Moving to the Beat

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Education Standards
The Curriculum Guide and Education Standards

In order to assist educators in applying the curriculum of *Moving to the Beat* with the Oregon Education Standards, a brief description of applicable standards are listed below. Please note: This is not a comprehensive list.

**Arts**

The main Arts standards covered in the curriculum fall under the category, Create, Present and Perform, AR.HS.CP.01-03

- **AR.HS.CP.01** Select and combine essential elements and organizational principles to achieve a desired effect when creating, presenting and/or performing works of art for a variety of purposes.
- **AR.HS.CP.02** Explain the choices made in the creative process when combining ideas, techniques, and problem solving to produce one’s work, and identify the impact that different choices might have made.
- **AR.HS.CP.03** Create, present and/or perform a work of art by controlling essential elements and organizational principles and describe how well the work expresses an intended idea, mood or feeling.

**Social Sciences**

The main Social Sciences standards present in the curriculum fall under the category, Social Science Analysis, SS.HS.SA.01-06

- **SS.HS.SA.01** Define, research, and explain an event, issue, problem or phenomenon and its significance to society.
- **SS.HS.SA.02** Gather, analyze, use and document information from various sources, distinguishing facts, opinions, inferences, biases, stereotypes, and persuasive appeals.
- **SS.HS.SA.03** Understand what it means to be a critical consumer of information.
- **SS.HS.SA.04** Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon from varied or opposed perspectives or points of view.
- **SS.HS.SA.05** Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon, identifying characteristics, influences, causes and both short-term and long-term effects.
- **SS.HS.SA.06** Propose, compare, and judge multiple responses, alternatives or solutions; then reach a defensible, supported conclusion.

**English Language Arts**

**Writing**

**EL.HS.WR.21** Write biographical or autobiographical narratives or short stories:

- Relate a sequence of events, and communicate the significance of the events to the audience.
- Locate scenes and incidents in specific places.
- Describe with concrete sensory details the sights, sounds, and smells of a scene and the specific actions, movements, gestures, and feelings of the characters; use interior monologue to depict the character’s feelings.
- Pace the presentation of actions to accommodate changes in mood and time.
- Make effective use of descriptions of appearance, images, shifting perspectives, and sensory details.

**EL.HS.WR.23** Write analytical essays and research reports:

- Gather evidence in support of a thesis, including information on all relevant perspectives.
- Convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently.
- Make distinctions between the relative value and significance of specific data, facts and ideas.
Include visual aids by employing appropriate technology to organize and record information on charts, maps, and graphs.

Anticipate and address readers’ potential misunderstandings, biases, and expectations.

Use technical terms and notations accurately.

Document sources.

**EL.HS.WR.24** Write persuasive compositions:

- Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained and logical fashion.
- Use specific rhetorical (communication) devices to support assertions, such as appealing to logic through reasoning; appealing to emotion or ethical beliefs; or relating a personal anecdote, case study, or analogy.
- Clarify and defend positions with precise and relevant evidence, including facts, expert opinions, quotations, and expressions of commonly accepted beliefs and logical reasoning.
- Address readers’ concerns, counterclaims, biases, and expectations.

**Reading**

- **EL.HS.RE.01** Read at an independent and instructional reading level appropriate to grade level.
- **EL.HS.RE.02** Listen to, read, and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text, including classic and contemporary literature, poetry, magazines, newspapers, reference materials, and online information.
- **EL.HS.RE.03** Make connections to text, within text, and among texts through classic and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.
- **EL.HS.RE.04** Demonstrate listening comprehension of more complex text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.
- **EL.HS.RE.08** Understand, learn, and use new vocabulary that is introduced and taught directly through informational texts, literary texts, and instruction across the subject areas.
- **EL.RE.HS.09** Develop vocabulary by listening to and discussing both familiar and conceptually challenging selections read aloud across the subject areas.
- **EL.HS.RE.15** Read textbooks; biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, bus routes, catalogs, technical directions, consumer, workplace, and public documents.
- **EL.HS.RE.19** Identify and/or summarize sequence of events, main ideas, facts and supporting details, and opinions in informational and practical selections.
- **EL.HS.RE.20** Clarify understanding of informational texts by creating sophisticated outlines, graphic organizers, diagrams, logical notes, or summaries.
- **EL.HS.RE.24** Analyze implicit relationships, such as cause and effect, sequence time relationships, comparisons, classifications, and generalizations.
- **EL.HS.RE.26** Draw conclusions about the author’s purpose based on evidence in the text.
- **EL.HS.RE.33** Generate relevant questions about readings on issues that can be researched.
- **EL.HS.RE.35** Extend ideas presented in primary or secondary sources through original analysis, evaluation, and elaboration.
Moving to the Beat
Introduction
Moving to the Beat Curriculum Guide: Introduction

Among musical genres often “lost in translation” across the generations, hip-hop most certainly tops the list. Teachers may be wary of bringing hip-hop into the classroom because it is so controversial, and because so many popular rap lyrics are contrary to academic aims. Yet hip-hop has achieved serious recognition among academic scholars. Many colleges and universities now teach courses on hip-hop in departments of cultural studies, history, art and music, and sociology. However, most of this rich scholarship never reaches high school classrooms or lower division college courses.

This curriculum makes use of the documentary film *Moving to the Beat* as a vehicle for classroom instruction on hip-hop as a language for taking up a range of broader social and academic themes. *Moving to the Beat* film was initiated in 2005 as a cross-cultural project carried out by documentary filmmakers, many of whom are educators, in Sierra Leone and the United States. The project began as an exploration of the use of hip-hop as a medium for positive social change. In the process of producing the film, the project took hold as an ongoing forum for young male and female hip-hop artists to speak in their own voices about war, rebellion, healing, and forms of community reparation. The format of this curriculum guide reflects these same aims: to generate dialogue—both within the classroom and throughout the broader community—on issues affecting the lives of youth.

Structured as a six-day sequence of lessons and activities taught in periods of 45-50 minutes per day, the *Moving to the Beat* curriculum is designed for use in high school and college level classrooms. Instructional standards are included to indicate how content meets nationally recognized secondary level guidelines for social studies, art and music. Day one introduces the *Moving to the Beat* project and provides background on hip-hop as a cultural movement and how its history is intertwined with other aspects of history. Days two and three provide guidelines for screening the film in two parts and drawing out key themes. Day four focuses on the immigrant experience of youth and how young immigrants make use of hip-hop to navigate cultural borders. In focusing on different understandings of the concept of the American Dream, this day also makes use of the documentary to discuss illusions attached to this concept. Day five explores gender experiences and draws examples from the film to discuss stereotyping, and how socially conscious hip-hop both reinforces and resists forms of gender oppression. Day 6 extends the discussion of sex and gender in taking up how the artists use hip-hop in local HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in Sierra Leone. The documentary and CD soundtrack provide engaging materials for discussing the topic of risky sexual practices in ways that are woven into other areas of life and the broader concerns of youth.

Background to the Curriculum Project

The story of the *Moving to the Beat* documentary centers on a hip-hop group from Portland, Oregon, Rebel Soulz, as the group carries out a conversation with youth in war-torn Sierra Leone through the medium of hip-hop. The documentary enlists the narrative device of the journey—in this case, the journey of Rebel Soulz members—as they travel to Freetown, Sierra Leone to bring the radical roots of hip-hop to the “motherland.” *Moving to the Beat* tells a
A collective tale of Black youth searching for an identity that encompasses the trauma, ideals, hopes and losses born of their common and differing histories.

The *Moving to the Beat* project emerged from an earlier international collaboration with Sierra Leonean women peace activists, a collaboration that included interviews with women in refugee camps along the border of Sierra Leone. The interviews focused on women’s perceptions of the causes of the civil war that had raged throughout their country in the 1990s and how women were conceptualizing the peace process. In carrying out this field study, our aim was to place female voices at the center of this inquiry into gender, war, and processes of peace and reconciliation. The interdisciplinary curriculum that resulted from the study, *Speaking Out: Women, War, and the Global Economy* (Haaken, Ladum, Zundel, et al, 2005) and its accompanying documentary film, *Diamonds, Guns, and Rice*, combine interview material, poetry, music, art, essays by Sierra Leonean women, and historical and economic analyses of policies that shape political conflict in West Africa.

The *Moving to the Beat* collaboration grew out of a “wrap-up” visit to Sierra Leone in 2005 as youth—many of them the children of mothers interviewed for *Speaking Out*—connected with some of the members of our crew around their shared love of hip-hop. Sierra Leonean youth were using hip-hop, specifically rap music, to speak out on issues of post-war trauma, the AIDS/HIV epidemic, women’s rights, poverty and political corruption. For Sierra Leonean elders and many of us on the *Speaking Out* team, the question of whether youth were engaging hip-hop in a socially progressive or regressive way—whether it enlarged or blunted their relational and cultural capacities—motivated continuation of our collaborative inquiry. In returning to the United States, the crew met with the *Speaking Out* team and the *Moving to the Beat* team was formed to pursue this new area of collaboration with Sierra Leone. The second documentary, *Moving to the Beat*, showed how African youth went against the grain of consumerism and sexism that dominated much of the mainstream rap in the United States.

In “putting down the gun and picking up the mic,” many of these youth, some of whom were former child soldiers in the Sierra Leonean conflict, sought to find an insurgent political voice through hip-hop. As documentary filmmakers, we wanted to capture the currents of this cultural movement and to document the lyrical aspects of hip-hop dialogue, itself an echo of the older Black tradition of call-and-response. When the completed documentary screened at schools and festivals in the United States and Britain, as well as countries in Africa (Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, and South Africa), demands followed for a curriculum guide to continue this dialogue in secondary level and college classrooms.

In bridging the worlds of Africa and America, African immigrant youth carry precious cultural goods. These youth often are burdened with heavy responsibilities to send resources back to their homeland communities. But they have much to offer to their new home country as well. The story of hip-hop in Sierra Leone—and how that story is carried by youth immigrating to the United States—is one of those richly rewarding products of cultural exchange that students discover through the *Moving to the Beat* curriculum.
Moving to the Beat
Curriculum
Day 1
Exploring the Power of Hip-Hop

Most students have some knowledge of hip-hop culture. Yet few understand its rich and varied history in the United States and throughout the globe. The process of inquiry outlined in this segment includes a journey to uncover the roots of hip-hop—a fascinating and often forgotten area of the country’s past. Understanding this history prepares students to recognize both the positive and the destructive aspects of hip-hop culture. In many areas of the globe, youth are seeking a collective voice through the language of hip-hop. The following activities create a shared framework for discussing the conventions of hip-hop performed in *Moving to the Beat*, and for the subsequent parts of the curriculum.

♦ Objectives

After completing this section students should be able to:

- Gain an introductory understanding of key elements of hip-hop culture
- Learn about the historical and social roots of hip-hop
- Explain how hip-hop can be used in both positive and negative ways

Activity I:
Recovering Hip-Hop History

Like any cultural phenomenon, hip-hop carries a complex history. Although the initial development of hip-hop is tied to one specific place in geography and time, the global spread of hip-hop has produced many subgenres and additional elements (e.g. theatre, fashion, and film). For this activity, distribute handout #1, “The Radical Roots of Hip-Hop” and handout #2, “Hip-Hop Activism Across Continents.” As a homework assignment prior to day one, have students select one of the artists listed in handout #2 to write about in a short essay.

Questions for class discussion:

- What did you learn about the history and global influence of hip-hop from handouts #1 and #2?
- Why do you think the one handout was titled, “The Radical Roots of Hip-Hop”?
- What are different meanings of the term radical?
- What are some examples of radical hip-hop and what makes the hip-hop radical?
- How might a country’s history influence hip-hop artists in that country?
Activity II:
Kanye West Takes on Hip-hop Culture and the Diamond Industry

Over the years, companies such as De Beers and the World Diamond Council have used advertising to create a mystique around diamonds in the Western world. Diamonds now play an important role in how Westerners celebrate weddings, anniversaries, Valentine’s Day, and other special occasions associated with romance. The international diamond trade, from which the average Sierra Leonean receives little benefit, played a significant role in fueling the bloody conflict of the 1990s, when a rebel movement of primarily young soldiers overtook the country.

In his song, *Diamonds from Sierra Leone*, Kanye West critiques American rap artists’ obsession with diamonds and their contribution to suffering in Africa by promoting diamonds in performing images of success. Although “bling” carries elements of parody, i.e., poking fun at the dominant culture through an over-the-top performance of its excesses, this fascination with diamonds also has a problematic serious side.

Either distribute as a handout or project onto a screen for classroom discussion the lyrics from Kanye West’s song, “Diamonds from Sierra Leone” (available online). Ask students to interpret the lyrics.

Questions for class discussion:

- What is Kayne West saying about the diamond industry through these lyrics about the diamond industry in Sierra Leone?
- What is he asking outsiders to consider in terms of their own responsibility for this conflict?
- How is West’s music a form of activism?

Homework assignment: Ask students to investigate and write a short paper on the role of diamond companies and advertising in creating a mystique around these gems. As a second or additional homework option, have students carry out library research on the role of the international diamond trade in fueling armed conflict in countries of the world such as Sierra Leone.
Days 2 & 3
Screening Moving to the Beat

*Moving to the Beat* is an exploration of self-expression through music and tells a story of the power of hip-hop for healing and social change. This section is structured around a two-day screening of the film, although there is flexibility in the pacing based on the approach of the instructor. Whether one day or several days are spent on screening *Moving to the Beat*, it is strongly recommended that students be prepared with the historical and cultural materials provided in Day one.

Running time for the film is 44 minutes. When screening the film in two sessions, time code 27:17 is a useful starting point for the second session (when the narrator begins to talk about women in the hip-hop scene).

**Note to Instructor:** Before beginning this section, it is important to go over classroom rules that stress respect, listening skills, active participation, and allowing room for divergent opinions.

- **Objectives**

  After watching *Moving to the Beat*, students should be able to:

  - Identify the film’s main themes
  - Discuss basic concepts in film analysis
  - Explore the dynamics of cross-cultural dialogue

- **Activity I:**

  **From America to Africa: Crossing Cultural Borders**

  Distribute to students “*The Making of Moving to the Beat*” (handout #3), an essay by Caleb Heymann, one of the documentary filmmakers. This essay describes the efforts of an American youth to help create a film that captures the experience of Sierra Leone from an outsider’s point of view. In the handout Heymann emphasizes the importance of listening and openness to new experiences, and how entering another culture requires both curiosity and respect.
Homework assignment: Write a one-page essay on how the author’s perceptions changed after visiting Sierra Leone and what factors might account for those changes.

Activity II: Screening and Discussion

Encourage students to take notes on the main themes of Moving to the Beat, on what parts speak to them, the characters and stories with which they most identify, and any questions they might have as they watch. If you plan on showing the film in two segments, time code 27:17 is a useful stopping place.

Students sometimes laugh when they are uncomfortable with the material, such as sexual scenes, or when characters appear different from acceptable group norms. If students laugh or make rude comments during the screening of the documentary, it may be appropriate to initiate a class discussion: “I noticed that some students laughed at certain points in the film. Why do you think that was? Is laughing sometimes because people are uncomfortable? Can it be hurtful, even if the person being laughed at isn’t in the room?”

Questions for class discussion:

- What did you think about the film?
- What was your favorite part? Why?
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- What character did you identify with most? Why?
- What were some of the main themes in this film?
- Do you think the film was trying to say something? What was it trying to say?
Homework assignment: Write a one-page essay on how the author’s perceptions changed after visiting Sierra Leone and what factors might account for those changes.
Day 4
Moving to the Beat of the Immigrant Experience

In *Moving to the Beat*, Portland hip-hop artists, Rebel Soulz, travel to Sierra Leone to bring the radical roots of American hip-hop to Africa and to find their spiritual homeland. For the African-American members of Rebel Soulz, the trip to Sierra Leone represents a return to their ancestral home in Africa. These American youth had ancestors who came involuntarily to the United States through the Atlantic Slave Trade. The documentary also looks at the immigrant experience through the eyes of an individual. Abdul Fofanah, co-director of *Moving to the Beat*, shares his personal story of how his family and other Sierra Leoneans immigrated to the U.S. to escape conditions in his war-torn country.

Hip-hop, especially in the 1980s, was an important tool for African-American youth to speak about the obstacles African-Americans have faced in pursuing the American Dream. This section explores through *Moving to the Beat* the multiple meanings of this concept and the racial divides that shape the immigrant experience. The activities encourage students to go beyond the ideology of the American Dream to gain a deeper understanding of the role of both fantasy and reality in shaping concepts of America at home and abroad and of hip-hop as a language for cross-cultural dialogue.

**Objectives**

After completing this section students should be able to:

- Identify the relationship between a personal dream and a national dream
- Investigate the role of hip-hop in shaping critiques of the American dream
- Carry out an interview with an immigrant and provide a summary of key themes related to fantasies and realities of America

**Activity I:**
**Film Scenes and Discussion**

Have students watch the scene from *Moving to the Beat* where Rebel Soulz talk about bringing the “real America” to Sierra Leone (time code 13:57–19:03. After watching this scene, select
Questions for class discussion:

- What does the trip to Africa represent to members of the Rebel Soulz?
- What is meant by the term “puffin the dream”?
- What is their criticism of the concept of the American Dream?
- How are Rebel Soulz’s images of America different from those held by Sierra Leonean artists? What factors might contribute to those differences?

Homework assignment: Have students discuss Langston Hughes’s poem, *A Dream Deferred*, published in 1951 (handout #4). Using the poem as a catalyst, have students identify and discuss the meaning of the poem and its metaphors, and the poem’s relevance for today.

Activity II:
Exploring the Immigrant Experience
Distribute “Exploring the Immigrant Experience” (handout #5) and instruct students to complete one of the following activity options. The options provide for a range of time restrictions and skill levels. If offered as a homework assignment, students may be invited to share their papers in class, or to write hip-hop lyrics based on the interview material.

Homework assignment:

- **Write a letter about America:** Write a letter to a person who is thinking about moving to America. What would you tell them? What would you want to know from them?
- **Interview someone new to the country:** Interview someone who has immigrated to the U.S. and write a summary of their responses to the following questions: Where are they from and why did they come to the United States? What did they think America would be like when they came? What is their first memory of arriving? Have their perceptions changed?
- **Interview a first generation American:** Interview a first generation American (born in the United States to immigrants) and write a summary of their responses to the following questions: What country did their parents (or relative) come from? Why did they come to the United States? Which cultural practices were carried to the new country and which were left behind? How are ties preserved with the home country?
One of the recurring criticisms of hip-hop centers on its use of degrading or sexist images of women. Yet this same charge of sexism can be directed at many musical genres, from country, blues, to rock and heavy metal music. The making of Moving to the Beat provided an opportunity to explore how female artists were taking up the aggressive style of hip-hop language, as well as the multiple expressions of masculinities produced through this cultural form. The documentary shows how hip-hop may be enlisted in bridging social divisions, whether based on race, gender, or geographical boundaries.

This section engages students in key concepts in the social sciences that also guide the documentary: rebellion, stereotyping, and sexism. Although the identity of rebel is usually associated with masculinity, the documentary challenges gender stereotyping by introducing female artists who also identify as rebels. Male and female artists use hip-hop to cross the gender divide, just as Black artists from Africa and America cross a geographical divide.

Objectives

After completing this section students should be able to:

- Understand the concept of rebellion
- Explore the problem of sexism
- Learn about stereotypes

Activity I:
Film Scene Screening and Discussion

Through the journey of Rebel Soulz to Sierra Leone, the documentary invites discussion of the identity of rebel and its progressive and destructive potential. Although the differing meanings of the word rebel are taken up throughout the documentary, the segment from time code 20:08-23:30 is useful in opening class discussion.

Questions for class discussion:

- When Ciiz states, “You have to rebel, and that’s just for your soul and for your survival’s sake”, what is he saying?
- In what kinds of situations is it good to be a rebel?
- Why was rebel a disturbing word for many Sierra Leoneans?
- What does being a rebel mean to the hip-hop artists Rebel Soulz?
- What is the Rebel Soulz group trying to accomplish with its rebel stance?
Activity II:
The Problem of Stereotyping

As students develop critical awareness around stereotyping, they sometimes come to the conclusion that it is wrong to put people into categories. If this issue emerges in the classroom, engage students in thinking about important questions on stereotyping.

Emphasize the following dimensions of stereotyping, noting that stereotypes may be either positive or negative:

- Denies the complexity of individuals or groups by defining them through a single or limited set of characteristics
- Maintains systems of power by limiting the self-definition of groups to those categories that have been historically available to them, for example, businessmen, mothers, athletes, or hairdressers
- Creates social distance by limiting the full humanity of individuals or group

Note to Instructor:
A stereotype is a false generalization about an individual or group, even though the stereotype may have some basis in reality. Stereotyping involves drawing a conclusion that has the effect of creating social distance and closing down the process of learning about others. Furthermore, there is a political dimension to this form of categorizing. Stereotyping robs individuals and groups of complexity, reducing them to the crude dimension of a “type.” This is particularly destructive when the individual or group has a history of being defined in narrow or negative ways by the dominant group.

Even “positive” stereotypes can be oppressive. For example, women and people of color are often viewed as more emotional, sensual, and spiritual than their white male counterparts. While these may be perceived as being positive characteristics, they are also used to place women and people of color in a position close to “nature”, and thus less culturally “advanced” than white males. Groups that have been stereotyped may make new uses of the characteristics in the process of redefining themselves, just as they may struggle to break free from older definitions altogether.

Questions for class discussion:
- What categories are useful when describing groups?
- Are there times when categories are destructive?
- What is the difference between classifying or forming categories in positive ways and stereotyping?
Homework assignment: Encourage students to spend 15 minutes writing a reflective essay or rap lyrics on their own experiences with labels and stereotypes. If students are prepared and guidelines are in place, students may be encouraged to share in small group discussions.

Activity III:
Moving to a Different Beat: Lady Bee
In this activity, students are introduced to Lady Bee in the *Moving to the Beat* documentary. The interview with Lady Bee addresses the challenges of being a female hip-hop artist and her response to those challenges. Students consider how Lady Bee’s treatment as a female in a predominately male genre shapes her identification with the rebellious currents of the hip-hop scene.

Distribute *Lady Bee: Staying on Stage* (handout #6) and have students watch the scene from time code 29:18–32:02. After watching Lady Bee’s performance, assign questions for group discussion.

Questions for class discussion:
- Why do you think Lady Bee was cut off?
- What is her explanation? Do you agree with her?
- Have you ever experienced being treated differently because of gender stereotypes?
- What are common stereotypes in commercial hip-hop music?
- Who is hurt and who benefits from stereotypes?

Homework assignment: In addition to handout #6, distribute the full transcription of the Lady Bee interview (handout #7). Encourage students to identify statements in the dialogue that express how the interviewer and Lady Bee address the question of whether being female influenced what happened in her performance. Also encourage students to attend to the role of the interviewer in encouraging Lady Bee to “hold the stage” in this post-performance videotaping of her thoughts on her work as a female and underground hip-hop artist.
Day 6
Sexuality and Hip-Hop Activism:
Fighting the Spread of HIV and AIDS

As an activist project, the *Moving to the Beat* documentary and CD feature artists who use hip-hop to confront issues affecting the lives of youth. The artists in Sierra Leone rap about everyday life and how the HIV/AIDS crisis is part of a bigger picture, including concerns about war, poverty, and unemployment. Many of the songs focus on HIV/AIDS crisis as a source of ongoing fear and concern, but also as a source of learning and expanded visions of community.

The strategies of HIV/AIDS prevention used by the artists in *Moving to the Beat* differ from those utilized by many NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and government agencies. Although the artists in *Moving to the Beat* are explicit about the dangers surrounding HIV/AIDS they also acknowledge the pleasure and playfulness of sexuality. In creating dialogue through these songs, the artists also draw on the African tradition of *call and response* — a tradition that operates as a form of local democracy as performers or speakers “call” on the audience to respond.

◊ Objectives
After completing this section, students should be able to:

- Reflect on the challenges faced by hip-hop artists in Sierra Leone and the United States
- Identify ways that sexual practices have different meanings across generations and cultures
- Discuss gender dynamics associated with risky sexual behavior

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Activity II:
Youth Speaking Out about AIDS

This activity explores the involvement by young hip-hop artists in HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns in Sierra Leone and begins with a screening of an excerpt from the film (time code 23:38 – 27:07). In this segment, Sierra Leonean hip-hop artists speak about their efforts to promote AIDS awareness. Following the screening, divide students into groups. Assign each group questions from the following list.

Questions for small group discussion:

- Was there anything in this segment that surprised you?
- How is music used to address the issue of HIV/AIDS?
- Do you think the songs are effective? Why or why not?
- What are some of the challenges that young people in Moving to the Beat face in advocating safe sex practices?

Activity III:
Pleasures and Danger: Sexuality and HIV/AIDS Education

Through hip-hop, Sierra Leonean artists are able to tell the story of HIV in a way that audiences can hear and incorporate into their daily lives. Much like other places in the world Sierra Leonean hip-hop can include stereotypes and prejudices, as well as more socially positive lyrics.

In addition to listening to the songs on the Moving to the Beat soundtrack and watching the Moving to the Beat DVD, have students review the lyrical excerpts in handout #8, and consider how gender may affect the messages of the songs.

Note to instructor:
The transcribed lyrics include some explicit sexual references, some of which are translated from Krio.
Questions for small group discussion:

- Which risks may be common in public health campaigns against HIV/AIDS infection? How do the Moving to the Beat songs address these risks lyrically? (For example, the problem of further stigmatizing those with infection, developing fears of sexuality, turning off youth with educational messages)
- Is there one song in the Moving to the Beat tracks that would be the most effective in HIV/AIDS education? Why?
- How do the artists draw on their culture in writing the lyrics and performing the songs, and in the messages they choose to convey?
- How might the songs be different if performed by US artists?
- Are there hip-hop songs from US artists that carry a similar message?

Homework assignment: Have students write one verse of a rap song/or a story aimed at creating a conversation between males and females over responsible sex practices.
Resources


Appendix
Student Handouts
The Radical Roots of Hip-Hop

Moving to the Beat—the documentary film, music videos, and songs—grew out of a global youth movement to enlist the language of hip-hop to express outrage and call for change. Musician Disiplin, featured in Moving to the Beat, describes hip-hop as the “soundtrack to our lives.” If hip-hop remains the “soundtrack” for many Black youths, it also finds a responsive chord in streets throughout the world where young people struggle to survive and seek a voice in determining their fates.

Although decidedly contemporary, hip-hop draws on a rich history of musical influences from the art and styles of Africa, America, and the Caribbean—specifically reggae music prevalent on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. For example, rapping echoes African and African-American oral traditions of rhyming and chanting. The call and response pattern of communicating, common in Black religious celebrations, is also used in hip-hop. Oral traditions such as ‘playing the dozens’ as well as jazz and spoken work poetry have been influential in the development of the MC’ing aspect found in hip-hop culture.

The origins of hip-hop are heavily debated and are difficult to trace back to a specific person or group. Many contemporary sources point to the Jamaican immigrant DJ Kool Herc as the true origin of the hip-hop movement. In the early 1970s, with his massive speaker systems nicknamed “The Herculoids”, DJ Kool Herc made hip-hop music an unavoidable aspect of the streets of New York City. In addition to his reclamation of space with his speakers, DJ Kool Herc is also credited with beginning the process of isolating rhythmic drumbeats, or “the break”, in vinyl records. This distinctive music would become the archetypal sound of hip-hop.

In actuality, many people and circumstances created and shaped hip-hop as a movement. The continued evolution of hip-hop took place in 1970s in the Bronx, a borough of New York City. The music was a response on the part of young people to the deteriorating social conditions that plagued their city. Just one generation after many disenfranchised youth sought change through active participation in the civil-rights movement, their children found themselves losing ground economically and struggling to survive.

The following decade saw further economic downturn as the country spiraled into a recession. This nationwide crisis served to intensify the already difficult situations of youth in the poorer communities. The transition of economic resources from the urban centers out to the suburbs, combined with factory closures that wiped out employment opportunities for living-wage jobs, resulted in cuts to social services. Urban renewal, such as the displacement caused by the Cross Bronx Expressway, devastated many of the inner city neighborhoods, as did the influx of drugs and the increasing availability of lethal weaponry. The trauma and violence that many disenfranchised youth experienced in the urban ghettos created the circumstances that gave birth to hip-hop.

While rap music is currently the most popular element of hip-hop art, the culture is multifaceted. Graffiti art, DJ’ing and breakdance once dominated the hip-hop scene. Graffiti, the
oldest of the hip-hop elements, involved the use of spray paint to “tag” buildings, trains, and 
other urban spaces. The graffiti tags were often elaborate and complex pieces of visual art 
that had the aim of reclaiming public spaces. The auditory art form of DJ’ing and the 
physical art form of breakdancing evolved together. DJ’ing originally consisted of the music 
DJ’s creative ability to isolate and loop break beats. These break beats were then used as 
the backdrop of battles between breakdancing “crews.” In a contest to outdo one another, 
DJ’s developed other skills such as scratching. Competition also forced breakdancing to 
evolve into a complicated, choreographed form of expression.

As hip-hop captured a widening youth audience, American entertainment companies 
sought to capitalize on its burgeoning appeal. The identity of mainstream hip-hop began to 
shift from being music “from the streets for the streets,” to a studio produced sound for 
mass consumption. Hip-hop also contributed to the link between “coolness” and Black 
culture. African-Americans had been creatively influencing the arts for years. In fact, at its 
inception, both Rock-and-Roll and country music had drawn heavily on the work of Black 
artists. However, as white recording artists began recording in both genres, and, subse-
quently, the audience of the genre became more white and mainstream, the cultural 
meaning and roots of many of the African chants and rhymes were lost. Hip-hop as an 
emerging art form recaptured the rawness and angst of the African-American experience. 
However, as hip-hop became commercial, it was stripped of its message and its original 
purpose was often lost in the shuffle.

Although commercial hip-hop still held deep associations with Black urban culture, most of 
the lyrics were laundered of their political edge. As the genre attracted a widening audience 
of white youth, often affluent and from the suburbs, recording studios marketed the hip-
hop identity as the cool outlaw. In the 1990s, the hip-hop genre saw the emergence of 
gangsta rap, a narrative outlet describing inner city life, quickly became the preeminent 
form of hip-hop music available to mainstream audiences. However, these raw narratives 
became more exaggerated and one-dimensional as rap became increasingly mainstream. 
The commodification of hip-hop—its mass distribution and consumption for purposes of 
making profits—led some prominent hip-hop artists, such as the rap artist Nas, to proclaim 
the death of hip-hop.

While it appeared on the surface that commercial hip-hop, void of any real political agenda, 
was being embraced by the American youth, the radical roots of American hip-hop were 
being “imported” by the youth into other countries. Looking for a voice, many disenfran-
chised youth who were experiencing their own socio-economic issues in their environment 
embraced the hip-hop art form as a medium of getting their message out to all who would 
listen. A progressive movement of rap music and hip-hop culture thrived in diverse coun-
tries such as England, Japan, South Africa, Palestine, and Brazil. Many of the youth in these 
countries have embraced American hip-hop, yet they have crafted the style and lyrics to 
speak to their local social conditions. The underground scene includes artists such as The 
Coup, Immortal Technique, Rebel Diaz, and Dead Prez. These artists speak out on injustice, 
oppression, and the corporate cooptation of mainstream hip-hop.
Progressive artists in America are looking to bring hip-hop back to its roots, making rap music, as rap artist Chuck D once described it, “the Black CNN”. Following in the footsteps of earlier rap artists, such as Public Enemy, the first openly political rap group, current hip-hop artists are bringing real-life issues back into the music. Almost two decades ago, Public Enemy infused their rap with a Black stance, often drawing on the work of Malcolm X and Black Panther leaders. Their music, although mainstream, sent a radical and progressive message to listeners worldwide. Currently, many of the more progressive musicians adopt a radical vision of hip-hop and its role in social change. However, their music often perpetuates discrimination of women and gays and lesbians. While rapping about the problematic nature of racism and capitalistic exploitation, these same artists use derogatory language and descriptors associated with women and sexual minorities. This will be a challenge for future rap artists to grapple with as they continue to use the medium for social change.

Hip-hop has moved beyond the original four elements (i.e., MC’ing, DJ’ing, graffiti, and breaking) and extends into theatre, fashion, writing, and filmmaking. Artists enlisting these new aspects of hip-hop often take hip-hop beyond its association with bubble letters and rap music. For these artists, hip-hop is a way of life and an identity that may or may not include the original elements. This expansion offers opportunities for hip-hop to continue to develop in areas outside of mainstream white culture. Dominant powers have the ability to take an art, identify, or culture based in some from of resistance and transform it into an agent of commercial culture. But hip-hop is equipped with the ability to constantly evolve and change. In fact, this constant change is often considered one of the primary tenants of hip-hop culture as a whole. The changing face of hip-hop makes it hard to study and understand but it also equips hip-hop with the tools to regenerate itself in the face of challenges.

If hip-hop continues to be the “soundtrack” of the youth searching to find a united voice, it will always find a responsive chord—from Freetown to cities around the globe. Moving to the Beat—the documentary film, music videos, and songs—grew out of this type of global youth movement to enlist the language of hip-hop to express outrage and call for change. The metaphorical soundtrack to Moving to the Beat, as well as the actual one, relays stories of the brutal side of living and surviving in America: hustling money, sex and drugs, and fighting the police. But the soundtrack also carries a message of hope for hard times, and radical possibilities for change.
**HIP-HOP ACTIVISM ACROSS CONTINENTS**

In history, youth culture has played a significant role in changing the world by speaking out and organizing for a common cause. In the 1960s, young people all over the world were making an impact in the struggle for civil rights, social injustice, warfare, and colonialism. Recently, we have seen young people play a prominent role in the Arab spring movements that brought down governments in North Africa and the Middle East.

Music has historically been a powerful genre of protest employed by the youth, its song lyrics documenting for prosperity of the common people’s struggles against perceived injustice. In the Arab spring movements, rappers like El General in Tunisia, and Boge in Libya, helped to give voice to a movement and build momentum for mass efforts to enact change in their countries.

The genre of Hip-hop, which was born in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States, shares a long tradition of activism through music with many cultures around the world. Hip-hop has been a powerful medium in the US because of its tradition of speaking out. Once called “the black CNN” by Chuck D’, hip-hop is rooted in the experience of poverty and racism the African American communities were experiencing in the 1980s.

Ultimately, rap music is popular because of its accessibility. Soccer is the world’s most popular game because all that is needed is some sort of ball. Pele, one of the greatest soccer players ever, learned to play using a grapefruit. The magic of the game is what you do with that ball. With hip-hop, all you need is a beat. It is then up to the artist armed with language to craft his words around the beat. While anyone can employ beat and speech to enact social change, hip-hop music has been the tool of young people in the United States, and now plays a significant role all over the world.

The following is a list of youth from all over the world who have used hip-hop to speak out for social change. Your job is to pick one of these individuals/groups and investigate the causes they speak for in their music. This will involve a review of the country’s history as well as the artist’s personal history.

- The Roots (U.S.A.)
- Black Star—Mos Def and Talib Kweli (U.S.A.)
- Immortal Technique (U.S.A.)
- Lupe Fiasco (U.S.A.)
- Blue Scholars (U.S.A.)
- Le General (Tunisia)
- Sister Fa (Senegal)
- Keur Gui (Senegal)
- Magia (Cuba)
- IAM (France/Marseille)
- Cartel (Germany)
- Racionais MC’s (Brazil)
- Francis Magalona (Philippines)
In the winter of 2007, a group of Portland-based musicians and filmmakers boarded a plane for Freetown, Sierra Leone. The trip had different meanings for the various people heading for this small country in West Africa. For Sawif and Ciiz, members of the Portland-based hip-hop group, Rebel Soulz, it was an opportunity to showcase their music to an overseas audience and to fulfill their dream of connecting with their spiritual homeland as African-Americans. For Sierra Leonean-American Abdul, it was an actual homecoming to a place where he’d spent his childhood before immigrating to America. And for me, as a Portland-based filmmaker living in South Africa, it was a chance to return to Western Africa where I had shot my first documentary film eight years earlier as a high school student. That trip between my junior and senior years of high school started me on a journey that continues today in discovering the fascinating histories of Africa.

Our two-week trip in 2007 became the foundation for the Moving to the Beat documentary, a project that had begun several years prior. I filmed Sawif, Ciiz and Abdul as they mingled with their musical counterparts on the beaches of Freetown, visited with refugees and amputees victimized by the decade-long civil war, and performed live at local clubs. Through interviews, radio appearances, casual conversations and freestyles, the dialogue was broad and ambitious. There was palpable excitement in the air, as if long-lost brothers and sisters were coming together. The chant of “Salon fo go bifo! (Sierra Leone must progress)” and “Forward ahead to Africa” followed us like a steady drum-beat throughout the trip.

The central idea behind Moving to the Beat is that hip-hop bridges the worlds of black youth in Africa and America. Hip-hop is more than the music—it’s a language, an attitude, a way of dressing and moving that forms a common bond and identity. As Afrika Bambaataa observed, hip-hop “dates all the way back to the motherland, where tribes would use call-and-response chants.” Roots can be traced through Cab Calloway’s jazz rhyming and the poetic ‘rapping’ of Isaac Hayes, to the angry political rhetoric of Malcom X. And with this phase of globalization, it’s come full circle back to Africa, where youth rock Tupac tattoos and holler “West Side!”

Bigger-than-life images of Tupac and other hip-hop celebrities were displayed on posters and passing cars—Fancy cars, “bling” and white picket mansions. And this presence of American hip-hop on the streets of Freetown led to a general consensus among our Sierra Leonean friends that America was indeed a “second heaven.” At the same time, they struggled to untangle the radical and commercial roots of American hip-hop. There was
a genuine response to our call to demystify America as the Wonderland. “Moving to the Beat” became a process of breaking down misconceptions that existed between Africa and America, and recovering the radical soul of hip-hop.

The local hip-hop style of Freetown may be derivative of commercial American rap in style and attitude. But in terms of substance and lyrical content, it is far more progressive than most Western hip-hop. In Sierra Leone, there is widespread awareness that music plays an educational and political role through “sensitizing” the masses to social issues. Songs promoting safe sex actually play in clubs as local hits. Young women turned to hip-hop to speak out against sexism, while young men—many of whom had been child war soldiers—put down the gun and picked up the microphone to attack repressive traditions with “lyrical ammunition.”

When we boarded the plane back to America, we knew that this was still a beginning. Sierra Leoneans had embraced the Rebel Soulz and turned them into local celebrities, and now they were already planning their next trip to “Sa’lone.” As co-directors, Abdul and I knew that we had our work cut out in editing the footage back in Portland. But more than that this project had started a small movement, and our connections laid the groundwork for the Moving to the Beat Freetown organization that is currently fifty members strong. The commitment to social change and building an American – African activist connection through progressive hip-hop remains strong. Our documentary Moving to the Beat has recently been screened at film festivals in New York, Atlanta and Amsterdam, and selected for inclusion in the Afropop series by the National Black Programming Consortium.

If you’d like more information or to get involved in the project, please visit our website at www.moving2thebeat.com and send us an email.
A Dream Deferred

By Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?
Exploring the Immigrant Experience

Pick one of the following options to explore the immigrant experience.

I. Write a letter
Write a letter to a person who is thinking about moving to America.

Some questions to consider:
- What would you tell them about America?
- What would you want to know from them?
- How do they think America will be different from their homeland?
- Any advice you want to give them?

II. Interview someone
Interview someone who has immigrated to the U.S. and write-up the interview.

Some questions to consider:
- What did they think America would be like when they came?
- Has their perception changed?
- How is it similar and different from their homeland?
- What has been the best part of living in America?
- What are some of the things they find most difficult?
- How do they combine the heritage of their family with the American culture? Do they identify more with one or the other?
Watch the performance of Lady Bee on the *Moving to the Beat* documentary. As a class discuss the following questions:

A. What is lady Bee’s explanation for why she was cut off during the performance?

B. Do you agree with her explanation?

C. Have you experienced such blatant discrimination? If so: Where and in what situation? How did such discrimination make you feel? How did you handle the discrimination?

D. What views do the Sierra Leonean men have of women hip-hop artists?

E. What views do the Sierra Leonean women have of the men in their community? How do the women view themselves in their community?

F. What are the common stereotypes in hip-hop music? Where do these stereotypes come from? Who is hurt by gender stereotypes? Who benefits from gender stereotypes?
This dialogue is the transcription of the complete interview with Lady Bee in the performance. The Moving to the Beat film includes selections from this dialogue.

Interviewer: What is your name and what do you do?
LB: My name is Lady Bee, and I am a musician.

Interviewer: What is your real name?
LB: My real name is Aminata Kamara.

Interviewer: Lady Bee how did you feel when they turned your music off before you finished?
LB: I didn’t feel very good about that.

Interviewer: Do you think that it is because you are a lady that they treated you that way?
LB: No, not because I am a female, because the system was having problems, they should have tried to fix it. But, instead I was into my performance and I was hype, right as I got the crowd into my performance they broke my zeal.

Interviewer: Do you think that if you were a guy they would have worked this problem out, and listened?
LB: Yes, if it was a guy they would have fixed the situation and listened to him. And they would have changed the song and replaced it with another one if it was a guy. But, I’m a lady and I guess I don’t have the same strength as a man.

Interviewer: So what do you think that the people of Sierra Leone should do about female musicians?
LB: They should assist us, the ladies, so that in the future if something like this happens I should be able to continue and entertain the crowd.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your performance tonight?
LB: I’m satisfied. But in another way I’m not satisfied because the way I intended to perform I was not given a chance to perform that way.

Interviewer: So what do you want to tell the world about this kind of treatment that Sierra Leonean female artist have to go through?
LB: I want the world to know that we need assistance so that we woman can get our rights. Anything that we do we should have the chance to do it so that we can be free and when we
Lady B

are performing we should be allowed to perform the way that we want to perform so that the crowd will be happy for us.

**Interviewer:** What advice do you have for the people of Sierra Leone?

**LB:** I would advise the Sierra Leonean people not to underestimate us or underrate us they should take us as equals as the big artist. They shouldn’t take the bigger artist to be more important than us. Because I believe that if it was a bigger artist that was performing they would not have treated that artist the same way that they treated me. It is because I’m an underground artist. This is why I was treated this way. So I want our people to control this kind of behavior so that us the young ones will get our rights as up and coming artist.

**Interviewer:** Lady B, how much music have you sang?

**LB:** Well I have about eight songs that are already on the CD plus I have a new album that I am working on.

**Interviewer:** Who is supporting you on your new album?

**LB:** I don’t have anyone supporting me; I do it by myself with the help of my mother. My mother took some of the money from her business and invested it in me. I went to the studio with that money to record my album. Supporters will say that they are supporting me but when it is time they are nowhere to be found. So right now I am suffering.

**Interviewer:** So how do you feel about that? They say they will support you then they disappear.

**LB:** It doesn’t make me feel good it pains me in my heart. It makes me cry every day. It doesn’t make me feel good at all. At times it makes me feel like I don’t belong in the music field but when I sit down I have so much music in my head. And it gives me courage that some day God will send me a Godly person to assist me.

**Interviewer:** So your mother is taking business money and investing in you? How does she feel about the way that you are being treated?

**LB:** Mother always tells me not to be discouraged because when I am discouraged I lose weight, and get stressed. I should stay focused until God sends me the godly person that will help support me.

**Interviewer:** So what advice do you have for fellow musicians like yourself?
LB: They should have courage because if you don’t have courage in music then you get discouraged. If I didn’t have courage then I would stop making music but I still have a lot of courage. Wherever there is a performance I am ready to go and perform. Maybe it is in one of these places where God will send the right person to help.

Interviewer: How do you feel about Hip Hop?

LB: Hip-hop is very good. I love hip-hop and that is my field.

Interviewer: So hip-hop is the kind of music that you intend to do throughout your whole music career?

LB: Well sometimes I rap and do other genres of music but hip-hop is the field that I belong to.

Interviewer: So you have adopted this hip-hop music? How do you think it’s going to benefit your self and your mother?

LB: I believe when my album gets released I will be able to re-pay my mother for all that she has invested in my music career.

Interviewer: What is the last word of advice that you have for your fellow musicians that are in the same boat as you?

LB: I want to tell them to have courage and not to give up because if you are discouraged you will never reap the benefits of your suffering, but if you have courage one day you will get what you want. This is my advice to the young up-coming artist.
**Freeze**  
*By Barmmy Boy*  

*Second verse:*  
Baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, you got to know Bammy can flow, so you have to blow (take it easy).  
You got to show the life that you’re living, so you gotta blow.  
If AIDS attack you, it’s a big *dombolo* (catastrophe)  
So you can jump like Jackie Chan, and you can pull all kinds of patterns, you can move from man to man, move from hand to hand, house to house, post to post (being seen).  
From pot to pot, *tity* (young woman, not derogative), tell me when you are ready to go home.  
Stop posing, stop posing, if you don’t want AIDS to block your nose.  
If you don’t want AIDS to block your nose, my advice is to use condoms.  
If you don’t want AIDS to knock you down and check your ego, wreck you and die, then don’t be going all about (promiscuous).  
When nightfall comes, you grab your bag, you continue to go around all about.  
I’m warning you, if you don’t stop, HIV will end up making you smell like rot.  
I’m tired, I’m tired, I’m tired of you.  
Get, get, get out of here.  
Please don’t be around here, tity, I’m tired of you, your style, please get out of here.

**Bad Disease**  
*By Freezo Creame feat, Slim A, and JD Kamel*  

*Third Verse:*  
Baby, too much rough sex won’t make you blessed. Baby, take it like I’m saying. They will really take you for less. Some men don’t even know you, they will think less. Hi, take it easy. Come let us master this, think like *Pile* (a soccer player). Because when the virus traps you, you will die, sister. How are you going to be walking? You have to be faithful to your partner. Because *flesh to flesh* (no protection) is against the motion. So sister, take your time. HIV/AIDS does not play. If you are tuned in, you’ll say goodbye to this world. You’ll just be run down. And that’s how you’ll be run down-o (”o” at the end of word means something much bigger is happening).

**Be Wise**  
*By Mems B feat Justice and Luxson*  

*Second Verse:*  
Oh my brothers, try to be conscious, for the virus HIV is flying across.  
Oh my sisters, try to be wise, for the virus HIV is running too fast.  
Oh you players, go tell your partners to use the condom anytime you wanna have sex.  
Don’t use a needle to inject two people, that’s the way that you can catch this virus.  
HIV is flying, so if you wanna be saved, you better buy your new blade.  
Oh my brothers and sisters, you better be wise, HIV is real.