

WE JUST STILL x HIP HOP LITERACIES FEST 2026

Multi-Site Festival | The Ohio State University & Columbus Community
May – June 2026

Conference Request for Proposals

Conference Theme: Hip Hop as Healing: Reclaiming Our Stories, Restoring Our Communities

Submission Deadline: March 30, 2026

Acceptance Notifications: April 7, 2026

Conference Dates: June 5-6, 2026

Location: The Ohio State University, Sullivant Hall

About the Festival

The We Just Still x Hip Hop Literacies Fest 2026 brings together scholars, artists, educators, and community members to explore Hip Hop as a healing practice. Building on our successful 2025 conference that connected over 200 participants across the U.S. and Canada, this year's festival deepens our commitment to centering community wisdom alongside academic knowledge.

We believe Hip Hop has always been about healing—from the Bronx block parties that transformed pain into celebration, to the cyphers where young people find their voice, to the beats that help us process. This festival honors Hip Hop's power to heal individuals, restore communities, and reclaim narratives that have been distorted or ignored.

Hip Hop healing happens when:

- **Stories get reclaimed:** Communities tell their own truths instead of being defined by others
- **Bodies find freedom:** Through breaking, dance, and movement that releases what's been held
- **Voices get amplified:** MCing and spoken word become tools for processing trauma and claiming power
- **Spaces get created:** Hip Hop becomes sites of learning where people can be whole, seen, and held by their community
- **Knowledge gets preserved:** Elders and youth connect through cultural practices that keep our histories alive
- **Joy gets practiced:** Even in struggle, Hip Hop makes space for celebration, play, and collective joy

This festival explores Hip Hop not as something to study from the outside, but as a living practice that communities use to survive, resist, and thrive. We center anti-extractive practices, meaning we approach Hip Hop in ways that honor, support, and give back to the communities who created and sustain the culture, rather than simply taking knowledge for academic purposes.

Who Should Submit

We welcome proposals from:

- **Scholars and researchers** studying Hip Hop's role in healing and wellness
- **Hip Hop artists** (MCs, DJs, dancers, graffiti artists, producers) whose practice serves their community
- **Educators** using Hip Hop pedagogies in schools and community settings
- **Youth workers and organizers** building healing spaces through Hip Hop culture
- **Cultural workers and archivists** preserving Hip Hop histories and knowledge
- **Practitioners** using Hip Hop in therapeutic, restorative justice, or wellness contexts
- **Community leaders** working at the intersection of Hip Hop and social healing

You don't need traditional academic credentials. We value lived experience, artistic practice, and community knowledge equally.

What We're Looking For

We prioritize proposals that demonstrate how Hip Hop serves as a healing practice. We're especially interested in work that explores:

Hip Hop as Healing Theory & Practice

- Hip Hop as a framework for understanding and processing individual and collective trauma
- The healing power of Hip Hop's five elements (knowledge, graffiti, DJing, breaking, MCing)
- Hip Hop's role in mental health, wellness, and emotional regulation
- Hip Hop as spiritual practice and ritual
- Joy, play, and pleasure as healing practices within Hip Hop culture

Community Healing & Cultural Reclamation

- How Hip Hop helps communities reclaim stories and resist harmful narratives
- Hip Hop's role in building healing spaces and "third spaces" for community gathering
- Intergenerational healing through Hip Hop knowledge transmission
- Hip Hop as resistance to cultural erasure and displacement
- Community archiving and cultural memory work as healing practice

Hip Hop Pedagogies for Liberation

- Using Hip Hop pedagogical frameworks to create healing-centered learning environments
- Hip Hop as sites of learning where students' identities and experiences are affirmed
- Anti-extractive practices in studying and teaching Hip Hop—approaches that give back to communities rather than just taking knowledge from them
- Youth development and mentorship through Hip Hop culture

- Hip Hop as bridge between street knowledge and academic knowledge

Creative & Economic Justice

- Arts entrepreneurship that keeps resources in community
- Hip Hop's role in economic healing and wealth building
- Digital technology and AI in service of Hip Hop communities
- Sustainable models for community-institution partnerships
- Creative placemaking and cultural preservation

How to Submit

Choose the format that best fits your work:

Presentation

What to submit: A 400-word abstract that includes:

- Your name, contact info, and affiliation (if you have one)
- Your connection to the work/community you're presenting about
- Clear explanation of your topic and why it matters for Hip Hop healing
- How your work contributes to understanding Hip Hop as healing practice

Good for: Research findings, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, case studies, program evaluations, autoethnography, community-based research

Panel Discussion

What to submit: A 500-word proposal that includes:

- Panel title and names/contact info for all participants
- Each participant's role and expertise
- Overview of the conversation you'll facilitate
- How the panel creates space for multiple perspectives on Hip Hop healing

Good for: Exploring a topic from different angles, bringing together practitioners and scholars, community conversations, intergenerational dialogues

Immersive Workshop

What to submit: A 300-word proposal that includes:

- Workshop title, your name and contact info
- Clear description of what participants will do and learn
- Your background/experience leading this type of work
- How your workshop embodies Hip Hop as healing practice
- Any materials or space requirements

- Workshops may include engagement with your own artistic practice in relation to hip hop ((MCing, DJing, producing, dance, spoken word, visual art). If so please upload a link to your performance sample (video, audio, or image portfolio).

Good for: Hands-on skill-building, creative practices, somatic/embodied work, community dialogue processes, artistic creation

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

1. **Connection to healing:** How clearly does the work demonstrate Hip Hop's role in individual or collective healing?
2. **Community grounding:** Is the work rooted in authentic community relationships and experiences?
3. **Knowledge contribution:** Does it advance our understanding of Hip Hop healing theory or practice?
4. **Quality and innovation:** Is the work well-developed, thoughtful, and creative?
5. **Accessibility:** Can diverse audiences engage with and learn from this work?
6. **Sustained impact:** Does it have potential to create lasting change beyond the conference?

Important Notes

Language & Accessibility

We value clear, accessible language. Academic jargon is not required. Write in the language that feels most authentic to you and your work.

Collaborative Proposals Welcome

We encourage partnerships across organizations, institutions, and community groups. Multi-voiced panels and collaborative workshops are especially encouraged.

Community Partnerships Valued

If your work involves community partners, please describe those relationships and how they informed your proposal.

What Happens Next

- **March 30, 2026:** Proposals due
- **April 7, 2026:** Acceptance notifications sent
- **April 2026:** Full festival schedule and details released
- **June 6, 2025:** Conference presentations take place

Questions? Contact us at email: banner.47@osu.edu and hill.2029@osu.edu

