



This is Hip-Hop! **Hip-Hop is not about Sex, Drugs and Violence**

18 September 2020 – On 26 September 2020 at 10pm JST/2pm BST/9am EST/6am PST, nine hip-hop innovators from around the world will gather online for a panel discussion about hip-hop. *This is Hip-Hop!* is the first in a series of digital events by True Colors Festival presented by The Nippon Foundation (TNF).

This is Hip-Hop! seeks to overturn negative stereotypes about hip-hop through panelists' positive and powerful personal experiences. Expect spirited exchanges about hot button topics like cultural appropriation, diversity and inclusivity, the real reason behind hip-hop's bad press and real-life stories of hip-hop culture's role as an agent of social change.

The session will be facilitated by **Jonzi D**, British hip-hop dance and theater innovator. Jonzi is co-founder of *Breakin' Convention*, the world's largest international hip-hop event. This spoken word artist is credited for raising the profile of British hip-hop and dance since the 1980s and for successfully bringing hip-hop into the theater. As one of 16 Associate Artists at the renowned Sadler's Wells Theatre, Jonzi D is one of the most exciting talents in the British dance space. In 2011, he was bestowed the title of Member of the British Empire (MBE) – a coveted accolade he chose to turn down on moral grounds.

Jonzi D will be joined by eight panelists, who, like him, have never played it safe. Each has overcome personal social and physical barriers in pursuit of careers in hip-hop music and arts.

Amber Galloway-Gallego (USA) is a world renowned concert and festival American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. She has shared the stage with influential hip-hop artists such as Kendrick Lamar and Twista. Her initial plan was to become a rapper, but progressive hearing loss led her to helping Deaf audiences "hear" and "feel" music instead.

Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli (Canada) has through sheer determination, courage and innovation, overcome Anhydrogryposis, a muscle disorder that affects his legs, to pursue breakdancing as a career. He developed his unique dance style that harnesses the strength of his upper body, using crutches like extensions of his arms. He created ILL-ABILITIES™, an international crew of differently-abled dancers, that has dazzled audiences around the world with their barrier – and gravity – defying moves.

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Saykoji (Indonesia) is a critically acclaimed rapper from Indonesia with a massive following. Once a shy and introverted kid who was taunted with the nickname “Psycho”, he found solace and confidence with his ability to express his feelings in rhyme. A gift that paved the way for him to become a rap artist. Proof of this hip-hop practitioner’s positive take on life is expressed in his stage name – Saykoji (pronounced “Sai-koji”) is a play on his childhood old nickname.

Sparsh Shah (USA), is a rapper and singer who first came into the spotlight in 2015, when his cover of Eminem’s “Not Afraid” garnered 75 million views on social media. Eminem’s label, Shady Records and rapper Jay Sean acknowledged Sparsh’s feat by retweeting his video. The 17-year-old has not let osteogenesis imperfecta (or brittle bone disease) stop him. He juggles school, speaking engagements and “Sparshing” (a term he uses to describe touching the hearts of audiences) through his brand of hip-hop called “Raga-rap”, a fusion of Indian classical music with hip-hop.

Tamura King (Japan), is a creative crew comprising the Ghanaian-Japanese Tamura siblings who hail from a sea town in the Kanagawa Prefecture. The trio are eldest brother **NASA**, a creative director, elder sister **Namichie**, a rapper and costume creator, and youngest sister **Mana**, a dancer. They recently burst into the scene and already, the world cannot help but pay attention to their dope, ill-defined sounds and witty punchlines delivered via social media.

Wheelsmith (Singapore) is an accomplished rapper, beatboxer, songwriter and music producer. In 2019, he performed on Singapore’s biggest stage: the National Day Parade. He’s also represented his home country by playing wheelchair rugby for Team Singapore. More recently, Wheelsmith has found himself in the theater — both in the wings and centerstage — creating the soundscape for and performing in *And Suddenly I Disappear: The Singapore/UK ‘d’ Monologues*, which was presented in Singapore and the UK.

Speakers’ bios, photos and ready-to-publish social media content can be accessed here:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1e4_8vLHPaTAX3vOINACRGT7XZ7GiKaYa

The event closes with a specially commissioned freestyle dance ‘moment’ featuring 20 breakdancers from four countries – Jakarta, London, Singapore and Tokyo. Each dancer will bring their own style and identity to the dance floor, unified by a track specially written and produced for this segment by Singaporean panelist Wheelsmith. The dancers are:

Jakarta

Arif Setyo Budi
Cynthia Arnella
Icha Fajarin
Muhd Alfian Suhendy

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London

Rudy T
Triston
Cori D
Kofi Mingo

Singapore

Joel Chong
Jonas Yeo
BANGXY (Bryan Ang)
Tejas Hirah
Ammar "Amezy" (Muhd Ammar Nasrulhaq)
AMANZO (Amanda Seet)
Chelsea Monteiro

Tokyo

TOMOYA
NAGA
Daiki Nishimura
Yuto Shimura
Yuhi Shimura

Says Jonzi D: “I am excited to meet other hip-hop heads on this platform so we can discuss the culture that gives us value. We can also share some positive hip-hop energy with the people who need to hear it the most. I look forward to hearing about hip-hop from the panelists’ perspectives – how does hip-hop allow you to recognize your superpowers?”

A commitment to accessibility

This is Hip-Hop! takes place live and can be watched in real time (audiences must pre-register to receive a link to watch it live). The panel discussion will be in English, and will be available with English and Japanese subtitles; and International and Japanese Sign Language interpretation. Audiences will also be able to post questions and comments.

Says Audrey Perera, Executive Producer of True Colors Festival 2020/21: “Hip-hop is one of the fastest growing and most popular cultures around the world – that’s what inspired us to create this unusual panel discussion among successful hip-hop artists from diverse backgrounds. Expect great stories of empowerment, identity and connection. This is what True Colors Festival is all about – creating opportunities to celebrate diversity and shared humanity through the arts.”

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TCF is delighted to announce it has teamed up with **NME**, the legendary media powerhouse and world’s defining voice in music and pop culture since 1952. NME Asia will tell stories through curated digital content about *This is Hip-Hop!* and its line-up of artist speakers. The content will be published on the NME Asia (www.nme.com/en_asia/) and syndicated to the NME global site (www.nme.com) and NME Australia (www.nme.com/en_au/).

Says Lauren Hendry Parsons, BandLab Technologies (NME Asia), “We are delighted to be supporting the True Colors Festival in 2020. At BandLab Technologies, we are guided by our mission to tear down the barriers to creativity, and believe everyone should have the opportunity to be creative: and this is truly what drives True Colors Festival. We love that the festival’s first digital event brings the world of hip-hop together, to celebrate creativity, and empowers creators to express themselves on a global platform and share their journeys authentically. As a media site, NME Asia celebrates homegrown talent, both established and emerging. We can’t wait to see what unfolds when all of the True Colors elements are brought together virtually!”

True Colors Festival 2020/21

True Colors Festival (TCF) presented by The Nippon Foundation, which has been working toward a more inclusive and diverse society in Japan and around the world for more than 50 years: TCF is a series of performing arts events presented across geographies, in celebration of diversity and inclusion as “One World One Family.”

Through festivals since 2006 in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, and Japan, TCF has presented more than 1,100 performing artists from more than 30 countries and attracted more than 40,000 people.

In June 2020, True Colors Festival released its first music video, featuring the Ben E King classic hit, [Stand By Me](#), performed remotely by 46 artists from 15 countries/regions, sending a message of hope and positivity to people everywhere – especially people with disabilities – during the COVID-19 lockdown. To date, it has garnered about 640,000 views across YouTube and Facebook.

The re-start of TCF 2020/2021 marks its commitment to tap on the power of the arts to connect artists and audiences in experiences such as music videos, film screenings, children’s programs, musicals, concerts, and workshops.

Follow True Colors Festival for updates:

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Note to editor:

The Nippon Foundation (TNF) was established in 1962 as a non-profit philanthropic organization, active in Japan and around the world. Initially our efforts focused largely on the maritime and shipping fields, but since then, the range of our activities has expanded to education, social welfare, public health, and other fields—carried out in more than 100 countries to date. Together with our more than 20 partner organizations in Japan and worldwide, we are funding and assisting community-led efforts aimed at realizing a more peaceful and prosperous global society. To find out more about TNF, please visit <http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/en/>

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