

LORENZO RENNIE HARRIS P.H.D.

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Teaching Statement & Philosophy

Since the age of 15, I have been dedicated to educating the masses about Hip-Hop dance and culture. Exploring ways in which to bring this form to the community, concert stage and academia, I've been inspired to educate popular "culturalists"-mainstream thinkers and the "neo" Hip-Hop generation not only about it's history and relevance but rather bring to light its humanitarian foundation and philosophy. Like many original American art forms, this is a discipline founded in the African Diaspora, and as much as we associate Hip-Hop with youth, its progenitors were primarily born between 1955 and 1965. Therefore confirming a forward thinking movement who's goals in their prime were to ensure lineage, equality and peace for all. Most are mis-informed or have a preconceived notion of what Hip-Hop dance and culture is. With that said, it should be known that my philosophy as an educator is the direct result of being born before Hip-Hop became Hip-Hop as we know it today. Having watched it's evolution and being immersed in it's revolution, I was afforded a very unique perspective, one that is often overlooked. There are three unspoken laws of Hip-Hop 1.) individuality 2.) creativity and last but not least 3.) innovation. At every turn a practitioner of Hip-Hop must be identified as an independent thinker who is creative and innovative in all he or she does. Freestyle and improvisation is "the" core method of progressivity in our culture. We aren't allowed to wear the same clothes twice, nor repeat the same dance movement or lyric. Simply put improvisation embraces change rather than resisting it. These three laws ensures the natural progression of our experience as humans. Without them we become stagnant and complacent as a race of beings. Our very existence stems from our growth mentally and spiritually. It's imperative that we evolve, reaching beyond the limitations we unwisely set on ourselves. Embraced by the cipher, the improvisation of dance and lyric teaches it's students humility, confidence, skill, collaboration and discipline; which are nothing more than life tools. Govern by a "poly-rhythmic" time signature, this pedagogical approach uses the philosophical understanding of the Hip-hop "cipher"-360 degrees of knowledge, wisdom and understanding, to teach objectivity, balance and progression. . In my opinion the way we receive information is cycler in nature, not linear. "Structure" is worshiped as a "God"-line, when in fact it is a guide-line. Cycler thinking acknowledges structure as being flexible in nature. Its ok if you deviate (improvisation) from

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the path, or in dance or rhyme the time signature. Maybe you will come back to the path or maybe not. Its your choice, its your voice and individual right to change your time signature if you will. Yes, this is Hip-Hop but more importantly this is being Human. Identifying self, loving self and respecting self. Once we have achieved or come close to this understanding we are able to engage in the motto of Kevin Donovan-(Afrikan Bambatta), "Peace Love & Universal Truth."