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Executive Summary

The Urban R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Movement (U.R. Movement) is a movement attempting to connect the Hip-Hop culture to youth in disenfranchised communities and to provide an alternative to the mean streets that these youth are forced to transverse. The U.R. Movement strives to employ various aspects of Hip-Hop culture to teach disenfranchised youth history, language, and writing skills that enhance youth's perception of self and equip them with the confidence, motivation, determination, and tools to improve their living/social conditions. The U.R. Movement, in which the "R" stands for R.E.A.L.I.T.Y (Rhymes Equal Actual Life In The Youth) comes from a social and political conscious hip-hop artist named, KRS-One, who addresses and supports our Movement's efforts within his music. These concerns include: wealth (entrepreneurship and community involvement), health (mental, physical, and spiritual), and knowledge of self (understanding yourself in all ways, but mostly in the context of your own conditions and environment).

The U.R. Movement plans to set our foundation at the Douglass Park Community Center in Champaign, Illinois. Having our foundation centered at Douglass Park Community Center, surrounded by a predominantly Black community is our specific intention to be visible and empower a community that has historically been overlooked by and marginalized from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana and the rest of the Urbana-Champaign area.

The U.R. Movement believes there is great educational value in the musical genre Hip-Hop. Utilizing Hip-Hop and its historical connection between youth, community, and addressing messages of hope, struggle, and resistance against social, political and economic oppression helps drive the U.R Movement's larger purpose—to be a catalyst for a youth movement. This Movement will offer an open and inclusive space where participants can foster a deeper

understanding of personal, diversity, and justice issues through Hip-Hop by participating in experiential activities, individual and small group reflections, and dialogues.

Obtaining the financial prize of 2,500 dollars from our Hip-Hop Entrepreneurship class will attest to our group's personal drive, dedication, willingness to learn and devotion to community education. The U.R. Movement will strive to enhance the lives of disenfranchised youth. Through Hip-Hop, education and service, we seek to offer a culturally relevant approach to empower and improve the participant's conditions and the communities in which they live. Acceptance of this financial reward will provide the Urban R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Movement ample support and opportunities to make our dream a reality.

Introduction

The youth of today are facing problems; these dilemmas are unlike any the nation has seen before. They are essentially entering a battleground each time they step outside of their front door, and even inside of their schools. The education system is not adequately equipping them with the fundamental tools necessary for survival in a world that wants them to fail. Unfortunately, often times their parents are not active enough to prepare the children either. These children absolutely cannot be left alone and abandoned. When a child feels as though no one is concerned about them, they lose their sense of belonging and identity. The U.R. Movement understands this, and has made it our personal mission to reach out to these disenfranchised youth. Our movement understands the idea that it truly does take a village to raise a child. These children are our responsibility, and we must make it our personal mission to solve these problems that plague them.

The focus of the U.R. Movement is to provide the youth of Douglass Park and throughout the Champaign-Urbana community with a voice and an understanding of identity. They need to

know their place individually, community-wise, and even globally. Within the program, we want them to tackle the issues that they are facing head-on without a sense of fear. The U.R. Movement is absolutely necessary, particularly within this community because the children of Douglass Park need a forum for dialogue. We are more than prepared to deal with the challenges that dealing with youth face, because there is a passion for change within us. We understand that the key to leaving an impact on youth is consistency and longevity. The U.R. Movement cannot expect change overnight, and we cannot constantly walk in and out of the children's lives. They need role models, but more importantly they need real models. They need real-life examples of people that look like them, and can show them that they can be successful. We hope to serve as those examples. The U.R. Movement hopes to leave a lasting legacy, and one that ultimately the youth of Douglass Park can take over. After completion of our program, we hope that the children will later come back and want to become the volunteers. This is how we begin a cycle of "doing good in the hood." You have to instill the desire in the children to want to become the future leaders of their city, and ultimately nation. The U.R. Movement is the first step towards changing the lives of the youth at Douglass Park.

The basis behind the name, U.R. Movement is two main ideas. The first is based on a song by KRS-One in which he uses the word REALITY to mean Rhymes Equal Actual Life in the Youth. We understand that this is certainly true, and that hip-hop is the voice of the youth right now. Therefore, the U.R. Movement means the Urban Reality movement. In addition to this, a large focus of our movement is about providing the children with a sense of identity, who they are. Therefore, U.R. has the meaning of "you are", because that is what we want the children to understand by the end of our program. The U.R. Movement has immeasurable amounts of motivation and ideas. We have no doubt that if given the right financial tools, we

would serve as extremely valuable assets to the children of Douglass Park through our movement.

Rationale/Theory

There is an old African Proverb that explains the importance of history being told by the oppressed, it states, “Until the lion writes his/her own story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” This African Proverb outlines the problems of history only being told through the lens of the oppressor, instead of the oppressed. The U.R. Movement believes Hip-Hop gives a counter-historical narrative analysis on issues that directly affects the disenfranchised. Historically, Hip-Hop music has been the voice of the racially oppressed and disenfranchised youth that offers a message of hope, struggle, and resistance against social, political, and economic oppression (Powell, 2003; Kitwana, 2002; Chang, 2005; Cheney, 2005; Stewart, 2005).

Hip-Hop has grown and changed over the past three decades, which cannot only be characterize as just a musical genre, but as a multi-faceted movement that encompasses: style of dress, dialect and language, way of looking at the world, and an aesthetic that reflects the sensibilities of a large population of youth (Kitwana, 2002; Aldridge and Stewart, 2005). The U.R. Movement’s goal is to utilize this multi-faceted movement that Hip-Hop encompasses to establish an after-school program for 6th-8th grade at the Douglass Community Center in Champaign, Illinois.

In Jeff Chang’s book, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop* (2005), outlines four fundamental elements of Hip-Hop: Disc jockeying (DJing), break dancing, graffiti art, and rapping (emceeing). The U.R. Movement agrees with the four that he mentioned, however, we contend that he left out one essential element of Hip-Hop, which is knowledge (educating). To us, this fundamental element

is what keeps the spirit of Hip-Hop alive in all of the group members. Thus, collaborating the ideals of Hip Hop with the current and unlimited access of knowledge we hold as college students at the University of Illinois, creates a powerful tool (I-Power) that will empower the disenfranchised youth in the Urbana-Champaign area to become self-directed people. These self-directed people: “lead rather than follow; initiate rather than join; question rather than obey; take rather than beg;” produce rather than consume (Shujaa, 1994).

The U.R. Movement believes that creating an atmosphere where disenfranchised youth are encouraged to bring and voice their life experiences, struggles, and questions at the Douglass Community Center will only encourage and uplift the surrounding historically marginalize/downtrodden communities. Our program provides a culturally relevant approach to teach, encourage, and enhance the youth in the Champaign-Urbana area. Giving the U.R. Movement an opportunity to implement our program will make it possible for us to “do some good in the hood.”

Goals

With the image of establishing the most efficient program for the community, we came up with a system of goals that would allow us to focus on the development of the next generation. Overall, the broad goal of this program is to promote the individual growth of the participants within our program. By the end of the program, we want the students to be able to reflect on relevant issues within their community, work through differences and conflicts, and socially identify themselves as a part of the staff with plans to have a positive impact within their community.

In order to do so, we have also developed goals for our program in order to ensure that we do make a significant difference within the participants within the Champaign-Urbana

community. Therefore, the program has been strategically planned to promote the development of their mindsets. The program will enhance the students' ability to reflect upon, and learn about themselves, as well as other members of society, in the context of systems of privilege and oppression. In addition, we will allow them the chance to explore similarities and differences in societal constraints across the different social groups within our country. As a means of enhancing their knowledge of the society in which they live, we will provide them with opportunities to gain an understanding of the dynamics of politics and how they implement a system of oppression within their community. We plan for our program to allow them to identify who they are, and what their role is within society. We also will help develop an abstract thinking process for the implementation of actions to interrupt injustices and build alliances to promote greater social justice. The U.R. Movement will provide the students with the skills to work through differences, disagreements, and conflicts as they transition their thinking into a more proactive thought process.

Approach

The U.R. Movement has two basic approaches that we hope will ultimately lead to a successful program with a high turnout. The initial activity will be a promotional bash, The Kick-off, to catch the attention of the youth within the community. The kick-off will feature performances by various Champaign-Urbana dance teams, singing groups, and words from several University of Illinois athletes. In addition, DJ Supa, who is well known throughout Champaign-Urbana, has agreed to serve as our disc jockey. Our hopes with this initial bash are that we will be able to get a high turnout from the children. There will be food and refreshments, and this is where the children will learn the goals of the U.R. Movement. They will enroll in the program here. There is no fee for the program, but we will have them put down what activities

they like to participate in so we can get an idea of the range of talent present.

Following the kick-off, our journey will begin with the students. Our central approach of this program is using hip-hop as a medium to provide the children with fundamental life skills. Each week a particular skill or circumstance will be chosen as one that we deem necessary for the children to learn. Some of these skills include dealing with relationships, violence, leadership, discipline, etc. The children will discuss their thoughts amongst each other freely. A hip-hop video that promotes a positive way of dealing with this particular trait/situation will then be shown and analyzed. We hope to engage in a dialogue with the children in regards to how the video made them feel, and how their thoughts on that topic might have changed. After this, the children will break off into groups based on the activity that we have chosen for the day. For the first four weeks, the skill will be different. These skills will be based on the four elements of hip-hop (emceeing, graffiti, DJing, b-boying) Using the element for the week, they will then have to create a piece that shows that they have gotten a thorough understanding of the principle for that week. The following six weeks, they will be able to pick a specific element and specialize their talent in that area. There will be very few restrictions placed on them, as we truly want this to be an open dialogue and a forum for free expression. However, their performance does have to clearly show that they understand what was shown in the video and discussed.

We certainly understand that it is absolutely crucial that we have high turnout at the kickoff, and this is why we have enlisted the help of more famous names. Once the children have taken an interest in the program, we hope to keep their interest by making the U.R. Movement a place where they can open up about anything. At the end of 10 weeks, the children will receive a t-shirt representing the completion of the program.

Target Demographic

The U.R. Movement program targets middle school students as a demographic, but it will be open to students of all ages that are members of the Champaign-Urbana community. This demographic will be the best option to accomplish our goals; to reach students and teach them prevention and guidance for future endeavors, rather than help them try to fix problems at an older age. Also, this demographic will be more receptive to having young, black men and women telling them what to do in life and how to do it. Older students may feel like they don't have to listen to what people, who are only a few years older than them, are saying. Older kids are also more self-conscious about their self-image, and may not show up to our events, because that may not be the "cool" thing to do, socially. Overall, our program targets middle school students to ensure a higher rate of participants, and a greater chance to affect as many students as possible.

Staff

U.R. Movement is an organization founded by ten students at the University of Illinois. These founding members control a majority of the program, while there are others who help keep it going. The program will take place at the Douglass Center in Urbana, where Charles Burton and his team will occasionally be a part of the U.R. Movement's staff. Some of the founding members will be graduating soon and U.R. Movement will promote the program in search of new members.

There will be an annual bash where the students will have the opportunity to display their talent and what they have learned in the program. The first bash, the kick-off, will allow upcoming participants to see some things they will be able to do or take part in. There will be speakers and performers at The Kick-off whom the founding members feel will draw the youth in or be very beneficial for them to see. Following the end of the first session, U.R. Movement will present C.U Showcase, Champaign Urbana Showcase, where the kids will display what they

have learned.

The following is a list of people that will temporarily participate in the program as speakers/performers:

Graffiti:

-Tramell Taylor

Mcing:

- Ti Ti Lokei
- Billy Dalton
- Ernest Crim

Poets

- Lindsey Reed
- Nino Rodriguez
- Aaron Ammons
- Torrance Douse

Singers

- Aramie Payton
- Shanon Smith
- Black Chorus
- Jeremih
- Avary Smith
- Kyra Jackson
- Monet Brinson
- Renelle Daniels

B-Boying:

- Hip-Notic Dance Team
- House Arrest II
- Omnimov
- Dance 2xs
- The Pope and his dance team

Djing:

- D.J Mando and Rad Roc
- Freddy Geiger

Speakers:

University of Illinois Basketball Team:

- Alex Legion
- Demetri McCamey
- Calvin Brock

University of Illinois Football Team:

-Juice Williams
-Vontae Davis
-Chris Duvall

University of Illinois Track Team:

-Nick Brown
-Brandon Gray

Marketing and Promotional Strategy

In order to accomplish the goals of our program it is essential to have involvement from individuals in our target demographic and the support of the surrounding community. To ensure the participation of the youth, our group has adapted strategies commonly associated with social activities of the community. We feel that it is appropriate to adapt this type of promotional strategy because making a difference in our communities should be undertaken with the same zeal associated with promoting a party.

Community involvement and encouragement is essential to the success of this program, so it is extremely important to make the members of the community aware of our program. The best ways to inform the Douglass Park neighborhood is through door-to-door canvases, announcements made through local churches, barbershops, salons and the community center of Douglass Park. These announcements will be a combination of verbal communication and flyers/handbills. It is important to have face to face interaction with the members of the community because this interaction will allow us to make a connection to the people of the community which can result in more trust and support and thus a successful program. A stamp of approval from the community is pertinent to success but it is even more important to pique the interest of the potential youth participants.

Youth participation will be one of the key determinants of the success of our program, so it is important to draw the youth in through interaction with them. Through meet and greets at schools, we hope to be able to encourage participation from the youth. The meet and greets

would allow our group members to pass out flyers and explain our program to potential participants by going classroom to classroom or by setting up a table in the cafeteria of the school. Posters and flyers hung in key common areas would serve as a reminder to students of our program, as well as the chalking of the sidewalks and playground of the school.

A kick off bash would be thrown prior to the start of the program to inform the community of the activities available to participate in by attending our program. The kick off bash would consist of local celebrities of varying crafts showcasing their talents to the youth while encouraging them to find a means of expression that is specific to them as individuals. This bash would serve as a huge kick off party, complete with a live DJ, dancers, spoken word artist, artist, poets, rappers and singers. We plan on promoting the kick off bash through the various performers we invite to perform, flyers, handbills and possibly radio promotions.

In order to increase the number of participants involved in the program, we plan to have a Word of Mouf competition for the participants of the program. Our participants will have the opportunity to compete for a prize, the student that brings the most students over the course of the program will be the winner of the prize. This friendly competition will help us to reach students that we may have missed before and it validates the program to new participants from actual participants of the program.

Lastly, we plan to work in conjugation with the I-POWER movement. Collaborating with the I-POWER movement would allow us to increase university student involvement in volunteerism and staffing. University student involvement will make our program more sustainable over time, especially after our founding members matriculate from the university. Lastly, we want to include the logo of the I-POWER movement on the promotional t-shirts that will be worn by the staff and by the participants of the program. After the youth participants

successfully complete our program by demonstrating genuine growth, their final t-shirts will have the logo of our group along with the I-POWER stamp of approval. The I-POWER stamp of approval demonstrates that they have been authenticated by the standards of our program. An unfamiliar and fashionable shirt will spark conversation with various people that might want to work in collaboration with our program by participating, facilitating, and/ or donating to the cause of educating our youth.

Intended and Unintended Outcomes

The U.R. Movement intends, in the least, to obtain and maintain a committed group of students that will learn, grow and reciprocate the principles inherited through our program. All of the students will participate in the weekly dialogue section where we incorporate Hip Hop. We hope our participants leave with a deeper understanding of Hip Hop and its true purposes; that Hip Hop is not merely words and a beat or a catchy hook; it is a means of expression through which the realities of our lives were executed. We expect that through extensive marketing and promoting we will reach a great number of kids from the Champaign-Urbana area and the word will continuously spread. We expect that all of our participants will come with open minds and are eager to learn about the realities that surround us everyday. With “identity” being our main focus we anticipate that our kids will come in with questions and concerns. Due to our discussion topics and teaching strategies, by the completion of the program our participants will have a clearer understanding of themselves and the following:

1. Who I am.
2. This is why I am the way I am.
3. What I can be and what I have the power to do.

In gaining the support of the community and youth leaders we will be successful in establishing a

sufficient program and enhancing the lives of our future leaders.

There are endless unintended situations that may be encountered. For instance, it is possible that even with the appropriate marketing we may not accrue the number of participants we intend to. Though, we would be satisfied with significantly affecting a few students, we would recommit ourselves to promoting and uncovering new ways to reach more youth. On the other hand, we may unexpectedly receive an overwhelming response to our program. However, thanks to the Douglass facilities we will have adequate room in case of an inflated response. The U.R. Movement could also accommodate an overwhelming response by finding more volunteers and by trying to make everyone as comfortable as possible.

Regardless of a good turnout, the participants may lack enthusiasm about the program. They may not feel like they are learning or be bored. In this case, our staff will have to revamp the structure of our program so that it is more appealing to its members. We will take and consider any suggestions into consideration to make the program more desirable so that all youth in the area will want to be participants of the program.

Unfortunately our program may not initially obtain full support from our community. Members of the community may not feel that Hip Hop has the capacity to empower or teach because of its demeaning reputation. In that case we can only prove ourselves to the community by providing a detailed evaluation of our program and doing “some good in the hood”. We hope that they are receptive and will give us the opportunity to make change.

It is also possible that we may endure financial complications in the duration of our program. If our funding does not come through we are prepared to do extensive fundraising, reach out to the community and university, so we can get everything necessary for our kids.

The most unexpected and unintended outcome our program could encounter is simply not

being successful. Though we do not expect for our program to fail in any way, it is a possibility. Failure is not something that the U.R. Movement will accept. As a team, every founding member has worked too long and hard and is determined not to let our dream go. We are all dedicated to positively impacting our youth, and if the U.R. Movement is not meant to receive funding from the African American Cultural Center, we will find other ways to accomplish our goals. Many African Americans succumb to adversity and instead of persevering they give up, this attitude perpetuates a continuous downward spiral. We are committed to breaking that cycle by preserving in the face of adversity.

There are countless situations that we may encounter such as drugs and alcohol, violence or negative influences. However, with the expertise of Charles Burton, Dr. William Patterson, other figures in our community, and true Hip Hop we will be successful in teaching our students to overcome peer pressure and the negative influences within their community

Evaluation Method

IDENTITY, is the title of our evaluation method which will be implemented at three different occurrences throughout the duration of our program. IDENTITY will be conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the program as a means of evaluating the overall effectiveness of our program. We believe that this portion of the program will showcase a substantial difference in the students' ideological thinking, level of comfort within the program, as well as the development of a plan to overcome the societal constraints that they have been subjected to within the Champaign-Urbana communities.

To be more specific, the first part of IDENTITY will be conducted within the first week of the program as an ice-breaker. We will be asking the students to write a paragraph explaining who they are. Due to the lack of comfort with this new experience, we do not expect them to go

into depth as to who they are. In addition, we are confident that they may not have fully determined who they are due to the current stage within their lives.

In week six of the program, we will once again present the concept of IDENTITY. We will now be asking the students why they feel they are the way that they are. The previous five weeks would have provided them with the tools to make a connection between their current situations and their community. This connection would include their interaction with peers, as well as their thoughts on respect, relationships, and violence. Therefore, we expect them to realize that we, as individuals, are influenced by our surroundings. Hopefully, they will have increased their level of comfort not only amongst themselves but with the staff, resulting in a more in depth explanation of who they are and where they come from on a case-by-case basis.

At the conclusion of the program, week ten to be exact, we will be asking the students to identify themselves through their IDENTITY. Prior to this week, the students were provided with tools, that the staff determined were essential, in order to overcome the society in which we live. These tools showcase a sense of discipline, social consciousness, the importance of education, and the development of self-esteem, which will result in confidence in entrepreneurship, aspirations, and personal achievements. As a result, we will ask the students what they have planned for the future. Prior to the conclusion of the program, we expect the students to have developed a better understanding of who they are, where they come from, and where they would like to go as they realize that they have the ability to make their dreams come true and make it out of their current situations through opportunities other than the dope game, football field, and basketball court.

Budget

The U.R. Movement has composed a budget proposal below that portion out the twenty-five hundred (2500) dollar grant, as we would use it, if we were to win the competition. The U.R. Movement will break down its financial earnings into two main categories. The first will be devoted to the Kick-Off, our initial promotional bash. We have set aside sixteen hundred (1600) dollars to provide the greatest and most influential hip-hop showcase that the youth and community have ever experienced. The estimated expenses for the Kick-Off break down (are) as follows:

- DJ Supa and Rad-Roc attendance fee and equipment \$500
- Food and Beverages \$400
 - Catering from local Black-owned establishments –
 - Chicken Shack, Sea Boat, Blues BBQ
- Other Entertainment \$500
- Marketing and Promotional Expenses \$200

The second category is The Movement. It includes the estimated costs for The U.R. Movement’s weekly sessions. Eight hundred (800) dollars of our initial earnings will break down (are) in the following:

- T-Shirts (\$6 dollars x 50 participants) \$300
- Supplies \$300
- Initial program snacks and other miscellaneous items \$200

The final one hundred (100) dollars will be reserved to buy fundraising supplies. The profit from the fundraiser(s) will go toward future programs, necessities for the program and our end of the year event “C.U. Showcase.” We also plan onto to do continuous fundraising to support or program.

The U.R. Movement budget is set up to benefit all aspects of the program. Taking the best interest of our program into consideration we will reallocate monies as necessary to meet the most pertinent needs of the program. We will make revisions to our budget as we see evaluate

our program over the period of time and identify the problems areas that need to be changed.

I-POWER

University of Illinois

Presents

HIP

HOP

Special Performances

HOT DJ



OUR MOVEMENT

FOOD

Kick Off Bash

Douglass Community Center

March 6, 2009

5:30pm - 9pm

Open To The Community



U.R.
MOVEMENT

Is an I-POWERED student operated civic engagement pilot project supported by

BNAACC

Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center

TIME TO MAKE IT BOUNCE



The **U.R. Movement** stands for Urban R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Movement, in which R.E.A.L.I.T.Y means (Rhymes Equal Actual Life In The Youth). The U.R. Movement connects Hip-Hop culture to lived experiences of youth by employing Hip-Hop culture to teach disenfranchised youth history, language, and writing skills that will enhance their perception of self, which will equip the students with the confidence, motivation, determination, and tools to improve their conditions.

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BNAACC

Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center

Douglass Community Center

512 E. Grove Street
Champaign, IL. 61820-3230

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The U.R. Movement Dialogue Program





Offers different viewpoints on issues that impact youth.

- Allows youth to create or find their voice in society that offers a message of hope, struggle, and resistance against oppression.
- Provides an opportunity to positively enhance their lives and community



The U.R. Movement Dialogue Program is a 6-8 week program that meets every Wednesday from 5-7p.m., beginning on March 11, 2009.

Some of the planned topics that will be discussed and analyzed include:

Identity

Community/Family

Education

Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem

Violence

Relationships

Social Consciousness

Discipline/Organization

Aspirations/Goals

...and more

The U.R. Movement was founded on Dec. 10, 2008. Its founders and facilitators consist of students attending the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign.

Founders of U.R. Movement

Jonathan Hamilton

Ashley Rouse

Brianna Woolridge

Saturnino Rodriguez

Tykisha Reed

Brittany Heath

Matt Thompson

Marques Lowe

Denisha Brown



Making Our Community More “Inclusive”: The Champaign-Urbana U.R. Movement

“People talk about Hip-Hop like it's some giant living in the hillside coming down to visit the townspeople. We *are* Hip-Hop. Me, you, everybody, we are Hip-Hop. So Hip-Hop is going where we [are] going. So the next time you ask yourself where Hip-Hop is going, ask yourself... where am I going? How am I doing?” (Mos Def, *“Fear Not of Man”*, 1999)

INTRODUCTION¹

On Friday October 9th, 2009, Kiwane Carrington a young African American teenager from Champaign, Illinois is shot to death by a Champaign police officer. The vigils and protests that followed the shooting would highlight an unsettled history between law enforcement and the community but more importantly, the raw frustration and helplessness of youth of color in Champaign-Urbana. In the wake of Kiwane Carrington’s death, important questions have been raised about ways to improve the conditions of youth of color in Champaign and surrounding communities. Yet noticeably these questions have not translated into any visible and sustained programming to address the needs of the most vulnerable population in the wake of the shooting, Kiwane’s peers.

In this process the University of Illinois has been noticeably silent. The flagship institution of the Illinois University system continues to be the tie that binds the communities of central Illinois culturally and economically together. Yet, in this time when the youth of a community that sits directly in its shadow need human and material resources, no response as of yet has been offered.

It is important to note though that the U of I has in place the necessary infrastructure for establishing stronger relationships with and between its surrounding communities. One such initiative is ‘Inclusive Illinois’, which has as one of its many noteworthy aims, the objective to promote and strengthen community-campus relationships. The University considers community-campus relationships imperative, made evident by details from the report Project 2012: Transforming Illinois.

Illinois has envisioned itself as a new Illinois; one in which there is a strong investment in its surrounding communities and a commitment to establishing meaningful collaborations with community-based agencies and organizations to address critical societal issues...An underlying value embedded in a number of the proposed initiatives is the inherent belief that the role of Illinois is to support community groups to name

¹ This document was submitted for the Focal Point Grant Proposal during the 2009-2010 academic school year. Focal Point is an interdisciplinary initiative to catalyze the formation of intellectual communities to advance knowledge in areas of critical national and human need. Up to \$15,000 of funds may be awarded per project. This proposal project was written by Jonathan L. Hamilton, Olanipekun Laosebikan, and Robert Anthony Ward, who are doctoral students in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Unfortunately, this proposal was not accepted, but will be resubmitted with changes for the 2010-2011 academic school year.

and actualize their vision and core objects (as opposed to the objectives of individual researchers or campus sponsored programs). Also, the goal is intended to increase the exchange between the campus and community via increased communication (Project 2012: Transforming Illinois, http://www.provost.illinois.edu/programs/diversity/Project_2012-Transforming_Illinois-Re-envisioning_Diversity_and_Inclusion_Final.pdf, p. 46).

It is in this spirit of “establishing meaningful collaborations with community-based agencies and organizations to address critical societal issues”, that we have teamed with Douglass Park Community Center and formed the U.R. Movement.

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

The Urban R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Movement (U.R. Movement hereafter) is an organization that emerged from the I-Power movement course taught by Professor William Patterson of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The U.R. Movement founded by ten students in this course in the spring of 2009 and has been in operation ever since. The U.R. Movement is a program designed to critically engage, educate, challenge and empower urban youth using Hip-Hop as a medium for communication and dialogue. The name of the organization “U.R.” or translated as “your” recognizes Hip-Hop as a legitimate medium for understanding the lived experiences and realities of urban youth and the ownership these youth have over Hip-Hop as a vehicle for their education and creative expression.

We have come together as educators, sociologist, historians, and individuals concerned with our community to devise a program to teach youth to unpack and critically engage the images and information that they consume. As the successes of the recent presidential election, Hip-Hop can be used as an important educational tool to spread civic awareness. We believe that Hip-Hop can be used successfully as an educational tool to promote critical literacy helping to develop engaged and empowered urban youth as students and citizens. Often in the traditional K-12 schools, students are required to leave Hip-Hop outside of the classroom, however it is our conviction that schools to their own detriment deny the rising significance of Hip-Hop in the lives of urban youth today.

Through the U.R. Movement we seek to empower youth to be critical consumers and producers of Hip-Hop music and culture specifically and media in general. One of the premises upon which we operate is that we are not required to be passive consumers of media in today’s marketplace. We teach youth that through their actions and awareness they help to create the environment in which they live, and the culture that others experience.

In collaboration with its most important partners, Champaign-Urbana youth, the U.R. Movement currently provides a practical model of engagement with Hip-Hop culture that recognizes its potential as an educational tool. Yet the program has potential for so much more. The recent shooting of Kiwane Carrington makes clear the need for more far reaching attempts to address the needs of urban youth within the larger framework of improving and strengthening community relationships. Utilizing the current framework of the U.R. Movement we are proposing the creation of a workshop that will provide an outlet to showcase Champaign-Urbana

youth's creative skills through various art forms that highlight the theme of "Social Justice" as a vehicle for strengthening community relations.

TOPICS/ THEMES OF EXPLORATION

The use of "social justice" workshop provides an opportunity for community members, faculty and students to explore connections between media literacy and empowerment. A focus on media literacy emphasizes the importance of analyzing lyrics and images in Hip-Hop. This helps to identify messages as well as interpret and respond to issues of race, class, patriarchy, homophobia, etc.

The benefits of this proposed youth organizing/development dialogue program will equip participants with knowledge to explore questions about critical consciousness, Hip-Hop, social justice, forms of oppression, advocacy, activism, and becoming agents for change. Those participating in the U.R. Movement organizing/development dialogue program will draw from and expand on existing curriculum resources developed from the U.R. Movement between Spring 2009 and Fall 2009.

LOCATION

The U.R. Movement's foundation is set at the Douglass Park Community Center in Champaign, Illinois. The community center lies within the predominantly Black North Champaign community, a historically marginalized community. The program is strategically located in this community to increase awareness about the significant issues affecting the community and to highlight the need to establish stronger ties between this community and surrounding communities. Douglass Park Community Center offers an open and inclusive space to accomplish this goal.

TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC

The U.R. Movement program specifically targets middle school students, but it will be open to local students of all ages. Middle school youth are ideal in that they are at a critical age when social influences like music and culture play an important role in identity formation. High school students though welcome in the program tend to be more sporadic in attendance and participation, possibly because of the presence of the younger students.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND FREQUENCY

The program participants will meet once a week for two hours at the Douglass Community Center located in Champaign, Illinois. The program will operate on a four (4) week cycle revolving around a specific theme every month, which culminates in a group project in the fourth week. The cycle of the program is detailed below:

The first week begins with "media literacy training". This stage is an opportunity for the group deconstructing media related to our theme paying particular attention to race, class, and gender.

The group will learn how to engage these controversial subjects in a supportive yet critical manner. This stage offers a powerful opportunity to model new ways of addressing conflicting viewpoints while respecting difference and each other.

The second week will be spent “building a sense of connection and community”. With this stage students begin to look more closely at the necessity of alliances and how to build them. There will be workshops and primers on what social justice is and how environmental issues affect us. The dialogue here addresses students’ individual experiences with social inequality and what resources exist in their communities to help them.

The third week involves designing and developing practice in relation to our theme, or as we call it “envisioning change and taking action”. At this point the participants will design (illustrate, build, create, perform) utilizing the monthly theme for that month to implement or show their understanding of ways to connect Hip-Hop (5 Elements) to address issues of oppression, privilege, or justice within their community.

The fourth week is dedicated to the youth working on a project, which they come together and choose. The project will utilize lessons that they learned in the three previous weeks. Also, as the program progresses the groups will be able to utilize future workshop and understandings to strengthen their projects.

Monthly Themes:

August- September / Orientation to set the tone for the dialogue, establish ground rules, goals

October / Dee jay techniques and music production

November / Break Dancing

January / Rapping/Emceeing

February / Knowledge

March / Graffiti

April / Social Justice Fair

May-June / Reflection and Next Steps

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- (1) To develop a capacity for dialogue—which will lead to identifying individual and collective actions for interrupting injustices and building alliances to promote greater social justice amongst disenfranchised communities in Champaign-Urbana with the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

- (2) To make recommendations for a means to understanding Hip-Hop music as a literary form that can potentially counter act unarticulated or “hidden” curriculums that need to be addressed head on (race, culture, class, gender, etc.)
- (3) To produce two scholarly publications that provides a descriptive analysis of the U.R. Movement and its effort to cultivate critical consciousness and sociopolitical development in Champaign-Urbana youth. We will also create a booklet that displays the various artworks shown at the Social Justice Fair for each of the youth participants.
- (4) The program will conclude with community showcase that we are calling the “social justice fair”. With this event we will invite the students’ parents, teachers, and other organizations that provide services & activities for the community to come together and be more aware of each other. The U.R Movement youth groups will also present their projects developed during through the program.

ORGANIZERS

It is our goal to create opportunities to bring faculty, staff, students, youth, and community members together to learn and share their insights and perspectives on developing a positive working relationship in the fight for social justice. Faculty will provide assistance with organizing the monthly workshops and the Social Justice Fair.

- *John Jennings*- Assistant Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 - *William Patterson*- Assistant Visiting Professor in the Afro American Studies
 - *Jonathan L. Hamilton*- PhD Student in Educational Policy Studies and a concentration in African American Studies
 - *Olanipekun Laosebikan*- PhD Candidate in Educational Policy Studies
 - *Robert Anthony Ward* - PhD Candidate in Educational Policy Studies

Staff

The staff of the U.R. Movement consists of a dedicated team of graduate and undergraduate students. The staff of the Douglass community center serves as auxiliary staff as well for the program.

List of Committed Faculty and Graduate Student Support

- Dr. Jennifer F. Hamer- Associate Professor – African American Studies

- Dr. Christopher Span- Associate Professor – Educational Policy Studies
- Dr. Lou Turner- Academic Advisor- African American Studies
- Melvin Armstrong Jr.- Doctoral Candidate - Educational Policy Studies
- Steven Parris- Doctoral Student – Educational Policy Studies

BUDGET

Student Research (2 Students)	
Travel	\$0
Professional Development	\$1,000
Equipment	\$3,000
Total Student Research	= <u>\$4,000</u>
Faculty Research Incentive (2 faculty)	= <u>\$1,000</u>
Total Research	= <u>\$5,000</u>
Refreshments for weekly sessions	\$700
Prizes/Field Trip	\$2,000
Dissemination Activities	
Photocopying	\$700
Books for Social Justice Fair	\$800
Public Relation Team	\$800
Total Dissemination Activities	= <u>\$2,300</u>
Total Proposed Budget	<u>\$10,000</u>
Social Justice Fair	
Key Note Speaker Honoraria and Travel	\$1,000
Refreshment for conference participants	\$500
Publicity	\$500
Equipment	\$1,000
Total for Urban R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Movement’s Social Justice Fair	<u>\$3,000</u>

Work Cited

Mos Def. (1999). Fear Not of Man. Black on Both Sides. (CD). New York, New York:
Rawkus Records