

Special Issue – Hip-Hop Volume 1 of Black By God: The West Virginian



Mic Check: A West Virginia Hip-Hop Retrospective

Celebrating the Beats, Bars & Black
Voices That Shaped the Mountain State



APRIL 26, 2025

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Editor's Note

WORDS BY LEESHIA LEE

Who's Gonna Be the WV Rap Star?

Editor, BBG Hip-Hop Issue

I come from a generation that **didn't just listen to hip-hop—we lived it. We breathed it, walked it, and talked it.** Hip-hop was our **therapy**, our **resistance**, our **joy**.

In the community I was raised in, **hip-hop wasn't just a genre. It was the heartbeat of the block**, the rhythm of our resilience. The music **blasted from a cousin's beat-up ride**, poured out of living room speakers, and echoed down school hallways during lunchtime cyphers. It was everywhere—because it was **everything**.

We wore our love for the culture like **armor**. Our neighborhood was **hungry, creative, and talented**. We **battled with beats, not fists**. We showed up and showed out—not just for ourselves but for **West Virginia**. And maybe, **just maybe**, hip-hop really was in our **bloodline**.

My love grew deeper with every **Source** mag under my bed, every **Vibe** issue with curled pages, and every **Word Up** poster on my wall. That obsession landed me a job at a record store, where I put people on to the new wave while quoting Nas like scripture.

Then came **radio**—my playlists weren't just for spinning records, they were for **lifting voices**. My mission? **Platform our talent. Tell our stories. Show our soul**. The world just didn't know about WV—yet.

When radio ended, I built **SceneItRoute**, another mic, another platform for this state's raw brilliance. And now, my book, *Based on a Woo Story*, is my **love letter** to it all.

West Virginia has **yet to have its breakout hip-hop star**, but that's why I keep going. Because **I believe in us**. Because I know **our time is coming**. Because when we reach the top, **our voices will echo through these mountains and beyond**.

Boom.
— Leeshia Lee



thesceneitroute304
On Instagram:



Who's Who in WV Hip-Hop

BY BBG

West Virginia's hip-hop scene is vibrant and diverse, featuring a range of artists who have made significant contributions both locally and nationally. Here's an overview of notable figures and groups shaping the state's hip-hop landscape:



Pioneering Groups:

- **Hype Touch:** Emerging from Charleston in the mid-1990s, Hype Touch became a household name in the capital city. The group's members included Tony Scott, Little Thomas, Lamere Whitestone, Ron Blanks, Jason Harris, Wallace King, John Coleman, and Leon Tatum. They garnered respected recognition in the industry during their active years.



Contemporary Artists:

- **Shelem:** A 25-year-old rapper from West Virginia, Shelem has gained attention for his DIY approach to music. His recent projects showcase slick production and advancing lyrical artistry.
- **Huey Mack:** Born in Morgantown, Huey Mack has achieved national recognition with his blend of hip-hop and pop influences. His track "West Virginia to Worldwide" reflects his journey from local to international stages.
- **Dinosaur Burps:** This duo, consisting of emcees Chris Allen and Jordan Sadeghi, is known for their unique style and contributions to the local hip-hop scene.
- **Duck City Music:** A collective that has been active in promoting hip-hop culture throughout the state, Duck City Music comprises artists dedicated to the craft and culture of hip-hop.
- **6'6 240:** A southern rap artist from West Virginia and an original member of the 304 Reconz, a popular rap group from the area.
- **Mini Thin:** Known for his country rap style, Mini Thin has a following that appreciates his blend of genres.



Emerging Talent:

- **Draco:** Part of the duo Dajuan and Draco, this young artist from Charleston brings a unique aggression to his music, representing the newer generation of West Virginia rappers.
- **304 Reconz:** A collective that has been instrumental in promoting hip-hop within the state, featuring artists like 6'6 240.



Media and Documentation:

- **Leeshia Lee:** A Charleston-based hip-hop journalist, photographer, and storyteller, Leeshia has been pivotal in chronicling West Virginia's growing hip-hop culture through her platform, The Scene It Route.



Regional Influence:

- **Valley Boy Music Group:** Originating from southwest Virginia, near the West Virginia border, this collective has contributed to the regional hip-hop scene, emphasizing collaboration among artists in rural areas.

The state's hip-hop community continues to evolve, with artists gaining recognition and contributing to the broader cultural tapestry.

Where's What in WV Hip-Hop

Northern WV

- **Huey Mack (Morgantown)** Nationally known artist blending hip-hop/pop.
- **Illa Illa (Fairmont)** Underground MC known for lyrical depth.
- **Feral Cat (Morgantown)** Experimental hip-hop/jazz fusion artist.

Southern WV

- **6'6 240 (Beckley)** Southern-style rapper and part of 304 Reconz.
- **Mini Thin (Princeton)** Known for country-rap, represents southern Appalachian culture.
- **WV Vibes ENT (Bluefield)** Promotion company pushing hip-hop shows in southern WV.

Charleston/Huntington Area (Kanawha & Cabell Counties)

- **Dajuan & Draco (Charleston)** Young artists with a strong city following.
- **Leeshia Lee (Charleston)** Documentarian and journalist covering WV hip-hop through The Scene It Route.
- **Duck City Music (Charleston)** Long-running collective focused on golden-era and lyrical hip-hop.
- **DJ Yemi (Huntington)** Hip-hop DJ and event curator, including college-based shows.

Central WV

- **Illregular Clothing (Flatwoods)** Streetwear brand tapped into local hip-hop and culture.
- **DJ Dollar (Clarksburg)** Club and radio DJ supporting WV hip-hop events and acts.

Eastern Panhandle

- **FlyGuy Yattie (Martinsburg)** Known in DMV circuits as well, repping Panhandle scenes.
- **Wavy Wednesdays (Shepherdstown)** Open mic & showcase events for young hip-hop creatives.

Organizations & Media Supporting Hip-Hop in WV

- **West Virginia Hip-Hop Festival (Charleston)** Local festival featuring regional artists.
- **WV Music Hall of Fame** Though broader in scope, they've shown interest in hip-hop's evolution in WV.
- **Multifest (Charleston)** Major multicultural festival that includes hip-hop acts.
- **Black By God: The WV Magazine** BBG is now a vital statewide hub documenting and elevating the culture.

Joemac: A Journey from the Mountains to the Beach, Hip-Hop at His Heart

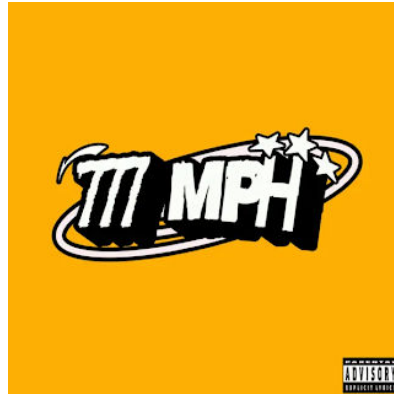
BY AIDEN SATTERFIELD



Joemac is a rising hip-hop artist originally from West Virginia, a South Charleston High School graduate now based in Hampton, Virginia, where he's carving out a unique space in the DMV music scene. Known for his raw lyricism and versatile flow, Joemac's music captures the hustle, resilience, and vibe of his West Virginia roots while embracing the energetic pulse of the DMV's street rap culture. His standout tracks, like Count Yo Paper, Relax, and BMF, showcase a blend of gritty storytelling and laid-back charisma. Joemac also has projects such as 777 MPH, Strictly Business, and my favorite, Hot Summer Cold Heart. All of them showcase a range from R&B to straight-up trap

music. Now, with an authentic 4,000 Youtube subscribers and a growing fanbase, Joemac is set on putting West Virginia on the map.

Joemac's career is gaining momentum through key collaborations with prominent DMV artists, including KP Skywalka, a buzzing figure in the region's rap landscape. Their joint work, such as the 2025 single Grinch, highlights Joemac's ability to hold his own alongside the scene's heavy hitters. These collaborations have helped him tap into the DMV's signature sound while adding his own West Virginia-bred perspective.



Beyond performing, Joemac is building a legacy as an entrepreneur with his up-and-coming label, Million Dollar Mountains. Claiming to "Create Wealth Through Poverty," the name nods to his West Virginia origins, symbolizing ambition and the climb to success from humble beginnings. Through the label, he's trying to find new talent and create a platform to amplify voices from his home state, aiming to let the voices of West Virginians be heard. While still in its early stages, Million Dollar Mountains reflects Joemac's vision to not just rise but lift others with him, making him a real force in the rap game.



Hip-Hop on the Mountaintop

This article was originally published by MountaineerENews February 4, 2025



The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences will host a free hip-hop concert and panel discussion Feb. 6 as part of its fourth annual Eberly Roundtable.

This year's event will celebrate the culture, community, creativity and identity of hip-hop in Appalachia by highlighting the vibrant and often overlooked contributions of rural hip-hop artists.

Panel discussion

"Can West Virginia Get a Good Rap?," moderated by Javier McCoy, interim director of the Center for Black Culture, will take place from noon to 1:30 p.m. in Brooks Hall, Room 325.

Panelists include the following:

- **Katelyn Best**, assistant professor of musicology at West Virginia University
- **Austin McCoy**, assistant professor of history at West Virginia University
- **Angie Luvara**, assistant professor of sociology at Frostburg State University
- **Ted Olson**, professor of Appalachian studies at East Tennessee State University
- **GRDN**, the "Capital City Pop Princess" from Charleston

Hip-hop concert

The Eberly Roundtable will conclude with a live hip-hop concert at 7:30 p.m. in the Canady Creative Arts Center, Gladys Davis Theater. Doors and merchandise tables will open at 7 p.m. and a reception will follow the concert.

The concert will showcase the unique perspectives of small town and rural hip-hop artists, featuring performances by the following:

- **Deep Jackson**, a prominent figure in the Appalachian hip-hop scene that has dropped eight projects since 2009. His music brings a unique blend of storytelling and rhythm that reflects his roots and experiences.
- **Shelem**, known for his dynamic stage presence and lyrical prowess, has been making waves in the regional music scene with his innovative approach to hip-hop. He strives to create a magnificent experience with every song, performance, video and interaction.
- **GRDN**, dubbed the "Capital City Pop Princess," offers a fresh fusion of pop and hip-hop elements.
- **Monstalung**, based in Morgantown, is an artist, beatmaker, songwriter, author and content creator. He ran his own record label for 15 years, achieving radio play on local, Top 40 and college stations, securing TV placements and performing alongside national acts.

"We are excited to bring these emerging hip-hop artists to campus," said **Scott Davidson**, Eberly Roundtable coordinator and director of the Multidisciplinary Studies Program. "While the concert will provide a platform for these artists from West Virginia, we hope that the panel will prompt reflection on the vital importance of creative work to this region and the distinctive cultural forms developing here."

The Eberly Roundtable is an annual interdisciplinary forum that brings together scholars, artists and community members to engage in discussions central to the WVU land-grant mission and regional identity.

In WV, Hip-hop Has Gone From Marginalized To Mainstream

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 22, 2025

BY VANESSA PEÑA

This article was originally published by WV Public Broadcasting, a newsroom whose mission is to educate, inform, and inspire our people by telling West Virginia's story.

This story originally aired in the June 16, 2024 episode of Inside Appalachia.

I'm in Eric Jordan's home studio in Morgantown, West Virginia. He's walking me through his process of making a beat.

"As you can see, that's the signal there, and I'm capturing it," Jordan says to me over the music.

The song "All My Love In Vain" by Sonny Boy Williamson II plays on Jordan's turntable. The turntable is connected to his computer, and it captures the audio from the record. The signal is moving up and down in squiggly lines that identify sound waves.

"I'm just sort of listening for something that captures my liking," Jordan says. He allows the music to play for a beat longer. "Alright, let's mess with that."

Jordan takes a snippet of the song. He creates a drumbeat and layers it underneath the music. The sound of electronic drums begins to play as Jordan feels out the sound.

"Alright, I got my drums. I feel



ABOVE: Eric Jordan works at his desk, creating a beat using a song by Sonny Boy Williamson II as a base.

Photo Credit: Vanessa Peña/West Virginia Public Broadcasting

comfortable enough to play around with these chops," Jordan says as he puts his drumbeat to loop.

In 2023, communities all around the country celebrated the 50th anniversary of hip-hop. Here in West Virginia, hip-hop has gone from a marginalized art form, to a mainstream powerhouse.

Jordan is a familiar face in the West Virginia hip-hop scene, where he's known by his stage name Monstalung. Hip-hop has been a big part of Jordan's life from a young age, in part because of the influence of his father, Norman Jordan. Norman Jordan was a

distinguished poet and artist.

In the '60s and '70s, Norman Jordan was at the forefront of the Black Arts Movement in West Virginia and Ohio. He was part of this nationwide effort to foster pride in Black history, arts and culture.

The Black Arts Movement inspired a diverse body of poetry, theater and visual arts, and in 1973, a new musical genre: hip-hop. This was the backdrop of Jordan's childhood. As a kid, he and his siblings often performed alongside their father. These performances included dance, music and Norman Jordan's poetry.

"He didn't waste time with me. I was his bongo player when I was nine," Jordan says as he reflects on his experience performing with his father. "I mean, we performed at Berkeley College, Howard University and different things like that. I was in all his productions. Me and my siblings and my mother were, you know, we were a family unit."

Inspired by his father's passion for poetry and performing arts, Jordan started breakdancing in high school. He got gigs at mall fashion shows and local restaurants. Jordan says he and his peers were pushing boundaries.

"At that time, people were doing hip-hop, it wasn't trendy yet. This is the early '80s so we stuck out like sore thumbs. You can see us coming a mile away," Jordan says.

After college, Jordan fully immersed himself in the world of hip-hop — DJing, MCing and making beats — from Maryland to New York. In 1999, he returned home to West Virginia, where he started a record label with his brother. Their mission was to make hip-



ABOVE: The drum Eric would use when performing with his father, Norman Jordan.

Photo Credit: Vanessa Peña/West Virginia Public Broadcasting

In WV, Hip-hop Has Gone From Marginalized To Mainstream (cont.)

hip-hop music for, by, and about West Virginians.

“We made a conscious effort to make music that dealt with self-esteem and state pride. We just felt like that was something that wasn’t here,” Jordan says.

Jordan formed a hip-hop group called the 304 Reconz under his label. They performed all around West Virginia, collaborating with artists in Huntington, Charleston and Morgantown. But it wasn’t easy getting started.

“It was rocky at the beginning, because there was really no hip-hop scene here at all, so we had to create one,” Jordan says.

By the early 2000s, hip-hop had gained traction in big cities like New York, Atlanta and Chicago. But in West Virginia, it hadn’t built momentum yet. The 304 Reconz had to get creative.

“When we first started doing shows, we did raves, we did biker bars,” Jordan says.

The 304 Reconz were performing a genre of music rooted in Black culture to majority white audiences. And not everyone knew how to react.

“You know, a couple of times I thought we had to fight ourselves out of these places, but ended up winning over the crowd and winning over the differences in culture,” Jordan says.

Through their efforts, Jordan and his peers laid the groundwork for a new generation of hip-hop artists in the state.

One artist who is at the forefront of this new generation is Isaac Fadiga, commonly known by his stage name Shelem. Shelem is 27 and lives in Charleston. When he first started making hip-hop music in 2007, the 304 Reconz were already well established. And with the internet, he could learn from successful hip-hop artists all around the world.

“Right around the time I started writing my own stuff was when Soulja Boy was big, so that was an inspiration in itself, because he was so young and he was doing everything on his own,” Shelem says. “He was producing his own songs, and he was using the same software that I was, so it was like a clear vision of what it could be if you did it right.”

As a student at Marshall University, Shelem started performing in public.

“I did the talent show. That was my first time performing. And then that same week, there was an open mic,” Shelem says. “And then from there I met this band called The Heavy Hitters and



ABOVE: Shelem at his home studio in Charleston, West Virginia, demonstrating his work flow and organization.
Photo Credit: Vanessa Peña/West Virginia Public Broadcasting

they ended up inviting me to play as part of their set at pretty much every venue that they played at in the area.”

In just a few decades, hip-hop artists in West Virginia have gone from “sticking out like sore thumbs” to being accepted and even celebrated by the mainstream. Last year, Jordan and Shelem spoke at Marshall University on a panel about hip-hop’s 50th anniversary. And now, Shelem is the face and voice of the West Virginia restaurant Tudor’s

Biscuit World in a commercial that launched last year.

“I got a call from their marketing manager who said, ‘Hey, we have this idea we want to do, we want to do a rap about the breakfast wraps and we thought you’d be good to do that,’” Shelem says. “It was exciting to have been chosen for something like that.”

After getting the deal with Tudor’s to make the jingle, Shelem called Jordan to tell him the news. Jordan remembers Shelem thanking him for paving the

way for hip-hop artists in the state.

“New people like Shelem,” Jordan says, “I think he’s the future of our state when it comes to hip-hop.”

In January, Shelem released his third album titled Hope This Helps. Later this year, Jordan will release a memoir titled Child of the Poet, Son of the Dreamer along with an accompanying album, An Appalachian Hip-hop Story.

June Appal's Groundbreaking Appalachian Hip-Hop Album

Contributors include Gardenn, DJ Monstalung, & Stunna T's

BY BBG

On August 2nd, June Appal Recordings — Appalshop's record label — released **No Options: Hip-Hop in Appalachia!** You can preorder it through Bandcamp now and hear West Virginia artist Gardenn's single "Sun-Flower."

Why is this album so special?

While previous hip-hop compilations have focused on more urban areas, the 24 original tracks on **No Options** celebrates the powerful voices of rural and small-town hip-hop artists often overlooked in mainstream compilations

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AUGUST 4, 2024



On August 2, June Appal Recordings released **No Options: Hip-Hop in Appalachia!** You can order it through Bandcamp.

Artists hail throughout Appalachia, including Alabama, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, and New York.

Notable contributors include West Virginia artist Gardenn and DJ Monstalung. Stunna T's track "Show Up" was recorded via phone in Wallens Ridge State Prison in Big Stone Gap, Virginia.

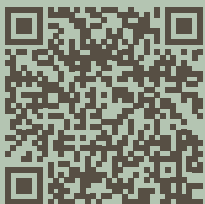
As executive producer, JK Turner writes:

"Hip-hop in Appalachia is a testament to the enduring power of music to forge connections and give voice to the marginalized. The fusion of hip-hop culture with the region's rich cultural heritage has resulted in a unique form of artistic expression that speaks to the resilience and creativity of the people of Appalachia."

James "Sparky" Rucker, 2022 winner of the Black Appalachian Storytellers Fellowship Award, notes:

"June Appal has always been ahead of the curve, and **No Options: Hip-Hop in Appalachia** proves it. Fans of hip-hop will not be disappointed."

Order your copy now through June Appal's Bandcamp by scanning the QR:



Leeshia Lee: Documenting West Virginia's Hip-Hop Legacy

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 19, 2024

BY BBG

In the heart of West Virginia, where coal mines and mountain ballads have long shaped the cultural landscape, a new voice is capturing a different rhythm—the pulse of hip-hop. That voice belongs to **Leeshia Lee**, a Charleston-based hip-hop journalist, photographer, and storyteller whose work has become a lifeline for the state's urban music scene.

Through her platform, **The Scene It Route**, Leeshia has spent years chronicling West Virginia's growing hip-hop culture. Her interviews, photo essays, and video documentaries ensure that the contributions of artists, DJs, and producers are acknowledged, respected, and celebrated. More than just a photographer, she is an advocate, preserving and elevating the stories of **Black Appalachia** and hip-hop's undeniable place in WV's cultural identity.

Her latest project—a viral video compiling major rappers who have referenced West Virginia in their music—has taken social media by storm. Featuring shoutouts from **Jadakiss, Jack Harlow, Big Sean, Hussein Fatal, Mac Miller, Lupe Fiasco, Chino XL, and Ari Lennox**, the video is a testament to how deeply WV's influence runs in hip-hop, even if it's often overlooked.

Leeshia has also curated a snapshot of hip-hop references to **West Virginia** football legend **Randy Moss**, further



cementing the state's imprint on music and culture.

"West Virginia has a hip-hop history that needs to be seen and heard," says Leeshia. "We have talent here, and we have stories that deserve recognition. I want to make sure our artists, past and present, are documented in a way that lasts."

Beyond hip-hop, **Leeshia is a cultural force in Charleston, WV**—producing plays, community events, and photography exhibits that showcase the rich history and resilience of Black Appalachians. Whether she's capturing a rapper's first studio session, organizing the Fairy Boss Mother's Ball for young girls to see themselves as royalty, or documenting the West Side's legacy, she is writing history in real-time.

With **The Scene It Route** gaining momentum and more eyes on her work, Leeshia Lee is proving that

West Virginia hip-hop is not just surviving—it's thriving.

Charleston-native defies musical genres with release of 'Stay Strong,' looks to 'do the impossible' in 2025

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY REAL WV

BY MATTHEW YOUNG

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JANUARY 28, 2025



"At the end of the day, I know that, and we're gonna do the impossible."

Thomas – whose video for his song "Stay Strong" was just released last week and has already amassed nearly 75,000 streams – is preparing to release even more new music in March, and then again in May.

"We're gonna do the impossible, that's what's getting ready to happen – I'm gonna do the impossible."

Those words were spoken by Charleston-native and Source Magazine's 2025 "Artist to Watch" Stephen Thomas last week, during a conversation with RealWV. From his humble roots in Christian music, all the way to Grammy consideration on five separate occasions, Thomas' genre-defying style and relatable sound makes both he and his music feel like an old, familiar friend.

"With God, all things are possible," Thomas said.

"Then I have an EP (extended play) coming out called 'The Universal Me,'" Thomas added. "This EP is gonna showcase five different genres on one project. So we're getting ready to surprise a lot of people."

With "Stay Strong," Thomas explores more rock-beats and pop-hooks than in his previous hip-hop-oriented offerings, and the song's optimistic lyrics and catchy chorus make it the perfect feel-good banger for the shower or the car. And while Thomas has slid masterfully into the world of pop-rock, he still has more worlds to conquer.

Early next month, Thomas will be traveling to Atlanta, Georgia to film

three music videos, all of which are scheduled for release later this year.

"One of the videos – a lot of people don't know, but I've had a country song ready for the past year," Thomas said. "I've been sitting on it, just waiting. We sent it out to the PR team, and we got some responses. They were like, 'Hey, when are we getting a full country album?'" While Thomas seemed hesitant at the thought of releasing a full-length country album, he expects to have covered at least seven different musical genres by the end of the year.

With "Back Home," a song and video released last May, Thomas seamlessly combines an authentic-yet-edgier vocal style with an early 2000's rhythm accompaniment to create a far more alternative pop-rock sound. "Back Home" was well-received by listeners, and eventually reached number two on the iTunes charts.

"Where do you hear of an artist being able to say they're from Charleston, West Virginia, and they receive a plaque for hitting number two on the iTunes charts?" Thomas asked. "Not only that, I've been considered for five Grammy Awards, and now, here we are, because of 'Back Home,' I've now become a top 70 radio-charting artist all over the United States. That's a blessing – it truly is."

"There's not many that can say they're from West Virginia and be able to have that opportunity to have those accolades," Thomas said. "And I humbly say that – I respectfully say that. It's a blessing. It's not the norm." "We still have a lot of work to do," Thomas added. "But to have songs that are taking off, like 'Stay Strong' and

'Back Home,' and crossing over to the rock and alternative-era with the music – and to be going into pop this year – and then of course getting ready to go country this year as well. I'm also getting ready to hit two more new genres of music."

Though he has been performing professionally for 15 years, Thomas first gained notice after signing with Skeelo Muiki/SONY Red in 2013. However, his 2016 breakout single, "Best Days," was released through Creative Hearts Entertainment. A pure hip-hop track, "Best Days" also reached number two on the iTunes charts.

"I started out in Christian music, then I crossed over into hip-hop," Thomas explained. "Me and DJ Unk just did the remake of the old school Charlie Wilson Gap Band (song) 'Outstanding.'"

"The owner of 'Outstanding' by the Gap Band was the one who gave his stamp of approval for us to do this remake because he liked the song so much," Thomas added. "His name is Ray Calhoun. He was the drummer for The Gap Band back in '83, and played music with Charlie Wilson for all those years."

Anthony Platt, known professionally as DJ Unk, was an Atlanta-based rapper. Known for his 2006 breakout hit "Walk it Out," DJ Unk sadly died of a heart attack last Friday. The husband and father was just 43-years-old.

While Thomas spoke with RealWV before learning of Unk's passing, through a post on social media, Thomas said, "We had so much more work to do, but I'm still going to push 'Outstanding' for us because that's what you wanted for us both. I know you wanted to see me win, my guy. I love you, family. Rest easy Legend Anthony Platt."

Watch Stephen Thomas's music videos here:



Stephen Thomas' music is available for streaming on Apple Music, Spotify, YouTube Music, Amazon Music, and YouTube. Stephen Thomas can also be found on Instagram, @stephentmusic.

West Virginia's Mountainous Hip-Hop History

A celebration of the forgotten rabble-rappers of Mountain State rap from the Chuck City and beyond.

BY HUGH CANADA

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2023

The power of hip-hop can move figurative mountains, but how does it play in the literal mountains of West Virginia? When you think of hip-hop, it's East Coast versus West Coast, Atlanta, Detroit, New Orleans, really any number of options. Your mind doesn't automatically run to West Virginia. That's understandable. However, there is a rich history of hip-hop in the nation's 35th state and it started more than 40 years ago. It just took a while for it to make its way out of the mountains.

Hip-hop music originated in New York City in the 1970s as a cultural exchange among Black, Latino, and Caribbean youth and has grown into arguably the most consumed music genre worldwide. Over time, hip-hop has become more than just music — it has become a language, an appearance, a culture, and a lifestyle. Since its origination, hip-hop has broken through many barriers musically, racially, artistically, and regionally. Hip-hop is a combination of many elements, including deejaying, MCing, graffiti, and dance. What we know today as rap music came from hip-hop culture.

Inspiring a heavy buzz, hip-hop spread from its birthplace across the United States as the free-spirited late '70s gave way to the materialistic decadence of the '80s. Radio stations, television networks, and the world of film influenced innovation and creativity. West Virginia youth were no different. They took what they heard and saw in the media into their own hands to help create their version of the culture. TV shows like *Video Music Box* and *Yo! MTV Raps*, along with movies such as 1982's *Wild Style*, 1984's releases of *Beat Street* and *Breakin*, and *Krush Groove*, from 1985, are a few that come to mind. These films allowed people to visualize this hip-hop culture in the confines of their homes.

This state is diverse and, despite the attempts of some, cannot be pigeonholed. This makes West Virginia hip-hop extra unique in that sense. When hip-hop crossed the borders into West Virginia in the early 80's, the spark was lit and has never faded. Including every influential part of hip-hop history in the Mountain State would be nearly impossible, but as highlighted below, the memories are worth sharing. Please share your own memories with us on social media.

"The artists active at this time deserve acknowledgment and gratitude for the work they put into creating the future face of hip-hop in West Virginia."

Editors Note: The full article is far from a comprehensive list of West Virginia's hip-hop notables. The following is a living document that will be updated continuously until the full story is told. If you see a name or group that needs to be on the list, reach out to Black By God at crystal@BlackByGod.org or scan the QR code.



Read the full article by scanning the QR Code:



In the full article you'll learn about:

- Pride and bragging rights: the 1980s
- Making Inroads on radio: the 1990s
- 304Live goes online: the 2000s
- Video
- Still active, forever rising: the 2010s and today

"In West Virginia, these sounds could sometimes be heard in Charleston on radio station 1490 AM WRVZ. Having rap and hip-hop on an AM station shows how challenging it was at the time, especially in West Virginia, for this genre of music to get radio airplay."

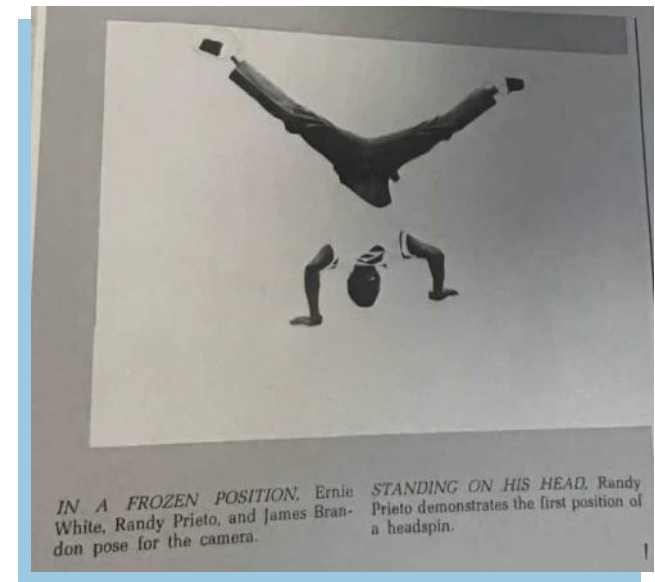


Photo from a Charleston High Year book featuring Ernie White, Marcus Prieto, and Randy Prieto who you will read about.



Photo: Duck City Music is a hip-hop movement which originated in Rand, West Virginia. (The hometown of NFL Hall Of Famer Randy Moss and Rand University.)

From WV to LA: Myles T. Drops Coupe Music, Reveals Big Sean Collaboration on Quotables Podcast

BY BBG

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 13, 2024

In November of 2024, music producer Myles Satterfield, better known as Myles T., celebrated two massive milestones: releasing his debut instrumental album, *Coupe Music*, and marking his first major industry collaboration as a co-producer on Big Sean's latest album, *Better Me Than You*. Known for beats that feel at home on a late-night drive, Myles T. has taken his sound from the hills of Charleston, West Virginia, to LA's vibrant music scene, where his career is gaining major momentum.

Making Moves with Big Sean

On *Better Me Than You*, Myles co-produced two standout tracks: #5, "Who You Are (Superstar)," which samples Usher, and #6, "Yes," which showcases his deep, introspective production style. This collaboration is a huge step for Myles, putting his unique blend of soul and grit in the spotlight alongside Big Sean's powerful lyrics. Influenced by hip-hop giants like Kanye West, Myles has joined the ranks, working with artists he grew up admiring and paving the way for a promising music career.

Coupe Music: A Personal Soundtrack

With *Coupe Music*, Myles brings listeners into his world. This is more than just a collection of beats; it's a sonic journey through life's highs and lows, set to the rhythm of sunset drives. Each track captures memories and moments from



his journey from West Virginia to L.A. Here's a peek at some highlights:

- **"Condo in Vegas"** – Inspired by a soul-searching escape to Vegas after life-altering events, including the passing of his grandmother and his collaboration with Big Sean, this track channels the solitude and growth he found in the desert.
- **"Toodles!"** – A tribute to his Granny Mae, this track features her voice saying her iconic not-a-goodbye, "Toodles!" Myles made this beat tough and strong, capturing her spirit and grit.
- **"Little Trees"** – Inspired by the Black Ice air freshener, Myles combines nostalgia with West Coast vibes, reflecting his journey from Charleston's back roads to LA's freeways.
- **"Trance"** – This George Clinton-inspired groove has bass-heavy lines that bring the funk, hinting at a new project Myles wants to pursue in this style.
- **"Sold"** – A track that embodies the satisfaction of creating something valuable and finishing up the album. Myles hints at potential verses to take this song to the next level.

On Quotables Podcast: Myles T. Tells His Story

In his *Quotables Podcast* episode, Myles takes listeners back to the start of his journey, detailing the resilience and determination that drove him from a small town to the national stage. Growing up with limited resources, he recalls learning music production on an old Mac Book loaded with GarageBand, working with trial, error, and persistence. Myles reflects on mentors like Chris Kessel, who ran a hip-hop boot camp where Myles honed his craft, and his brother DJ Charlie Blac, who introduced him to the world of DJing... a moment that changed everything. He also acknowledges local hip-hop legends 6'6 240 and Monstalung, who too are brothers, and have not only influenced Myles but also connected to him through poetry; their father, and Myles' mother are both inducted Affrilichian Poets.

Additionally, Myles shares how friends like Little Rich, JZack, Aziz, and Bouve supported his journey from Charleston to LA, helping him secure important collaborations.

In the podcast, Myles recounts the game-changing introduction to Big Sean, made possible by Little Rich, and the lessons he's learned from music icons like Kanye West, Metro Boomin, and Dr. Dre. His journey is grounded in his family and friends' unwavering support, making every beat a testament to the people who have shaped him.

Coupe Music: A Soundtrack for the Come-Up

For Myles, *Coupe Music* is both a celebration and a stepping stone. "After I make a beat, I like to get in the car and listen to what I just made. Around sunset, that's when I think my music sounds the best," he says. Through this album, he invites listeners to share the drive, ambition, and reflection that have fueled his career from West Virginia's hills to LA's studios.

BELOW: Album art for Myles's EP *Coupe Music*



Catch the full *Quotables Podcast* episode now streaming, and take a ride with *Coupe Music*—available to stream on Apple Music and Spotify! You can also purchase a digital booklet to get a behind the scenes look into what went into creating the EP.

Listen to *Coupe Music* by Myles here:

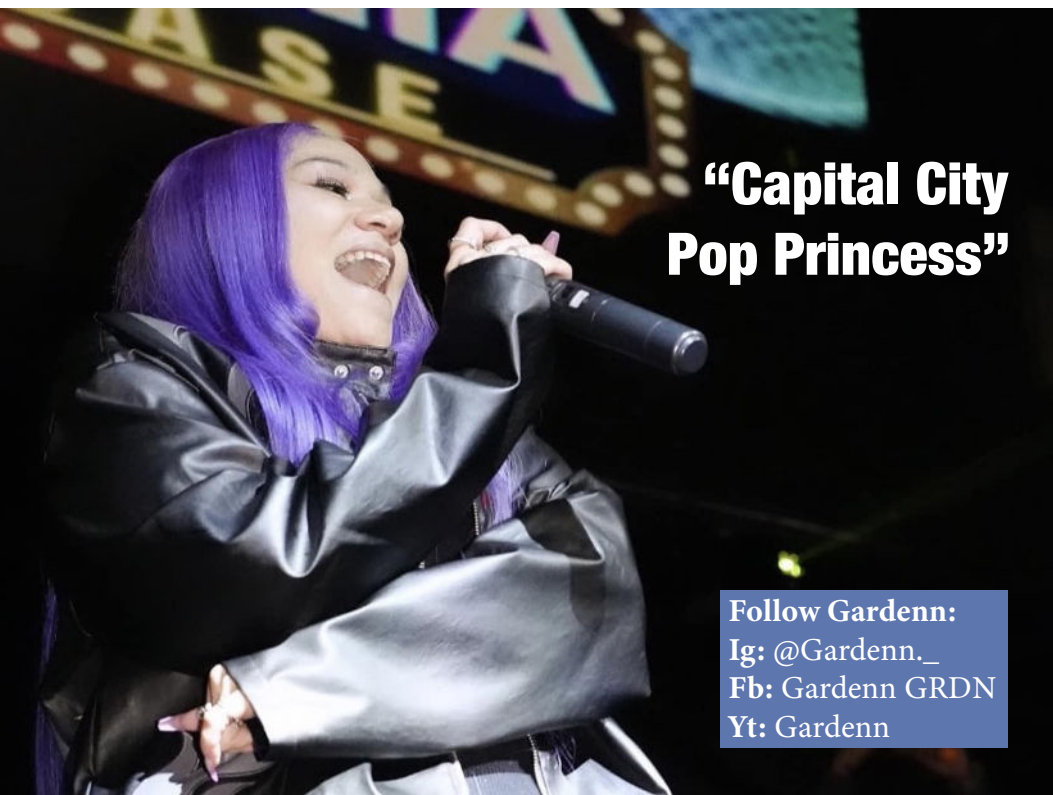


Watch the full *Quotables Podcast* episode here:



Charleston's Musical Sensation "Gardenn" Blooming

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED
AUGUST 1, 2024



**"Capital City
Pop Princess"**

Follow Gardenn:
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Yt: Gardenn

BY NEENEE INCOGNITA

Gardenn performing. Photo By Leeshia Lee

Born and raised in Charleston, Gardenn is a talented music artist, songwriter, and creator. She displays her colorful style on social media and often embraces neon pink, purple, and blue hairstyles, nails, and outfits. Through her lyrics, voice, and signature style, Gardenn is an example of the artistry of the Mountain State.

Also known as the "Capital City Pop Princess," she describes her music as "high-vibrational and energetic." Before her busy weekend, she met up with BBG hip-hop reporter NeeNee Incognita for a quick interview.

Gardenn will perform on Friday, August 2nd, for Ladies Night at Multifest in Charleston, WV, opening for Monie Love. She will also perform on August 6th at African American Heritage Night at the Dirty Birds Baseball stadium.

With this month's release of "Yes!" by Big Sean, co-produced by WV native Myles T., last month's release of DJ MonstaLung's EP *An Appalachian Hip-hop Story Pt. 1*, NeeNee Incognita's annual OG Fest, Duck City's annihilation at ciphers across the country, and the recent Appalshop compilation EP *No Options: Hip-Hop in Appalachia* is having a moment!

Interview with Gardenn by NeeNee Incognita

NeeNee: What's good? It's your girl, NeeNee Incognita, the self-proclaimed Coldest Chick from the Sticks. I am an underground and indie hip-hop and rap artist, host, public speaker, public figure, ghostwriter, and hip-hop journalist with Black by God. Today, I'm interviewing Gardenn.

NeeNee: When and how did you get started creating music?

Gardenn: Music has always been a huge part of my life. I have always felt very connected to music. Whether it be creating music, listening to music, or even just being music, it may sound cliché, but I feel that I have always been destined to be involved with music one way or another. I touched the stage for the first time at five years old with my elementary school talent show. From there, I began entering anything involving music. I would sing the national anthem at my school. I was just excited to share my music and never had a second thought about it. I now pursue music full-time and attend school for a music performance degree. I am excited to see where the future leads as I chase my destiny, love, be loved, and create.

NeeNee: What has been your journey's most challenging and rewarding thing?

Follow NeeNee Incognita:

Ig: @NeeNeeIncognita
Fb: Nee Nee Incognita
Yt: Nee Nee Incognita

Gardenn: The most challenging aspect of my journey would be learning the balance between music and business, protecting my peace, standing firm on those boundaries, and knowing myself. However, the most rewarding part of this journey is giving and receiving energy, learning as you go, watching yourself grow, and experiencing life. There are so many rewarding aspects. I would say, mainly for me, it is the transfer of energy.

NeeNee: How much influence does West Virginia and Appalachia have on your career in the music industry?

Gardenn: I like to tell people I come from a place that is 90% land and 10% people. I've had the opportunity to develop who I am here in WV, and that I will carry throughout life.

NeeNee: If you could give your younger self one piece of advice knowing what you know now, what would it be?

Gardenn: "Just relax, chill out, and enjoy the ride." But wear a seat belt, lol. You'll need it.

NeeNee: Give us a gem for all the dream chasers from unknown towns who never make it out.

Gardenn: Believe in yourself; the world is waiting for you.

NeeNee: What's next for Gardenn?

Gardenn: Honestly, who knows, lol, but I am excited. I feel very confident about my future and our future.

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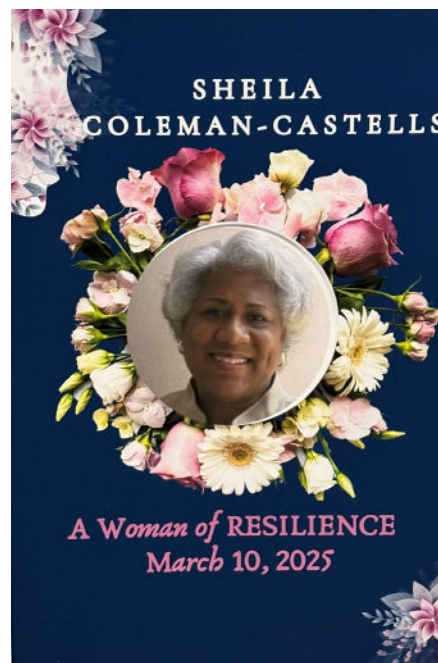
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DOC.SEUS HD AKA THE JREAM LOYALTY B4 ROYALTY- STRUGGLE TALK MIXTAPE VL.1

a playlist by Doc.Seus HD
on #SoundCloud

SoundCloud



Youtube



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Spotify



Doc Seus HD is an independent hip-hop artist known for his gritty, melodic sound that blends East Coast rap roots with modern production. His music often explores themes of resilience, self-empowerment, and street wisdom.

Notable Tracks:

- "Roger Foye Straight"
- "Sexual Healing"
- "Watch Ur Moves"
- "10 Toes Down"
- "Get It Wet"
- "Game 2 Be Sold Not Told"
- "Flavor in Ur Ear"

Thank You Ms. Sheila!

BBG would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Ms. Sheila for her efforts in securing the ads for this issue. We are also grateful for her support of the hip-hop edition. We proudly recognize Ms. Sheila as a 2025 Woman of Resilience Honoree, celebrated during Black Policy Day.

THE **WORD**, THE **KNOWLEDGE**, THE **RHYME**

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Block

3

26

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8th Ave between Hal Greer Blvd & 17th Street

HUNTINGTON, WV

This first edition of Black By God Hip-Hop was created for distribution at the third annual Word on the Block event.

BBG

THE WEST VIRGINIAN

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How Wheeling is Keeping West Virginia Hip-Hop Alive

A Look Back at “Hip Hop: A Black Tie Affair” — Where Elegance Met the Beat

BY BBG

West Virginia has always had its own rhythm. From porchfront pickin’ to gospel choirs, mountain soul to Black coal camp blues — storytelling through sound is nothing new here. But what might surprise some is just how alive, thriving, and innovative the hip-hop scene is across the Mountain State, especially in Wheeling.

On February 24, 2024, the city’s cultural heart beat loud and proud at Hip Hop: A Black Tie Affair, hosted at the Wheeling Artisan Center by Wheeling Heritage and the YWCA Wheeling. The event was more than a party it was a moment. A declaration. A visual and sonic reminder that West Virginia hip-hop isn’t just surviving — it’s evolving.

Wheeling: A Hip-Hop Hub in the Making

Long overlooked in conversations about Appalachian culture, Wheeling is quickly becoming a destination for Black creativity, innovation, and artistic freedom. Events like Hip Hop: A Black Tie Affair are proof that when local institutions invest in platforms for authentic expression, real culture rises and it ripples outward

What Happened at the Event?

The evening kicked off with “The Mixtape” a juried art exhibition that invited artists to remix hip-hop’s influence through photography, sculpture, graffiti, fashion, and more. Just like the original mixtapes of the 1970s, these works were raw, real, and deeply personal. A striking reminder that hip-hop is not just music, it’s a movement, and a mirror

Visit event page:



Next came the screening of “1 of 1,” a lyrical self-portrait gallery. MCs from across the state submitted 16-bar verses about what makes them unique, standing out through story, flow, and personal truth. Their verses were more than performances, they were declarations of identity, pride, and purpose.

And to close the night? A pulse-pounding DJ battle that turned the Artisan Center into a dancefloor and made one thing clear: hip-hop lives here.

Why It Matters?

In a state where Black stories too often go unheard, *Hip Hop: A Black Tie Affair* changed the narrative. It didn’t just entertain, it empowered. It reminded us that hip-hop is Appalachian, too. That young Black artists in the hills *have something to say*, and deserve spaces that honor their brilliance.

Wheeling’s commitment to this cultural conversation is making waves and not just locally. The elegance of the evening, paired with the rawness of real voices, turned a one-night event into a movement.

Because hip-hop in West Virginia isn’t a relic. It’s a revolution, *happening in real time, in real places, with real people*. From the block to the ballroom, the story continues.

Watch the video:



Rising Talent

Young Tuff,

a 13-year-old rapper from Huntington, sees himself as *the Him* of West Virginia Hip-hop. He says what sets him apart is that he raps about the life he truly lives. He speaks on who he is, where he comes from, and makes a point to stay positive. According to him, the downside of hip-hop in the state is that too many people refuse to be authentic. He believes that staying true to who you are is crucial — that alone can take you far.

The young artist already has an impressive resume. He has performed at two Black Tie Balls for the Young Dreamers, won the talent show at Multifest, and even performed for the twins on MTV's *Teen Mom*. Young Tuff is determined to succeed in the music he loves by avoiding profanity and continuing to promote positivity.

When asked what advice he would give to someone wanting to start a rap career in West Virginia, he said, **"Don't be lying in your raps!"**



Rising Talent



Young Trizzy,

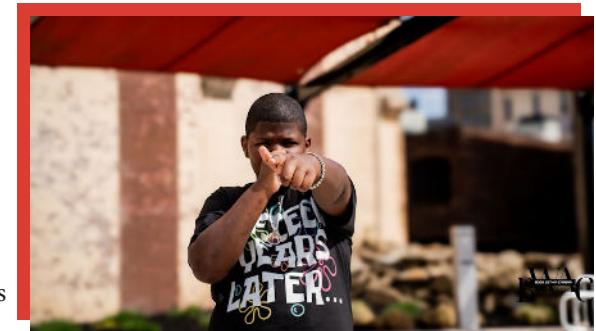
is a 15-year-old from West Virginia who has a deep love for hip-hop. He's autistic, and he uses music to share his voice with the world. For him, hip-hop isn't just something he listens to, it's something he feels in his heart. It's how he connects with people and how he expresses himself.

He says he raps because he loves the culture, and his music is starting to inspire kids all over West Virginia. When they see him doing what he loves, they start to believe they can follow their dreams too. That's the message behind everything he creates. If he can do it, so can they.

Trizzy says his life feels like a movie. Some days are tough and some days are amazing. He talks about having different sides to who he is, and how being autistic makes his story unique. Music unites the many sides of who he is. It helps him tell his truth in a way that people can feel.

He believes hip-hop in West Virginia needs a hero — someone to represent, to lift others up, to show what's possible. He says that's the role he's going to play. Not because he wants the spotlight, but because he wants to be that light for someone else.

Trizzy isn't just making songs. He's **making something that matters.**



Jet Life Apparel - Where Culture Meets Couture

Fashion Buzz

BY JAYLI PHILLIPS

WWW.JETLIFEAPPAREL.COM



Visit Jet Life Apparel in Charleston on Leon Sullivan Way or at the Barboursville Mall

Follow them on Facebook & TikTok @jetlifelapparel5

Step into Jet Life Apparel, and you're stepping into more than just a store—you're entering a movement. Located in Charleston and Huntington, WV, this Black-owned fashion store is all about urban luxury and streetwear from top-tier brands.

Owners Jonathan and Sabrina Kennedy launched Jet Life Apparel to fill a void they saw in West Virginia's fashion scene. "There just wasn't anything out there for us," Sabrina shared. "We wanted to create a space where people could find clothes that reflected their culture, their style—and feel good while doing it."

Described in three words? "Fire. Lit. Luxury." Jet Life Apparel blends high fashion with hip-hop culture—offering not only the latest trends but also a

vibe. From rhinestone tees making a comeback to limited-edition leather duffels, their selections are a nod to what's next while honoring the roots of streetwear.

Hip-hop plays a huge role here. "A lot of our brands were created by artists or are worn by them—Young Thug, Lil Durk, Jay-Z," Sabrina said. "That energy translates into everything we do."

With expansion in sight (Morgantown, you might be next), Jet Life Apparel is proof that fashion, culture, and community can thrive in the Mountain State.

So whether you're looking for your next fit or just want to feel the vibe—JetLife is where culture meets couture.

WOW!



True Phillips, 8 from Charleston, WV having fun during the 50th Anniversary of Hip-Hop Celebration at North Charleston Rec Center.

True's Hoops and Harmony comic strip promotes creativity, confidence, and the power of being yourself—on and off the court. The "Dribble & Flow" comic strip is all about how cool Allen Iverson was! He was an awesome basketball player who didn't just play the game—he made it his own. He wore baggy clothes, braids and cool chains, and he could rap too! He mixed basketball and hip hop like they were meant to be together. It shows that being yourself is powerful—and that being different can change the game!

BAM!

True's Hoops and Harmony

ALLEN IVERSON WAS AN NBA PLAYER THAT HAD A BIG INFLUENCE ON HIP-HOP.



HE BROUGHT HIP-HOP STYLE TO THE NBA, WITH BAGGY CLOTHES AND JEWELRY.



IVERSON ALSO COLLABORATED WITH ARTISTS AND EVEN RECORDED HIS OWN RAP.



HE WAS A CULTURAL ICON CONNECTING BASKETBALL AND THE HIP HOP WORLD!



"Dribble and Flow"

Vol. 1 Ep. 2
T. Phillips

Uncle Woody Honored with Key to the City at 2025 White Party

Woody Woods, y'all! Charleston showed up and showed out at his annual White Party (again!) on April 5, 2025, where the celebration hit a new high:

Mayor Amy Shuler Goodwin presented Woody with the Key to the City—a powerful symbol of his legacy in the Capital City.

For over 25 years, **Woody “Uncle Woody” Woods** has been more than a radio personality—he’s a cultural force, community advocate, and local legend. As **the first African-American male in West Virginia to host a full-time FM radio show**, Woody broke barriers, uplifted voices, and made Charleston’s WRVZ 107.3 The Beat one of the state’s most beloved stations.

Woody’s radio journey began on the night shift at WJFX Foxy 107.9 in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and led him to Charleston, where he became a fixture on the airwaves and in the community. A proud member of the CORE DJs, he’s shared stages with icons like Snoop Dogg, Ice Cube, Lil Wayne, and more—but it’s his off-air presence that leaves the deepest impact.

From reading in schools to mentoring youth, coaching local teams, and running the annual “Beat Backpack Attack,” **Woody’s love for the community is personal and powerful.** His advocacy for childhood cancer through St. Jude’s, his mentorship of inner-city youth, and his deep ties to Charleston schools show how much he invests in the next generation.

Now a **West Virginia Radio Hall of Fame inductee**, a proud father of five, and grandfather, Uncle Woody leads with heart, hustle, and humor.

Whether he’s spinning records or speaking truth, **Woody Woods is the beat of the city**—and with the Key to the City in hand, he’s just getting started.



Mic Check: Every BBG Hip-hop Feature in One Place



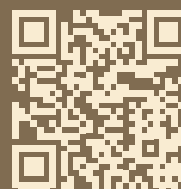
Fill your head to the tip-top with all things WV hip-hop:

Scan the QR code to access BBG’s compilation of full-length articles on West Virginia’s thriving hip-hop scene.

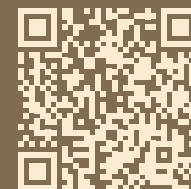


Want to keep up with WV Hip-Hop Digitally? **Check out these Instagram pages!**

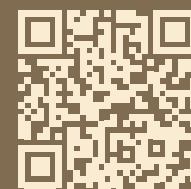
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WV Community Solidarity Fund

BY ACLUWV

SPONSORED CONTENT

The WV Community Solidarity Fund is operated by Kanawha Rapid Response, a network of volunteers in solidarity with the immigrant community in WV. This fund exists to support people and families with emergency expenses that may arise when someone is targeted by or detained by ICE.

What expenses qualify

Individual families can request up to \$2,000/year for:

- (1) Costs related to legal efforts and communications for people detained: legal fees, commissary funds, bond, transport costs to/from jails or courts;
- (2) Legal costs and fees for those at risk of detention by ICE.
- (3) Emergency needs for families whose household member(s) have been detained by ICE: rent, utilities, groceries, formula, diapers, childcare, transportation, and other resources/supplies.
- (4) Costs related to reunification of separated families, including passport fees and plane tickets.

Know Your Rights: A Guide for Immigrants Facing Police or ICE Encounters

Under the United States Constitution, we all have rights — regardless of immigration status. At a time when the federal government is ramping up ICE raids, it's never been more important to know how your rights come into play during interactions with immigration officials.

If you are stopped or questioned by the police or ICE, remain calm and assert your right to remain silent. You are not obligated to answer questions about your immigration status, how you entered the country, or where you were born. If they ask for permission to search your belongings, tell them no.

Never show false documents or claim to be a U.S. Citizen if you aren't as the government can use these lies against you in proceedings. It is important to remain truthful while also withholding information that you are not required to give.

If ICE or the police come to your home, do not open the door. Politely ask them to slip warrants under the door or show them through the peephole. ICE warrants (Form I-200) do not allow them to enter without your permission. Only a criminal warrant signed by a judge grants that authority. Even if they have one and can enter you still have the right to remain silent.

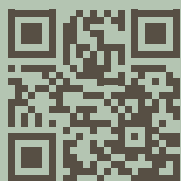
If ICE or the police come to your work, they cannot access non-public areas without a warrant or your employer's permission. If agents arrive, stay calm, avoid running, and move to a private space if possible. You are not required to show ID, work authorization, or other documents.

If ICE or the police come stop you in your car, stop, turn off your engine, and provide your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance if requested. Do not agree to a search of your vehicle, and remember that you do not have to answer questions about your immigration status.

If you are arrested, remain silent and request a lawyer. Do not sign anything you don't understand, and ask for an interpreter if needed. Your right to an attorney exists regardless of your ability to pay, and it is essential that you wait to talk about your immigration status until you can speak with a lawyer.

Knowledge is power and remember that you are not alone. If you need help with your immigration proceedings, please contact Mountain State Justice at (304) 344-3144. And if you believe your rights have been violated by government officials, please contact the ACLU of West Virginia at (304) 345-9246 or at mail@acluwv.org

Scan the code for more information and to apply



Who can apply

People (and family members) who are at risk of being detained by ICE, or have been detained by ICE, in West Virginia. In the event that someone has been detained, a family member or friend can apply on their behalf.

Fondos de solidaridad para la comunidad

CONTENIDO
PATROCINADO

POR ACLUWV

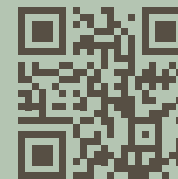
Los fondos de solidaridad para la comunidad están operados por Kanawha Rapid Response, una red de voluntarios en solidaridad con la comunidad inmigrante en West Virginia. Los fondos existen para apoyar a personas y familias con gastos de emergencia, gastos que pueden surgir cuando alguien está siendo buscado o es detenido por ICE.

Cuáles Gastos Cualifican

Cada familia puede solicitar ayuda hasta los \$2,000 dólares al año para:

- (1) Gastos relacionados con esfuerzos legales y comunicaciones para personas detenidas: gastos legales, servicios en la comisaría, fianza, gastos de transportación a la cárcel o a la corte.
- (2) Costos relacionados con cuestiones legales para personas en riesgo de ser detenidos por la agencia ICE.
- (3) Gastos de emergencia para familiares donde alguien ha sido detenido por la agencia de ICE: renta, pago de facturas, supermercado, formulas, diapers, cuidado de niños, transporte, y otras necesidades.
- (4) Costos para la reunificación de familias separadas, incluyendo pasaportes y boletos de avión.

Para más información y para aplicar, escanea el código



Quién puede aplicar

Personas (y miembros de la familia) quienes están en riesgo de ser detenidos por la agencia ICE, o quienes han sido detenidos por la agencia ICE, en West Virginia. En el caso de que alguien haya sido detenido, un miembro de la familia o un amigo puede aplicar en su representación.

Conozca Sus Derechos: Una Guía para Inmigrantes que Enfrentan Encuentros con la Policía o ICE

Según la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, todos tenemos derechos, independientemente de nuestro estatus migratorio. En un momento en que el gobierno federal está aumentando las redadas de ICE, nunca ha sido más importante saber cómo entran en juego sus derechos durante las interacciones con los funcionarios de inmigración.

Si la policía o ICE lo detienen o lo interrogan, mantenga la calma y use su derecho de permanecer en silencio. No está obligado a responder preguntas y dar detalles sobre su estatus migratorio, cómo entro al país o en dónde nació. Si le piden permiso para revisar sus pertenencias, dígalos que no.

Nunca muestre documentos falsos ni afirme ser ciudadano estadounidense si no lo es, ya que el gobierno puede usar estas mentiras en su contra en los procedimientos. Es importante ser sincero y, al mismo tiempo, retener información que no está obligado a proporcionar.

Si ICE o la policía llega a su casa, no abra la puerta. Pídale cortésmente que deslicen las órdenes judiciales por debajo de la puerta o que las muestren por la ventana o mirilla de la puerta. Las órdenes administrativas de arresto de ICE (Formulario I-200) no les permiten entrar sin su permiso a su hogar. Solo una orden de arresto judicial firmada por un juez otorga esa autoridad. Incluso si tienen una y pueden entrar, usted tiene derecho a permanecer en silencio.

Si ICE o la policía vienen a su trabajo, no pueden acceder a áreas que no sean públicas sin una orden de arresto judicial o sin el permiso de su empleador. Si llegan agentes, mantenga la calma, evite correr y vaya a un espacio privado si es posible. No está obligado a mostrar identificación, autorización de trabajo u otros documentos. Si se lo piden dígalos que esta en su derecho de no hacerlo.

Si ICE o la policía vienen a detenerlo en su automóvil, deténgase, apague el motor y proporcione su licencia de conducir, registro y prueba de seguro si se lo solicitan. No acepte que revisen su vehículo y recuerde que no tiene que responder preguntas sobre su estatus migratorio.

Si lo arrestan, permanezca en silencio y solicite un abogado. No firme nada que no entienda y pida un intérprete si es necesario. Su derecho a contar con un abogado existe independientemente de su capacidad de pago, y es esencial que espere a hablar sobre su estatus migratorio hasta que pueda hablar con un abogado.

El conocimiento es poder y recuerde que no está solo. Si necesita ayuda con sus procedimientos de inmigración, comuníquese con Mountain State Justice al (304) 344-3144. Y si cree que sus derechos han sido violados por oficiales del gobierno, comuníquese con la ACLU de West Virginia al (304) 345-9246 o al mail@acluwv.org

Passing the Mic: A Lyrical Legacy

BY LEESHIA LEE

Bear with me for a moment.

These are the stories in our local culture that never get told.

West Virginia hip hop does exist.

I have always been in love with music, writing, poetry, and rhyming. It isn't hard to see how I ended up on the radio.

I am a fan of everything that is real hip-hop. I am from an era where music was an expression of identity. **Art imitated life; we lived it.** Not the other way around.

West Virginia, just like the rare jewel we know her to be, exploited for our natural resources and overlooked, music was no different. In the midst of that, legendary figures have crept out of the mountains and reminded the world that **we do exist and we do put in work.**

While I was on the radio, I used to throw parties and let artists perform. West Virginia had a music scene that was thriving statewide, with artists traveling for showcases and performing in other cities. The crowds would sing along to the lyrics at shows, videos were being shot in neighborhoods, and CDs were actually being pressed up and sold. Two Charleston rappers, Hugh Holla and Plenty Rock, created a legendary documentary visiting cities across the state, interviewing artists. It was ahead of its time but a great reference point for where the musical culture in the state was headed.



The collective artist community had a village, so it was able to grow, and with the growth came the energy. The energy that what was happening in Atlanta and other major cities could happen here. That someone from here could actually blow because there was definitely not a talent shortage. I've heard stories of West Virginia rappers opening up for artists and stealing the show. **We had a buzz.**

Then the internet happened, and the music scene didn't transition as it should. The focus shifted to the accessibility of more famous mainstream artists. It was more exciting to support the lives of another artist who was once a local artist in their hometown, instead of someone whose story we already knew.

We fell out of love with rooting for our own underdogs and became fascinated with watching everyone else pass us by.

Last night, I had a nostalgic moment. I went back in time. I heard someone say my name. I turned around, and it was Buzzy Shine, Self Made. Huntington. That's how it registered in my mind, just like that. As if I had a mic in my hand, and I was about to call him up to the stage.

I was wondering what brought him out to Charleston, but it was a rap show, and I know it's always refreshing to see what new talent is sounding like these days. Back then, when Self Made came to a show, they came deep. Charleston artists would invite them up, and the crowds would enjoy the merging of the two cities' cultures that often would have tension otherwise.

Last night, I saw it happen before my eyes.

I realized that MJ, who just graduated, threw a party for the artists to perform. They showed up in jerseys, had their phones out recording, and shouted the words to their friends' songs. **The hype—they brought it back.**

When the effort is shown, you have to respect it.

Isn't this the story of how hip hop started? The simplicity of witnessing the changing of the guard.

I realized that Buzzy Shine was there to watch his son perform. Ello.

If history repeats itself, I have faith this time it will be **all gas, no brakes.**



The ones that are up next, they have all the tools to level out the playing field.

Most people don't have to climb a mountain to be heard. So just get louder and louder; someone is going to feel you.

I snapped these pictures for the history books.

Until they catch on I'll document it out.



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