

## The Daily Cardinal

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# 'Protect the Mic' expects to reach beyond hip-hop

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A seemingly modest proposal to make October 2015 hip-hop awareness month at Tuesday's Madison Arts Commission meeting was universally applauded by members and community speakers alike.

Karen Reece, president of the Urban Community Arts Network, described the proposal as part of the 2015 "Protect the Mic" initiative developed with the Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives and spoken word group First Wave, and emphasized the necessity of the Commission's approval.

"In a city where maybe passively, hip-hop has been told it doesn't necessarily belong, having an endorsement like this really goes a long way," Reece said.

"Protect the Mic" is intended to connect the current First Wave "Pass the Mic" program with the Madison Hip-Hop Awards, which just celebrated their tenth and fifth anniversaries respectively, according to Reece.

"One of the things we really struggled with is creating community." Reece said "Local artists don't necessarily know what's going on at First Wave at UW, and vice versa."

However, Reece stressed that while building bridges between the Madison hip-hop communities was the short-term goal, the end goal of entertainment equity in Madison across genres is just as critical.

Members of the Commission noted in particular the need to reconcile the gap between the disparaging "Race to Equity" report that documented extreme racial disparities with Livability's naming of Madison as the most livable city, citing that "Protect the Mic" fits in as part of closing the gap.

"I think that this [proposal] is fantastic," Vice Chair Chris Taylor said. "I think that Madison in particular needs that."