

BLINK Grant Application

Madison Arts Commission

Applicant Information

Name: The JVN Project

Address (no P.O. boxes): 333 East Campus Mall Rm 3129

City/State/Zip: Madison, WI, 53706

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Project Description

Project Title: JVN Day 2020

Location(s): 333 East Campus Mall / UW Campus

Start date/time: September 11th, 2020

End date/time: September 13th, 2020

Project Costs:

Panels	\$ 250
Mounting	\$ 550
Paint & Interior Design	\$1500

Additional Project Income (if any):

Amount Requested from MAC: \$1500

Estimated Total Costs/Income: \$2300

Do you have the necessary Insurance coverage?

N/A

Do you have all necessary permits and permissions?

Yes

Conceptual Approach

The JVN Project is a Hip-Hop Centered organization that seeks to serve and empower. It is an organization instituted by students at the University of Wisconsin- Madison inspired by the life of 19-year-old Chicagoan artist and UW-Madison student, John “Vietnam” Nguyễn — an emcee, poet, dancer, music engineer, and activist. The JVN Project uses and integrates John’s and Hip-Hop’s core values as a framework for developing programs and initiatives committed to literacy, uplifting disenfranchised communities, youth mentorship, modeling restorative justice, and providing platforms for people to tell their story.

For the last seven years, The JVN Project (JVNP) has organized an annual Hip-Hop festival on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to celebrate the life and legacy of John “Vietnam” Nguyễn, as well as to inspire and educate through the elements of Hip-Hop. An event of this festival that has continued every year has been dedicated to the element of graffiti—an 8ft. 3-panel mural erected by festival participants in honor of the festival theme.

This year we at JVNP are seeking to expand the possibility and impact of this community project. We have designed an installation that utilizes the graffiti element of Hip-Hop, as well as other materials to create a physical representation of a conversation happening in many Madison communities where the impact of pushing out Hip-Hop has been most felt. As the world’s fastest growing culture and now most engaged genre of music, many have grown eager to see their stories reflected in Hip-Hop. This fact creates a natural and ever-building tension in a city like Madison, which, over the last 15 years, has seen restrictions on the play and performance of Hip-Hop music by club owners, venue owners, restaurateurs, etc., “There are no Hip-Hop venues in this city, period,” says DJ Pain 1.

Due to views that Hip-Hop events, “incite fights, gang activity, riots, gunfire, and all manner of intoxicated behavior” (Elbow, 2018), the genre is considered an outlier in the city. There are no spaces where Hip-Hop is allowed and DJ’s who usually spin a mix of genres are forbidden from playing Hip-Hop at their gigs. The most streamed, purchased, and watched genre globally is relegated to private gatherings throughout the city. A research study conducted in 2017 by University of Wisconsin-Madison sociologist Randy Stoecker looked at the correlation between music genre and violence in Madison. He found that venues that regularly featured Hip-Hop were less likely to attract police than those that featured country music, karaoke, DJs, electronic dance music, and other open mic events. Furthermore, venues that played Hip-Hop far-trailed behind these other venues when it came down to violent incidents and police calls that resulted in charges.

After concluding that the restriction of Hip-Hop in Madison is unfounded, Dr. Stoecker explains, “The mainstream cultural hypothesis that we are testing – that Hip-Hop is a medium

associated with greater violence – is also a racialized one because of the genre’s association with African-Americans, who are also believed to be more violent.” This is a fact we at JVNP would like our installation to shed a great amount of light on. Fear of focusing on how race is at the root of this issue in Madison has led to very little progress in resolving it. Just earlier this year (2020), a new café and nightclub, *Canopy*, publicly announced that no “Hip-Hop or Urban music” would be allowed to be played or performed at the venue.

Project Description

This installation consists of four large wooden standing panels facing one another almost forming a vertical box”, however separate enough at the corners where viewers can both see in and enter in through. The outside of the panels will be painted white and covered in polyurethane while the inside of the panels would be spray painted with vibrant and eccentric graffiti. The inside would also feature (through framed lamination) excerpts from articles quoting business owners who have restricted Hip-Hop, excerpts from the study led by Dr. Stoecker, and information about the history of Hip-Hop culture in the city of Madison (eg. the fact that Madison’s own DJ Pain 1 is grammy nominated and continues to work with major artists/record labels). The color white on the outside of the panels represents the whitewashing of spaces throughout the city to decrease “the crowd,” associated with Hip-Hop which is majority black and brown. The design is also created with the understanding that Madison’s population is majority White. Therefore, when the viewer is passing by there are only flashes of the bright interior from the corners. This also highlights the fact that, in addition to internalized racial bias, having limited perspective of the culture has led to deep misunderstandings of its people and its impact. The installation purposefully implicates viewers and invites them into a greater awareness at the same time.

This is a call to action. By holding up a mirror as well as a more accurate reflection of Hip-Hop by a local organization, the JVNP would like to create space to discuss how Hip-Hop can be more accurately represented. In order for this installation to have the most effective intended effect, the JVNP has considered possible locations of Downtown Madison, Madison’s East Side near more affluent neighborhoods, or Madison’s South Side.







