Youth Arts/ Performance Groups

**Cyphers for Justice (CFJ)**apprentices inner-city youth as critical researchers through the use of hip-hop, spoken word, and digital literacy. Founded within the traditions of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Hip-Hop culture, CFJ youth work alongside Columbia University graduate students, professors, and community-based teaching artists, to conduct research and present their findings on relevant social issues.  CFJ is an afterschool program within Columbia University's Institute for Urban and Minority Education (IUME).

The **Riis STARS Dance Team** is a ballet performance group from the Jacob Riis Neighborhood Settlement Performing Arts Program. The program was developed to enhance performance and public speaking through singing, dancing, and theater. With this program they are able to provide workshops in all aspects of theatre arts, including but not limited to costume design, hair & make-up, setting up props, and staging.  In addition, performing allows them to teach youth life-skills that will be essential to their growth, e.g. teambuilding, leadership, and communication. While participating in this program, youth are able to do what they love and appreciate the value of working hard for it.

**Science Genius B.A.T.T.L.E.S.** is an initiative that is focused on utilizing the power of hip-hop music and culture to introduce youth to the wonder and beauty of science. The core message of the initiative is to meet urban youth who are traditionally disengaged in science classrooms on their cultural turf, and provide them with the opportunity to express the same passion they have for hip-hop culture for science. Concurrently, the project aims to display the interests of science enthusiasts who have a passion for hip-hop, and introduce both hip-hop and science to a wider audience. The main activity of the project involves a call for students in selected schools across New York City to create science themed raps based on topics decided upon by the project sponsors (scientists, educators, and Hip-Hop icon GZA). The raps that students create are part of a competition within and across schools. The raps are performed over the students’ choice of 5 hip-hop instrumentals provided by project organizers, and cover topics that align to the New York State Science Learning Standards, and Core Curriculum.

**Rodney James-Spann** is a senior at Talent Unlimited High school majoring in instrumental music. His primary instrument is the tenor saxophone and he also doubles on the soprano saxophone. In his short seventeen years, Rodney earned several awards and scholarships and has had the opportunity to play with many musicians at various venues throughout New York City and beyond. He has graced the stage with Wynton Marsalis, Jimmy Greene, Antonio Hart, and many others and has performed in many venues including Carnegie Hall, The Blue Note, and Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola. Rodney’s future goals include music in some form. Ultimately he would like to be a performer, music producer or music engineer. Rodney has been accepted to and will be attending The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York City in the fall of 2016. Rodney would like to continue sharing his gift and love of music because music makes the world go around.