

Hip-hop Deity

-Wilma Ann Anderson

Funny thing, music is. It has the power to transform. It's almost a deity. Divine intervention by this deity occurred my senior year in college—it was my hip-hop rebirth. Since the age of 10 I had been living a double life—church girl most of the week and hip-hopper in private. My hip-hop girl identity was growing stronger and stronger with each Biz Markie single, and each Public Enemy release. I couldn't stop who I was becoming. It started with the Sugar Hill Gang. I remember disappearing into a funk at my older sister's birthday party as I bent my knees, let the infectious rhyme and beat guide me, and "danced like a boy."

I had always been a writer, so it was only natural that I started writing rhymes. My best friend in high school and I would sit at the lunch table and sometimes freestyle off of the "nerdy" girl at our table (actually, we were all "nerds"), or the boys that we were digging that month. Most of the times we presented our crafty rhymes that we had spent the whole night before working on.

Singing solos in the church choir by day, and rockin' my fat laces and Pumas by night. Was I wrong? I was told I was wrong later on in college. I was director of the university gospel choir and a model student, but there I was, every Thursday at the black student's party called Steppin' Out. "How can you be dancin' like a maniac in here, and directing the choir on Sunday?" someone asked me. I gave a look like, "Let me be me" and finished the thought just in time to join the crowd shouting the "Who's that? BROWN!" line in Tribe Called Quest's "Scenario."

OK so the question that person asked me haunted me that entire semester. By this time I knew the words to every hip-hop release just as well as I knew the latest gospel jams. I *needed* them both to make it through my grueling Ivy League schedule. Nevertheless, my two identities were beginning to butt heads or were they just trying to coexist?

I never, ever put down my bible, but I chose to pick up some black three-quarter combat boots and blue jeans that fit a little too loosely. 'Let me be me. Let me be me'.

I resolved that God was gonna help me with my problem, if it really was a problem. I didn't trade in my ankle-length skirts, but I didn't wear them every day. I didn't want to be a robot anymore. I am a diverse, unique creature, and I knew that my ability to embrace hip-hop music fully and the culture that comes with it would be to my benefit—and to God's glory, as I would be able to appreciate, and relate to, and share with my brothers and sisters in the culture.

Yeah, I got the latest Jay-Z album, and I got that Donnie McClurkin too. It's all good.