

arts
education
njpac



dupré “doital”

kelly

**the david g. berger
master class series**



hip hop activism

Dupré “DoltAll” Kelly is known for using hip hop as an avenue for activism, but he is not the first to do so. Hip hop, as a genre, officially emerged on August 11, 1973 — five years after the official end of the Civil Rights Movement. Combining styles such as funk, jazz, blues and spoken word, hip hop quickly became mainstream. Many attribute the success of the genre to the voice it gave oppressed communities, specifically the African American community, in response to major social justice events such as the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the assassination of Malcolm X. As social justice movements erupted in the mid-20th century, hip hop evolved as a way for people to address minority and immigration rights, education access, prison reform, voting and other issues where minority voices had been historically oppressed.

Since hip hop erupted in the 1970s, it has been the inspiration for many campaigns, such as the Respect My Vote campaign organized by the Hip Hop Caucus. This campaign aims to educate young and new voters on state voting statistics, interpreting your ballot and ensuring your vote is counted in local, state and federal elections. The Hip Hop Caucus uses a shared genre to affect change, such as raising money for natural disaster relief or protecting voting rights for those with felony records. The Respect My Vote campaign increases voter turnout in younger demographics by pledging people to vote, assisting in voter registration and partnerships with hip hop artists. For example, artists such as 2Chainz, Ne-Yo, Gloria Reuben, Meek Mill, Ludacris, Ciara, Big Sean and Flo Rida have committed themselves to furthering the mission of the Hip Hop Caucus.

“How Can We Be Free” by Tupac Shakur and “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy are just two of the many examples of artists using their platform to create art while motivating their listeners to become politically conscious, but Hip Hop Caucus released an entire album dedicated to climate change in 2014. In an interview with *New Jersey Monthly*, Dupré Kelly communicates that this is the purpose of hip hop in the modern world, stating, “They hate to hear a march coming. They hate to hear the stomping of the feet. They want you to be stagnant ... hip hop is that movement.” He has made it his mission to promote the intersection of hip hop and advocacy further. To this day, hip hop is both a celebration of Black history and an activist genre that promotes political progression in broader American culture.



“As I got older, I realized that it’s not about making it out. It’s about making where you come from better.”

— Dupré “DoltAll” Kelly

about dupré “doltall” kelly

Hip Hop legend **Dupré “DoltAll” Kelly** has devoted his life to making meaningful change, using music and open discussion as tools to change not only politics but culture as well. Born and raised in the West Ward of Newark, NJ, Kelly credits his dedication and passion for change to his mother. With this ambition, Kelly became a commercially successful rapper for Lords of the Underground, a community leader and an owner of a not-for-profit organization. He also sits on the boards of United Way of West Essex, After School All Stars, Newark Arts Council and Newark Museum Advisory Board, and he has had a brief career in film as well as a cast member of shows such as *The Sopranos*, *Law & Order* and *30 Rock*.

Lords of the Underground (L.O.T.U.G.) is an American hip hop trio based in Newark, NJ, that arose in 1990 and has sold millions of albums in addition to reaching 66 on the Billboard 200. The group comprises Dupré “DoltAll” Kelly, Al’Terik “Mr. Funke” Wardrick and Bruce A. “D.J. Lord Jazz” Colston. His success as an emcee enabled him to be the first platinum-selling rap artist elected to office in the United States. Initially, Kelly had no intention of funneling his activism into a councilman position. He knew he had a voice and things to say, and his journey began with him channeling this passion into music. While he was inspired by many, Kelly recalls a moment from his

twenties when Tupac Shakur told him, “We have to turn all of our fans into voters,” prompting Kelly to use his platform to get listeners excited about the change. Shakur continued to say, “We have to deal with legislation. If we don’t do that, those laws will never be made for us.” This conversation echoed in Kelly’s mind for decades. His campaign began in 2018, and he won a councilman position in 2022. Kelly is still an active member of L.O.T.U.G. and views his music career not as a distraction from his duties to the community but as a tool to promote change.

Kelly believes that while laws can change, real change happens through public service and connecting with your community. Kelly’s not-for-profit, 211 Community Impact (211ci), includes many programs, such as Read for Life (focusing on building community literacy), Look Good Feel Good (teaches students the importance of taking pride in appearance and dress for success), After School (provides entertainment and creative writing education) and Let’s Eat (feeding and clothing West Ward citizens). The diversity of programming shows Kelly’s focus on investing in the youth’s future, the general community’s well-being and the creativity of all Newark citizens. Kelly encourages people to look at his story as the blueprint for what could be accomplished by anyone anywhere and hopes that America sees an upward trend of public servants who are genuinely connected to their constituents.

seed questions to consider

1. What are the similarities/intersections between political action and hip hop?
2. How can each element of hip hop be a vehicle to promote social, political and economic change?
3. How is perseverance an integral theme of hip hop history?

vocabulary

211 Community Impact

A group of programs initiated by Dupré Kelly that addresses food insecurity, displacement, education and literacy for students in the West Ward of Newark, New Jersey

Activism

Making decisions to try and inspire meaningful change. This can be achieved through actions that promote, impede, direct or intervene in social, political, economic or environmental reform with the desire to make changes in society toward a perceived greater good

Cadence

The unique rhythmic pattern of how a rapper delivers their lyrics



Entrepreneur

A person who organizes and operates a business, typically one that they created

Emceeing

One of the central elements of hip hop where words are recited rapidly and rhythmically over a prerecorded, typically electronic instrumental backing

Empowerment

The practice of motivating oneself or others to accomplish important goals or objectives towards self-improvement

Food Insecurity

The condition of not having access to sufficient food or food of an adequate quality to meet one's basic needs. According to the USDA, 12.8% of American households were food-insecure in 2023

Fusion

The process of joining together multiple genres or influences to form a new creation or style

Graffiti

A style of expressive public art serving as a fundamental element of hip hop. Darry “Cornbread” McCray is credited as the first modern graffiti artist, writing his nickname across Philadelphia in the 1960s and inspiring other artists to express themselves in the same way

Hip Hop

A genre of music most often characterized by a strong, rhythmic beat and a rapping vocal track. The genre originated in New York City in the 1970s as a cultural exchange among Black, Latino and Caribbean youth and has grown into one of the most consumed genres of music in the United States. As a culture, hip hop is built on five main pillars: DJing, rapping (also called emceeing), breakdancing (usually called breaking or B-boying), graffiti and knowledge of self

Lords of the Underground

Also known as L.O.T.U.G., is an American hip hop trio composed of Dupré “DoltAll” Kelly, Al’Terik “Mr. Funke” Wardrick and Bruce A. “D.J. Lord Jazz” Colston

Revitalization

Governmentally organized attempts to create a more satisfying and equitable culture, typically in response to dissatisfaction from constituents. Revitalization movements can be in response to social, environmental, economic or political concerns



resources

Websites

Wikipedia | Lords of the Underground
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lords_of_the_Underground

“Revisiting Lords of the Undergrounds ‘Keepers of the Funk’ | Respective Tribute
albumism.com/features/lords-of-the-underground-keepers-of-the-funk-turns-25-anniversary-retrospective

HipHopDX | “Dupré ‘DoltAll’ Kelly on Being First Elected Hip Hop Politician”
hiphopdx.com/news/id.72554/title.doitall-dupre-kelly-interview-lords-underground-newark-councilman

211 Community Impact Website
211communityimpact.com

NJ Monthly | “Newark Rapper Turned Councilman Dupré Kelly Talks Music, Politics”
njmonthly.com/articles/news/dupre-kelly-councilman-doitall-lords-of-the-underground-newark-west-ward-tupac-shakur

West Ward Council Website | About Dupré
duprekelly.com/about-dupr%C3%A9

Insider NJ | “Dupré Kelly Announces Far-Reaching Plan for Revitalization of Newark’s West Ward”
insidernj.com/press-release/dupre-kelly-announces-far-reaching-plan-for-revitalization-of-newarks-west-ward

Wikipedia | Political Hip Hop
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_hip_hop

Respect My Vote | Hip Hop Caucus
respectmyvote.com

In the Mix | NJPAC
njpac.org/education-program/in-the-mix

Videos

Lords of the Underground — Chief Rocka
youtube.com/watch?v=JFGXtAE7SiU

“DoltAll’ Does it All: Rapper Becomes New Jersey Council Member” — ABCNL
youtube.com/watch?v=ap0ighdcSVc

Hot 97: Hip Hop Votes
youtube.com/watch?v=k6G7kAAKowk

“Rap and Hip Hop: CrashCourse Black American History #47” — CrashCourse
youtube.com/watch?v=RHCA5b9TkVg

“Fight the Power” by Public Enemy
youtube.com/watch?v=naHgg1MhZrl

Associated Press | “Activist Brings Awareness Through Hip Hop, Poetry”
youtube.com/watch?v=AmkJ_BdvU74

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the arts in your school

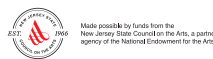
In-School Residencies: NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development: Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

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study the arts at njpac

Saturday Programs: NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.