



HIP HOP DIPLOMACY

10/15/22 -
10/28/22

CONTACT NEXT LEVEL
nextlevel@meridian.org

WEBSITE
www.nextlevel-usa.org

CONTACT ECA
eca-press@state.gov

SOCIAL MEDIA
  



About

Next Level is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Meridian International Center. Its mission is to use Hip Hop music and dance to foster cross-cultural creative exchange in diverse communities.

Next Level works with U.S. embassies and consulates to create two-week residencies that reach underserved communities and youth. Teams of six American Hip Hop artist-educators collaborate with local organizations and musicians to facilitate workshops, lecture-demonstrations, and master classes, as well as formal and informal live performances. All activities are designed to promote the mutual sharing of knowledge, values, perspectives, and respect between local communities and American artists. Workshops, which span several hours each day, emphasize the development of musical and entrepreneurial skills and promote conflict transformation strategies. A final public performance concludes each residency, and professional-grade musical equipment is donated to local partners to encourage continued learning and growth.

Since 2014, Next Level has organized successful exchange programs in more than 35 countries across 6 continents, as well as U.S. residencies for artists from those international programs.

In 2021-2022, residencies will take place in the United Arab Emirates, Barbados, Portugal, Ecuador, Poland, Nepal, Laos, Argentina, Haiti, and Ghana.



The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs promotes international mutual understanding through a wide range of academic, cultural, private-sector, professional, and sports exchange programs. These exchanges engage youth, students, educators, artists, athletes, and emerging leaders in many fields in the United States and in more than 160 countries. Alumni of ECA exchanges comprise over one million people around the world, including more than 50 Nobel Laureates and more than 320 current or former heads of state and government.



Meridian International Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit diplomacy center that connects leaders through culture and collaboration to drive solutions for global challenges. The Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy harnesses the arts to engage audiences around the world through compelling exhibitions, exchanges, forums, public-private partnerships, educational initiatives, and community outreach, resulting in individuals and communities finding common ground, forging more stable relationships, and fostering genuine respect.



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

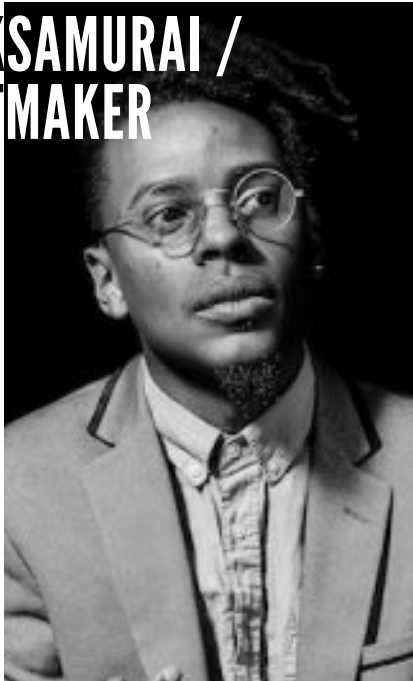


The Institute for the Arts and Humanities at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill empowers faculty to achieve their full potential by creating community and cultivating leadership. The IAH supports its mission through its Faculty Fellows Program by sponsoring conferences, lectures, and public conversations. The Institute trains and supports current and emerging university leaders through the Academic Leadership Program. The Institute promotes community through its Faculty Programs that build mentoring networks for faculty at all stages of their academic careers.



PARTNERS

BLVK SAMURAI / BEATMAKER



Charles “BLVK Samurai” Burchell is a music producer, rapper, multi-instrumentalist, and educator from New Orleans, Louisiana. Burchell is a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. For the last ten years, Burchell has performed nationally and internationally and given masterclasses at various universities around the world. Burchell has also taught and designed music programs at the K-12 level for various schools and institutions. Burchell has worked in cultural diplomacy for the last six years while also teaching music production programs at John Cabot University and Saint Louis College of Music. Burchell is the founder of LEX Sounds, a sample pack label that distributes high quality music samples on the popular website Splice.com.

Hailing out of the New York City area, Mazzi is part of a group called S.O.U.L. (Sense Of Understanding Life’s) Purpose. He considers it to be the biggest crew in Hip Hop since anyone who helps music prosper is a part of it! If you’ve streamed music online, produced a beat, or contributed to further development of the music, you’re a S.O.U.L. Purpose member! Since the late 1990s, Mazzi has collaborated with N.O.R.E., Jadakiss, and others. He has performed alongside or opened up for artists such as Eminem, G-Unit, Black Eyed Peas, and more! Traveling to more than 50 countries, Mazzi and S.O.U.L. Purpose dedicate themselves to global philanthropy through working with nonprofit organizations and charities. They also have conducted, organized workshops and performed worldwide for underprivileged youth. As a whole, they have always strived to bring social awareness, activism, and unity through Hip Hop culture. Mazzi & S.O.U.L. Purpose are from the people and for the people; dedicating time and energy to better situations with zero politics!

MAZZI / MC



DIAMOND D / BEATMAKER



Joseph “Diamond D” Kirkland has created an extensive discography, including a Grammy Award in 1996 for his production contribution on the Fugees LP, *The Score* (which won Best Rap Album), and was nominated a second time for a Grammy in 2008 for co-production on Natalie Cole’s cover of Aretha Franklin’s “Day Dreaming.” In 2010, *XXL* magazine named him among their top ten producers who rhyme. In 2011, *The Source* magazine named him among the top ten producers who rhyme and in 2013 he was presented with the [iStandard] Producers “Living Legend” award. He has also scored music and worked on several motion picture soundtracks.



BAO PHAM / VIDEOGRAPHER

Raised in Portland, Oregon, Bao Pham started her artistic & dance journey out of her hometown freestyle community in 2009. Moving beyond sessions and battles, Bao shifted to event organizing in her local scene with the ADAPT team with the dance celebration holding its annual summer event within the Portland Metro and Beaverton area. In addition to event curating, her work funneled into the media realm, with camera work. Developing her methods through various visual art disciplines, Bao is a self and community-taught videographer, photographer, and graphic designer.

HANNAH G-W / DANCER



Hannah "G-W" George-Wheeler is a Vermont native who started her career as a gymnast before becoming a cultural ambassador through exchange programs in Costa Rica, Spain, and France. G-W earned her bachelor's degree in French Literature with a minor in anthropology from George Washington University. While there, she competed with GWU's hip hop dance team, Capital Funk. In 2010, she joined Urban Artistry, Inc./Assassins Crew, where she developed skills in breaking, house dance, and whacking under the mentorship of Junious Brickhouse. As a community builder, G-W has taken conflict transformation courses, taught dance classes, and worked on cultural preservation projects.

ORB / DANCER



Orb is an MC, Bboy, and House dancer with over 20 years of experience performing, competing, judging, and teaching at major dance events worldwide. As a member of the Circle of Fire dance crew, Orb blends Hip Hop, breaking, house dancing, and Capoeira into his performances. Working both locally in Seattle, WA and internationally, Orb has taught dance workshops for youth and adults in Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America.

AGANA / AEROSOL



AGANA is a multi-dimensional, contemporary mural artist hailing from the San Francisco Bay Area. Agana gives public walls vibrant life with her iconic pictorial imagery, bold aesthetics, bursting colors, and textual calligraphic gestures. At the intersection of aerosol art and street art practices, she communicates common social threads through her monumental vision. She also translates the artistic mural process into fruitful community-building strategies. Agana creates platforms for successful global art projects on city buildings across the Americas and worldwide, from Switzerland to Senegal.



LAURA BUSTILLOS / VIDEOGRAPHER

Laura Bustillos Jáquez is a documentary filmmaker and photographer from the border of Mexico and the United States. As a transnational woman of color, she focuses on telling stories about immigration and social reconstruction movements within the U.S.-Mexico border and the world. Laura graduated with a BA in Visual Journalism and a special recognition from Brooks Institute in Ventura, California. She then obtained a David Lynch MA in Film at Maharishi University in 2015. She is the founder of LaBú Productions and is currently based in New York City & Ciudad Juarez-El Paso (U.S.-Mexico Border).

Corey James Gray fka iLLspokinn is an international performer, songwriter, and organizer in New York City. His songs have been featured in several television commercials, including a promotion for NBC's coverage of the Winter Olympics. Corey has been a featured performer at the Atlantic Music Expo in Cabo Verde, the Timitar Festival in Morocco, and the NBA's London games in 2015, 2016, and 2018. In NYC, he is a co-founder of "Urban Art Beat" – a platform for creative expression that partners talented artists and dedicated volunteers with underserved school and organizations.

COREY JAMES GRAY / SITE MANAGER



BRIAN PISTOLS / SITE MANAGER

Brian Pistols came into the breaking scene when he was eleven years old with the Bai Cha Breakers. His early experience started at the local Boys and Girls Club where he would teach dance for an hour in exchange for two hours of practice time, the rest is history. A competitor, performer, and mentor, Brian Pistols has done shows for an extensive list of corporations and community events as well as taking time to teach and share his knowledge with those who seek it. Now a member of the Del Fuego Wolfpack, he continues competing, performing, and teaching today. In more recent years, he can be found hosting and judging various events across Massachusetts. Brian Pistols organizes the "Entering ShaoLynn" event held in his hometown of Lynn, MA as a way to give back to the community that has raised him. Brian Pistols continues pushing forward in the breaking community in various aspects, anywhere and everywhere it takes him.