

THE HIP HOP and SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Expanding Economic and Civic Engagement Opportunities for Youth

A Participant's Perspective recounted by **Bakari Kitwana**



Z E R O D / V / D E TM

COMMUNITY / TECHNOLOGY / OPPORTUNITY

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● PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends of ZeroDivide,

As funders of social change programs, we must create new ways to support resilience and growth in the communities we serve.

In 2003, ZeroDivide sought to merge the powerful, popular phenomenon of Hip Hop and the connective thread of information technology to create what became a new philanthropic model. We called it The Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative. Over the next seven years, ZeroDivide created new partnerships and funded innovative – even risky – grassroots youth programs that simultaneously created community enterprises and fostered civic engagement.

Our theory of change was:

TECHNOLOGY + POPULAR CULTURE = ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

In this paradigm, technology was the mechanism and Hip Hop was the language and the medium. Technology has the potential to equalize. When coupled with the vibrant and world-wide culture of Hip Hop, it has the power to transform lives. ZeroDivide explored and refined our model through practice and investment, and our commitment was rewarded. ZeroDivide's community investment programs brought and taught marketable, transferable technical skills to disadvantaged young people while supporting their innate artistic and entrepreneurial abilities. In the following pages we offer you a proven strategy to help young people prosper and thrive.

This report documents the evolution of ZeroDivide's Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative through the eyes of a participant—Hip Hop expert and author Bakari Kitwana. We invite you to follow our discovery process and progression and hope you will adopt our findings for like endeavors.

Tessie Guillermo

President & Chief Executive Officer

● EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

In 2003 ZeroDivide set out to explore the possibilities of a new philanthropic model that used two powerful, interconnected phenomena: technology and the youth-inspired folk art, “Hip Hop.” ZeroDivide believed this model had the potential to capture the interest of disadvantaged youths, engage their inherent intelligence, and encourage positive social change. The Foundation sought to:

- Create a strategy that combined technology and Hip Hop to cultivate entrepreneurship and community-based activism;
- Fund programs that matched its strategy; and
- Demonstrate the value of new partnerships among communities, policy makers, philanthropic organizations, and grassroots Hip Hop movements.

SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR NEW GENERATION

Hip Hop spontaneously arose in Black communities in the post-civil rights and post-Black Power era. It quickly became an artistic expression of, and a way to survive, on-going poverty and social disenfranchisement. Hip Hop simultaneously evolved into a medium for grassroots political organizing and a force in popular American—and later, international—youth culture. In 2003, philanthropic foundations first funded individual Hip Hop artists and activists.

TO ASSESS THE NEED

ZeroDivide commissioned a youth expert to explore the possibilities for Hip-Hop-specific initiative and appointed a full-time program officer to direct the discovery process. In a bold and unprecedented decision, The Foundation also invited expertise from outside of itself: ZeroDivide created a forum comprised of 24 Hip Hop experts, philanthropists, business leaders, professors, and activists, known as “The Kitchen Cabinet.” This fluid forum connected previously isolated facets of the Hip Hop community; The Kitchen Cabinet met periodically from 2005-2007 to discuss ideas and informally advise The Foundation as it developed, implemented, and refined its strategic plan.

IMPLEMENTATION

ZeroDivide established four funding guidelines:

1) California-based nonprofits that; 2) Engage technology; 3) Demonstrate innovation with an eye on social change, and 4) Use one of the five elements of Hip Hop:

- Dance (movement);
- Graffiti art (visual),
- Emcee-ing (speech);
- DJ-ing (music); and/or
- Knowledge (education).

From 2004 to 2008, ZeroDivide funded 15 grassroots Hip Hop programs and devoted over \$1 million in resources and program and directive grants.

LESSONS LEARNED: A NEW MODEL

ZeroDivide learned lessons vital to the success of funding emerging youth-centered organizational models. In order to recognize and utilize such genius, philanthropy must consider the following philosophical and strategic shifts:

- **Cede Control:** Allow communities to articulate their needs; cultivate collaborative partnerships; take risks and remain fluid; look for non-traditional measures of success.
- **Strive for Sustained and Authentic Engagement:** Provide on-going thought leadership and consultation; find mutual strategic goals.
- **Build Networks:** Fund Hip Hop convenings and their resultant collaborations and partnerships.
- **Encourage social enterprise programs:** Support the natural ability of young organizers to combine entrepreneurship with social justice goals.

CONCLUSIONS

ZeroDivide hopes philanthropic foundations will embrace and further its initiative: this proven model offers new solutions to some of the most difficult, persistent problems of our time and transforms marginalized youths into engaged and economically vital citizens.

● ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ZeroDivide would like to thank the following people:

Bakari Kitwana - For documenting his perspective and years of participation in the Hip Hop Initiative. His wise counsel and easy-going demeanor are always appreciated.

Arnold Chandler - This account would not have been possible without the extensive research and interviews conducted by Arnold. We thank him for his work, insights, and the perspective he brought to the project.

Rebecca Wilson - We are grateful that she shared her superb editing skills and guidance in completing the project.

Kitchen Cabinet - Special thanks go to all the Kitchen Cabinet members that participated in the Hip Hop Initiative. Their dedication to Hip Hop and social justice fueled our hearts and minds.

Hip Hop Initiative Grantees - Thank you for your participation. Your work has inspired us.

*The Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative is dedicated
to the memory of Alan Watahara.*

● OVERVIEW

In 2003, ZeroDivide — a California-based Foundation whose objective is to build the capacity of underserved communities to use information technology — embarked on a mission to create a unique strategy for funding an important, emerging social justice trend: grassroots Hip Hop arts and activist programs that were having a transformative impact on youth.

Based on research, general observation, first hand engagement with youth, and a commitment to strengthening families, they conceived that the precise marriage between popular culture and technology was the most viable strategy for impacting marginalized youth in California, and, by extension, the nation. Although both technology and popular culture resonate within disadvantaged communities, an effective definitive strategy for harnessing the power of both had yet to be realized. ZeroDivide sought to (a) create such a strategy, (b) infuse funding into grassroots Hip Hop arts groups that would accelerate the process, (c) build a tool that transcended a specific issue focus, and (d) demonstrate the value proposition of a shared approach between the community, policy makers, philanthropy, and grass roots Hip Hop communities around social justice efforts. By doing so, they could maximize the possibility of moving our nation into the 21st century and establish our youth as productive partners in building a new America.

The result of this bold vision is the ZeroDivide Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative (the Hip Hop Initiative), which, over three years, funded fifteen projects that transformed marginalized youths with an interest in Hip Hop into entrepreneurs, educators, better skilled and informed workers, and civically engaged young adults with a firm stake in their communities. These programs demonstrate the conscious use of Hip Hop as a multi-media communications vehicle that empowers, educates, and unites communities. The unique content that each produced opened new entrepreneurial markets and furthered possibilities for community action.

This account documents the planning and execution of the 2005-launched Hip Hop Initiative, lessons learned, and suggestions for like future philanthropic endeavors.

● SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR A NEW GENERATION

The successes and failures of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s gave way to the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both coincided with

the rise of the global economic era that presented underprivileged Americans with new challenges. By the mid 1970s, the ability of civil rights and Black power politics to render significant social change began to wane. Likewise, that era's economic downturn hit Black urban communities particularly hard. Inflation topped 14%. Unemployment doubled from 4.6% to 9% between 1973 and 1975. With Black unemployment rates nearly twice the national average from the 1970s onward, traditional grassroots activists and political organizers (despite isolated and sporadic victories) seemed ill equipped to galvanize momentum around the primary issues adversely affecting youth: unemployment, education, healthcare, and criminal justice. This is the climate in which Hip Hop (a folk art organized around five primary forms—breakdancing, graffiti art, Emcee-ing, DJ-ing and knowledge—emerged by the mid 1970s as a viable, but marginalized, cultural arts movement that would eventually work its way into mainstream American popular culture. In the absence of a promising public policy agenda for addressing the social ills affecting these communities, young people created Hip Hop, in part, as a means of surviving the economic challenges of the time.

Hip Hop's early practitioners saw Hip Hop as "art," yes, but also an art that emerged from their politicized reality. This was true from pioneers like Kurtis Blow and Melle Melle (whose lyrics articulated the economic despair and political challenges of their time) to Afrika Bambaataa (whose effort to expand Hip Hop as an instrument of community organization worldwide via his Zulu Nation reached all seven continents within a decade). These pioneering efforts, that embrace art and activism, would set the stage for the artistic and political marriage within Hip Hop that would persist decades later.

By the 1980s, this Hip Hop art and politics trend was marked by the emergence of mainstream, top-selling political Hip Hop artists (such as Public Enemy and KRS-One) and local youth organizations (Black Cops Against Police Brutality and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement) that articulated a 1960s and 1970s activist political message. These 1980s youth activists came of age with Hip Hop as the pulse of their generation — and they recognized that any significant movement that hoped to enlist youth needed to strategically incorporate Hip Hop into its program.

By the 1990s, when mainstream Hip Hop artists were enjoying record-breaking multi-platinum sales, these local Hip Hop organizers (such as the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement) took Hip Hop political organizing

into both grassroots and mainstream electoral politics organizing efforts. Simultaneously, more than a reflection of 1960s and 1970s art and politics, the newest wave of political Hip Hop artists and their commentary were steeped in their generation's own social ills. As the 1990s came to a close and Hip Hop's mainstream appeal continued to grow, political Hip Hop artists in the mainstream began to wane. This, however, didn't minimize the influence of such artists in grassroots circles. Independent political emcees persisted for the love of the game, and political Hip Hop activists and organizers turned their local success to the national stage in the twelve to twenty-four months leading up to the 2004 Presidential Election.

The idea among Hip Hop generation activists that Hip Hop was a viable political organizing medium that could be lent to efforts to address problems affecting American youth took the form of three main national efforts: The Hip Hop Summit Action Network (the more Hip Hop industry centric, which emerged under Russell Simmons), The League of Young Voters, and the National Hip Hop Political Convention (both with a more grassroots, independent focus). All three emerged in 2003 and came into greater focus in the summer of 2004.

At the same time, program officers at various philanthropic organizations organically funded various Hip Hop efforts. Some of the impetus was the novelty — as Hip Hop's visibility increased in mainstream pop culture, and Hip Hop grew indistinguishable from America youth. Others recognized Hip Hop as a viable new generation "high art." Still others saw Hip Hop's pervasive grassroots presence as a local and national unified youth culture with the potential to mobilize youth toward social justice efforts. This local manifestation of Hip Hop — its independent Hip Hop artists and vibrant local activist organizers — stood in contrast to its corporate persona, which most older Americans saw as part of the problem rather than the solution.

The Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, Soros Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and others were among those who funded such independent Hip Hop arts and activist efforts from theatre (Hip Hop Theatre Festival), film (Hip Hop Association's International Film Festival) and spoken word (Youth Speaks) to local (Ella Baker Center) and national organizations (National Hip Hop Political Convention).

It was within this climate that ZeroDivide's Hip Hop Initiative was born. As ZeroDivide (then the Community Technology Foundation of California) thought through ways of expanding its influence and impact within disadvantaged and marginalized communities,

and given the foundation's focus on technology and innovation, popular culture, and Hip Hop specifically, became fixed on its radar. But, rather than simply adding a Hip Hop nonprofit to its portfolio, ZeroDivide sought a more comprehensive approach—one that would capitalize on youths' instinctive engagement with technology and popular culture; one that would have an immediate impact; and one that would enhance the various, but disparate efforts already in effect, rather than distract from, compete with, or overtake them. This effort would require the right combination of (1) analysis, (2) community input and (3) philanthropic expertise. From the start and throughout, ZeroDivide tuned in to all three.

ASSESSING THE NEED

In August of 2003 ZeroDivide commissioned Alan Watahara (a well-known expert and advocate in the children and youth field) to explore the possibilities of a Hip-Hop-specific initiative. The launch of the Hip Hop Initiative's exploratory phase coincided with movement within the Hip Hop community to organize nationally around civic engagement and Hip Hop. Phase one of the Hip Hop Initiative included the following:

- Focused, preliminary research on Hip Hop, including a cursory review of the literature on Hip Hop in order to grasp a sense of the terrain (this included an examination of a range of books, articles, and academic inquiry into the Hip Hop phenomenon as a folk art, popular cultural phenomenon, and commercial industry at state, national, and international levels);
- A survey of scores of California teens in order to gain insight into their relationship with popular culture, music and media, and Hip Hop specifically, as well as generation-specific interests and methods of communications. (The survey gathered data which helped inform ZeroDivide's thinking on the importance of a Hip Hop initiative and what it would look like, such as: *Where do you get your news? What type of music do you listen to? What are your favorite websites? What current events concern you the most? and Does celebrity involvement in political causes influence young people?* among others).
- A full-time program officer, Ruth Williams, to spearhead the effort. This program officer intensified the work of the consultant with more field research, which included in-person, one-on-one meetings with individual experts, attending key Hip Hop conferences and gatherings, became immersed in the community and literature, and made the community aware of ZeroDivide as a potential partner.

- Two convenings in 2004, the first in June in Los Angeles and the second in San Francisco in December of 2004, with a handful of local Hip Hop practitioners (activists, artists, journalists, etc.) to determine a better sense of the need within the Hip Hop community and the extent to which ZeroDivide could offer meaningful assistance. Both meetings consisted of focused discussions around key questions such as: *Was a Hip Hop initiative necessary? What would it look like? What type of organizations would it fund?*, etc.

From the above efforts, The Foundation learned the following:

- They needed to have more meetings with Hip Hop insiders, who they recognized as key influencers and crucial stakeholders in the grassroots Hip Hop community;
- There were various issues that this community was targeting in its quest for social justice, which ZeroDivide shouldn't stray from; and
- Many of the local social justice efforts were just that, local, and that the right funding strategy—which harnessed the power of technology and popular culture—could play a role in networking these various grassroots communities.

As 2004 came to a close, ZeroDivide was clearer that they were building a funding initiative that would focus on Hip Hop as a vehicle for “social justice and strengthening families” — what they began to discuss as “The Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative.”

THE KITCHEN CABINET

A significant part of the emerging Hip Hop Initiative were recurring gatherings of key influencers and stakeholders to inform an effective funding strategy. Based on the value of the 2004 meetings with Hip Hop practitioners, which helped clarify the need for a Hip Hop Initiative, ZeroDivide felt that on-going, first-hand engagement with the Hip Hop, philanthropic, and business communities was essential. The goal of this approach was to create a bottom-up community investment model that relied on the community to articulate its needs and offer feedback based on years of experience on the ground—something ZeroDivide staffers admittedly lacked and didn't seek to reproduce, as any attempt to do so would vastly limit the ability of the Hip Hop Initiative to be effective within a reasonable frame of time.

This *ad hoc* advisory committee came to be referred to as The Kitchen Cabinet, a group comprised primarily of Hip Hop experts who, because of their work in the field over the

last decade, demonstrated as much interest as ZeroDivide in making sure the Hip Hop Initiative had a profound and lasting impact.

This group was fluid, with participants rotating in and out depending on their availability, and the expertise required for the shifting, concentrated focus of the discussions. At times, it included a mixture of program officers at various foundations, cultural critics whose expertise was Hip Hop, nonprofit organization directors, university professors, Hip Hop artists, and Hip Hop arts organizers and activists. These conversations were crucial to the Hip Hop Initiative's success. Among others, the following people contributed to the discussions at Kitchen Cabinet meetings between 2005 and 2008:

● **ibrahim abdul-matin:** Technology Organizer at Movement Strategies. From 2002-2004, ibrahim served as the Director of Youth Programs at Brooklyn's Prospect Park and served on the planning team of the Brooklyn Academy for Science and the Environment (BASE), a new, small high school now in its second year.

● **Shakeel Ali:** President of Ali International Training & Consulting Services, a network of consultants who create positive outlets for youth to express themselves and develop their skills and talents. He is also Co-Founder and Interim Executive Director of Alternative School of Knowledge.

● **Joaquin Alvarado:** Director of San Francisco State University's Institute for Next Generation Internet, an effort in the Bay Area to bring Next Generation Internet access and applications to a unique partnership of educational institutions, government agencies, major corporations, small businesses, and community-based organizations.

● **Ben Caldwell:** Founder of the Kaos Network in Los Angeles, which provides at-risk youth with training in digital arts, media arts, and multimedia. Ben was also instrumental in the formation of Project Blowed.

● **Jeff Chang:** Award winning Hip Hop journalist and author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, an examination of how Hip Hop has shaped American history and culture over the past 30 years.

● **Malkia A. Cyril:** Director of the Youth Media Council and co-founder of the Media Justice Network, which works to build the strategic communications capacity of the progressive movement and to hold corporate media accountable for biased content and policy.

● **Davey D:** Hip Hop historian, journalist, community activist, and radio DJ. He works for Pacifica Radio station KPFA and has worked in radio in the San Francisco Bay Area for over a decade, including stations KALX and KMEL.

Stephen DeBerry: Investment Director at Omidyar Network who has been active in youth development and leadership for most of his career. He currently serves on the Boards of The East Palo Alto Mural Art Project and The Hip Hop Archive.

Martha Diaz: Founder and President of the National Hip Hop Association, the Global Hip Hop Film Festival and the Hip Hop Education Summit, which trains teachers to infuse Hip Hop into the curriculum.

Jeff Fienman: Director of the employment program at Horizons Unlimited, a nonprofit organization based in the Mission District of San Francisco that provides youth services to low-income teens. In 2000, Jeff began The DJ Project, a program at Horizons Unlimited that uses DJ-ing as a way of teaching entrepreneurial skills to at-risk youth.

Ahmad Mansur: Director of Programs at Zeum, a hands-on, interactive art and technology museum for youth and their families, located in San Francisco's cultural arts district, the Yerba Buena Center. Ahmad is also a ZeroDivide Fellow.

Dr. Marcy Morgan: Associate Professor of Communications at Stanford University. She is the Founding Director of The Hip Hop Archive at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute at Harvard University. Her research has focused on language, culture and identity, sociolinguistics, discourse, and interaction.

Ken Ikeda: Executive Director at Youth Sounds, a youth multimedia program in Oakland. The curriculum and principles of ethnography and storytelling in Youth Sounds are focused on using Hip Hop and technology.

Bakari Kitwana: Former editor at The Source and author of the groundbreaking *The Hip Hop Generation*, which is taught as a course book at over 100 colleges and universities across the country. He is also the co-founder of the 2004 National Hip Hop Political Convention.

McCrae A. Parker: Director of Youth Development and Training at Youth Radio, a youth media program that promotes young people's intellectual, creative, and professional growth through training and access to media.

Jeff Perlstein: Executive Director of Media Alliance, a San Francisco nonprofit which advocates for a more democratic media environment.

Favianna Rodriguez: A founding member of the East Side Arts Alliance (ESAA), an Oakland-based collective of third world artists and community organizers who use the arts as a tool in the freedom struggle. She is also the co-owner of Tumi's Design, a multi-service technology and design firm.

Diane Sanchez: Program Officer at the East Bay Community Foundation with a portfolio that includes various arts grantees in the Bay Area.

Beverly Tate: Professor at Pasadena City College, where she organizes various lecture series across a wide variety of social issues, including race and Hip Hop.

Oliver Wang: Freelance Hip Hop journalist who writes regularly for the *S.F. Bay Guardian*, *LA Weekly*, and the *Village Voice*. He is the author of *The Hip Hop Album Guide*. He holds a Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from UC Berkeley and teaches in the Sociology Department at California State Long Beach.

Kevin Weston: Editor-in-Chief of *YO! Youth Outlook*, an award-winning monthly magazine about youth life in the San Francisco Bay Area. *YO! Youth Outlook* has evolved from a newsprint tabloid to a color-cover magazine and Web portal with video, radio, and interactive segments.

Daryl Williams: Director of Minority Entrepreneurship Programs at the Kauffman Foundation, a foundation that works with partners to encourage entrepreneurship across America and improve the education of children and youth.

Steve Wright: Program Director at salesforce.com/foundation. He works directly with youth, technology coordinators, and community organizations to ensure a productive experience in which technology is used in service of youth. Steve is also a ZeroDivide Fellow.

Dave Yanofsky: Director of Programming at UthTV, a high-profile outlet for youth media. Before coming to UthTV, he served as Executive Director of Just Think, a youth media nonprofit in San Francisco.

The Kitchen Cabinet met several times over the next few years to debate, retool, rethink, and flesh out the possibilities of The Hip Hop Initiative. As the Hip Hop Initiative progressed, The Kitchen Cabinet was crucial in helping to chart and evaluate its effectiveness.

It's important to remember that as significant as The Kitchen Cabinet was to the Hip Hop Initiative, it didn't function as a board of directors-styled final-decision making body. The success of the Hip Hop Initiative also relied heavily on the expertise, experience and insight of The Foundation itself. To that end, ZeroDivide routinely consulted an informal team of internal Foundation staff, including the Hip Hop Initiative's Program Manager, and an outside consultant. These folks, along with consultation with The Kitchen Cabinet, were the internal core of this effort.

YEAR ONE – THE HIP HOP INITIATIVE BEGINS FUNDING

● YEAR ONE-THE HIP HOP INITIATIVE BEGINS FUNDING

2005 was the first year grants were made. It was the year that the symbiotic relationship between The Kitchen Cabinet and The Foundation was ironed out. That year, the Foundation was also moving to get the Hip Hop Initiative off the ground in a time frame dictated by Tessie Guillermo, ZeroDivide's CEO, and supported by the Board of Directors. The Kitchen Cabinet met twice in 2005, in January and again in August. In the months in between, ZeroDivide finalized a strategic plan for the Hip Hop Initiative. The strategic plan came out of consultation with the Kitchen Cabinet and back and forth discussion within the Community Investment Team. This strategic plan served as the road map of the Hip Hop Initiative over the next three years, and included twenty tactics for implementation. These strategies were grouped into five areas of concentration:

- Planning and Designing
- Identifying and Addressing the Community's Needs
- Positioning, Marketing, and Information Collection
- Impact and Evaluation
- Leverage and Sustainability

The Kitchen Cabinet and ZeroDivide agreed on the following priority action steps for 2005:

- Create and issue Request for Proposals (RFP);
- Develop and support the creation of a website focused on the Hip Hop social justice community;
- Establish a fellowship program for Hip Hop social justice activists, and
- Develop a research binder as a repository of data related to this Initiative that is regularly updated and eventually available online.¹

¹ The Website took the form of mybloc.net, which was developed by Movement Strategy Center as one of the grantees listed here. The Fellowship Program idea failed to secure funding partners. And the repository of data related to this Initiative has, in part, evolved into this account.

By August 2005, an operational/tactical plan was developed that detailed the tasks and activities necessary to achieve the various goals identified in the strategic plan, including a work plan for the foundation and staff that monitored progress and budgeting. And finally, also at this time, The Foundation decided that the primary issue / area around which to focus was the framework of “strengthening families.” Simultaneously, one of its key goals was to make Hip Hop an important leader in social justice. More specifically, ZeroDivide hoped to: 1) find a way for the private sector, community activists, and the philanthropic community to work together to best identify innovative applications of technology and Hip Hop that would promote social justice; and 2) after demonstrating the importance and effectiveness of this approach, to use the three-year Initiative as the best, proven argument for business and philanthropy to continue this work.

The idea was solidified through healthy debate in the Kitchen Cabinet’s January 2005 meeting, where, just as in both 2004 meetings, numerous Hip Hop community hot-button issues were outlined. The Foundation decided that getting into the intricacies of a specific issue was less important than supporting the emerging movement. ZeroDivide’s President and CEO Tessie Guillermo put it this way

“ZeroDivide sees itself as trying to influence the field of philanthropy. We want other funders to fund tech as a means of social change—not just funding administrative costs. We want them to understand that funding tech means funding content, activities, services, integrating tech and delivery of service. We want them to understand themselves not as funders of equipment, but funders of the means of communication and of civil rights.”

By the end of the Fall of 2005, the Foundation identified four grantees that were aligned with this mission:

1. Rap Sessions

A national Hip Hop discussion tour of town hall meetings that targeted the Hip Hop and post- Hip Hop generations and encouraged healthy dialogue around American history, race, gender, politics, civic engagement, and the power of Hip Hop to affect social change;

2. Movement Strategy Center

A social change organization committed to developing strategies to make movements stronger and more effective and that sought to create an internet social networking platform focused on Hip Hop and social change and that targeted the Hip Hop and post- Hip Hop generations;

3. Just Think

A curriculum development organization that had an eye on taking its nationally acclaimed, Hip-Hop-based curriculum, "Flipping the Script," into the classrooms at several marginalized California schools; and

4. Horizons Unlimited

An arts and entrepreneurial youth program that gives youth hands-on experience in the entertainment business and related technologies.

By the end of the year, with strategic and operational plans are solidified, the role of The Kitchen Cabinet shifted. The Hip Hop Initiative continued to rely on the advisory committee for feedback on the terrain. However, with the ideas and best practices of the Kitchen Cabinet set into an effective philanthropic funding strategy, the role of The Kitchen Cabinet adjusted into more of a "talk back" role, responding to the evolving effort. With feedback from The Kitchen Cabinet, RFP guidelines were established that used the following criteria:

- California-based, nonprofits that:
 - > Engage technology
 - > Demonstrate innovation with an eye on social change
 - > Use one of the five elements of Hip Hop:
 1. Dance (movement)
 2. Graffiti art (visual)
 3. Emcee-ing (speech),
 4. DJ-ing (music)
 5. Knowledge (education)

The RFP reads:

ZeroDivide has chosen Hip Hop as the primary delivery method for this new funding area. Many communities have yet to fully benefit from technology, which can both strengthen content and assist in effective organizing and mobilizing for social change. Technology has the potential to transform information and energy from the Hip Hop community into effective social justice action and push the boundaries of social innovation.

Successful grantees will use Hip Hop as a method of positive enhancement of the people, the community in which they live and beyond. ZeroDivide values organizations that have experience using Hip Hop in program delivery. Like any of our other grantees, proposals must clearly demonstrate how technology is central to the project. We are also interested in ways that Hip Hop can be potentially used across multiple generations to improve critical educational, economic, health, employment, political, and cultural dimensions of community life.

THE GRANTEES

Grants were awarded in three periods: 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008. The grantees, the grants, and their impact are discussed below, where the following questions are answered for each:

- > *What was organization's mission and impact before funding?*
- > *What programs we funded?*
- > *What was the vision/ need filled by the program?*
- > *How did it impact the organization and the community?*

The following tables outline some of the organizations, projects, and outcomes funded by ZeroDivide's Hip Hop Initiative.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

The Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC)

BAVC is a nonprofit founded in 1976 as a way to make emerging video technology accessible to independent filmmakers. Today, with that mission still at its core, BAVC has evolved into a community media arts resource center.

www.bavc.org

THE PROJECT

With countless youth across the state and the nation engaging in various aspects of Hip Hop art and industry at an entrepreneurial level, BAVC realized that a one-stop resource would be a valuable tool for job training and networking with the goal of empowering youth interested in pursuing entrepreneurial efforts. ZeroDivide awarded \$50,000 to BAVC's project, called Onthe1.org, a website that provides technological production and promotional resources to young, aspiring Hip Hop artists. The site acts as a free community portal that links all aspects of Hip Hop digital culture and provides a space for producers, performers, and enthusiasts to network.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Youth producers created open source web-based system to showcase their work. As hosting technologies improved this site was subsequently integrated into BAVC's home page.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Center for Media Justice (formerly the Youth Media Council)

Center for Media Justice is a media strategy and action training center that works with youth and communities of color across age and regional boundaries to transform the public policy debate on race and poverty. Founded in 2001, the Center for Media Justice makes strategic communications accessible to organizers, journalists, and artists whose voices are pushed to the margins, works to support the growth of independent progressive media, and coordinates issues-related media campaigns.

www.centerformediajustice.org

THE PROJECT

Recognizing the importance of independent media and access to radio for local youth artists and community organizers, the Center for Media Justice initiated a local media justice campaign to challenge corporate control and domination of local radio waves at the expense of public access. ZeroDivide awarded the Center for Media Justice \$50,000 in 2005 to support a six- to nine-month media accountability campaign to mobilize young people of color around Clear Channel’s California broadcast license renewal process. The mobilization effort included a ten-week program that trained youth on media policy and media reform strategies. In 2007, ZeroDivide awarded an additional \$5,000 for a delegation from the Center for Media Justice to attend the National conference for Media Reform in Memphis, TN.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The successful outcome of campaign included temporary jobs for youth engaged in the program as well as the creation of a “Media Accountability Handbook” for youth. The handbook was printed in hard copy form and made available on the Internet as a learning tool for youth beyond the immediate local campaign. The handbook included organizing tools and a “how-to” curriculum.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Hip Hop Congress

Hip Hop Congress is one of the largest Hip Hop arts and activist organizations in the US. Founded in 2000, the Hip Hop Congress has 15 California chapters and 45 nation-wide. The organization networks local Hip Hop activist organizations and Hip Hop arts practitioners and mobilizes members around political issues relevant to the Hip Hop and post- Hip Hop generations such as civic engagement, incarceration, and media justice.

www.hiphopcongress.com

THE PROJECT

After years of developing its network of artists and activists, Hip Hop Congress believed it could better service its existing network and build upon it by expanding its use of Internet and cell phone technology. In tune with the significance of social networking among youth of color, Hip Hop Congress planned to transform its network into a virtual hub so it could more effectively assist members, artists and its overall social justice goals. In 2008, ZeroDivide awarded the Hip Hop Congress a \$75,000 grant to create a social networking platform that would transform its informal artists driven network into a tool to further assist its social change agenda. The platform would be a source of up-to-date information on core issues facing the Hip Hop community, facilitate transactions among members (such as buying and selling products), and initiate collective action on social issues. Ultimately Hip Hop Congress believed it could use these tools to increase civic engagement among young — from information sharing on get-out-the-vote efforts and teach-ins to interfacing with government organizations and leaders.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Increased youth outreach and activism by 200%; supported events at half of California Hip Hop Congress chapters; expanded operations in Northwest and Midwest Regions; increased press outreach of artists and activist members with appearances on CNN, Democracy Now, and in various local newspapers such as the *Oakland Tribune*, *San Jose Mercury News*, and the *Seattle Times*.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Horizons Unlimited

Horizons Unlimited is a San Francisco-based youth advocacy and development organization that targets at risk Latino youths ages 12-26. Founded in 1965, Horizons Unlimited offers educational, drug-prevention, and employment programs. In 2000, Horizons Unlimited launched their DJ Project program for youth, an arts and entrepreneurship after school program grounded in Hip Hop culture that focused on emerging digital technology and entertainment industry job training.

www.horizons-sf.org

THE PROJECT

Hoping to further tap into the entrepreneurial spirit inherent in Hip Hop and introduce youth to mainstream work opportunities, in 2005 ZeroDivide awarded \$50,000 to the DJ Project to develop a program that allowed San Francisco Bay Area youth to create and market music online. Youth collaborated in small teams and worked virtually to produce numerous CD's, which culminated with a community cd release party. In 2006 ZeroDivide awarded Horizons Unlimited/The DJ Project an additional \$50,000 to produce a youth-run Hip Hop arts competition called "Grind and Glory." As part of the competition, which parroted an "American Idol" like format, youth were required to attend professional development workshops focused on technology, event coordination, and marketing.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

In response to the 2005 grant, the DJ Project identified new satellite partners, built music studios, hired and trained consultants to work with youth, implemented video technologies and online file sharing protocols, trained youth to manage projects, recorded two audio CDS featuring original music compositions, hosted two community events, and strengthened youth commitment to school. Parents spoke of the importance of this after school option in their children's lives and administrators revealed how the after school program inspired new school pride. Regarding the 2006 grant, hundreds of youths participated in the project. The event was made into a full-length documentary that was submitted to the Sundance Film Festival.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Just Think

Just Think is a media education nonprofit that works with youth and educators across the nation to combat the mixed messages youth receive from video games, the Internet, television, print media, radio, and film. Founded in 1995, Just Think teaches media literacy skills for the 21st Century and develops curricula that build skills in critical thinking and creative media production.

www.justthink.org

THE PROJECT

Understanding the power of Hip Hop to reach youth and recognizing racial disparities in education that show black and brown youths lagging behind their white counterparts, Just Think imagined that a Hip Hop centered curriculum that spoke to youth from their own cultural worldview could yield different results. In 2005, ZeroDivide awarded Just Think \$25,000 to develop “Flipping the Script,” a Hip Hop based curriculum taught from a culturally relevant perspective that meets California state teaching standards in English, History, and Social Science. “Flipping the Script” was tested in collaboration with BAYCAT’s after school program and implemented in a pilot program at Thurgood Marshall High School in San Francisco.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

In 2005, 100% of BAYCAT participants who were engaged with the “Flipping the Script” curriculum graduated and are now pursuing higher education.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Movement Strategy Center

Movement Strategy Center is a nonprofit whose mission is to increase youth and adult participation in social justice issues. Founded in 2001, Movement Strategy Center supports social justice movements by collaborating with organizations and their funders in order to identify best methods for short term objectives—ultimately creating stronger, more effective and sustainable movements.

www.movementstrategy.org

THE PROJECT

Realizing that the Hip Hop social justice movement was disjointed and could benefit from a greater awareness of like organizations programs, strategies and impact, Movement Strategy Center believed a web portal designed with a Hip Hop edge could meet that need. In 2005, ZeroDivide awarded Movement Strategy Center \$50,000 to build the web portal, mybloc.net. The purpose of the site is to unify the social justice Hip Hop community by creating a centralized clearing site for information on all aspects of social activism. The site planned to use social networking as its platform and will allow for multiple levels of connections among young individual users, organizations, and social justice movements.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The site launched in 2006. It currently has nearly 1,000 users. The site has been successful in integrating with various online organizing initiatives as well as like emerging tech initiatives, such as the Future 5000 Project and Online Media Resource Center.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

The Mural Arts Project

The Mural Arts Project is an innovative arts organization founded in 2001 that strives to use the power of public art to transform the lives of youth and the public perception of East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Redwood City. The organization combines employment opportunities for youth, curriculum development, and technology to help youth install large public art murals. The process involves youth research and education components (focused on history, health, music, etc.) designed to help youth embrace education, art, and, simultaneously, begin to take ownership of their communities.

www.muralmusicarts.org

THE PROJECT

Understanding the ways that Hip Hop youth are preoccupied with the idea of place and being part of a global community, The Mural Arts Project created the after school program “History Through Hip Hop” that employs marginalized youth, teaches them the history of the neighborhood, its cultural roots and their own connection to the region via Hip Hop music and technology. ZeroDivide awarded The Mural Arts Project \$5,000 for this effort in 2005. A year later ZeroDivide awarded the organization a grant for \$50,000 to create an online virtual tour and teach students civic engagement, community activism, visual art, and writing as they research, conduct interviews with community leaders, and develop mural concepts for installation. In 2007 ZeroDivide awarded the organization a grant for \$6,000 to take students to the National Media Reform Conference. And in 2008 the organization was awarded \$75,000 to expand the gallery into a community enterprise called Critical Condition that would share this project more widely via the Internet.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Staff received full participation from students, who improved reading comprehension and writing skills, and learned literary techniques. Students learned the academic side of Hip Hop through writing, as they researched and wrote rhymes to convey critical issues facing their communities. In doing so, students developed an improved sense of agency. Students also learned basics of music and studio recording and produced and performed four original songs at The Mural Arts Project Summer Unveiling at Stanford University in the Fall of 2005.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Rap Sessions

Rap Sessions, a collaboration between Pasadena City College and Hip Hop author-activist Bakari Kitwana, is a national Hip Hop discussion tour on Hip Hop led by a multiracial panel of Hip Hop artists, activists, and scholars who tour California and the nation to engage youth in candid compelling conversations about race, gender, economics, entrepreneurship, and political power.

www.rapsessions.org

THE PROJECT

Recognizing that youth voter turnout was up significantly during the 2004 Election as a result of the efforts of Hip Hop political organizers, but that young voters still had yet to reach their potential, Rap Sessions was created to help young people to become better equipped for civic engagement. ZeroDivide awarded Pasadena College \$10,000 in 2005 to jumpstart this effort, conduct gatherings of young people in several California cities (Irvine, Pasadena, and Los Angeles) and videotape those gatherings. In 2006, ZeroDivide awarded Pasadena City College an additional \$40,000 to increase Rap Sessions ability to continue to engage California youth in candid conversations about race and social just through Hip Hop. This included additional conversations about gender and Hip Hop (in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Stanford), the creation of a web presence with digital stories, video blogs and a short documentary in order to make these dialogues available to a wider audience

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

These town hall meetings have expanded our nation's understanding of race, gender, politics, and youth culture. Gatherings have drawn audiences of 200-500, have been broadcast on C-SPAN as well as local access television in cities like Chicago, IL, Cleveland, OH, and West Lafayette, IN. Rap Sessions has drawn interest from a variety of institutions to partner from the Kauffman Foundation and the City Museum of New York to the Center for American Progress (Campus Progress), and Harvard Law-based Jamestown Project.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Youth Movement Records

Founded in 2003, Youth Movement Records is a youth-driven media arts nonprofit organization that trains urban youths ages 13-19 in leadership, entrepreneurship, and music and video production techniques through its “Social Documentary Project.” With a focus on ending violence and positive community involvement, Youth Movement Records also works with a production and distribution company to disseminate work produced by youth participating in the program—from music videos to documentary films.

www.youthmovementrecords.org

THE PROJECT

With the continued deregulation of the communications industry, countless youths across the U.S. are increasingly aware of the ways that multinational corporations dominate local markets. Given the importance of the local media to youth activist and arts efforts, alongside recognition of the limited opportunities for local messages to compete in local markets, Youth Movement Records realized that for youth and youth-centered organizations understanding new directions in the media is crucial. As such, Youth Movement Records created various projects designed to increase this awareness across organizations. In 2009, ZeroDivide awarded Youth Movement Records a \$25,500 grant to take a delegation of 50 young people from ten California-based organizations to Detroit for the 2009 Allied Media Conference where they could further develop their skills as media makers and conduct a workshop on some of the work they are already doing and seek out organizations to collaborate with for future projects.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Students each participated in daily blogging from the conference that was posted on the Internet. Organizations collaborated on future campaigns to expand community access to emerging technologies. Youth Movement Records published four articles about youth media and technology. A one-year follow-up meeting is planned to map possibilities for future work and set priorities for youth media in California.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Youth Outlook (YO!)

YO! is a literary journal that chronicles the world through the eyes of young people themselves. The youth division of New America Media—which produces and distributes youth media content nationally—*YO!* is the umbrella organization that houses *YO!* TV, *YO!* Radio, in addition to the magazines *Debug*, *The Beat Within*, *SNAG*, and *SPRAWL*. *YO!* trains and employs youths ages 14-25 in all aspects of its programs and streams youth content directly from its website.

www.youthoutlook.org

THE PROJECT

With proper support, *YO!* believed it could expand its reach and impact on youth in the San Francisco Bay Area. With this idea in mind, *YO!* sought to create Mobile Publishing Teams. The effort could provide a valuable service to educators by getting students excited about journalism and learning as well as expand youth employment and career options. In 2004, ZeroDivide awarded a \$50,000 grant to *YO!* to fund the Mobile Publishing Teams project at seven Bay Area high schools, which included classes on magazine, audio, and video production? In 2005, ZeroDivide awarded *YO!* an additional grant for \$50,000 to continue its Mobile Publishing Teams work and distribute the content they created.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

In 2005, *YO!* was awarded a Webby by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences for excellence in website and digital arts content. In the first year of the project over 110 youths participated in the multimedia classes. Also in the first year participants produced eight youth magazines, six five-minute videos, and seven feature length articles. All were posted on *YO!*'s website. In the second year, *YO!* TV was able to air twelve thirty-minute programs through the WB Channel and Channel 21, twenty-four essays were produced for *YO!* Radio, and eight feature stories were streamed from its website.

ZeroDivide Grantees

ORGANIZATION

Youth Radio

Youth Radio provides free after school media training and broadcast journalism education to over 400 14-24 year-olds annually. Founded in 1990, the organization focuses on peer mentoring, entrepreneurship, career development and targets disadvantaged youth from underserved public schools, group homes, juvenile detention centers, and community centers. Youth Radio’s content reaches 22 million people annually through its multiple media outlets, including Public Radio International (Marketplace), CNN.com, CBSHealthwatch.com, and Pacifica News Service.

www.youthradio.org

THE PROJECT

The War in Iraq had a huge impact on marginalized American youth whose parents, siblings, friends, and associates served on the ground in the war effort. This perspective rarely showed up in mainstream media coverage. In addition to job training, Youth Radio hoped a project centered on reporting on this effort (entitled “Young Reporters, ‘Ask What Matters to You?’) would add to our nation’s understanding of how the war was affecting us at home and help youth see possibilities for civic engagement. In 2004, ZeroDivide awarded a \$50,000 grant to Youth Radio to train youth reporters to cover the war from the youth perspective through speaking directly with Iraqi youth and young US soldiers. In 2005, ZeroDivide funded Youth Radio with an additional \$50,000 grant to launch an independent Web radio station. The grant also supported collaboration between Youth Radio and iTunes, giving Youth Radio the ability to stream its content 24 hours a day.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

For their in-depth coverage and superior field work on the Iraq War, “Young Reporters Ask, ‘What Happened to You?,’ “ Youth Radio won the Edward R. Murrow Award. In addition to the 24 hours a day streaming on its own website and on iTunes, Youth Radio successfully created and aired 352 hours of content, trained thirteen youths to be radio hosts, produced a cd of original music “beats,” and initiated a live two-hour program once a week on KPFB. Youth Radio graduates achieved the soft and hard skills to land jobs with employers like KCBS, KQED, the Port of Oakland, and Google.

DIRECTIVE GRANTS

In addition to the grantees above, in 2008 ZeroDivide also awarded directive grants for programming to four organizations:

1. A \$30,000 grant was awarded to Words, Beats, & Life Inc. to conduct a three-day teach-in in the San Francisco Bay Area (entitled “Remixing the Art of Social Change: A Hip Hop Approach”) that targeted California-based nonprofits. The teach-in focused on the following goals: providing nonprofits information on Hip Hop organizing; educating the funding community on the importance of investing in the Hip Hop arts/activist sector; fostering partnerships between Hip Hop arts and activist groups in order to pursue group funding initiatives. The teach-in classes were videotaped, edited, and posted on the Internet. The teach-in built on the success of a similar event that Words, Beats and Life hosted a year earlier in Washington, D.C., where 150 organizations participated. Over 300 responded to the call to participate in the San Francisco Bay Area event.
2. A \$4,000 grant was awarded to the National Hip Hop Political Convention to assist in the production of an online tool necessary for establishing a political issues platform (in real-time) for their membership. The organization planned to use the online tool for follow-up after the election to monitor the progress made by government in the group’s core issue areas as well as to disseminate accountability progress reports to the Hip Hop community. Long-term goals of this grant included supporting civic engagement within the Hip Hop community and continuing the creation of a Hip Hop activist community network.
3. A \$10,000 grant was awarded to Generational Alliance to support the organization’s GenVote Initiative, a program that used new media technologies and Hip Hop to increase excitement among youth about participating in the 2008 presidential election. The primary tool for the GenVote Initiative was a Vote Hip Hop Contest that allowed young people to articulate issues that were important to them, and encouraged youth the create and share media content concerning the importance of voting. Outcomes of the grant included the following: Encouraging all political parties to adopt Generation Alliance’s political platform; educating California youth about the voting process; and increasing the number of young, non-college and college voters across race and class.

4. A \$5,863 grant was committed to co-sponsor a Hip Hop and Entrepreneurship event with the Kauffman Foundation. This event was part of Global Entrepreneurship Week, a series of international events sponsored by the Kauffman Foundation and Ernst & Young, and was one of many events designed to highlight entrepreneurial efforts of innovative citizens around the world. The Entrepreneurship and Hip Hop Event, a town hall style meeting designed by Rap Sessions, featured Hip Hop artists Chuck D and Master P and other Hip Hop industry experts in discussions about the ways entrepreneurship and technology impacted the evolution of Hip Hop culture. ZeroDivide's technological support included live video streaming for the event over the Internet.

Viewed collectively, with an eye on the above grantees, a clear vision of ZeroDivide's impact on the Hip Hop social justice movement becomes apparent. The grantees almost universally reiterate that Hip Hop is the connective thread that, above all else, is the key gateway to engaging youth, or as Malkia Cyril, Director of the Center for Media Justice eloquently states, "Hip Hop is more than an art-form. It provokes an entire worldview."

When it comes to Just Think's work in developing Hip Hop curriculum, Elana Rosen, Executive Director of Just Think, reminds us of the challenge of educating a new generation of Americans: "Learning and engaging in the 21st Century has to do with meeting young people where they are. If we force young people to learn outside of their environment all the time, we will fail."

Robert Collins, Manager of Bay Area Video Coalition, viewed the power of Hip Hop to engage youth in a similar manner. "Hip Hop has been fairly critical in making this work," says Collins. "In underserved communities, the relationship of youth with Hip Hop opens the door to these other activities—Hip Hop allows the program to draw them in, and helps the programmatic intervention to go beyond just helping with the music to helping with college, transition to adulthood, having a safe place, connection to a community, etc."

The Hip Hop connective thread allows a pathway to civic engagement, greater use of technology, and entrepreneurship. Youth Radio, for example, concedes that part of the draw to their program was Hip Hop. But once students are in the door, the impact goes beyond that. "A significant amount of folks who come into Youth Radio want to rap [are Hip Hop kids]," said Youth Radio's Media Manager Patrick Johnson. "They typically find

their entry point in the mass production class. At the same time, folks learn a broader set of areas that they also become engaged in.”

Likewise, at Bay Area Video Coalition Hip Hop similarly opens the door to civic engagement, media literacy, technology and activism: “Kids had ... MySpace [pages],” Collins recalls, “but didn’t know how to use Word to type lyrics or Excel to support business. [From their understanding of Hip Hop], we were able to incorporate social justice into the curriculum, analyze what was going on in the media, and teach kids how just traveling from Oakland to San Francisco could be eye-opening.”

LESSONS LEARNED

The Hip Hop Initiative is a proven model that ZeroDivide hopes other foundations will consider, expand upon and extend across the nation. After three years of investing over \$1 million in Hip Hop nonprofits focused on increasing civic engagement and strengthening economic empowerment for marginalized youth of color, ZeroDivide has drawn a number of key lessons regarding the importance of funding grassroots Hip Hop social justice organizations and their work. Each of these lessons is rooted in the crucial understanding that there are subtle nuances to post-civil rights activism and organizations that require foundations committed to evolving with the times to adjust their approach.

In short, funders must adapt in order to situate themselves for the future. In today’s environment, the traditional funding approach isn’t compatible with emerging organizational models. New approaches will certainly require greater risk-taking, and the willingness to fluidly adapt to new realities facing the communities they hope to serve. Some of these variables include:

- The ways and speed with which new technologies catalyze change in community structures;
- How technology has shortened generational cycles, from 25 years to between 10 -15 years;
- How local economies are affected by recent economic upheaval;
- The impacts of globalization on economic opportunity;
- Demographic changes; and
- Increasing commitments to sustainability.

The philanthropic community should also consider the following findings:

CEDING CONTROL

Investing in Hip Hop nonprofits requires that foundations cede some level of control over the terms of their relationship with these organizations. It also involves letting go of the existing process to some degree. Traditional approaches — such as the need for well-crafted proposals, five-year strategic plans, benchmarks, etc. — present hurdles to reaching desired goals. Hip Hop organizations usually require a genuine sense of collaborative partnership and often must buy-in to the foundation’s approach. This initial understanding was pivotal to ZeroDivide’s decision to create The Kitchen Cabinet to establish these relationships and create buy-in early on.

These organizations not only bring to the table unique insights to contemporary organizing, but they are often very young and may not have sufficient insight into navigating elite institutions. Foundations that rely on traditional criteria to evaluate them will inevitably overlook genius. These organizations are prepared to do the hard work, but at times they will need direct hands-on guidance. A new approach will require some degree of risk-taking on the part of funders.

SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

Foundation staff have spent a great deal of time engaged with grantees — well-beyond issuing a grant. Strategic consultation, thought leadership, and partnership development were important roles played by the program officer throughout the evolution of the Hip Hop Initiative.

These young organizers are highly skilled and innovative; part of their ability to engage technology, entrepreneurship, and social change simultaneously to offer new solutions is due to their instinct to “think outside the box.” Foundations must realize that they value conviction over expediency. The results are new answers to old problems — something we all seek. Funders must meet them where they are and nurture the relationship rather than expecting complete conformity.

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AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT

An important lesson gathered by the Foundation in its relationship with Hip Hop nonprofits is that funding doesn't primarily drive them. The realization that there is a money/power dynamic that they are potentially beholden to is something that they generally won't hesitate to bring out into the open. Balancing the equation, Hip Hop organizations make it clear that the money isn't the key to the relationship. Hip Hop community organizations are very clear throughout the process that the source of their motivation is their work rather than foundation dollars. A general sense persists that they are not taking foundation dollars just to take it, but it really has to fit into their work. Contrary to the practice of traditional nonprofits, several organizations proved perfectly willing to “leave the money on the table” if it didn't accord closely with their strategic goals. Likewise, these organizations see the relationships as a partnership. In this situation, funders must be flexible partners in an organic process of sustained engagement.

As a result of these dynamics, foundations have to engage on a different level than what has become the norm. This means that the relationship has to be more authentic, and foundations have to spend more hands-on time with the community to figure out their needs. For such authentic engagement and partnership to exist, a trust relationship is crucial. Foundations must demonstrate that they are equally committed to the issues and end goals over the process.

NETWORK-BUILDING

While investments usually have a place-based impact, the incipency of the collaborative infrastructure among Hip Hop organizations demands a grantmaking approach that seeks to bring multiple organizations and networks together. This typically involves holding a series of convenings followed by the funding of collaborations and strategic partnerships that emerge out of them. This generation of nonprofits highly value community and collective advancement. All see themselves as part of a community of organizers who benefit from each other's work, especially when that collective approach gives them city-, state- and nation-wide reach. These collaborations add to their impact, not distract from it. Funders must be willing partners in this equation.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The Hip Hop Initiative helped ZeroDivide realize that young organizers' ability to combine entrepreneurship with a social change agenda is a model that is ahead of the curve. It reflects the extent to which this generation of activists has bought into the best of America—from its entrepreneurial spirit of capitalism, to its focus on building democracy and empowering ordinary Americans. It also reflects that Hip Hop organizers don't intrinsically see a contradiction in combining these two approaches into a new model of community activism.

The experience with the Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative influenced ZeroDivide's decision to:

1. Embrace a social enterprise approach in how it invested in Hip Hop nonprofits, and;
2. To re-organize all of its grantmaking around a social enterprise model focused on improving civic engagement and economic empowerment for marginalized communities.

In conceptualizing and implementing the Hip Hop Initiative, these two areas have emerged as the twin pillars of a comprehensive approach to community change and social justice that now defines the Foundation's overall approach. It is a model that ZeroDivide recommends that the philanthropy community overall should consider.

● CONCLUSIONS

At the outset, the ZeroDivide Hip Hop and Social Justice Initiative hypothesized that something special, important, and empowering was happening in the place where Hip Hop and technology meets. However, the full extent of the power of incorporating technology and popular culture into a philanthropic strategy in order to strengthen families and communities became apparent when ZeroDivide began identifying, funding, and working with organizations on innovative projects. ZeroDivide learned that when given proper focus and resources, financial and otherwise, youth activist organizations — those with an eye on social change through the use of technology — possess a unique capacity to do one or more of the following: arm youth with crucial skills for the labor force, create new types of enterprises, add to a collective sense of the importance of volunteerism, and empower individuals by helping youth take ownership of and build assets within their communities.

This sense of empowerment, in turn, leads to greater sense of citizenship and patriotism. Without funding these organizations and their work, we are doing our nation a disservice and failing future generations. As this account demonstrates, these youth-centered efforts unlock the power of Hip Hop and technology. They have found ways to bring youth from the margins to the center of civic and economic activity — making them key stakeholders in building a new America — and offering solutions to some of the most difficult questions of our time.

● Appendix I: Statistical Snapshot of Grantees and Community Contexts

Grantee Snapshot

Contextual Data: Total number of the Hip Hop Initiative grantees; budget ranges with number listed; and number of youth served for all programs and average for combined.

1. Total Number of grantees–15
2. Number of youth served (average for the Hip Hop Initiative) – 450
3. Age range and median age for youth served (average for the Hip Hop Initiative) – 17
4. Estimate of percentage of youth from poor neighborhoods (or % of population) – 85% - 95%
5. Organizational budget for FY 2008 – \$50K - \$1 million
6. Number of organizational full time staff – 3 < 10
7. Community Contextual Snapshot

The majority of grantees of the ZeroDivide Hip Hop Initiative were located in three of California’s largest cities: Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland. The data listed below is from the 2000 Census and describes the number of census tracts with poverty rates greater than 30%, the percentage of youth of color that lived in these neighborhoods in 2000, and the percentage of working-age youth and adults in these neighborhoods who were not employed or seeking work in April of 2000.

Number of High Poverty Neighborhoods

Number of census tracts with poverty rates higher than 30% in 2000

- San Francisco: 7 of 176
- Oakland: 18 of 107
- Los Angeles: 257 of 865

Share of Youth of Color Living in Poor Neighborhoods

The proportion of each city's Black, Latin, and Asian youths between the ages of 10 and 24 that lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates higher than 30% in 2000.

Oakland: Number of Youths Who Live in High Poverty Neighborhoods

- 1 in 4 Black youths
- 1 in 5 Latino youths
- 1 in 5 Asian youths
- 1 in 10 white youths

San Francisco: Number of Youths Who Live in High Poverty Neighborhoods

- 1 in 6 Black youths
- 1 in 333 Latino youths
- 1 in 25 Asian youths

Los Angeles: Number of Youths Who Live in High Poverty Neighborhoods

- 1 in 2 Black youths
- 1 in 2 Latino youths
- 1 in 4 Asian youths
- 1 in 4 White youths

Percentage of Working-Age Youth and Adults Not Employed or Seeking Working in Poor Neighborhoods

The percentage of the population aged 16 and over living in high poverty neighborhoods (greater than 30% poverty) in each city that were not employed or actively seeking work in 2000.

- Oakland 49%
- San Francisco 51%
- Los Angeles 47%

● **Appendix II: Interviewees**

Jeff Chang

Journalist and author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (2005)

Sonya Clark-Herrera

Executive Director, Mural Music & Arts Project

Robert Collins

Manager, BUMP Records, Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC)

Malkia Cyril

Director, Center for Media Justice

Patrick Johnson

Youth Media Manager, Youth Radio

Mazi Mutafa

Executive Director, Words, Beats and Life (WBL)

Shamako Noble

Co-Founder and President, Hip Hop Congress

Elana Rosen

Executive Director, Just Think

Beverly Tate

Professor, Pasadena City College

Kevin Weston

Publisher, *Youth Outlook*

Chris Wiltsee

Executive Director, Youth Movement Records

● **Appendix III: Resources**

Civic Engagement and Youth

Black Youth Project

<http://blackyouthproject.uchicago.edu>

CIRCLE

<http://www.civicyouth.org>

Democracy and Hip Hop Blog

<http://democracyandhiphop.blogspot.com>

WireTap Magazine

<http://www.wiretapmag.org>

Youth Development/Organizing/Arts

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

<http://ellabakercenter.org>

Hip Hop Theater Fest

<http://www.hiphoptheaterfest.com>

Justice Uniting in Creative Energy

<http://www.rampartjuice.com>

My Bloc

<http://www.mybloc.net>

Youth Movement Records

<http://www.youthmovementrecords.org>

Youth Uprising

<http://youthuprising.org>

Hip Hop Journalism, Advocacy, and Academia

Jeff Chang

<http://www.cantstopwontstop.com/blog/index.cfm>

Davey D

<http://daveyd.com>

Hip Hop Archive

<http://www.hiphoparchive.org>

Hip Hop Journalism Association

<http://www.hhja.org>

Industry Ears

<http://www.industryyears.com>

Indymedia

<http://www.indymedia.org>

Vibe Blogs

<http://blogs.vibe.com>

● ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bakari Kitwana is a journalist, activist and political analyst whose commentary on politics and youth culture have been seen on the CNN, FOX News (the O'Reilly Factor), C-Span, PBS (The Tavis Smiley Show) and heard on NPR. He's currently a Senior Media Fellow at the Harvard Law based think tank, The Jamestown Project, and the CEO of Rap Sessions: Community Dialogues on Hip Hop, which conducts townhall meetings around the country on difficult dialogues facing the Hip Hop generation.

His book *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*, which focuses on young Blacks born after the Civil Rights Movement, has been adopted as a course book in classrooms at over 100 colleges and universities.

A native of Long Island, NY, Kitwana holds a B.A. and two Masters degrees (in English and Teaching) from the University of Rochester. Most recently he was named a Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media at Columbia College. His 2010 *Hip Hop Activism in the Obama Era* (Third World Press) is his most recent work.