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Roots and Culture as a Basis for Transformation in Adult Education

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Abstract: This paper discusses the completed indepth interviews of six youth who participated in hip-hop and reggae critical music reflection sessions. The group process experience and the voices of the youth are reported in this presentation. Hip-hop and Reggae cultural movements provide a medium for learning and presents possibilities for social transformation through the generation of new voice and knowledge.

This paper examines Reggae and the Hip-Hop Cultural Movements among young urban youth and sets out the conditions under which social transformation can occur and lead to new knowledge creation and social action. Art can effectively instigate social transformation when learning occurs through an accessible critical social discourse rooted in social realities. Reggae and the Hip-Hop Cultural Movements provide an informal medium for learning and presents possibilities for social transformation through the generation of new voice and knowledge among urban youth.

Historically, black musical culture has always generated a socially conscious message communicated through song lyrics and seen in protest and songs of resistance to social injustice from the old Negro spirituals to the blues, Reggae and Hip-Hop as well as other musical genre. While manifestations of social and economic injustice in marginalized communities today remain prevalent, popular musical culture in which young urban youth are drawn still seeks to provide a social critique rooted in the social realities of urban life.

Born out of the conditions in marginalized communities Reggae emerged as a response. Reggae is a popular musical form that originated in Jamaica in the late 1960's and is associated with the Rastafarian Movement. The Rastafarian movement was developed as a political and cultural movement that emerged among communities of poor and working class Jamaicans. During the 1970's reggae music achieved global popularity and gained recognition as an effective intervention in social processes, derived from Rastafarian philosophy.

It is through reggae song lyrics and elements of discourse about reggae music in relation to Rastafarian cultural practices that brings about the shared experience of meaning making. Music and the effects of music can alter a people's definition of themselves and lead to social transformation. Music can often play an important role as a structurer and mediator of social consciousness.

The emergence of Hip-Hop Culture represents a resurfacing of a "raw" social consciousness that presents a vivid picture of a social reality identified with the marginalized black youth that black leaders, particularly the intellectuals have ignored. This music has captured the attention of our

youth unlike popular musical culture in the past. The technological transformation in communications through global networks that virtually transmits instantaneously all over the world has created an accessibility to popular culture never experienced before. The Hip-Hop culture has spawned a new generation of organic intellectuals, the Hip-Hop artist, and offers a new site for social learning among urban African American youth.

Our examination of the Reggae and Hip-Hop Cultural Movements focuses on the possibilities for social transformation through learning among urban youth participating in the cultural production of knowledge. More specifically in this paper we will examine how the depiction of social roles such as gender, attitudes and behavior as uncritically presented in dance hall Reggae and some forms of Hip-Hop music. The consumers and active participants in the movement can through critical social discourse provide an avenue for social transformation and the generation of new knowledge. This transformational process presents new ways of knowing and alternative approaches to the exchange of knowledge, where the marginalized voices of our urban youth can be heard and reflected in social action.

The authors completed indepth interviews of six youth who participated in a six month hip-hop and reggae critical music reflection sessions in which the meaning and the transformative forces of this emerging urban phenomena were explored. The authors facilitated the reflection sessions and selected members to provide interviews data on the meaning of the music on their lives. The group process experience and the voices of the young participants are reported in this presentation.