

MEDIA ALERT

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Hip-Hop Education Center Announces 2026 Artist-Scholars-in-Residence on Hip-Hop Day

Denise “Dee” Barnes, Odylle “Mantis” Beder, Dr. Glenn “Sweety G” Toby, Paradise Gray, and Prime Minister Pete Nice join a distinguished cohort advancing Hip-Hop scholarship, artistry, education, and cultural preservation

NEW YORK, NY — In celebration of Hip-Hop Day, the Hip-Hop Education Center (HHEC) proudly announces its 2026 Artist-Scholars-in-Residence: Denise “Dee” Barnes, Odylle “Mantis” Beder, Dr. Glenn “Sweety G” Toby, Paradise Gray, and Prime Minister Pete Nice.

The Artist-Scholar-in-Residence Program brings together artists, scholars, educators, archivists, and cultural leaders whose work expands the study, documentation, interpretation, and preservation of Hip-Hop culture. Building upon HHEC’s longstanding Scholars-in-Residence and Hip-Hop Artist Fellows programs, the residency recognizes creative practice, cultural knowledge, and lived experience as vital forms of scholarship.

Throughout the residency, the Artist-Scholars will develop independent creative or scholarly projects, contribute to HHEC’s research and educational initiatives, engage with its archives, participate in public programming, and collaborate with HHEC’s national network of artists, educators, researchers, and cultural institutions.

“Hip-Hop’s history has been built, documented, and passed down by artists and cultural workers whose knowledge is too often overlooked by traditional institutions,” said **Martha Diaz, Founder and President of the Hip-Hop Education Center**. “Our Artist-Scholar-in-Residence Program honors these knowledge keepers while creating space for them to research, create, teach, and preserve their contributions on their own terms. We are proud to launch this extraordinary cohort on Hip-Hop Day, a moment that reminds us that Hip-Hop is not only a global cultural force, but also a powerful intellectual, artistic, and educational tradition.”

2026 Artist-Scholars-in-Residence

Denise “Dee” Barnes is a pioneering recording artist, journalist, writer, producer, and on-air personality. She made Hip-Hop television history as host of FOX’s influential *Pump It Up!*,

interviewing artists including LL Cool J, Public Enemy, Salt-N-Pepa, and Ziggy Marley. As a member of Body & Soul, Barnes appeared on the Grammy-nominated anti-violence anthem “We’re All in the Same Gang.” She also hosted the groundbreaking *Sisters in the Name of Rap*, featuring Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, Roxanne Shanté, and Yo-Yo. Her contributions to Hip-Hop culture are featured in Netflix’s *Ladies First: A Story of Women in Hip-Hop*.

Odylle “Mantis” Beder is a Brooklyn native with more than 20 years of experience as a dancer, choreographer, and dance educator. A B-girl representing the renowned Full Circle Souljahs Crew, she has competed at RFTA, Red Bull, and IBE events and judges Breaking competitions locally and nationally. Mantis has performed at the Kennedy Center, New York Philharmonic, The Joyce Theater, Lincoln Center, and New Victory Theater and has danced with LL Cool J and MC Sha-Rock. She has led workshops at NYU, Harvard, Northeastern, and Princeton. In 2019, she created *Bgirl Herstory*, a multimedia project documenting B-girls’ contributions to Breaking.

Dr. Glenn “Sweety G” Toby is a Brooklyn-born, Queens-raised Hip-Hop pioneer, cultural architect, entrepreneur, sports agent, philanthropist, and bestselling author. Performing as Mr. Sweety G, he emerged as a rapper, songwriter, DJ, and producer and is an inductee of The Hip Hop Museum. His five-decade career spans music, sports, entrepreneurship, and venture capital. For more than 30 years, his Book Bank Foundation has advanced literacy, education, youth development, and community empowerment. Toby is a recipient of the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award, a TEDx speaker, a board member of the Peter Tosh Foundation, and author of *The Rhythm of Revenue*.

Paradise Gray is a Hip-Hop historian, cultural archivist, artist, and Chief Curator and Advisory Board Member of The Hip Hop Museum. A South Bronx Hip-Hop legend mentored by pioneering DJs, he has preserved Hip-Hop artifacts dating back to the early 1970s. As entertainment manager, booking agent, and host of the legendary Latin Quarter, Paradise helped shape one of the most influential incubators of Hip-Hop’s Golden Era from 1986 to 1988. He is an author, photographer, and producer of nine albums, including two classics with X-Clan. Paradise co-created and executive produced A&E’s *Hip Hop Treasures* alongside LL Cool J, Ice-T, and Pete Nice and is a co-founder and Mentor-in-Residence at 1Hood.

Prime Minister Pete Nice is a founding member of the Def Jam group 3rd Bass, which released two gold-certified albums. A pioneering MC, archivist, curator, and historian, he co-launched Columbia University’s first Hip-Hop radio show on WKCR with DJ Clark Kent and later signed MF DOOM to his first management contract. In 1995, he founded the American Baseball Archives, beginning a decades-long career preserving cultural history. Pete co-created and executive produced A&E’s *Hip Hop Treasures* alongside LL Cool J, Ice-T, and Paradise Gray and currently serves as a curator at The Hip Hop Museum. An Emmy-nominated writer and producer, he has authored several history books and contributed to major museum exhibitions worldwide.

About the Hip-Hop Education Center

The Hip-Hop Education Center is a nonprofit organization committed to catalyzing social change and educational equity through Hip-Hop research, curriculum development, professional learning, leadership development, collaborative programming, and cultural preservation. HHEC connects artists, educators, scholars, archivists, youth, and institutions to advance Hip-Hop as a field of study, professional practice, and transformative educational movement.