

## Opening remarks

After the screening of Byron Hurt's award-winning documentary 'Hip-hop: beyond beats and rhymes' on the evening before the workshop, a member of the audience asked: "Why have a workshop on hip-hop? What is the point of this workshop?" This excellent question gives me the opportunity to make clear, from the outset, that the aim of this workshop is not to judge hip-hop, it is not to criminalize or de-criminalize it. The media have been doing enough of that. As academics, and people willing to go the extra mile, we are here to UNDERSTAND hip-hop as a cultural phenomenon in its many dimensions: its relationship with gender and race, the different forms it takes in different parts of the world, its appeal to people of different backgrounds, what are its effects on the participants and the audience, and how language, music and dance work together to generate these effects. Hip-hop is something we all have come across in our everyday experience, either directly, or through the media. We want to do justice to the various dimensions and many voices in hip-hop culture, to move beyond the stereotypes about hip-hop, and find out why such stereotypes exist, where they come from, why they take the forms they take, and, perhaps, how they may be called into question and changed.

I would like to thank the people who took up my invitation to participate in this workshop, either as plenary speakers, as presenters of papers, or as panelists during the final roundtable discussion. Each of them brings a different perspective, either as people who analyze hip-hop, or as people making it.

This event is sponsored by 18 units across UIUC, without whose support it would not have been possible. Bear with me while I read through the list, they deserve to be mentioned at least once during the day:

the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics  
the Department of Linguistics  
the Center for Advanced Study  
the Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education program  
the School of Music  
the European Union Center  
the Department of Educational Policy Studies  
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the Department of Educational Psychology  
the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center  
the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies  
the Department of French  
the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures  
the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities

Last but not least I'd like to thank the students of the Department of Linguistics who are a part of this event, either by presenting papers, or by helping out with registration and coffee breaks. This event is addressed more than anyone else to our students, and I hope they will profit from, and contribute to, the discussions in this room but also beyond it.

The organizer  
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