

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Art is a discovery in itself. Seen in detail it is a series of discoveries, perhaps intended in the first instance to stave off boredom. In a long range view, art is the setting up of monuments to the ordinary things about us, in a moment and in time.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON,
*Folklore, Memoirs, and
Other Writings*

HIPHOP IS A MONUMENT to the youth, both black and brown, who resided in low-income communities in the New York area in the 1970s. In the act of living their lives and doing ordinary things, they created an art form that now resonates for the masses throughout the world. When hiphop began to move stealthily into the mindset of youth in the United States and elsewhere in the world, some of its fans were sitting in classrooms at colleges and universities. These students considered hiphop to be as serious as traditional academic study about the importance of knowledge, and as a result they presented new challenges to the establishment and to hiphop itself. Students and fans of hiphop began to agitate for classes, radio stations, artistic representations, research projects, and general inclusion in institutions at every level. I began developing the Hiphop Archive around 1995 when I was teaching at University of California, Los Angeles, in the department of anthropology and the Center for African American Studies. In 2002 I formally established the Hiphop Archive at

the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University. I wanted hip-hop to have the same level of respect as any area of study in the academic world. What's more, I wanted the issues, ideologies, and love of knowledge and sense of fairness that is fundamental to hip-hop culture to become part of academic culture. I thought hip-hop could level the academic playing field for students of color and for working-class students, as well as bring skill and merit back into the academic game the way skill and knowledge have become the foundation of hip-hop culture. My research on hip-hop, and on Project Blowed in particular, has been possible because of the support of many people.

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