



QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY

HIP HOP PROGRAM



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HIP HOP EXHIBIT

A CYPHER IN QUEENS

QueensLibrary.org

ABOUT A CYPHER IN QUEENS

A *Cypher in Queens* features nine-foot-tall “audio sculptures” of three Queens hip hop legends who have died in recent years: Prodigy, from the Queensbridge duo Mobb Deep; Jam Master Jay, the legendary DJ and member of Run-DMC who grew up in Hollis; and Phife Dawg, from the St. Albans supergroup A Tribe Called Quest.

Each sculpture consists of a bust of the artist that sits atop stacked speaker boxes, inspired by Carnival season on the island nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Visitors will be able to listen to the music of each artist with wireless headphones from the Library’s Media Center.

A *Cypher in Queens* will be at the Central branch of Queens Public Library from September 2019 through February 2020.





ARTIST PROFILE

SHERWIN BANFIELD

Sherwin Banfield, the creator of *A Cypher in Queens*, lives and works in Astoria, Queens. He grew up on hip hop music, received his BFA from The New School's Parsons School of Design, then furthered his studies in drawing, painting, and sculpture at The Art Students League of New York.

“My work is a reflection of the shapes, lines, designs and proportions of the beauty within all things visual and tangible, distilled through my visual and textured filter, manifested in sculpture and the visual arts.”

“I am crazy excited to personally introduce my sculptures and to hear the response from library visitors and the community at large because this will be something they've never seen before. These legends of hip hop left a mark on my life and countless others around the world, and to bring sculptural representations of them to a great institution such as the Queens Public Library, where they can be studied, debated, and reflected upon, allows their legacy to be further cemented in Queens history. It's about preserving hip hop history, and I'm trying to introduce sculpture as an alternative medium for hip hop preservation.”

Website: www.sherwinbanfield.com | Instagram: [@sherwintheartist](https://www.instagram.com/sherwintheartist)

PRODIGY

ALBERT JOHNSON

Albert Johnson, aka Prodigy, was born November 2, 1974, in Hempstead, Long Island. His family moved to LeFrak City, Queens, and he met Queensbridge Houses native Havoc while in high school. He and Havoc then formed the successful duo Mobb Deep. Coming from a respected musical family, Prodigy was an author and entrepreneur as well as a rapper. He served three years in prison following a plea agreement from a gun possession charge; after getting out in 2011, he kept busy by starting his own label, a clothing line, and publishing imprint (all under the name Infamous). His output as an artist includes eight studio albums with Mobb Depp, five solo albums, and four books. Prodigy was on tour when he was hospitalized due to complications related to his sickle cell anemia, and died on June 20, 2017 in Las Vegas, Nevada.



JAM MASTER JAY

JASON WILLIAM MIZELL

Jason William Mizell, aka Jam Master Jay, was the DJ of the influential hip hop group Run-DMC. He was born January 21, 1965 in Brooklyn, and his family moved to Hollis, Queens in 1975. His love for music started at just five years old. He learned to play several instruments, and as he grew older, his skillset progressed. In 1979, Jam Master Jay (originally calling himself Jazzy Jase) started using a new instrument: a turntable. He began making a name for himself performing locally. Mizell formed Run-DMC with Joseph “Run” Simmons and Darryl “DMC” McDaniels; in the 1980s, Run-DMC became one of the biggest hip hop groups in the world and are credited with breaking hip hop into the mainstream. On October 30, 2002, an unknown person fatally shot Jam Master Jay in his recording studio on Merrick Boulevard in Jamaica, Queens.



@ACypherInQueens

@SherwinTheArtist

PHIFE DAWG

MALIK IZAAK TAYLOR

Malik Izaak Taylor, aka Phife Dawg, was born November 20, 1970 in St. Albans, Queens. He was a rapper and member of the critically acclaimed group A Tribe Called Quest, which he formed with his childhood friends Q-Tip, Jarobi White, and Ali Shaheed Muhammad in 1985. Phife was nicknamed “The Five-Foot Assassin” and “The Five-Footer” because of his height (5 feet 3 inches tall). Phife referred to himself as a “West Indian” of Trinidadian descent, and his mother is poet and artist Cheryl Boyce-Taylor. Phife challenged the “macho posturing” of hip hop, often rapping about social and political issues. Although A Tribe Called Quest broke up in 1998, they still reunited for many performances, and Phife also pursued many solo projects. Phife died on March 22, 2016 in Contra Costa County, CA from complications resulting from diabetes.





Ralph McDaniels, Hip Hop Coordinator for Queens Public Library

QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY HIP HOP PROGRAMS

Queens Public Library's Hip Hop Programs tell the story of Hip Hop and the borough of Queens' contribution to this popular genre of music. They are devoted to presenting the five core elements (MCing, DJing, Breaking, Graffiti, and Knowledge) of Hip Hop.

Queens Public Library has embarked on a mission to recognize, document, and celebrate the positive evolution of Hip Hop culture and the Hip Hop community. We provide QPL customers with programming that will enhance their knowledge of this worldwide musical and cultural phenomenon. This will reflect the important role Queens communities played in Hip Hop's ascension from a local art form to an internationally recognized movement.

While providing programs that promote the overall mission, Queens Public Library will also collect and display artifacts such as pictures, periodicals, audio tapes, videotapes, writings, news articles, flyers, and oral histories from people involved with the music, from the origins of the genre up until present day.

A Cypher in Queens is hosted and curated by Queens Public Library Hip Hop Coordinator Ralph McDaniels.

Sherwin Banfield quotes courtesy of the artist and AM New York.

Hip Hop Legends biographies courtesy of Wikipedia and Ralph McDaniels.

Thank you to DJ Sparkx and DJ Preme for providing equipment and silent disco support.



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We speak your language.

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89-11 Merrick Boulevard, Jamaica

F to 169th Street. Numerous buses go to the 165th Street bus terminal.

   #QPLHipHop