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Tuesday, April 7, 2009

University hosts 'green' hip-hop expo Event will promote sustainability using arts and entertainment

Apr 6, 2009

By Megana Greve and George Mauzy

What do hip-hop and sustainability have in common? More than you might think.

A free, interactive expo on Saturday, April 11, at Baker University Center will blend the ideas of hip-hop and sustainability to find ways to improve urban and rural communities. The event will run from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

"We wanted to do something positive using the activist and progressive elements of the hip-hop culture," said Assistant Professor of African American Studies Akil Houston, one of the expo's organizers. "So many times you hear the negative aspects of hip-hop. Instead of focusing on what hip-hop is not, we wanted to show what it is."

The expo will feature three sets of concurrent workshops that will address topics such as greening your life, poetry writing and performance, and hip-hop's relationship with the media. A student-led discussion about sustainability in the Athens community is also on the agenda. Students will also be asked to write their sustainability solutions on the expo's graffiti wall.

Majora Carter, an award-winning environmental justice activist, will deliver the keynote address. She is a co-host on Sundance Channel's "The Green" and host of a public radio show titled "The Promised Land."

Carter has gained national prominence for the work of her non-profit environmental organization, Sustainable South Bronx. Under her leadership, it has developed green-collar job training and placement systems in economically depressed U.S. cities. In 2005 she won a \$500,000 MacArthur Foundation "Genius" award, which is given annually to people who show exceptional merit and promise for continued and enhanced creative work.

Carter's first major project was the South Bronx Greenway, an 11-mile alternative space that encompasses bicycle and pedestrian routes, local economic development, low-impact storm water management and a recreation space for the community. Her projects have helped communities clean the air, reduce the urban heat island effect, and create more jobs.

"I am inspired by what Majora Carter is doing because her work came as a result of her simply asking herself why she couldn't take a walk in a nice park in her neighborhood," said Ayanna Jordan, expo co-founder and director of Ohio University's Upward Bound program. "Aside from telling her own story, she will tell attendees what they can do in their own community to make it greener and better."

Invincible, an Israeli-born female rapper, will discuss the displacement and gentrification occurring in her hometown of Detroit and close the expo with a rap performance. Recognized as one of the best independent artists in hip-hop by XXL Magazine, she released her debut album "ShapeShifters" in June.

Affrilachian Poets members Mitchell L.H. Douglas, Ricardo Nazario y Colón,



Environmental activist Majora Carter will deliver the expo's keynote address.



Rapper Invincible will give a lecture and close the expo with a performance.

Photo(s) courtesy of the Department of African American Studies

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Bianca Springs-Floyd and Frank X Walker will conduct workshops on written and performance poetry. The group, which has been featured on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, also will conduct a poetry reading of their own works.

"Hip-hop is one of the few social programs in this century that is working," Houston said. "When you think about the cross-racial dialogue and the way young people tap into political consciousness through it, what better way is there to talk about sustainability in both rural and urban areas?"

Ohio University's Building Education Through the Arts and Transforming Society (B.E.A.T.S.) is hosting the event.

The expo, which is part of the Department of African American Studies' 40th anniversary, is being sponsored by Arts for Ohio, African American Studies, the colleges of [Education](#) and [Arts and Sciences](#), Hip Hop Congress, [Office of Sustainability](#), [Student Activities Commission](#), [Upward Bound](#) and [United Campus Ministries](#).

Although the expo is free and open to the public, [registration is required](#) because seating is limited. Registration includes a free lunch and other incentives.

For more information or to register, visit www.ohio.edu/aas/hiphop.

Related Links

Hip-hop Expo Web site: <http://www.ohio.edu/aas/hiphop/>

Arts for Ohio: <http://www.finearts.ohio.edu/artsforohio/>

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