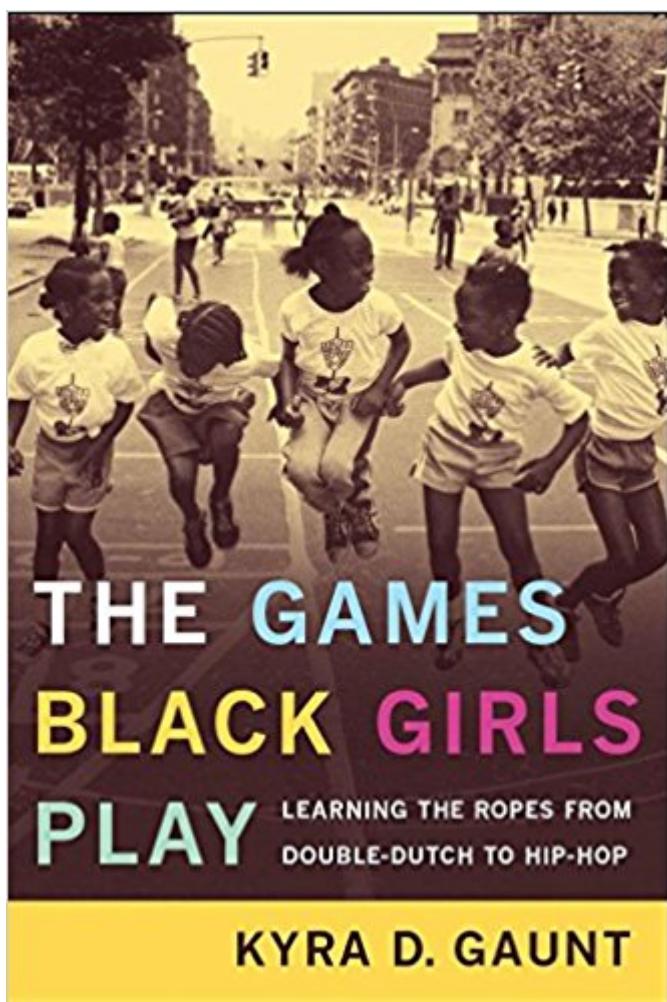


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# The Games Black Girls Play: Learning The Ropes From Double-Dutch To Hip-Hop



## Synopsis

2007 Alan Merriam Prize presented by the Society for Ethnomusicology 2007 PEN/Beyond Margins Book Award Finalist When we think of African American popular music, our first thought is probably not of double-dutch: girls bouncing between two twirling ropes, keeping time to the tick-tat under their toes. But this book argues that the games black girls play – "handclapping songs, cheers, and double-dutch jump rope" – both reflect and inspire the principles of black popular musicmaking. The Games Black Girls Play illustrates how black musical styles are incorporated into the earliest games African American girls learn – "how, in effect, these games contain the DNA of black music. Drawing on interviews, recordings of handclapping games and cheers, and her own observation and memories of gameplaying, Kyra D. Gaunt argues that black girls' games are connected to long traditions of African and African American musicmaking, and that they teach vital musical and social lessons that are carried into adulthood. In this celebration of playground poetry and childhood choreography, she uncovers the surprisingly rich contributions of girls' play to black popular culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Games Black Girls Play is an insightful inquiry into a frequently overlooked and influential site of cultural production. –Popular Music Gaunt provides a layered and rich analysis of a cultural form that has been all but ignored by scholars far and wide. –Gender and Society; Fusing academic prose with vividly rendered memories, Gaunt's journey is

refreshing. . . . Gaunt successfully lifts ignored girls from obscurity to center stage. . . . With *The Games Black Girls Play*, Gaunt has created a necessary space for translating black girls' joy in a society that typically overlooks it. Hopefully, others will take their turn and jump in to keep the games going. •Bitch •The Games Black Girls Play is beautifully and passionately written. This book presents an engaging reflexive narrative that ranges from childhood memories to involvement with ethnomusicological scholarship. Gaunt makes a convincing argument that the playsongs of African American girls is the foundation of African diasporic popular music-making. In a radical counter-history, she shows how African American girls-interlocutors who are triply minoritized through race, gender, and age-are producing music culture that has profound influences on popular music and the popular imagination. She calls for an engaged ethnomusicology and moves gracefully through an array of anti-essentialist perspectives on race and gender. She argues that 'kinetic orality' is key to African American musicking and that the body is always a locus of memory and communal. From somatic historiography to serious cross-talk with girls, Gaunt offers new methodologies for ethnomusicological work. The reader is pulled into a world in which Black girls are masters of musical knowledge, and in emerging from the book, we can't see the world of American popular music in the same way. When we chant *Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack* is dressed in black, black, black, with silver buttons, buttons, buttons, all down her back, back, back, we suddenly see how musical play and embodied knowledge generates a world of raced and gendered sociality. Oo-lay oo-lay! Congratulations, Kyra! •President Elect Professor Deborah Wong, Society for Ethnomusicology •In thoughtful and affectionate prose, Gaunt makes plain how the schoolyard syncopations of body and voice are both oral-kinetic play and improvised lessons in socializing girls into the unique social practices of black urban life. . . . *The Games Black Girls Play* is a smart, delightful and witty polemic of attributions; a cultural benchmark of the complex web of history, race and gender to suggest a 'gendered musical blackness' and an 'ethnographic truth' linking the 'intergenerational cultures of black musical expression' as embodied in the infectious playfulness of black girls. •Black Issues Book Review

Kyra D. Gaunt is associate professor of ethnomusicology at Baruch College-CUNY. She lectures nationally and internationally on African Americans and Africans in the U.S. She is also a jazz vocalist, songwriter and recording artist.

This book was inspirational and because I am a female I was truly interested in this book. It went into details about the what and the why's of the hand or rope games girls play.

This book is a must read for all students of Girls' Studies, African American Studies, and Music. Gaunt's scholarship paved the way for current scholarship on Black girlhood and continues to inform academic conversations about youth culture, creativity, and sound studies. This book is such a game changer! Buy it today!

This book is essential reading for anyone who cares not only about the history of girls games and music, black girls experience, but also the origins of hip hop. Hip Hop lineage is often conceived of as male--Gaunt reimagines the critical and central role that black girls music and games play in hip hop's story and also in influencing culture generally. A terrific read and central scholarship.

"By placing black girls at the center of her analysis, Kyra Gaunt challenges us to be ever mindful of the importance of gender, the body, and the everyday in our discussions of black music. The Games Black Girls Play is an exciting and original work that should forever transform the way we think about the sources of black, indeed American, popular music. This is a bold, brilliant, and beautifully written book."-Farah Jasmine Griffin, Columbia University"The Games Black Girls Play not only makes the point that black girls matter, but that the games, thoughts, and passions of black girls matter in a world that regularly renders black girls invisible and silent. Gaunt brilliantly argues that the culture of black girls is a critical influence on contemporary black popular culture."- Mark Anthony Neal, author of New Black Man: Rethinking Black Masculinity

Had to read it for school. Was interesting.

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