

Dr. Amber Epps aka HollyHood

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LYRICIST. ARTIST. WRITER. DJ. PROFESSOR. WITCH. CURATOR. CAT LADY. ADVOCATE. MOM.

A fan once described HollyHood as a “cross between Missy Elliott and Cardi B,” creating songs that evoke modern hip hop with an old school sensibility, a genre that could be labeled “adult contemporary hip hop”. Writing her first song in sixth grade detention, Holly’s lyrics depict life experiences, express extreme emotions, and create musical stories that can best be described as hardcore and gritty but also light-hearted and whimsical. Audiences find her intriguing but at the same time relatable, drawing her fans close to her in a way that can be considered endearing. Having earned five college degrees, including two doctorates, Holly is often referred to as Dr. Hood. Her longevity and reputation as one of the most well-known and respected women MCs in the city has also earned her the title of “Mom of Pittsburgh Hip Hop”. Additionally, HollyHood (aka Dr. Amber Epps) is a visual and installation artist, creating art with found objects and other items that might be considered nontraditional. Her art centers on topics including spiritualism, social justice, criminal justice, and prison reform. She is a member of the #NotWhite Collective and has exhibited her works in a number of gallery spaces both inside and outside of Pittsburgh.

Albums and Singles

Title: YellowJacket (album)

Executive Producer: HollyHood

Date: 2019

Title: #amberalert (single)

Executive Producer: HollyHood

Date: 2015

Title: No Sleep til Brooklyn (single)

Executive Producer: HollyHood

Date: 2017

Title: Ice Cream & Moscato (single)

Executive Producer: HollyHood

Date: 2012

Title: Teacherz Pet

Executive Producer: HollyHood

Date: 2015

Title: Pink Elephant (album)

Executive Producer: HollyHood

Date: 2011

Videos

Title: Fuck Tito

Directed and Edited By: Jordan Beckham

Date: 2021

Title: No Sleep til Brooklyn

Directed and Edited By: Chris Ivey

Date: 2017

Title: #amberalert

Directed and Edited By: StarrNamedMarr

Productions
Date: 2015

Productions
Date: 2013

Title: Ice Cream & Moscato
Directed and Edited By: StarrNamedMarr

Publications

- Epps, A. (2021). *Critical Success Factors and Methods to Increase Persistence for Non-Traditional Online*. In C. L. Jennings, *Ensuring Adult and Non-Traditional Learners' Success with Technology, Design, and Structure* (pp. 1-20). Hershey: IGI Global Publishing.
- Epps, A. (2019). *Introduction*. In Elsinore Bennu Think Tank for Restorative Justice, *Life Sentences: Writings from Inside an American Prison* (pp. 7-14). Cleveland: Belt Publishing.
- Epps, A. (2014). *Differences in Critical Success Factors for Traditional and Nontraditional Online Students: A Case Study of a Proprietary College in Western Pennsylvania*. (Publication No. 10225652) [Doctoral dissertation, Robert Morris University] PQDT Open. <https://pqdtopen.proquest.com/pubnum/10225652.html>

Stage Productions

2021 – “Quest and the Girl With the Yellow Jacket” is a production that I co-wrote, co-directed, and co-starred in as part of the New Hazlett Theater’s Community Supported Art (CSA) program. This production, a hip-hopera, combined songs and storylines from my album, *YellowJacket* (2019) and hip hop artist Jon Quest’s album, *Hollywood Divorce* (2019) to tell the tale of a married man involved in an affair, focusing on the emotional perspectives of individuals involved in a complex love story. Working with dramaturg TJ Parker-Young, this production, which was presented virtually, involved scripted lines, song performances, and two music videos.

Nontraditional Collaborations

2020 – #MySongIsYourSong challenge that paired artists up and asked them to create their own version of each other’s song. Collaboration videos were posted to YouTube.

2020 – Liberated to Be Me was a project that involved collaboration of 10 artists to create a song with the theme of liberation. Under the direction of Dr. Amelia Kemp, a video that included artist testimonials was created to accompany the song and broadcast on social media and on the UR2.Global website.

2018 - Ice Cream & Moscato beer collaboration with Butler Brew Works as part of the Fresh Fest Beer Festival. This beer was created based on my personality and preferences and named after my song with the same title.

Notable Performances

CB Baby DIY Musician Conference
Empire Control Room & Garage

August 2022
Austin, TX

Restart the Arts Allegheny Overlook Pop-Up Park	September 2021 Pittsburgh, PA
Oakland Ave Live Fuel & Fuddle	September 2021 Pittsburgh, PA
Downtown Night Market Market Square	August 2021 Pittsburgh, PA
Liberated to Be Me – Sweet Honey In Rock Artist Challenge 5 th Annual Inner-Peace Equals Word Peace Artist Music Video Project	October 2020 Virtual
#MySongsYourSong Make Music Day	June 2020 Virtual
Social Justice Disco Three Rivers Arts Festival	June 2020 Virtual
Pittsburgh Women’s Music Festival: A Parallel Universe Mr. Smalls Theater	May 2020 Virtual
Social Justice Disco 2020: Envision a Brighter Future Mr. Smalls Theater	February 2020 Millvale, PA
CD Baby DIY Musician Conference Cheer Up Charley	August 2019 Austin, TX
Deushtown Music Festival North Side	July 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
Deushtown Goes Downtown Market Square	June 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
SugarHill Gang x Furious 5: Rappers Delight 40th Anniversary Tour Jergel’s	April 2019 Warrendale, PA
Blindspotting: Carnegie Museum Film Festival Carnegie Mellon University	March 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
Opening Act for Ja Rule Jergel’s	January 2019 Warrendale, PA
Keyword: International Symposium Kelly Strayhorn Theater	October 2018 Pittsburgh, PA
Deushtown Music Festival North Side	July 2018 Pittsburgh, PA
Opening Act for Warren G – I Need a Light Tour Spirit	June 2018 Pittsburgh, PA
Three Rivers Arts Festival Main Stage Point State Park	June 2018 Pittsburgh, PA

Racial Equity & Arts Funding: GPAC Annual Convening David L. Lawrence Convention Center	May 2018 Pittsburgh, PA
Opening Act for Rakim Mr. Smalls Theater	March 2018 Pittsburgh, PA
Beats & Bars - Three Rivers Arts Festival Main Stage Point State Park	June 2017 Pittsburgh, PA
Opening Act for GZA The Rex Theater	March 2017 Pittsburgh, PA
Prom Do-Over James Street Gastropub	June 2016 Pittsburgh, PA
Layer Cake Festival Mr. Smalls Theater	June 2016 Pittsburgh, PA
The Late Show at the Funhouse The Funhouse at Mr. Smalls	May 2016 Pittsburgh, PA
Lyrical Mayhem The Smiling Moose	January 2016 Pittsburgh, PA
Opening Act for That's Hip Hop Concert w/ KRS-One & Rakim Greater Pittsburgh Coliseum	November 2015 Pittsburgh, PA
Industry Exposed Workshop, Panel, & Showcase Black & White Studios	September 2015 Long Island, NY
Freedom From Fracking: Clean Air, Water & Energy Mr. Smalls Theater	May 2015 Pittsburgh, PA

Awards/Residencies/Fellowships

- 2021 – Carnegie Library STACKS
- 2021 – New Hazlett Theater Community Supported Art Performance Series
- 2018 - Pittsburgh Magazine's 40 Under 40
- 2013 - Pittsburgh Courier's Fab 30
- 2014 - Most Wanted Fine Art Residency
- 2015 - Pittsburgh Filmmakers' Flight School Fellowship

Professional Development

CD Baby DIY Musician Conference CD Baby	August 2022 Austin, TX
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Platinum Mentoring Program The Songwriting Academy (Virtual)	June 2021 – June 2022 London, UK
5 Day Intensive Songwriting Bootcamp The Songwriting Academy (Virtual)	January 2021 London, UK
CD Baby DIY Musician Conference CD Baby	August 2019 Austin, TX
CD Baby DIY Musician Conference CD Baby	August 2017 Nashville, TN

Art Exhibits

<i>Homage</i> Pittsburgh International Airport	December 2022 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>#notwhite Collective 2016-2022</i> Space Gallery	November 2022 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>We Are The Global Majority: redux</i> Harlan Gallery: Seton Hill University Art Center	February 2022 Greensburg, PA
<i>First Fruit: Bring Me Your Best</i> Sweetwater Center for the Arts	September 2021 Sewickley, PA
<i>We Are the Global Majority Decolonizing Space</i> Space Gallery	June 2021 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Anthropology of Motherhood</i> McDonough Museum of Art	June 2021 Youngstown, OH
<i>Decolonizing: Intimate Family Portraiture</i> Frick Pittsburgh	May 2021 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Collective Legacy</i> Gallery at Main: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	December 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Woman It Woman</i> Carlow University	September 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Wild Things</i> CDCP Project Space	June 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Anthropology of Motherhood</i> Three Rivers Arts Festival	June 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>In Between the Middle</i> Buen Vivir Gallery for Contemporary Art	April 2019 Buffalo, NY

<i>In Between the Middle</i> Brewhouse Gallery	February 2018 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>The Craft</i> LOCAL 412	October 2016 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Anti-Social Media</i> LOCAL 412	April 2016 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Most Wanted Fine Art Group Show</i> Most Wanted Fine Art Gallery	December 2015 Pittsburgh, PA

Panel Discussions & Conference Presentations

<i>Culture Jam: Citywide Interdisciplinary Multicultural Conference for High School Students</i> Virtual	January 2021 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>“Power to the People: No Delay”: The Transformative Force of Hip Hop as Social-Justice Catalyst</i> Conference on College Compositions and Communication	March 2019 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Hip Hop Hates Women</i> AIR: Artists Image Resource	May 2017 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Gender and Hip Hop</i> Duquesne University	February 2017 Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Industry Exposed Workshop & Panel</i> Persepolis Hookah Lounge	August 2015 Pittsburgh, PA

Memberships

Pittsburgh Arts Research Council	2018 - 2019
Learning & Leadership Committee Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council	2018 - 2019

#notwhite collective 2016 - Present

A group of 13 women artists whose mission is to use non-individualistic, multi-disciplinary art to make our stories visible as we relate, connect, and belong to the Global Majority. We utilize our arts practice singularly and collectively to excavate histories, expose realities, and exorcize oppression. We are bi/multi-racial/cultural, immigrant or descendants of immigrants investigating the many ways we are seen or not seen, how we self-identify and how we seek liberation through sharing space and stories; research and art-making; discussing the history of imperialism and its effects on us, on the whole not-white world. We actively reject colonialism through our non-hierarchical process. The #notwhite collective expresses the hybridized and multifaceted aspects of self-defined liberation; we accept cultural

fluidity as a means of seeing and being seen, each member declaring their existence, individually and collectively, through our voices, bodies, and art.

Education

Doctor of Education, Argosy University

April 2015

Major: Higher and Postsecondary Education

Dissertation Title: *Comparing Student Perceptions of Computer Literacy Skills of Incoming Freshman Versus Ability*

Doctor of Science, Robert Morris University

May 2014

Major: Information Systems & Communications

Dissertation Title: *Differences in Critical Success Factors for Traditional and Nontraditional Online Students*

Master of Science, South University

June 2011

Major: Information Systems & Technology – Usability Studies

Master of Business Administration, Point Park University

August 2002

Major: Management Information Systems

Bachelor of Business Administration, Kent State University

August 2001

Major: Computer Information Systems