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Battling to be Heard

Damon Cagnolatti, Cerritos College

- Using the work of Keith Gilyard (Voices of The Self) and Victor Villanueva (Bootstraps) as models for interrogating his own development as a writer of color, Cagnolatti explores the way Hip Hop influenced his rhetorical education in the urban and militant environment of a Los Angeles magnet high school. Through his detailed analysis of the E.M.E.R.G.E. (Elevated Minds Embracing Righteousness and Gaining Equality) collective he joined in high school, he provides an in-depth and passionate model for how teachers should use Hip Hop forms such as battling, freestyling, and ciphering to shape their approach to college composition instruction and community engagement.

Battlin' to be Heard: A Narrative of Community, Ciphaz, Hip Hop, and Pedagogy

In the works of Keith Gilyard, Victor Villanueva, and Mike Rose, personal narrative is used as a vehicle for further inquiry into the relationship among culture, language, and education. Each scholar tells a story and makes valuable social commentary. Moreover, they give an account of individual, social, and institutional conditions that help to shape their scholarly identities. I draw on their work as a model for my own academic inquiry into Hip Hop as communal practice with pedagogical potential for the classroom. I reflect on my experiences at King/Drew Medical Magnet High School to recount how students and teachers constructed a learning environment that allowed students to develop their Hip Hop literacies through the use of personal experience,



dialogue, and critical inquiry. These experiences tell a story that frames the potential I see in Hip Hop practices to enrich the way first-year composition is taught. This narrative intends to contribute to a broader discussion of composition pedagogy and rhetorical studies. But, like rap artists Ludacris and Jay-Z state, I also “do It for Hip Hop,” that is, this essay is a contribution to the burgeoning field of Hip Hop studies as well.

Hip Hop heads appropriate spaces to perform a range of activities where they can build community. In our meetings we developed the ability to read and produce texts in a way that affirmed our subjectivity—what I will refer to in this narrative as Hip Hop critical literacy. This affirmation better enabled us to critique the unequal power relations within our social landscapes. We developed our critical literacy by schooling each other in ciphaz and engaging in rap battles and freestyles—three prominent Hip Hop practices. In Hip Hop culture, the cipa, rap battles, and freestyles represent a thing as well as an action. The cipa is a space where Hip Hop heads go to dialogue, to exchange knowledge, and to reflect on experiences that shape their collective worldviews. Participants gather in a circle while two emcees exchange either prewritten or spontaneous rhymes and critiques in its center. Battlin’ refers to emcees’ ability to provide and exchange critiques. Freestylin’ refers to a spontaneous expression of the first idea that comes to mind or a spontaneous free flowing written rhyme. Rap battles—or battlin’—and freestyles—or freestylin’—occur in the cipa.

In my experience, most classrooms resemble spaces where students merely absorb and regurgitate rules and directives; however, I argue that the composition classroom is a space that should encourage students to reflect critically on the social issues in their political environments at both home and school. In this way, the cipa, battlin’, and freestylin’ can be used to model a Hip Hop composition classroom. I hope my experiences at King/Drew help to illustrate a moment where students felt empowered by their freedom to interrogate both the issues that pervade



their communities and the messages in rap music that often illustrated such issues.

The student body of King/Drew was mostly comprised of Black and brown students who come from the surrounding areas: Los Angeles, Compton, and Watts. Because we were students, it was assumed all too readily that we were subjects to be contained, restricted, and policed. This assumption was reinforced by a police presence at our school that was intimidating to say the least. Their station was located by the front entrance, they patrolled the hallways throughout the day constantly, and they even had jail cells just before you got to the boys locker room on the second floor. The guards located at the entrance and the metal detectors we passed through on a daily basis blurred the line between school and prison. Teachers were also restricted by state expectations to adhere to the rigid academic standards that were enforced by “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). Signed into law in May 2001 by president George W. Bush, NCLB restricted both students and teachers and, consequently, a fuller exchange of ideas. The bill espoused two goals: to decrease the performance gap between affluent schools and inner-city schools, and to increase accountability in the areas of reading comprehension and mathematics. Schools that did not meet the mandated proficiency level lost their opportunity to receive federal funding. If they exhibited poor performance for two years consecutively, they not only risked losing federal funding, but they were also forced to undergo massive overhauls of their curriculum until testing standards were met.

This incentive for high-test scores had a perverse effect on the quality of education we received. Education under the political regime of NCLB was measured by our ability to regurgitate information and assumed that we had no knowledge worth contributing to our learning experience. Instructors, as they struggled to keep up with administrative demands and state expectations, began to rely solely on teaching to the test. Sadly, many of my classmates did not pass the California High School Exit Exam and were held back as a result. This national policy did not reflect the



expectations we had for what education should be. Rather, it represented a policing strategy that was reinforced by an actual on-campus police presence. Students at King/Drew were resistant toward the policy and educational strategies that focused exclusively on teaching to a test; they fostered our general discontent with school.

In response to these conditions, my classmates, our teacher Mr. Lee, and I constructed a safe space to learn, dialogue, and build knowledge together on campus. Our goal was to facilitate a longer lasting connection between our personal experiences and the expectations we had for our education. Such a space allowed us to reflect on our community and ideas that would improve our current social conditions. Moreover, it prepared us to engage in the literacy practices that we would later need to succeed at our respective universities and later in our professions

E.M.E.R.G.E, Hip Hop Music, and Community Classrooms

It's like training (The Cipher). It's like basic training. It's like, sparrin', you know what I mean? So, you know, that makes a better MC, bein' able to know that he can express hisself amongst people that can teach him as well as he teach them. Everybody's teachin' each other....

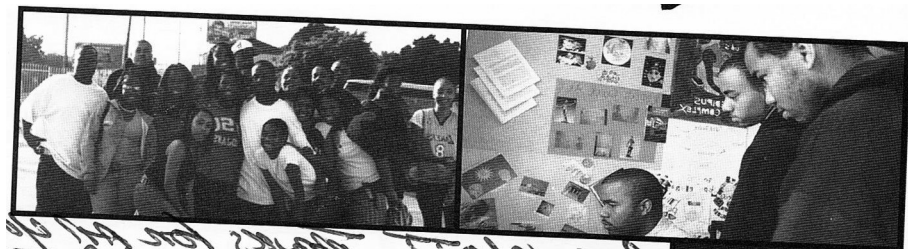
—*Raekwon*

An eleventh and twelfth grade English teacher, Mr. Lee, or Thomas as he preferred to be called, opened his classroom to us during his free period and after school. He was a six-year nascent teacher and stood about six feet and had a caramel-cinnamon skin tone. He was one of the few Black teachers with master's degree in Composition/Rhetoric and was a self-proclaimed Hip Hop head. Every few weeks he would come in with the latest Jay-Z or Nas and every other emcee that dropped their album that week. If it was new, he had it first. Thomas let us use his classroom as a place where we could talk about Hip Hop.



Once you entered his classroom, you knew you were in a different world: the sense of pressure and tension between students and police figures that was felt at the entrance doors was dissipated by the sounds coming from Mr. Lee's computer speakers which were jamming the dynamic beats of DJ Premiere and rapper Guru, known to the Hip Hop community as Gang Starr. The desks were positioned in a circle. Along the far wall, were two striking posters over his work station: a Black and white head shot of Malcolm X pointing in mid-speech with the words "By Any Means Necessary" around the border of the frame; and another head shot of Ernesto "Che" Guevara outlined in black, in contrast to the red back ground—strong and determined. To the right of his workstation was a display of student poetry, essays, and lyrics, which adorned the cabinets facing the white board. Circling back to the wall along the right of the entrance was an array of CD cover-images from Les Nubians, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Erykah Badu, Public Enemy, Ice Cube, Nas, and dozens more. The collage was tightly organized so that the no part of the white wall beneath it would show through its block formation. The bordering edges of the display, the white wall acted as a matte and gave a picturesque quality and feel to the collage in its center, which, when combined with the display of student work, revolutionary figures and images, and a handful of intellectually curious youngsters invigorated the classroom with excitement and energy. Thomas was one of the few teachers who decorated his classroom with art that had a deep cultural resonance with students. But this wasn't decoration for the sake of making his class look cool. In the students who frequented his sanctuary he saw the opportunity to guide, nourish, and facilitate potential leaders.

We would discuss the writing and philosophies of these figures whenever we came into Thomas' class. Nancy Gutierrez, who was also a classmate from Spanish 2 class, had to explain to me who Che Guevara was when I asked Thomas about that poster by Malcolm X. Before he could say anything, she broke it down.



Emerge Students

“Damon, how you talk all that stuff about the Panthers and revolution and you don’t know who Che is?” She asked, jokingly.

“Hey, I wasn’t exposed to dude. My dad was more concerned with the struggle in the U.S.” She shook her head and smiled and started to school me.

“Che was a major radical figure”

“Radical?”

“Yeah, he was a leader in a revolutionary Cuban guerilla group of the late 1950s. And he was a former medical student.”

Right away she caught my attention. At that time I was volunteering in the emergency room and the trauma center at King hospital and had aspirations of becoming a physician. Nancy spent the entire period schooling me on the Marxist military strategist’s journey from Argentina to Mexico and his belief that poverty was a result of greed and imperialism. The idea that the solution would be best addressed through a worldwide revolution connected back to figures I was more familiar with: Malcolm X, Public Enemy, and the Black Panthers. This wasn’t the first conversation I’d ever had with Nancy, but it was the first time we had a conversation on something I felt inspired by.



In class discussions like these, we sought to enhance our understandings of the messages the people on the wall were kicking. Thomas' classroom soon became a regular forum outside of formal classroom time—but still within the confines of our high school—where we could dialogue, learn, and compose. It was in his classroom that I first came to view Hip Hop as something more than merely a form of entertainment. Throughout our dialogues, we exchanged ideas and opinions rather than merely absorbing lessons and directives.

For us, rap music articulated a perspective on the policing strategies that occurred both inside and outside of King/Drew. Songs like Dead Prez's "Police State," Mos Def's "Mathematics," and Public Enemy's "Terror Dome" validated our own experiences with these strategies. A more recent example can be found in Lupe Fiasco's song entitled "Handcuffs." Lupe offers a clever critique of the unequal power relationship between some inner-city citizens and the police:

...Sittin' in the back of the police car position
Your mission is forgetting and denying your existence
Thinking of different ways to keep from submittin'
And continutin' and not to mention
Like that
Grand Marquis police in the second edition
With the walls so you can barely fit in
Knees is touchin' the front seat shiftin'
Cuz ya handcuffs is cutting ya wrists and...

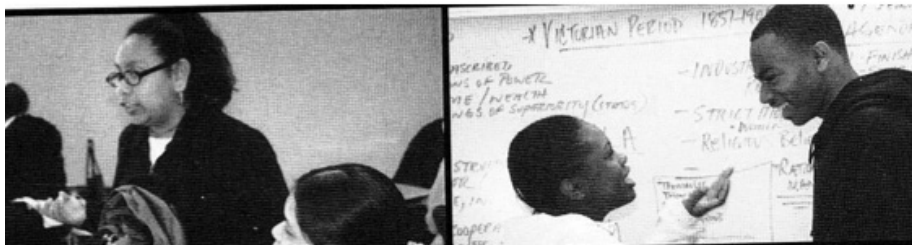
"Handcuffs" allude to the tools and tactics of policing that are used to maintain power and control criminals in inner cities. One example from our early childhood, the Rodney King beating in 1991, served as a striking reminder to us as we interpreted Lupe's message as a comment on the idea that people of color, especially in their youth, are presumed to be criminal. The "existence" that officers deny in Lupe's first bar is minority youth's right to citizenship and fair treatment under the law. The history



of police brutality, racism, and oppression to which this symbol is linked, continue to set minority youth apart from their white counterparts. Lupe illustrates this point while shackled in the backseat of a police car, which is located in a “Grand Marquis police in the second edition/with the wall so you can barely fit in/knees is touchin’ the front seat shiftin’/cuz ya handcuffs is cuttin’ ya wrists and...” In this last bar, “handcuffs” are represented as a synecdoche of the police car as both constrict and limit Lupe’s movement in the cramped backseat. Physically he is incarcerated in the backseat, which speaks to the effectiveness of policing strategies to contain and restrict bodies of color within the physical and symbolic confines of state institutions. In this way, he is marked as a criminal. The discourse of minority youth and criminality encompass a range of social issues that rationalize the strategies of control over bodies of color. Along with an on-campus police presence, these strategies were adopted by inner-city schools and seemed to maintain docility among students, which often ensured poor performances on state mandated tests.

Every morning, my friends and I would arrive at the same time as policemen who entered their on-campus station holding shotguns and totting black bags in front of our school. Many of my classmates wore an armor of resistance against police, who did not represent protection and safety to us. Rather their presence raised old scars borne through our experiences with them off campus. In their black bags were handcuffs and other instruments that made sure we knew who was in-charge. Within the context of our very own school it seemed as if we were to be conditioned into docility. (Cagnolatti2; left Emerge student delivering poem, right Cagnolatti and Emerge student having a conversation)

However, engaging in the cipa required that we become more than mere consumers of literate language and rap lyrics. It also inspired us to deeply consider an artist’s message, to reflect on our home communities, and to move closer to becoming critical individuals. Ultimately, our conversations on Hip Hop showed us that rap music was more than inspirational; it was a communal rhetoric that helped us to sharpen our



Left: Emerge student delivering poem, Right: Cagnolatti and Emerge student having a conversation

thinking and focus our attention on the social and political conditions that shaped our communities, conversations, and compositions.

We were able to express and analyze our collective experiences with the police without fear of repercussions, administrative justifications for police strategies, or teacher-enforced silencing. These ciphas took on many forms. Some days we wrote formal compositions, other days we performed spoken word pieces, yet most of the time our exchanges resembled traditional Hip Hop rap ciphas. By this, I mean we showed our skills as lyricists through freestylin' and battlin'.

Most of my classmates claimed to have been able to freestyle. But like any Hip Hop community, there were only a select few who were good at it. On any given Tuesday just after lunch, the best emcees at King/Drew could be found in Thomas' class kicking freestyles to cool and melodic instrumentals of Digable Planet's "The Rebirth of Slick" or Snoop Dogg's "Doggy Dog" World." My friend Ace used to joke around during the freestylin' sessions and actually kick some lines that I still remember to this day. For example, one went like:

Well the party's jumpin'
Mr. Lee's is packed.
And when a crowd's like this,
I'm ready to rap.



But before I can buss' a rhyme on the mic
I gotta serve you in cipa just to earn my stripes

Even my girl Nancy kicked rhymes. Although they were prewritten in her notebook in the midst of her other poems and homework assignments, Nancy would always come correct:

Fuck it, tryin' to make the world a better place
instead of duckin',
still tryin' to make the duckets
Make the knowledge rain down in buckets
Make a little something', and tuck it—just to give it a way
Build a works shop round where I stay
Some people got the love but they don't know the way
And I'm the sensei I greet 'em from far and I'm never gettin' played

Some of my classmates were better at spontaneously weaving together ideas and images without having previously written any of them down. That is, they were better at the practice known as the freestyle. Crowds would always build-up in Thomas's class whenever there was a freestyle session. The crowd acted as observers as well as judges. Even some of Thomas' former students, who came in to participate as junior-emcees, "went off the top of the dome"—another way we described freestylin'. The competition grew fiercer the longer they took turns rapping back and forth. In the end, we judged the contest based on who had the better meaning behind their rhymes or by whoever disarmed their opponent and shut them down.

We were always intrigued by which rhymes were rehearsed and prewritten and which ones were spontaneous. But it was difficult to know where to draw the distinction. Even the best freestylers drew from lines they've spit before to invent new rhymes. Whether from memory, personal experiences, or written on a piece of paper, all rhymes had a source. Drawing on these sources was a way to help emcees begin to



kick rhymes that were prewritten and to connect different ideas so that it could appear spontaneous.

Gathering in ciphaz, freestylin', and battlin' in Thomas' class were significant in helping us embrace our passion for learning and building community. In his class, we formed our own safe space of resistance and education, our own hush harbor collective we called E.M.E.R.G.E. (Elevated Minds Embracing Righteousness and Gaining Equality). We approached issues of aesthetics, culture, economics, sociology, philosophy, and psychology from a Hip Hop perspective. For us, this meant viewing the latter concepts with critical, inclusive, intellectual, and progressive lenses. We learned that since its inception, Hip Hop has been a prototype of strategic forms of expression. It was important to us because Hip Hop brought together diverse voices, perspectives and experiences from around our communities that found a home within the music. What began as a musical art form was being taken up by our group as a philosophical tool for creating a vocabulary, analyzing, and exchanging ideas about the world in which we live. As EMERGE, we used Hip Hop as a tool for education, communal development, independence of mind, and to affirm our skills with language. Many of us went on to graduate and attend four-year universities.

I reflect on these experiences because of how they influence my development as a thinker, and because the lessons from these experiences continue to shape my own approach to teaching first-year-composition. Many of my colleagues have shared with each other stories of our students' apathy and general discontent with first-year-composition courses. Several of my former students have explained to me during office-hours that they only try to "pass" classes so they could get a job. One student tried to explain that this attitude applies to all general education classes, not just composition. As an instructor, I sympathize with being focused on one's career goals. But I find it unfair and highly problematic to other students who come to class to work on their skills as writers to foster docility among an entire class. However, this sense



of apathy reminded me of the general lack of interest my high school peers and I initially shared about classes before forming E.M.E.R.G.E. It occurred to me that many students are now coming out of high schools where teaching to the test is the primary pedagogical strategy. It seemed to me that my students' sense of apathy might be a result of such teaching strategies implemented as a result of NCLB.

However, it wasn't until I took a graduate seminar with Keith Gilyard that I found a set of texts that offered a vocabulary through which I could develop my response to the problematic apathy that pervades my classroom. For example, as a composition teacher I try to construct a space where students can develop their own literacies and discuss issues and topics in which they are invested. That is, I try to encourage them to reflect on the politics that shape their worldviews in their essay writing. Infusing the classroom with Hip Hop practices and literacies opens the possibility for both students and instructors to make deeper connections with academic knowledge, as well as their experiences.

As a composition instructor, I think it is important to have my students form ciphaz, freestyle write, and deploy their experiences as invention for their writing. When freestylin', rappers do not always simply make up rhymes on the spot; they also draw on a wide variety of preconceived phrases to build more effective lines and clever rhymes. In the beginning stages of the writing process, I give them opportunities to begin their essays in class. On the first day of our freestyle sessions, students bring an outline of their essay topics. This kind of prewriting serves not only as a place to begin thinking about their subject matter but also to direct their writing along specific topics. Students' freestyle for fifteen minutes and pass what they have around the group. For those students who might experience writer's block during the session, peer feedback or ciphaz are structured in a way that students can help each other build on each other's ideas. In this way the student dialogue becomes a useful part of their process of invention. On average, by the end of class students



leave with ideas and actual writing that they can use to construct a more substantial rough draft.

At the following class meeting, students bring in a full draft of their essay for peer review. Unlike our freestyle sessions, students spend the entire class engaging each other's writing. In this instance, personal experience and student knowledge work in conjunction with the overarching lesson of the unit. That is, students analyze peer drafts according to their success within a particular genre of writing such as memoir writing, a definitional essay, or a formal research paper. Furthermore, they evaluate and engage peer drafts based on coherence, organization, style, voice, and how well an essay helps audiences understand the significance of an event to the development of their worldviews. The goal in this process is neither to suggest that student experiences trump academic concepts nor the experiences of other students for that matter. Rather, the goal is to illustrate and emphasize the importance of combining academic knowledges with the various experiences we all bring into the classroom.

My main point is that there needs to be safe places for students within and outside of formal academic classrooms because only by transforming these spaces can one shape how individuals come to resist the oppressive influences that shape everyone's life. In "Safe Houses in the Contact Zone: Coping Strategies of African American Students in the Academy," A. Suresh Canagarajah examines a range of discourses used by his African American students in an online discussion board he refers to as a safe house. Although he argues convincingly that safe houses open opportunities for Black students to develop confidence in a space that opposes them, he assumes too readily that these safe houses cannot be part of the formal classroom spaces. Canagarajah's students participated in an online "hidden textual space where they secretly communicate oppositional solidarity while 'fronting' academic conventions" (Canagarajah 188). However, there is little discussion of how students can make use of the personal experiences to avoid having to 'front' in formal academic discourse and settings such as the



classroom. As literacy scholar Vershawn Young explains, “once students realize that their writing is only acceptable in certain instances...they get caught between two worlds,’ the ‘home’ and ‘school’” (Young 120). The problem that Young and Canagarajah address seems to me to be this: how can instructors get students to connect their social, cultural, and personal experiences with their writing in ways that keep them inspired to continue learning?

Reaffirming Hip Hop and the Teaching of Community

Hip Hop lyricists often refer to ‘the cipher,’ a conceptual space in which heightened consciousness exists....it creates a vibe amid a community, as well as a spirit of artistic production...

—Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*

Scholars such as Gwendolyn Pough, Maisha Fisher, Kermit Campbell and Marc Lamont Hill have laid the groundwork for approaching this problem by exploring the pedagogical possibilities of using Hip Hop to create a sense of community in classrooms settings. Using Hip Hop cultural practices in the classroom requires that instructors figure out how to construct a space that can allow for connections across differences to be made. Hip Hop scholar Marc Lamont Hill argues in *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life*, that we can achieve this by adopting Hip Hop as a part of how we design our curriculums (Hill 9). Hip Hop practices such as the cipa provide a model for teaching that can circumvent this concern for how knowledge is constructed in the classroom. The cipa allow individuals to negotiate hostile environments and to transform their physical and social spaces to reflect on their collective worldviews. In this way, ciphaz are connected to what Maisha Fisher refers to as a “participatory literacy community” (PLC). She defines PLCs as “institutions created by Black people to provide a forum for Black readers, writers, and lovers of words and language” (90). Like PLCs, ciphaz allow participants to sharpen their linguistic skills.



Overall, ciphaz, rap battlin', and freestyles are literacy practices that represent Hip Hop as something more than a form of entertainment. Hip Hop did not spring forth from its nest in the South Bronx magically. It emerged from within a milieu of social and political injustices that restricted access to a full range of educational opportunities and economic resources. These experiences inform a Hip Hop worldview that is governed by persistence—a keep-on pushing sensibility that inspires strength of will and optimism in the face of oppression, adversity, and hard times. Therefore, the pedagogical potential of Hip Hop should be rooted in a pragmatic 'learn by doing' approach to education.

In *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*, Linda Flower notes that “the search for more public forms of engagement has pushed many scholars and students in rhetoric and composition studies into unfamiliar territory” (2). Hip Hop is one such territory, and ciphaz represent one of these forms of public engagement; ciphaz provide a model for combining personal and public performances that facilitate the integration of students personal knowledge into academic spaces. Moreover, ciphaz provide a forum where one can perform their linguistic skills and talents and capitalize on the connection between the ability to play with language, style, and texts that often contributes to one's academic and social successes.

In our ciphaz, my classmates and I would reflect on ideas and events that shaped our experiences. Scholars such as Linda Flower and Chris Gallagher have argued that any call for cultural, social, and political engagement in the classroom should also encourage students to draw on their personal experiences to enhance their writing. Through reflection, discussion, and inquiry into these personal knowledges—the application of one's cultural traditions and experiences—students can learn how to be more politically and socially aware. A broader awareness opens the possibility for students to revise and extend their perceptions on issues regarding cultural, social, and political differences through freestylin' and battlin'.



In the documentary *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyming*, emcee Divine Styler defines freestylin' in two ways: most commonly it is referred to as "flowing off the top of the dome," otherwise it refers to "a non-conceptual written rhyme." In Hip Hop culture, more credibility is granted to those who can freestyle instantaneously because it exhibits one's control and ability with language. However, whether emcees spontaneously construct rhymes or build off of prewritten flows, freestylin' represents an intense, quick witted, playfully vocal and fundamental practice of emceeing. They must constantly develop their ability to analyze and respond to the ideas and rhymes of their opponent to excel in the art of freestylin'.

In Hip Hop, battlin' refers to one's ability to provide critique. Battles represent a competition between two emcees that values one-upmanship. Winning does not rely solely on the use of fanciful language and braggadocios rhymes. Rather, the major objective is to sway the audience by showing that you are better than the previous rapper. From an outsider's perspective, the cipa may look like a group of people intensely arguing back and forth however, there is a general sense of mutual respect among participants that governs battles.

Hip Hop offers youth a new means of negotiating their immediate environment and of motivating individual and collective cultural practices. Moreover, it comprises a deliberate, focused, and often spontaneous array of practices and discourses that are constituted by contemporary youth of color and arise from their home communities. The expressive discourses and practices of Hip Hop offer the possibility for building connections among members of the Hip Hop community. For Hip Hop heads the city parks, the porches, the basketball courts, vestibules, and even classrooms are spaces where ciphas are formed to facilitate and further enhance the development of communal pride, worldviews, and skills with language.

The cipa invites scholars of composition to consider the classroom as a space that is situated between students' home communities and academic



culture. In this sense, the classroom correlates with the notion of the vestibule. In ancient Greek architecture, a vestibule is understood to be a partially enclosed lobby or intermediate passage between the entrance of a building and its exterior. By reconsidering the classroom as a vestibule, instructors can foster meaningful connections between students and teachers, students and academic culture, and students and their home communities.

I reflect on my personal experiences in high school and as a writing instructor to suggest a need to think more deeply about Hip Hop literacies and the development of safe spaces within academic structures. Sampling the notion of safe spaces, I seek to present the vestibule as a site in which ciphaz, rap battles, and freestylin' take place. Vestibules open a space to learn and practice rhetorical strategies from their home communities with each other without penalty. Many studies have appropriately detailed how the relocation of particular cultural formations from the margins to the center of the curriculum has engendered feelings of empowerment and possibility among students.

In conclusion, given the kind of intrusion and policing many students associate with formal schooling, I believe there is a need to foster safe spaces within academic settings. As a vestibule, the classroom can be understood as a space that is situated between academia and a larger social context—in particular students' home communities. As a space, the vestibule would encourage the development of multiple literacies and voices in student writing. I imagine the vestibule as a spatial metaphor for a place where Hip Hop literacy practices can be infused with the teaching of writing, that is, not as a substitution for academic discourse, nor in subordination to it, but as something mixed into classroom and student writing practices.



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