap* will appeal to readers interested in popular music, American music and history, and African American religion and culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Miyakawa, assistant professor of musicology at Middle Tennessee State University, offers "the first in-depth study of the Five Percent Nation," a fine study of the influential sect, an offshoot of the Nation of Islam. The Five Percent Nation counts Queen Latifah, Erykah Badu and members of Wu-Tang Clan as past or present members, and has spread its message through ideological rap/hip-hop music, known as "God Hop." With expressive writing and selective research, Miyakawa introduces the reader to a new world, where African-American rappers practice clean living, observe vegan lifestyles and seek to elevate their community through proud lyrics, exhorting youth to "civilize" themselves. Miyakawa explains the origins and religious beliefs of Five Percenters, including that modern black people are the descendants of an ancient, advanced "Moorish" civilization. The Five Percenters derive their name from the belief that 5% of all people are the "poor righteous teachers" who extol the "Black Man of Asia" as the "Living God[s]." Using her musicology background, Miyakawa explains the layered, dynamic and inventive compositions of God Hop music. She is quick to point out that Five Percenters are varied and difficult to categorize, which makes her work all the more admirable. Despite occasional dense writing, and a second-to-last chapter that lacks the intellectual punch of the others, Miyakawa has an infectious fondness for her controversial but stimulating subject. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Miyakawa (Middle Tennessee State Univ.) examines a breakaway sect of the Nation of Islam known as the Five Percent Nation, which produces music known as God hop. God hop rappers see themselves as teachers. Since 9/11 and the 2002 beltway sniper killings in the Washington, DC, area, this group and its musicians, known as Five Percenters, have come under more and more fire. The author divides the book, which originated as her dissertation, into two parts: in the first part she discusses the theology and history of Five Percent Nation; in the second she examines the tools

that God hop musicians use to bring their message to the masses. Including appendixes of Five Percent Nation rappers, a glossary, a discography, and indexes of songs and performers in addition to the standard apparatus, this is an interesting examination of a little-known musical genre and culture. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty." •B. L. Eden, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Choice, December 2005

Extremely insightful book into the Five Percenters and their connection to the Hip-Hop culture. Very well written with extensive research into the culture and history.

Learning so much about this religion/movement/life style. Well written, at times, straight academics. Casts light on possible meanings behind some of my favorite Hip Hop songs. No complaints.

This book was a super boring read for a even moderately experienced hip hop artist or anyone who is familiar with music theory. The book reads like a down the lines grocerie list with so much being rattled off and thrown at the reader in such rapid short sucession that its difficult to take away any real depth from it. The begining 1/3 of the book was the most interesting actually explaining what a 5 percenter is. The rest of the book seems to pick on and pick apart/name the lyrics and break down their flows over the beats. Which had really more to do with music theory than anything to actually do with God Hop or defining a five percenter. It felt added to use up space in the book and kill time more than anything. Because the five percenter deffinition is relatively simple. Id recomend the book "How to Rap" by Kool G Rap over this book anyday. Use a wiki for five percenter and save your money!

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