The quotations below have been researched and selected by the Hip Hop Curriculum Project’s Youth Team 2013. They reflect messages that have deep meaning for these individuals, so much so that they wanted to share these quotes as a resource to educators in their efforts to connect with the language, interests and lived experiences of young people. Some suggestions for use include providing a “Quote of the Day” for discussion, or using the quotes with the Freestyle and/or Battle Page Hip Hop Teaching Strategies described in Rhymes to Re-Education: A Hip Hop Curriculum.

**Big Pun**
Listen, I don’t wanna fight, I’d rather do what’s right
a boy needs a father, that’s the most important part of his life

*From the song “Punish Me”  
(Capital Punishment, 1998)*

**Chuck D**
Most of my heroes don’t appear on no stamps.

*From the song “Fight the Power”  
(Fear of a Black Planet LP, 1989)*

**Classified**  
(Feat David Myles)
I know I’ve never been the smartest or wisest but I realize what it takes
Never dwell in the dark cause the sun always rises
But I gotta make it to the next day
It’s a feeling that you get in your lungs when you run
But you running out of the air and your breath won’t come
And you (Breathes in and out heavily) wheezing gotta keep it movin’
Find an extra umphhh and push your way through it

*From the song “Inner Ninja”  
(Classified, 2012)*

**Common**
Never looking back or too far in front of me, the present is a gift, and I just want to Be.

*From the song “Be (Intro)”  
(Be, 2005)*
Cuban Link
I stuck through it all and this is what it all lead up to
it's the closest ones to you that will stick it in and cut you

From the song “Letter to Pun”
(Chain Reaction, 2005)

Cuban Link
We all get a turn to step up to the plate
but you gotta stand firm take control of your fate
sometimes we get burned the choices we make
but we live and we learn from our own mistakes
but don’t ever give up keep your head up
I know it gets rough but don’t let up if you fall get back up
it’ll get better its one life live it up

From the song “Life Goes On”
(Chain Reaction, 2005)

Damian Marley
This is how the media pillages
On the TV the picture is savages in villages
And the scientist still can’t explain the pyramids, huh
Evangelists making a living on the videos of ribs of the little kids

From the song “Patience”
by Damian Marley & Nas
(Distant Relatives, 2010)

Damian Marley
Some of the smartest dummies, can’t read the language of Egyptian mummies
An’ a fly go a moon, and can’t find food for the starving tummies
Pay no mind to the youths cause it’s not like the future depends on it
But save the animals in the zoo cause the chimpanzee dem a make big money

From the song “Patience (Sabali)”
(Distant Relatives, 2010)
D’bi Young & Anonimo Consejo

Come
Mi wan fi do some American dreaming
Pretend I’m living in the perfect system
Where class and colour have no meaning
But when mi guh to bed last night
Mi get a lickle fright
Mi se a baby die and then mi ear a soldier cry
But all is fair inna love and war
Eeeh star?
Come mek we do some American dreaming
Pretend this prison industrial shitstem
Is a figment of imagination
Pretend the move nine did commit a heinous crime
Advocating equal rights to relieve the peoples plight
Pretend political prisoners and prisoners of war
Have a jolly good time in solitary confinement
Them need time fi think but all is fair in love and war eeh star?
And them drop their bombs bout them a look fi saddam
And dem did the biggest war criminals
Ah talk bout peace when them come for the oil
and empire Pon de native soil
and empire Pon de native soil
and empire
Sueño America NO!

Sueño Americano

Dead Prez
These record labels slang our tapes like dope
You could be next in line and signed
And still be writing rhymes and broke
You would rather have a Lexus or Justice
A dream or some substance
A beamer, a necklace or freedom

From the song “Hip Hop”
(Let’s Get Free, 2000)
DMX

The industry, man it’s not the same
Doesn’t have to do with talent it’s about playing a game
The industry, real n*s is dying to get in
The industry, just to find they don’t fit in
The industry ain’t what it used to be
The industry is trying to control the way you mc
they want you to dress like this and talk like that ...
The industry, Stay in the dirt, play in the dirt
Test the wrong one in the industry and you will get hurt
I’m not an industry artist, I’m an artist in the industry
So I do what the fuck I want cuz nobody can finish me
The industry, wanted dead or alive
New artists to sell their souls and where they survive
The industry don’t give a fuck about you
But the industry couldn’t make a dime without you

From the poem “The Industry”
(Performed at the Def Poetry Jam on YouTube)

Dream Warriors

I venture through darkness with power eclipse
Soul for my guidance, my conscience
Opens my thought my neighbourhood compels
The contract swells the head
I feed on my own so here we go into a cool down
The fool found a sound but there’s not enough to go around
so we searchers and searchers we searches in ignorance
the outcome of distortion is the evidence
Pre-dominant pre-dominance is how I stand
Phenomenon one phenomenon two (come come)
I seek and prosper my journey is endless
keen is my eye sight analyze reality fantasy fantasize

From the song “I’ve Lost My Ignorance”
(Subliminal Simulation, 1994)
**Ebony**
Radical vocal formula is in the house  
Givin’ a vision from prison and doin’ shouts  
I leave it up to lyrics no gimmicks to make noise  
Ain’t no bush beatin’, just straight to the point  
Off stepped in projects takin’ props  
Only thing I got from bein’ a hard rock is life on cell blocks  
It’s nothin’ to glamorize, I’m sending a battle cry  
First step to healing’s admitting so no alibies  
I’m paying a cost to society greatly  
Place in the Pen they try to rehabilitate me  
But I heal myself by education and praying  
The prison is a business that aims to keep me staying  
While they claim to want correction but peep the science  
Every business survives by keeping all clients  
Returning or remaining, with coppers presiding  
They treat us like zoo animals and count us like diamonds

*From the song “This One’s Mine”*  
* (The Legacy EP - UBAD, 1996)*

**Eminem**
My life is full of empty promises and broken dreams  
I’m hopin’ things look up; but there ain’t no job openings  
I feel discouraged, hungry and malnourished  
Livin’ in this house with no furnace, unfurnished  
And I’m sick of workin’ dead-end jobs with lame pay  
And I’m tired of being hired and fired the same day ...
My daughter wants to throw the ball but I’m too stressed to play  
Live half a life and throw the rest away

*From the song “Rock Bottom”*  
* (Slim Shady LP, 1999)*

**Ghettosocks**  
**featuring Edgar Allen Floe**
He really wanted to shine but a rare gem in a diamond mine full of souls of coal. He kept diggin - found knowledge and wisdom, and understood it’s so easy to be a victim. But nobody’s perfect, illegal splurges - larsony’coulda shoulda woulda’ been the verdict if he ever got prosecuted but never was caught, can’t tell him not to do it if you never knew. But no, I’m speakin true-story not a movie, that little boy is yours truly. A tough road but Floe’s goal was finishing first.

*From the song “Don’t Turn Around”*  
* (Treat of the Day, 2009)*
**Ghostface Killah**

Seven o’clock, pluckin’ roaches out the cereal box  
Some shared the same spoon, watchin’ saturday cartoons  
Sugar water was our thing, every meal was no frills  
In the summer, free lunch held us down like steel  
And there was days I had to go to Tex house with a note  
Stating "Gloria can I borrow some food I’m dead broke”  
So embarrassin' I couldn't stand to knock on they door  
My friends might be laughin’, I spent stamps in stores  
Mommy where’s the toilet paper, use the newspaper  
Look Ms. Rose gave us a couch, she’s the neighbor  
Things was deep, my whole youth was sharper than cleats  
Two brothers with muscular dystrophy, it killed me  
But I remember this, mom's would lick her finger tips  
To wipe the cold out my eye before school wit her spit  
Case worker had her runnin' back to face to face  
I caught a case, housin' tried to throw us out of our place” –

*From the song “All That I Got is You”  
(Ironman, 1996)*

**Hopsin**

I’m embarrassed, and I’m ashamed played a part of the devilish game  
Making your common sense parish  
But I ain’t taking the full blame  
Cause, most of you chumps running around here ain’t never had strict parents

*From the song “Ill Mind of Hopsin 5” (2012)*

**J Cole**

I grew up with nothing it hurt me to see my mama poor  
the only pops that I ever seen around was Huxtible

*From the song “Simba”  
(Come Up Mixtape, 2010)*

**J Rebel**

I don’t live Hip Hop, Hip Hop lives in me.

*From Supanaturalz/Zulu Nation*
Jay Z
Check the swag man I walk like a ball player
no matter where you go you are what you are playa

*From the song “Public Service Announcement”*
*(The Black Album, 2003)*

Joe Budden
I’m always with step-dad, his names Beau
And there’s some things about him that my mom don’t know
And he says if I tell that it won’t be pretty
And I’m really scared of em, he’s already hit me
He touches me places I don’t like it
And I ain’t talking bout a hug or goodbye kiss
I mean touch me places that’s private
And he don’t just touch he put summin inside it
He says the more he does that, I’ll start to like it
Hand over my mouth so I’m quiet
Moms only wit ‘em cuz our money is low
I’m sixteen but I’m shaped like a twenty year old
And my moms in love so she makes excuses
But she looks at me and sees scrapes and bruises
Why step daddy gotta take me thru this
Help, somebody, I’m getting raped I can’t do this

*From the song “3 Sides to a Story”*
*(Mood Muzik 2: Can it get any worse, 2006)*

K’naan
We used to take barbed wire
mold them around discarded bike tires
roll them down the hill on foot blazin’
now that was our version of mountain bike racing
do you see why it’s amazing when someone comes out of such a dire situation
and learns the English language just to share his observation

*From the song “Somalia”*
*(Troubadour, 2010)*
**Kanye West**

It seems we living the American dream
But the people highest up got the lowest self-esteem
The prettiest people do the ugliest things
For the road to riches and diamond rings
We shine because they hate us, floss cause they degrade us
We trying to buy back our 40 acres
And for that paper, look how low we a stoop
Even if you in a Benz, you still a nigga in a coupe

*From the song “All Falls Down”*
*(The College Dropout, 2004)*

**Kardinal Offishal**

In Hell’s Kitchen the regulars never stand out
In high school they told me I wouldn’t be nothin’
Wouldn’t make it out the turf, wouldn’t see nothin’
They saw my gang and made up they mind quick
But I would never let the evil in their mind stick
Furthermore, some of the hoodlums I ran with are doctors and lawyers...
The teachers got the kids from 9 to 3
But we got ‘em 24/7
In they I.P.O.D.
So respect my P.O.V.
When I’m filling their ears with love that’s on me

*From the song “Mr Parker”*
*(Allow Me To Reintroduce Myself, 2012)*

**Kendrick Lamar**

Visions of Martin Luther staring at me
If I see it how he seen it that would make my parents happy
Sorry mama I can’t turn the other cheek

*From the song “Hiii Power”*
*(Section 80, 2011)*
**KRS One**

Now, here’s a likkle truth open up your eye
While you’re checking out the boom box, check the exercise
Take the word “Overseer,” like a sample
Repeat it very quickly in a crew for example
Overseer, overseer, overseer, overseer Officer, Officer, Officer, Officer, yeah, officer
from overseer you need a little clarity? Check the similarity
The overseer rode around the plantation
The officer is off patrolling all the nation
The overseer couldn’t stop you what you’re doing
The officer will pull you over just when he’s pursuing
The overseer had the right to get ill
And if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill
The officer has the right to arrest
and if you fight back they put a hole in your chest
Woop, they both ride horses
after 400 years, I've got no choices

*From the song “Sound of Da Police”*
*(Return of the Boom Bap, 1993)*

**Lauryn Hill**

Keep me in this box
Psychological locks
Repressin’ true expression
Cementin’ this repression
Promotin’ mass deception
So that no one can be healed
I don’t respect your system
I won’t protect your system
When you talk I don’t listen

*From the song “I Get Out”*
*(MTV Unplugged, 2001)*

**Lauryn Hill**

If everyone is a product of this society, who will say the things that need to be said, and do the things that need to be done, without compromise? Truth will never start out popular in a world more concerned with marketability than righteousness. It will initially suffer ridicule and even violence- yet ultimately it is undeniable. All of humanity is living in a dream world, but suffering real consequences.

*Source Unknown*
Layzie Bone
I’m in the flesh, let’s talk about sex
Babies having babies, Generation X
With the AIDS epidemic, we ain’t pure no more
And I know they gotta cure for this shit, we ain’t rich
First we lost Eazy, then we lost Pac
Biggie got killed, when this shit gonna stop?

*From the song “Change the World”*
*by Bone Thugs N Harmony (BTNHW Resurrection, 2000)*

Lil Wayne
Repetition is the father of learning.

Lupe Fiasco
It never did affect me there, maybe indirectly
That my neck leash was funding a rebellion or a military coup
Started by militias that don’t believe in following none of Geneva’s rules
I was brushing off the haters, trying to be cool
Didn’t have a clue that the rapper was helping the rapers
Raiders of the villagers, pillagers of the schools
Shooters of the innocent, torturers of the witnesses
Burners of the businesses and my bracelet was the fuel

*From the song “Conflict Diamonds”*
*(Fahrenheit 1/15: pt 2 Revenge Of The Nerds, 2006)*

Lupe Fiasco
Jihad is not holy war
Where’s that in the worship?
Murdering is not Islam
and you are not observant

*From the song “Words I Never Said”*
*(LASERS, 2011)*
**Lupe Fiasco**

Little Terry got a gun, he got from the store  
He bought it with the money he got from his chores  
He robbed a candy shop told her lay down on the floor  
Put the cookies in his bag took the pennies out the drawer  
Little Kalil got a gun he got from the rebels  
To kill the infidels and American devils  
A bomb on his waist, A mask on his face  
Prays five times a day, And listens to Heavy Metal  
Little Alex got a gun he took from his dad  
That he snuck into school in his black book bag  
His black nail polish, black boots and black hair  
He’s gonna blow away the bully that just pushed his ass...

*From the song “Little Weapon”*  
*(The Cool, 2007)*

**Macklemore & Ryan Lewis**

If I was gay I would think Hip Hop hates me  
have you read the youtube comments lately?  
"man that's gay" gets dropped on the daily  
we become so numb to what we’re saying  
a culture bounded from oppression  
yet we don’t have acceptance for ‘em  
call each other faggots behind the keys of a message board  
a word rooted in hate yet our genre still ignores it  
gay is synonymous with the lesser  
it’s the same hate that’s caused wars from religion  
gender to skin colour the complexion of your pigment  
the same fight that led people to walk outs and sit ins  
it’s human rights for everybody there is no difference

*From the song “Same Love”*  
*(The Heist, 2012)*

**Meek Mill**

I was raised by dat stop sign, no religion I was getting saved by dat glock nine. *(n.d.)*

*From the song “Ambition”*  
*(Ambition, 2011)*
**Michie Mee**

In life the thing to do  
Nothing gained, nothing tried  
Very few even try  
Most just wanna get high  
From the cradle to the grave  
Don’t wanna be your slave  
And I’m not gonna  
Take it how you wanna  
Love me or hate me  
Support me or snake me  
Either way I show love  
Let it make me or break me  
I’m the queen of self esteem

*From the song “Don't Wanna Be Your Slave”  
(The First Cut is the Deepest, 2000)*

**Motion**

The next time you write on a page or you dance on a stage, freestyle in the hallway or write rhymes on the bus, take a moment to ponder; a thousand years from now what will the griots say about us?

*From the poem “Musik”*

**Nas**

Political thugs in shark suits persuade us to pull triggers  
In army boots, yelling "Join the armed forces!"  
We lost the Vietnam War, intoxicated poisons  
Needles in arms of veterans instead of bigger fortunes  
There’s still a lot of niggas crawling in the corporate offices  
War in the ghetto, we crabs in a barrel, they torture us  
They won't be serving the beast too long  
The murderers wearing police uniforms, Confederate flags I burn

*From the song “Doo Rags”  
(Lost Tapes, 2002)*
Nas
B-boys and girls listen up
You can be anything in the world, in God we trust
An architect, doctor, maybe an actress
But nothing comes easy it takes much practice

*From the song* “I Know I Can”  
*(God’s Son, 2002)*

Nii Soja
Judge not by the loudness of your enemies
but the silence of your friends.

Nii Soja
It’s like we stuck between a rock and a hard place
Solutions ain’t cheap like a wife tryna part ways
We all want to hold on to truth like a pair of pliers
But its incredibly hard to find it when your surrounded by honest liars

*From the song* “Perfect Imperfection”  
*(2 Worlds 1 View, 2013)*

The Notorious B.I.G.
Back in the day our parents use to take care of us
look at them now they even f!@#$%^ scared of us
calling the city for help because they can’t maintain
damn, s!@# done changed

*From the song* “Things Done Changed”  
*(Ready to Die, 1994)*

Queen Latifah
Instinct leads me to another flow
Every time I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho
Trying to make a sister feel low
You know all of that got’s to go

*From the song* “U.N.I.T.Y.”  
*(Black Reign, 1993)*

Rakim
It ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at.

*From the song* “In the Ghetto”  
*(Let the Rhythm Hit ‘Em, 1990)*
Reema Major
Identified jealousy quick them nasty old girly tricks
The formula to make your soul disintegrate
Can be pride and hate mixed with other nasty human traits
When you own a pretty face it’s envy that you can’t escape

From the song “Father”

Rugged
Cut for cut, buck for buck government withdraws finance like banks
Invested in their own is the stance
It ain’t by chance the dance filled with blacks ends with white lines of chalk
Around bodies from irritated gun talk
Frustrated, brothers kill brothers because their lost
Of course bound to suffocated cause someone’s cloggin’ that exaust

From the song “Jah Jah Tings” (2002)

Rugged
What if slavery was reinstated in the form of prisons and inmates being owned by big corporations
causing situations to lead to long incarceration
free labor population to uplift they own nation
would you recognize this third holocaust when you see it
or would your brainwashed situation not allow you to believe it
call me rebellious cause I kick up and fuss
cause I’m dealin’ with these evils that be slowly killin’ us
what if...

From the song “What If” (2006)

Simmons
**SPIN El Poeta**
My journey just begun so I weaved it in my song
metaphysics word is bond
my health will get real strong
drink the water, cut the chemicals
keep the fire, trace the minerals
feel the wind, don’t be cynical
kiss the earth, the grounding’s critical
spiritually intact, our people are original so the creator’s got our back
don’t ever doubt that
we’re the 7th generation so we’re built to overcome
survive the tribulations give thanks grandfather sun

*From the song “Liberation of the Soul”*  
*(Reztore Pride, 2010)*

**SPIN El Poeta**
Youth under attack they gunning for your health
only way you can fight back is to elevate yourself
Freedom of the mind, liberation of the soul
will all be yours in time, it’s how the story must unfold (n.d.)

**Tupac Shakur**
Cops give a damn about a negro?
Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he’s a hero
Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares?
One less hungry mouth on the welfare
First ship ‘em dope and let ‘em deal to brothers
Give ‘em guns, step back, and watch ‘em kill each other

*From the song “Changes”*  
*(Greatest Hits, 1992)*

**Tupac Shakur**
And did you ever stop to think? I’m old enough to go to war but I ain’t old enough to drink.

*From the song “Cause I had to” (n.d.)*
Tupac Shakur
If I could recollect before my hood days
I sit and reminisce thinking of bliss or the good days
I stop and stare at the younger, my heart goes to ‘em
they tested with stress that they under
and nowadays things change
Everyone’s ashamed of the youth
cuz the truth look strange
and for me it’s reversed
we left them a world that’s cursed and it hurts
Cuz any day they’ll push the button
and all come in like Malcolm X and Bobby Hutton died for nothing
Don’t it make you get teary?
The world looks dreary
When you wipe your eyes see it clearly
There’s no need for you to fear me
if you take your time to hear me
maybe you can learn to cheer me
it ain’t about black or white cuz we human
I hope we see the light before it’s ruined
my ghetto gospel

From the song "Ghetto Gospel"
(Loyal to the Game, 2004)

Yasiin Bey
(formerly known as Mos Def)
It’s a number game, but shit don’t add up somehow
Like I got, sixteen to thirty-two bars to rock it
but only 15% of profits, ever see my pockets like
sixty-nine billion in the last twenty years
spent on national defense but folks still live in fear like
nearly half of America's largest cities is one-quarter black
That’s why they gave Ricky Ross all the crack
Sixteen ounces to a pound, twenty more to a key
A five minute sentence hearing and you no longer free
40% of Americans own a cell phone
so they can hear, everything that you say when you ain’t home
I guess, Michael Jackson was right, "You Are Not Alone"

From the song “Mathematics”
(Black on Both Sides, 1999)