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## I Turned My Love for Hip-hop into My Dream Job

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## I Turned My Love for Hip-hop into My Dream Job

By C. Keith Harrison  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Hip-hop brings people together, something that America desperately needs at this time.



Hip-hop has been the No. 1 musical genre in the world since 2018, bumping the long-time king rock 'n roll off the throne, according to Nielsen Music's report.

During our recent holiday break, my childhood friend Jeff Pecot gave me a cherished gift that we both grew up with, an Odyssey video game console.

Jeff and I had a routine during our middle school days in the early 80s. After we raced to the crib on our Schwinn bicycles, we did our homework and then played video games (football was the game of choice), and our favorite pastime was putting on the Sugar Hill Gang's Rapper's Delight.

My love for hip-hop, in part, is because it brings people together, something that America desperately needs at this time. In terms of the cool factor, few things are cooler than hip-hop music, culture, fashion and knowledge when the lyrics are conscious and irreverent. "It was all a dream, I used to read Word Up! Magazine," the late Notorious BIG smoothly spit in his opening verse of Juicy. It still ranks as one of the best songs of all time.



One of C. Keith Harrison's many collectibles, Biggie Smalls.

Since hip-hop hit the scene in the 1970s, its popularity has exploded exponentially.

Hip-hop has been the No. 1 musical genre in the world since 2018, bumping the long-time king rock 'n roll off the throne, according to Nielsen Music's report.

On a macro level, sports and hip-hop are intertwined and the cultural formation at virtually every major sporting event. Corporate sponsors maximize grabbing our attention with hip-hop energy, slang and rap verses. Hip-hop culture connects with youth, young adults and mature adults globally. At least 60 percent of the genre is

purchased by male, white Americans, indicating the mainstream consumption of the culture.

One of the best aspects of my job is connecting with others through our shared love and passion for hip-hop. During my time last semester in the Nasir Jones HipHop Fellowship at Harvard University's Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, I had the opportunity to virtually sit in a hip-hop course taught by director of the HipHop Archive and Research Institute, Professor Marcyliena Morgan, and famous producer 9<sup>th</sup> Wonder. I spent time with UCF alumnus and Boston Celtics center **Tacko Fall '19** and discussed hip-hop while at dinner in Harvard Square in Cambridge. I called Bill Adler, founding director of publicity at Def Jam Records, while at a record store he recommended near campus, as I purchased several vinyl records from the old school days of the culture I love so dearly.



Tacko Fall '19 (left) and C. Keith Harrison share a love of basketball and hip-hop.

I have enjoyed having a career that has allowed me the gift of parlaying a childhood passion to my job as a [professor of business, hip-hop and sport](#). Hip-hop is a cultural tool that enables my students to learn innovation, entrepreneurship, strategy, risk-taking, marketing, sales, analytics and so much more. Pedagogically, the world exposes today's students to hip-hop across social media, music in coffee shops, products in various genres, and the consistent tie-in with sport and sport business management.

The rainbow of my hip-hop journey occurred Nov. 20. This is the day UCF officially approved the Business of HipHop Innovation and Creative Industries certificate. We are the first [College of Business](#) to offer this type of academic program and it was truly a team effort.

And just like so many other times in my life, a hip-hop lyric provided the perfect sentiment to capture exactly what I felt in that moment: “Just throw your hands up in the air and party hardy like you just don’t care.”

C. Keith Harrison is a professor of business/hip-hop and sport in the UCF College of Business and the chief academic officer of the DeVos Sport Business Program. He can be reached at [Carlton.Harrison@ucf.edu](mailto:Carlton.Harrison@ucf.edu).

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