

## 'Holy Hip Hop': Same Message, New Beat

Contributed by Robyn Franks -- Black College Wire  
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Apostle Fire Fest headed to Atlanta

Christian hip-hop, also known as "holy hip-hop," has become an expression of living "holy" and the culture of the Christian life and mission.

"Our mission is to reach this generation with the message of the gospel and the universal hip-hop community," said Terrance Townsend, operations manager for Fire Fest International Ministries. "We focus on unity, education in the music ministry, spiritual edification and understanding how to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ." Apostle Fire Fest, a nationwide gospel/hip-hop artist retreat led by Fire Fest International Ministries, travels around the globe to encourage and enrich holy hip-hop artists in their ministries while giving them insight on navigating the music industry. This year's Fire Fest retreat will be held Oct. 3 in Atlanta, Ga. There, Christian rap artists will help youth and young adults understand why their industry has a different goal from that of the secular music industry.

"I've seen young people reached through holy hip-hop," Townsend said. "It has been an amazing opportunity seeing God's hand at work and being a part of what God is doing."

Students recognize Christian hip-hop from select videos. Deitrick Haddon, for example, released a video for "Love Him Like I Do," featuring Ruben Studdard and Mary Mary. Though the song is carried by a bouncing bass line uncommon to typical gospel, it still praises God.

Howard graduate student Joseph Snider is finding "holy hip-hop" interesting. "I'm trying to get into listening to Christian rap and hip-hop; I think that there is a place for them," Snider said. "I also feel that they can be holy and anointed.

But...Christian rap and hip-hop hasn't hit its mark because [it has imitated some] of the [world's standards]."

Snider continued, "I feel that Christian and gospel music as a whole should no longer just reach other Christians, but have a message for the world.

"Those Christians should be making music videos that play on the stations the world watches or the radio stations that the world listens to."

Senior anthropology major Janetta Freeman thinks hip-hop provides a unique outlet for the Christian experience.

"To me, hip-hop is a culture strong and fine, elegant yet aggressive, opinionated and riveted with intellect, comedy, passion and desperate rhythms of truth spoken by voices most often unheard.

"Yet, 'Christian' [hip-hop] is set apart in that it not only amplifies truth, but that it also glorifies God in its words and manner." {moshaloscan}

Robyn Franks writes for The Hilltop, Howard University's student newspaper, which originally published this article.