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New Book by Cal Poly Ethnic Studies Professor Wraps-Up Rap

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly Ethnic Studies Professor Charise Cheney’s recently published book, “Brothers Gonna Work It Out: Sexual Politics In The Golden Age Of Rap Nationalism,” illustrates the potentially powerful and transformative powers of rap music.

The book, published by New York University Press, examines the political expression of rap artists within the historical context of black nationalism. Black nationalism asserts that, because of their African ancestry and common historical experience of slavery, black people constitute a nationality separate and distinct from white Americans.

The book weaves together songs and interviews with hip-hop artists and activists such as Chuck D of Public Enemy; KRS-One; Rosa Clemente, manager of dead prez (sic); and Wise Intelligent of Poor Righteous Teachers.

According to NYU Press, Cheney’s book challenges the “simplistic notions of hip-hop culture as simply materialist, sexist or misogynistic.” Hip-hop can be “constructive and educational,” she said. “It can be used as a voice for disenfranchised and disillusioned youth all over the world.”

“A lot of artists are invoking dangerous stereotypes that portray black people as violent, criminal or hyper-sexual. There needs to be more balanced representations of blacks in popular culture that are also intellectual, political and progressive,” she said.

Cheney, who lives in San Luis Obispo, joined the faculty at Cal Poly in 1999. Much of the research Cheney conducted for the book was done in 2001-2002 during a year’s sabbatical from teaching, made possible by a Ford Foundation fellowship.

“Brothers Gonna Work It Out” is available from Amazon.com.

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