Dr. Tarshia Stanley
Associate Professor of English, Spelman College
Editor, Encyclopedia of Hip Hop Literature

Dr. Stanley: Tarshia Stanley I am an Associate Professor in the English department at Spelman College. And I have edited a book called the Greenwood Encyclopedia of Hip Hop Literature. And the way that I came to the project was that the press invited me to edit the collection. Um they pretty much just allowed me to think to, to sort of think about what was Hip Hop literature and formulate the collection. So, when I did the call for contributors, I really wanted to I knew that people were gonna react to this idea of a Hip Hop encyclopedia in many different ways. What I wanted them to do was to look beyond just street literature. I didn’t want them to think of the sort of popular lit as, as that was the only thing that was important about Hip Hop literature that was the only category that it was the same as street lit. I really wanted to move away from that. Because while I think street lit has, you know its place, I think Hip Hop literature is any literature that’s important to the Hip Hop generation and that help to define them. And I used Bakari Kitwana’s dates as to when the Hip Hop generation started. So, he, he moves from about 1964 to 1984 as the first Hip Hop generation. So we’re dealing with young people now in the second Hip Hop generation. So when we go back in the early 60’s and we think about those kids growing up you know who were they? What kind of literature were they coming in contact and how this help them to formulate what we think of today as Hip Hop culture? I began to look at things like I had to go to the poets. I had to look at the black power movement. You know I had to look at you know Sonia Sanchez. I had to look at the revolution Gil Scott Heron The Revolution Will Not Be Televised and I thought, these things were what was in the ear of the people we give credit you know for creating the Hip Hop the culture the music you know um the lifestyle. And so those are the kind of things that are in the encyclopedia as well as very contemporary things. Those same novels that you know are ranked number one you know and, and all the African American you know magazines those are in there as well. So it is an encyclopedia that has such a wide range of entries and there are a range of people who did the contributing. So there are academics, there are journalists, they’re couple of laid people whose work is Hip Hop and who love the literature and the culture. So there were you know a verity of folk who were contributing to the volume as well. I think it’s important that it adds to our study of literature because it does exactly what I hoped it would do which was expand this concept of Hip Hop literature you know beyond contemporary quick fiction. That it would move it into a space that would really began to think about you know what kinds of literature has been important to these people we call Hip Hop. And so, so I hope it has done that. Anyway, that was my intention.