

# Review With Q



(L-R): Giko Fendi, Kerrick Johnson and CJ: Hip-Hop's future (via Instagram)

## Hip-Hop Turns 50: “The Marathon Continues” at SUNY New Paltz

BY. QUINCY M. SIMMONS

**NEW PALTZ** – Hip-Hop has a future here at SUNY New Paltz. Its names are Giko Fendi, Kerrick Johnson and CJ.

Hip-Hop isn't just music, **“but a culture - birthed from oppressive systems and provided creative outlets for impoverished people around the world to express their creativity and genius,”** said New Paltz alumnus, [Yannick Florest](#).

Florest, who is an educator and winner of New Paltz's 2022 [40 Under Forty Award](#), released a [mixtape](#) in 2018 discussing education, community, and glimpses of him as a regular person. Though, this wouldn't be his last endeavor with music. In 2017, he released the song, “Peace Kings”, which is an ode to all Black men and men of color.



According to Yannick, “Peace Kings” is a letter of admiration at a time when men of color are being killed and suffering from depression at alarming rates.

### “RIGHT HERE WHAT WE GON' DO IS GO BACK”

- Erykah Badu, “Love of My Life (An Ode to Hip-Hop)” (ft. Common)

On Aug. 11, 1973, the hierarchy of music would be changed forever. According to [Complex](#), an 18-year-old Jamaican American DJ by the name of Kool Herc threw a party at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx, giving birth to the gift of Hip-Hop. Hip-Hop is a form of expression; it's a cultural movement that incorporates: DJing (turntablism)/music, MCing (rapping), dancing and visual art.

Hip-Hop emerged in the 1970s Bronx at a time of post-industrial decline and political disclosure. As stated by [Icon Collective](#), conditions grew worse in neighborhoods predominantly populated by African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Caribbean immigrants. With crime, gang violence and poverty erupting in these communities, youth turned to the streets as an escape for self-expression. Abandoned buildings and parking lots became spots for parties. DJs and MCs were the life of these parties; music blasting from mobile sound systems, sheets of cardboard became dance floors and brick walls were lit up by graffiti.

This emerging movement transformed the hardships, despair, and racial barriers into numerous creative outlets. Hip-Hop became a platform to deal with violence, racism and unjust inconsistencies in society, as further detailed by [Icon Collective](#).

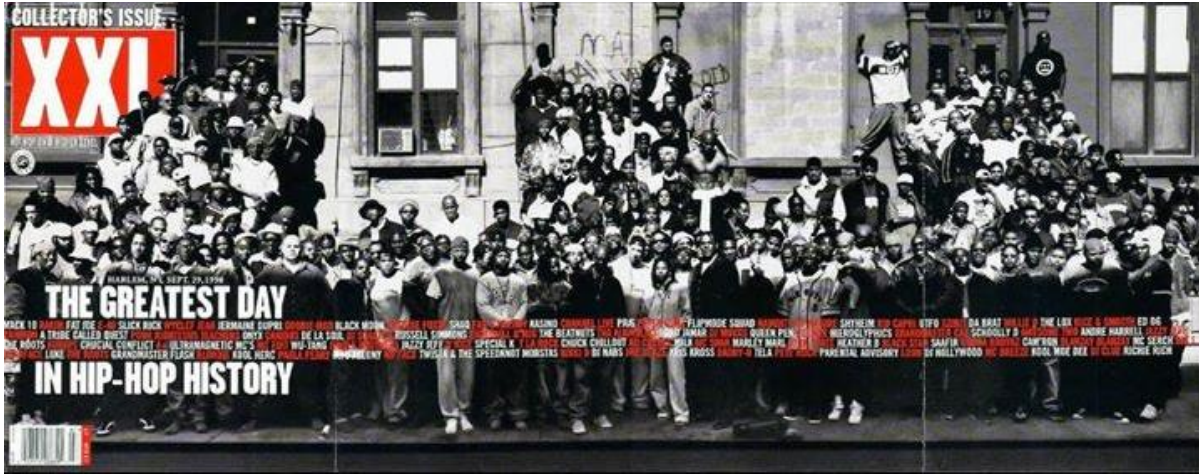
Several people were important in hip-hop's creation. DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa are considered to be the “Holy Trinity” of Hip-Hop, according to [Forbes](#).



Hip-Hop 50th Anniversary Performance at the 2023 Grammys

Though, the legacy of Hip-Hop continues here at SUNY New Paltz. To senior Ashlie McNeal, “Hip-Hop means expression.” It means “being authentic with your craft.” Sophomore Christian Rodriguez said since he was young, his parents influenced his music taste. Although his parents were not born in the US, they grew up in an American culture that embraced Hip-Hop and R&B. To him, Hip-Hop is a come-up story, “whether it's coming out of the ‘hood’ or getting out of a tough place.”

# Review With Q



On September 29, 1998, 177 Hip-Hop artists, producers, and influencers gathered on 17 East 126th Street in Harlem for what would be one of the most iconic photographs in Hip-Hop history. [“A Great Day in Hip-Hop”](#), published on the cover of issue #7 of XXL magazine, was Gordon Parks’ tribute to Art Kane’s 1958 photograph of 57 jazz musicians posing on the same Harlem brownstone stoop for Esquire magazine. Kane’s photograph—commonly referred to as “A Great Day in Harlem.”

Source: [The Gordon Parks Foundation](#)

## “BECOMING O.G.S IN THE GAME AND CHANGING”

- Dr Dre, “The Watcher”

SUNY New Paltz is giving birth to several aspiring artists. Students Kerrick Johnson and Carl John (aka CJ) are crafting up some of their own music. While their musical career is more of a hobby, music is “truly a beautiful thing,” said Kerrick. In middle school, Kerrick wrote poetry and became heavily invested in making music but went on a hiatus and moved onto other things. Fast forward to college, where he met CJ, who also shared an interest in music, and the two began their musical crusade! CJ composes a little bit of everything from Hip-Hop to Rock to Jazz all in the comfort of his own home.

Lyrically, they look up to artists such as Lil Wayne, Drake, Nas and 21 Savage who influence their musical style. The duo sees their music “as a way to bring joy to other people,” said Kerrick. Changing the narrative of an entire art form, CJ said, “is the message you put out, how you present it. How you present something is literally everything because it’s the impressions that it could set on people.” CJ already has a [debut single](#) out, but you can expect something from the duo very soon.

**“Similar to Nas, my lyrics talk about the struggle in minority communities and 90% of what I say is personal experienced facts...the struggle of growing up in the slums of Brooklyn, trying to bring the best out of people close to me.”**

- Kerrick Johnson



For Giko Mendy (aka Giko Fendi), music has been a part of his life. Since he was young, he would sing and frequently cover other artist’s music for fun. Now, he’s a promising young musician. His musical style isn’t strictly Hip-Hop, “I feel like it’s in between the lines...in a lot of [his] songs, I sing and rap,” he said. He listens to all types of artists from the likes of Drake, Chris Brown, to Justin Bieber and Shawn Mendes. Consuming artists of these different genres helps add versatility to his music. Moments like hitting 100 thousand streams or collaborating with other artists are rewarding to Giko and show how far he’s come as an artist. In his music, Giko tries to show that, “You can be whatever you want to be. You don’t need a crowd, you don’t need an audience, just do what’s right and you got it.” For more Giko Fendi, go on [Spotify](#), [YouTube](#), [YouTube Music](#) or [Pandora](#). Stay tuned as he plans on releasing music this summer!

## “H.E.R. (HIP-HOP IN ITS ESSENCE IS REAL)”

- Common, “I Used to Love H.E.R.”

Professor Anthony Dandridge, who teaches Rap & Spoken Word and Hip-Hop Culture at SUNY New Paltz, wants to see the culture of Hip-Hop continue to thrive and evolve. Dandridge sees Hip-Hop as a source of inspiration, creativity, and community building. To him, it is a form of expression **“rooted in the experiences of Black folk as a marginalized community with a history and traditions that existed prior to the dehumanizing objectification that was inherent to the Maafa.”**

Hip-Hop has taught him important lessons on the power of artistic expression and the role of music in social movements. He respects artists who use their platform to implement change and empower the community “with visions of success and speak truth in a way that is reflective of the diversity of our lives,” he said. Music is an agent of change and how we use it matters.

Some of his personal favorites include Public Enemy, Lauryn Hill, Biggie Smalls, Mos Def, and Black Thought. Though, if he had to pick one, it would be Jay-Z. According to Dandridge, “[Jay Z’s] rise and constant ability to create music that not only spoke to those intimate rhythms of Black folk but his maturity and expansion of his identity and responsibilities to his community in many ways model excellence.”

As an educator, Dandridge strives to highlight the positive aspects of Hip-Hop, such as “its ability to bring people together and promote social justice”. In doing this, we as people can help to counteract the negative stereotypes surrounding Hip-Hop. Additionally, he instructs artists to be conscious of the messages in their music and “work to promote positive social change through their lyrics and actions.”



Giko Fendi's latest release single, "loved you once before Pt. 2"

# Review With Q



Professor Anthony Dandridge alongside some of his favorite Hip-Hop artist

Upper Row (L-R): Mos Def, Hip-Hop group Public Enemy and Black Thought

Lower Row(L-R): Lauryn Hill and Jay Z

Professor Weldon McWilliams, chair of the Department of Black Studies at New Paltz, said it's a unique time to live in for Hip-Hop. This is because parents and children are listening to the same genre of music, he said. His mother listened to Gospel and R&B, occasionally listening to Hip-Hop. When Hip-Hop arrived, she would say, "Turn that noise down!" he said. Though when his son listens to Hip-Hop, he'll tune in with him because, "it's a part of the same genre of music I grew up with," he said.

McWilliams is part of the Hip-Hop generation and said, "it's ingrained in who I am." It influences everything from his style of dress to how he talks to his interactions with people. Where he grew up, there wasn't a Hip-Hop station in his proximity, so he ventured out to hear Hip-Hop. The first Hip-Hop album he bought was an album from the Hip-Hop group, Onyx. He reminisces about jamming out to artists like Biggie Smalls, Big L, Nas, Monie Love and others.

In fact, he remembers buying Monie Love's debut album, *Down to Earth*, and falling in love with her songs, "It's a Shame (My Sister)" and "Monie in the Middle." Additionally, he recalls a time when Wu Tang Clan's hit song, "C.R.E.A.M." remained the No. 1 song for six weeks on a white radio station near his home. It was ironic "to think about how creative and expressive Black people were to create such an art form that is now globally accepted, especially when it was initially rejected by the powers that be," he said. Now, it is a staple of American pop culture. As his love for Hip-Hop grew, his mother's love for the genre began to blossom. She requested him to buy "Lady's First" by Queen Latifah, drawing her into the world of Hip-Hop.



Video discussing the Top 20 Rap Songs of All Time

## We Are Hip-Hop!

A recent informal poll was conducted in which 21 Hip-Hop listeners dropped the names of their favorite artists. From the poll, I was trying to compile a Top 5 list of Hip-Hop artists who were frequently named. According to the poll, here they are.

What are your thoughts on the list? Who are your Top 5 Hip-Hop Artists?

1. Kendrick Lamar (26.7%)



2. J. Cole (26.7%)



3. Drake (20.0%)



4. Jay Z (13.3%)



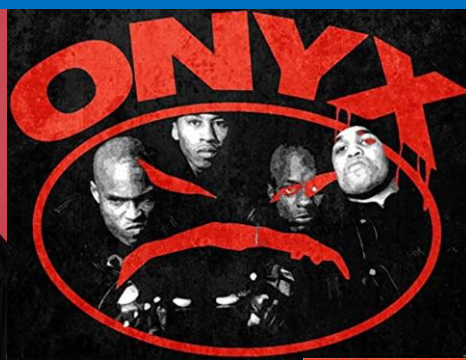
5. Biggie Smalls (aka The Notorious B.I.G.) (13.3%)



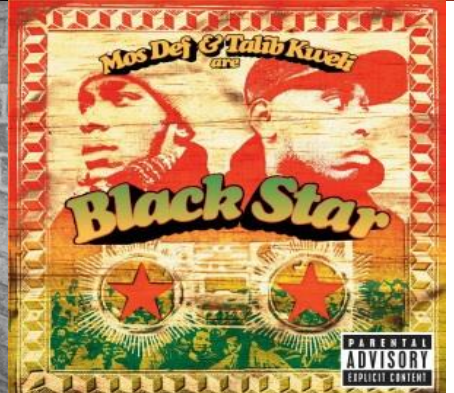
## Review With Q



Professor Weldon McWilliams alongside some of his favorite Hip-Hop artist.



Upper Row (L-R): Killer Mike, Hip-Hop group Onyx and Nas



Lower Row (L-R): Monie Love, Big L and Hip-Hop duo, Black Star

Now, Professor McWilliams feels, “Hip-Hop, like most things in America, there’s a part of it that’s become commodified and exploited for financial gain and popularity.” He would love to see Hip-Hop return to its essence of lyricism and messages that would help us progress as a society. He believes Hip-Hop gets unfairly blamed for some of the negativity in society as if it is the producer of the negativity, but it just calls our attention towards it.

Darrell P. Wheeler, President SUNY New Paltz believes Hip-Hop is important in providing students with a form of expression and “integrating social, political and economic angst and giving it an outlet.” As a liberal arts institution, part of what New Paltz wants students to be in touch with is “[students’] ability to draw on the humanities, arts, social sciences, and technical sciences,” infusing them into a “person-whole approach,” he said.

If Hip-Hop artists raise their level of social consciousness, he said, “I can see folks who may not be engaged on the social scene become more socially engaged as a result of Hip-Hop and its artists doing that.” This is why he listens to artists such as Black Thought, Killer Mike, and Black Star because of their ability to spark social commentary in their lyrics, promoting conversation among their listeners.

Now that Hip-Hop is globally accepted, McWilliams believes that **“it has the capacity to really speak out on issues and capture the attention of folks who may be frustrated with other institutions or other avenues of addressing.”**

### Hip-Hop is...

**“A mechanism of expression that is inclusive of artistic, music, rhythm, movement, visuals, and word.”**

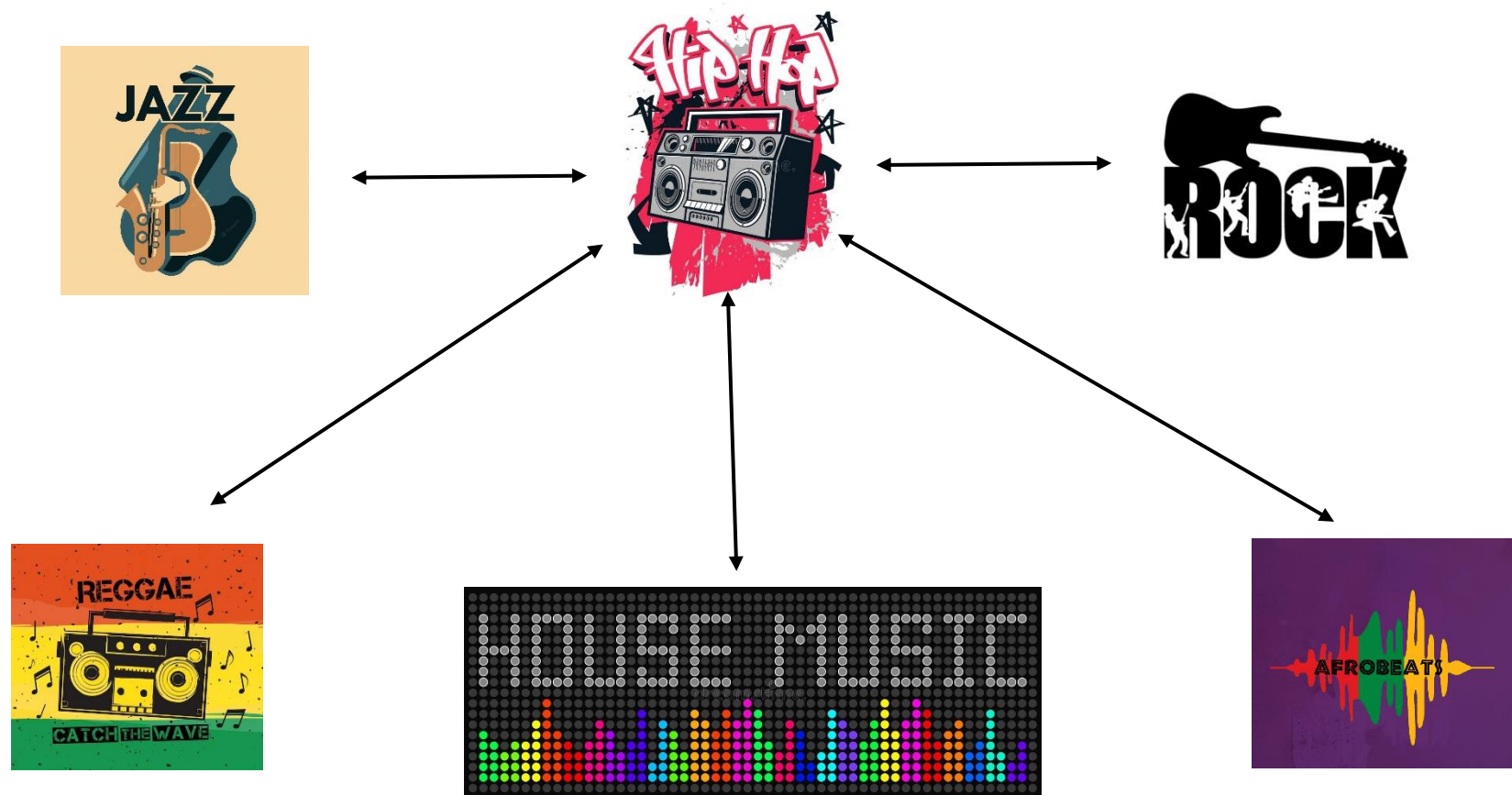
- Darrell P. Wheeler,  
President of SUNY  
New Paltz



Holding an event celebrating 50 years of Hip-Hop is not enough for President Wheeler.

Reflecting and partaking in deep conversations about Hip-Hop is just as meaningful “as an event that lasts a day that people may forget about tomorrow.” It is a testament to how much Hip-Hop has endured over the years. To him, “a day doesn't give honor to 50 years of something that’s still in evolution.”

## Review With Q



*Hip-Hop's connection to other genres of music.*

### "IT'S BIGGER THAN HIP-HOP"

- Dead Prez, "Hip-Hop"

The essence of Hip-Hop can be heard through various genres such as Afrobeats, Reggae and House music.

Recently, comedian and artist Lil Duval [tweeted](#), "Afrobeats might be the death of Hip-Hop as we know it." Wu Tang Clan leader, RZA chimed in and said, "Afrobeats is Hip-Hop. They basically are doing their form of Hip-Hop... Just like Trap was Hip-Hop ... Just like G-Funk was Hip-Hop. It's just their rendition." However, Duval later clarified, "I wasn't saying Hip-Hop is over, I said 'Hip-Hop as we know it' meaning like evolved into something bigger."

Sophomore Babatope Fadeyibi argues that Afrobeats is not intertwined with Hip-Hop. According to Babatope, "Afrobeats originated long ago." Indeed, Afrobeats predates back to Ghana in the 1920s. As explained in an [article](#), Ghanaian musicians infused foxtrot and calypso with Ghanaian rhythms like [Highlife](#). Though, the genre of Afrobeats developed in the 1960s, deriving inspiration from [Fuji music](#), highlife, American jazz and funk. It was created by Nigerian musician Fela Kuti who was known for his musical talent and involvement in post-colonial African politics. His [recordings](#) from the 1970s left a profound impact on the Nigerian music scene and gained popularity over the globe.

On the contrary, Hip-Hop didn't start until the early 1970s. Babatope recognizes some Afrobeats elements in Hip-Hop sometimes. However, this is only when there is a collaboration with Hip-Hop and Afrobeats artists. When listening to songs like A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie's ["Way Too Fly"](#) (ft. Davido) or Drake's ["Fountains"](#) (ft. Tems), according to Baba, **"the blend when Hip-Hop and Afrobeats combine together is one beautiful sound."**

Reggae has a strong connection with Hip-Hop. Its foundation was built on components of Jamaican sound system culture. The mastering of dubbing in reggae enabled artists to "toast"—the predecessor to rapping or emceeing—over instrumentals of songs, as stated by [Revolt](#). Since the days of DJ Kool Herc's summer parties in the 70s, reggae samples have become a staple in the genre. In his song ["Respect"](#), Biggie Smalls pays homage to his Jamaican heritage, sampling Pan Head's ["Gun Man Tune"](#) for the song's hook. Lauryn Hill's ["Lost Ones"](#) is [one of the many Hip-Hop songs](#) to sample Sister Nancy's ["Bam Bam"](#).

The sample is heard in the refrain of the song and after the second verse, she sings Winston Riley's admired, ["Stalag Riddim"](#). French Montana's ["Freaks"](#) (ft. Nicki Minaj) sampled Chaka Demus and Pliers iconic 1992 hit, ["Murder She Wrote"](#) and sampled Lil' Vicious' chorus from the original ["Freaks"](#) in 1994. The song also incorporates guitar strums and pounding drums from Jamaican duo, Sly and Robbie. As you can see, Reggae is an [integral part](#) of Hip-Hop.

While President Wheeler is not fond of Hip-Hop, he discussed his love of House music, which possesses undertones of Hip-Hop. House music a Black dance music subgenre originating in Chicago has been present in Hip-Hop long before Beyoncé's recent album, [Renaissance](#) and Drake's album, [Honestly](#), [Nevermind](#). With House music, "it's all about the movement and consistency," he said.

House music started in the late 1970s, by Chicago DJs like Frankie Knuckles, Ron Hardy, Farley "Jackmaster" Funk and others. Rooted in disco, house music combines electronic elements, samples, and synthesizers. According to an [article](#) from Music Industry How To, house music is distinguished by its steady pulse (typically a [4/4 time signature](#)) played around 120 beats/minute (bpm). At its core, its dance music, utilizing "a lot of repeating and remixing terminologies," said President Wheeler.

Looking at the musical aspect, such as the beats, the use of synthesizers and technologically altered music, "all of that becomes a part of the transition," he added. Several U.K. artists like Techtronic's ["Pump Up the Jam"](#) and Snap's ["I Got The Power"](#) acquired massive success by incorporating rap with house music. The Jungle Brothers' 1989 single, ["I'll House You."](#) pays homage to the culture of dancing to house music. This song was later used in a remix version of Hip-Hop group, N.E.R.D.'s ["She Wants to Move"](#). Most notably, T.I.'s 2006 song, ["Why You Wanna"](#) used components from Crystal Waters' ["Gypsy Woman \(She's Homeless\)."](#) which was the No. 8 song in the US in 1991, and remains a landmark house record as stated in a [XXL Magazine article](#). It is worth noting this song earned T.I. a gold plaque and made this song timeless due to the use of this sample.

Over the years, Hip-Hop has seen other genres of music intertwine with it. For a genre of music that cynical critics thought would be a "passing fancy", Hip-Hop has become a part of American/Pop culture like apple pie and Chevy cars; it will evolve way past its half-century it has existed. As Hip Hop evolves and transforms... the marathon continues.

# Review With Q



A compilation of several Hip-Hop albums in honor of Hip-Hop's 50 Years.

Courtesy of Quincy M. Simmons

## "I CAME IN THE DOOR, I SAID IT BEFORE"

- Eric B & Rakim, "Eric B is President"

HIP-HOP LIVES AT SUNY NEW PALTZ  
IT'S FUNKY ENOUGH.  
LYRICS OFF THE CUFF  
FLAVORFUL BEATS THAT MAKE YOU SAY,  
"PUMP IT UP!!"

YOUNG KINGS AND QUEENS IN THE MAKING  
OUT HERE DOMINATING AND CREATING  
IT CAN'T BE MISTAKEN  
HIP-HOP HAS MCS IN THIS GENERATION!

50 YEARS AND COUNTING  
STILL MORE TO GO  
CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP TIL HIP-HOP  
GROWS!!!

## About the Author

Quincy M. Simmons is a sophomore at SUNY New Paltz majoring in Journalism & Digital Media. Quincy writes stories on current events, entertainment, music, and social commentary.

### Contact Info

Email: [Qsimmons1208@gmail.com](mailto:Qsimmons1208@gmail.com)

