

Cross-School “Bring Your Own Idea” 2015 Program

Washington University in St. Louis

Proposing Faculty: Sheretta Butler-Barnes, Sowande’ Mustakeem, and Paul Steinbeck

Proposed Title:

‘All I Need Is One Mic’: Youth, Music, and Memory in the Era of Social Change

The current global landscape of violence, reemerging importance of race, and most especially the transformative power of social media has revealed the inter/cross-racial voices of youth actively demanding social change, social difference, and the betterment of society for the near and far future. One of the most powerful cultural forms that has vocalized protest, angst, and the demands for social change across time and space has been music. Tapping into the global power of music - regardless of genre - in serving as a voice, bridge, transmitter and archive of the past, the intention of this proposed “idea” is to amass Washington University faculty members across different units, schools, and most of all diverse racial and ethnic identities, whose scholarship and broader research interests can ignite conversations centered on music, youth, identity, empowerment, poetry, lyrical construction, social change, and generational memory, among a multitude of other exciting thematic possibilities. From another hyper-local perspective, given the recent rise of political, social, and economic activism both on and off campus, proposing this idea within the locale of St. Louis offers a tremendous opportunity for faculty to not only gather for big-topic conversations, but also to take such queries off campus to discern if, where, and how music is actively being used as an ongoing communal bridge and site of protest. The array of faculty who have all agreed to be a part of this cadre of scholars can each bring varied thematic perspectives about the utility of music, while offering insights into how these trends can best be accessed by our students and colleagues. Furthermore, the rise of scholarly and popular interest in the Ferguson movement, as well as the profound involvement of diverse musical artists in Ferguson and elsewhere in Missouri, serves as a key locus that intellectuals can engage and problematize. For instance, the recent news that Talib Kweli, an internationally renowned hip-hop artist and cultural worker, has agreed to donate \$100,000 to Ferguson protestors, reveals the increasing reconnection of hip hop with social and political activism, and moreover the economic influence exerted by musical artists who publicly endorse and financially

support these energies.¹ Finally, converging faculty through this proposed cross-school programmatic idea can potentially reshape conversations on music, race, meaning, power, and memory, towards showing us how to integrate music into the college classroom as a means of evoking greater understanding about the past, present, and future potentials still unlocked.

Preferred style of gathering: coffee or cocktails; group depending.

Preferred semester: Fall 2015

Participants Agreed (in writing Feb 2015)

William Acree (Romance Languages)

Ignacio Infante (Romance Languages)

Sheretta Butler-Barnes (Brown School of Social Work)

Anika Walke (History)

Michelle Purdy (Education)

Trevor Sangrey (WGSS)

Lerone Martin (Center for Religion and Politics)

Sowande' Mustakeem (History/AFAS)

Paul Steinbeck (Music)

Pending Invitations (as of submission)

Jonathan Fenderson (AFAS)

Adina Sterling (Olin Business School)

Diana Montano (History)

¹ Brennan Williams, "Talib Kweli's Ferguson Defense Fund to Distribute Over \$100,000 To Local Protestors," *HuffPost Black Voices*, 17 February 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/17/talib-kweli-ferguson-defense-fund-local-protestors_n_6698014.html.