

MSU Denver's Department of Africana Studies presents

**The 3rd Annual Umoja Conversations Conference:
“Black Women in/and/of Hip-Hop”**

supported by
the Department of Music's Music, Race, & Social Justice Visiting Artist Series,
the Department of English, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Thursday, October 20, 2022
King Center Concert Hall, on the Auraria Campus
FREE and Open to the Public
9am-9pm

featuring:
DJ Bella Scratch

a documentary film screening of Byron Hurt's *Hip-Hop Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006),
followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Kerrie Joy (poet, singer/songwriter, storyteller,
educator, and revolutionary), with Suzi Q. Smith (Artist, Organizer, and Educator), Ru Johnson
(Brand Operative and Operative Strategist with Roux Black Consulting), Jelie (Rapper and
Producer), & Zuri Barnes (Music Major, MSU Denver)

a Keynote Fireside Chat with Speaker, Hip-Hop scholar Dr. Joan Morgan (Program Director,
Center for Black Visual Culture, NYU/Writer/Scholar/Mom), moderated by Dr. Chereka
Dickerson (Assistant Professor of English, MSU Denver)

Nikki Swarn (General Manager and Program Director for Colorado's The Drop)

TheVoice (Former Emcee, Performer, Writer, Musician Producer, Public Speaker, Teacher,
Youth Facilitator/Mentor)

and an evening of performances:

Black Women in/and/of Hip-Hop
curated by Kerrie Joy

featuring Hex Kitten
with Spinks, She Who Wont Be Named, Binta Zang, Kerrie Joy, Jelie
& Rachel Baely

Conference Schedule

The 3rd Annual Umoja Conversations Conference:
“Black Women in/and/of Hip-Hop”
King Center Concert Hall

9am: Conference Opening

House DJ (Part One): DJ Bella Scratch

- Dr. Devon Wright (Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at Metropolitan State University of Denver)
- Dr. Douglas Mpondi (Chair and Professor of Africana Studies at Metropolitan State University of Denver)
- Dr. Michael Benitez (Vice President for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Metropolitan State University of Denver)
- Dr. Janine Davidson (President of Metropolitan State University of Denver)
- Dr. John Masserini (Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences (CLAS) at Metropolitan State University of Denver)

PART ONE: CONVERSATIONS, PRESENTATIONS & PANEL DISCUSSIONS

9:30-10:30am: Film Screening: *Hip-Hop Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006), written, produced, and directed by Byron Hurt

Byron Hurt combines his award-winning documentary films with a dynamic speaking style that challenges audiences to question gender, race, and class in American culture. His highly acclaimed documentary *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and broadcast nationally on PBS' Emmy award-winning series Independent Lens. The film explores issues of hypermasculinity, sexism, patriarchy, misogyny, anti-LGBTQ sentiments in Hip-Hop culture in and the broader content of U.S. white supremacy, including anti-Black media messaging such as criminalization and sexualization of Black bodies.

11am-12noon: Panel Discussion on the film, *Hip-Hop Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006), written, produced, and directed by Byron Hurt

- Panel Moderator: Kerrie Joy (Poet, Singer/Songwriter, Storyteller, Educator, and Revolutionary)
- Discussants:
 - o Suzi Q. Smith (Artist, Organizer, and Educator)
 - o Ru Johnson (Brand Operative and Operative Strategist with Roux Black Consulting)
 - o Jemie (Rapper and Producer)
 - o Zuri Barnes (Music Major, MSU Denver)

Through a panel discussion we hope to grapple with issues raised in the film and apply these ideas and other similar concepts to the post-#MeToo era, especially in the aftermath of media attention and legal consequences for high profile Black male entertainers such as Bill Cosby, R. Kelly, Russel Simmons and Dr. Dre.

12:30-2pm: Fireside Chat with Keynote Speaker and Scholar of Hip Hop, Dr. Joan Morgan

- Institutional Welcome: Dr. John Masserini (Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences (CLAS) at Metropolitan State University of Denver)
- Moderator: Dr. Chereka Dickerson (Assistant Professor of English, MSU Denver)

Dr. Joan Morgan (Program Director, Center for Black Visual Culture, NYU/Writer/Scholar/Mom)

Dr. Morgan is an award-winning feminist author and a graduate of NYU's American Studies Ph.D. program. A pioneering hip-hop journalist, Dr. Morgan coined the term "hip-hop feminism" in 1999, when her book was published, the groundbreaking *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*. Her book has been used in college coursework across the country. Regarded internationally as an expert on the topics of hip-hop, the Caribbean, and gender, Dr. Morgan has made numerous television, radio and film appearances — among them HBO Max, Netflix, Lifetime, MTV, BET, VH-1, CNN, WBAI's The Spin and MSNBC. Dr. Morgan has been a Visiting Instructor at Duke University where she taught The History of Hip-Hop Journalism, a Visiting Research Scholar at Vanderbilt University and Visiting Lecturer at Stanford University's Institute for the Diversity of the Arts where she was the recipient of the prestigious 2013 Dr. St. Clair Drake Teaching Award for her course The Pleasure Principle: A Post-Hip Hop Search for a Black Feminist Politics of Pleasure. She is the first Visiting Scholar to ever receive the award. She is also a recipient of the 2015 Woodrow Wilson Women's Studies Dissertation Fellowship, the 2015 Penfield Fellowship, the 2016 American Fellowship Award and a 2020 finalist for the ACLU Emerging Scholars Fellowship.

2:00-3:30pm: Lunch Break

3:30-4:30pm: Presentation by and Conversation with Nikki Swarn (General Manager and Program Director for Colorado's The Drop)

Ms. Nikki Swarn is General Manager and Program Director for Colorado's The Drop, which debuted in 2019 and was quick to garner a loyal following and some major accolades, like *Westword* Magazine's award for "Best New Radio Station in 2020." As Content Director, Ms. Swarn is a 20-year Colorado radio veteran with commercial radio stations like KS107.5, KYGO, ESPN, Alice 105.9. She is a genuine and self-aware leader with a diverse background in music and music marketing ranging from artist development and content strategy to marketing research and brand development. Ms. Swarn has a BA in English and Communications, and an MBA (Honors) in Marketing. Most notably, and most relevant to the theme for this conference, Program Director Nikki Swarn is also the first female African American radio station general manager in Colorado history.

PART TWO: DEMONSTRATIONS, PERFORMANCES, CYPHERS

4:45-5:45pm: Performance by TheVoice (Former Emcee, Performer, Writer, Musician Producer, Public Speaker, Teacher, Youth Facilitator/Mentor)

TheVoice- also known as Billie Jean, is one of Colorado's Hip Hop Pioneers. She is known for her heartfelt lyrics and electric performances. TheVoice began her lyricism in the early 80's and soared through her community using her gifts and talents to educate and empower her audience for over 30+ Years. Alongside her live performances, TheVoice has hosted her own midday radio show on Denver's only Black owned radio station formally known as K.D.K.O. She also taught a Hip Hop course at Denver's West High School and appeared regularly at Colorado's Art from Ashes Youth Program. Adding to her credits, TheVoice wrote and performed a nationally aired "Telly Award" winning commercial for the Black Starz Channel entitled "The Black Experience" which she used her poetry skills to take viewers through the journey and flight of Black Americans. TheVoice delivers lyrics ranging from raw and uncensored, to soulful, heartfelt and mind provoking, which gives her the ability to connect with diverse audiences. Whether she is rapping about love in all of its manifestations, urging women to respect themselves or soulfully singing about society's ills, one thing is for certain, music is an extension of TheVoice's very soul.

6-7 pm: Dinner Break

7pm: Performance

Black Women in/and/of Hip-Hop, curated by Kerrie Joy
featuring Hex Kitten
with Spinks, She Who Wont Be Named, Binta Zang, Kerrie Joy, Jelie
& Rachel Baely

Performer and Discussant Bios

From north Carolina, singer/songwriter Rachel Bailey aka **Rachel Baely** is a rising super star. She was mentored by R&B group JODECI as a young girl and has since opened for artists such as Ella Mai, Busta Rhymes, Big Boi from OutKast, and R&B group 112 to name a few and has broken several records on Denver's top radio stations as an independent artist. She represent her BAE gang which stands for "Be An Example" in hopes to inspire people to be their true authentic selves every day. Rachel Bailey aka your BAE is well on her way to reach stardom.

Zuri Barnes is a Senior at Metropolitan State University of Denver working towards her Bachelor of Arts in Music. She is a multi-instrumentalist and singer/songwriter who plays violin and guitar. Originally from West Virginia, Zuri has made a place for herself in the Denver music scene with performances at Your Mom's House, Globe Hall Denver, and the Marquis Theater downtown to name a few. She is currently working on a children's album which ties in a lot of different styles and genres. In addition to her life as a musician and student, Zuri is a published

working model in Denver. You can catch her at Denver Fashion Week this November! Learn more at <https://linktr.ee/zurileigh>.

Dr. Chereka Dickerson is an assistant professor of English at Metropolitan State University of Denver. Dr. Dickerson's research and teaching center on Black women and storytelling, most specifically the stories told to, told by, and told about Black women. Dr. Dickerson officially began studying hip-hop while working on her master's degree, and she makes it apparent to incorporate it in all aspects of her teaching. For Dr. Dickerson, hip-hop creates space for Black women to intentionally amplify their voices and their stories.

Hailing from Denver, CO, **Hex Kitten** is a DJ who has made waves throughout her city in a short period of time! She's rocked the stages of many prominent Denver festivals including the Underground Music Showcase as well as the Westword Showcase. In addition to frequenting many local establishments, she's DJ'd nightclubs hosted by noted recording artists such as Mario and Omarion. Hex is known to play open format sets, ranging from hip-hop, house, afrobeat & dancehall music, and is always keeping a dancefloor filled.

Jelie is a multi-talented rapper and producer who is at the fulcrum of an evolving Hip Hop scene. Jelie, pronounced "Jel-eye," is a very different and uniquely wired musician who isn't afraid to break the rules and push the boundaries of our perception with her deeply layered lyricism and well-crafted production. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Jelie is making music driven by a desire to motivate, inspire, and tell her story her way. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Recording Arts, and music is the vehicle by which she expresses herself authentically. She writes lyrics that draw from her experiences, and by using her musical acumen, she articulates stories and shared perspectives that will connect with audiences across the spectrum. She cites icons such as Missy Elliott, Tech N9ne, and Brotha Lynch Hung as pivotal influences in her music. She also draws inspiration from her family. Her autistic brother and sister are at the center of her motivation and heart. She has a deep-rooted passion and loves working with people who are perceived as disadvantaged, the elderly, the young, and the disabled. As an artist, her bars are cold and knit together by emotive and expressive punchlines. A skillfully resonated voice accentuates her effortless intonations. She delivers her rhymes in a cadence that crescendos with spellbinding emotional undertones. The talented enigma is here to reshape and leave an indelible mark in the industry.

Kerrie Joy (She/Her/Hers) is a poet, singer/songwriter, storyteller, educator, and revolutionary. She is based in Denver, CO where she channels her creativity through poetry, hip hop, song, graphic design and fashion. She is an organizer of ideas and a facilitator of critical thinking to secure freedom for all people. In addition to years of additional accolades, Kerrie Joy was named the 2022 Creative-in-Residence at the Denver Art Museum and continues to challenge herself as a master creative. Learn more at www.kerriejoy.com.

Ru Johnson is a brand operative and operations strategist in the music and cannabis industries. Her work creates opportunity for social impact by deepening audience connection, using the art of hip-hop as the catalyst. Roux Black Consulting is Johnson's brain child, a project management

agency focused on campaign development, marketing and promotion. Our portfolio consists of long-standing clients, AEG, Live Nation, Red Bull and others as well as large-scale productions like the National Cannabis Festival, Broccoli City, Westword Music Showcase, the Underground Music Showcase and other platforms that elevate independent artists.

DJ Bella Scratch is an open format DJ who has been spinning since 2000, though music has been ingrained in her since she first picked up a saxophone as a young girl. 'SheJay', as she is also known, is well versed in all genre's of music with personal favorites being Soul and Hip Hop. Make no mistake, Bella thinks good music is good music – Rock, Country, Top 40, EDM, Salsa, you name it, she can play it!! Bella has an uncanny talent for bringing your event to the next level. In addition to being your go-to party DJ, with several different residencies around town. Bella Scratch is the host and creator of a weekly syndicated radio show Bella's SoulFRESH, on KUVO 89.3 FM Denver. Musician, DJ, radio host, Bella Scratch is the definition of the whole package. When not DJ-ing, you can find her getting creative in other ways like graphic designing, photography, and video editing and scoping out all the good eats around Denver with friends.

She Who Wont Be Named, Artist Rapper, Songwriter born in Memphis, TN. This jazzy artist is making waves in Denver, CO. With inspirations from Lauren Hill and Memphis Rap, Imani has created a unique hardcore sound with lyricism and truth. She has been on many shows and movements in Denver such as The Knock 303 and even in her hometown joining Legend La Chats Chatway Family being featured on *Chatway DaTape vol 1* and soon to be released *Chatway Datape vol 2*. When asked about her future She has plans on creating her own label and creating a non-profit to bring various opportunities for underprivileged families and areas.

Suzi Q. Smith is an award-winning artist, organizer, and educator who lives in Denver, Colorado. She has created, curated, coached, and taught in Denver for over 20 years, managing the largest poetry festivals that Denver has seen to date. A TEDx speaker multiple times, Suzi has performed throughout the United States for over a decade, and has shared stages with Nikki Giovanni, the late Gil Scott Heron, and many more. The author of poetry collections *Poems for the End of the World*, *A Gospel of Bones*, and *Thirteen Descansos*, Suzi is also a singer-songwriter, playwright, and multi-disciplinary creative. Currently, she is Affiliate Faculty with Regis University's Mile High MFA, Lighthouse Writers Workshop, and DU's Prison Arts Initiative, as well as the [margins.] Conference Director for The Word. She also serves as a community representative on the Denver County Cultural Council. Website: <https://www.suziqsmith.com>, Twitter: @suziqpoet, Instagram: @suziqsmith.

Local R&B and Hip-Hop artist "**Spinks**" is a singer/songwriter and has been writing, recording, and performing her music since 2018. The 22-year-old has been making her mark here in Denver, Colorado as she has been on rotation for the radio stations 98.1 and 104.7. She has performed at Soho Lounge in Austin, Texas, Summit Denver, The Roxy, Marquis Theatre, and many other places we know and love. Spinks is also an advocate for LGBTQIA. She is on all music platforms. Her newest single is called "No Mercy" and is on YouTube. You can follow her

@spinksmusic_ on Instagram as she will be posting more about her upcoming shows and new song releases.

Binta Zang is a West African, original hip hop songwriter based in Denver, CO. She is often compared to the likes of artists like Noname, Kari Faux, and even Lauryn Hill but she is making strides in defining her own lane as a musician. Her debut EP 'Signed Bmac' has been streamed in over 20 different countries, and she has been making her way around the U.S as well performing in big cities like Houston, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. Check out this rising artist now as soon she will become a household name.

-

Special thanks to The Department of Africana Studies, The College of Letters, Arts & Sciences, The Department of Music, The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Metropolitan State University of Denver Admissions for providing the opportunity for students from Denver Public Schools to participate, The Department of English, The Center for Multicultural Engagement and Inclusion, Brother Jeff's Cultural Center, Kerrie Joy, Christine Devine, Charla Bevan-Jones, Kim Wendt, Jeremy VanHooser, David Sharman, Domonic Velarde, Amanda Ryder, & Jermaine Gunnells