



# Free Stylin': How Hip Hop Changed the Fashion Industry (Hip Hop in America)

*Elena Romero*

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For years, designers and manufacturers took cues from the streets to enhance their clothing lines, but before the 1980s the urban consumer was never recognized as a viable demographic. In a push to appeal to young customers, the fashion industry began hiring and backing talented African American designers and entrepreneurs. This seemingly unconventional union made business sense: seasoned fashion executives brought proven track records, while aspiring designers provided street credibility and a fresh perspective on design. The end result: a multi-billion dollar industry.

This book traces the fascinating unfolding of hip hop fashion from its roots to the present day. It explores how hip hop transitioned from "the hood" to the runway; how race, ethnicity, and culture played into commercialism; how celebrities impacted the fashion industry; and what ultimately led major department stores to jump on the urban bandwagon. Utilizing the author's journalistic lens and based upon interviews with urban fashion designers, entrepreneurs, fashion veterans, trend forecasters, and hip hop celebrities, each chapter is akin to an oral history that provides not just facts but also invaluable analysis and historical perspective.

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