

Taking Over
Written and Performed by Danny Hoch
Directed by Tony Taccone
January 21 – February 22, 2009
Kirk Douglas Theatre

Teaching Instructions



TARGET®



Center
Theatre
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L.A.'s Theatre Company

How to Use the Discovery Guide

Everyone writes the word Hip-Hop a different way.

Some capitalize each H, some hyphenate, some take the whole thing lowercase. “Hip-Hop” seems like a movement or a creed, with capital letters and a bold identity; “hip hop” seems like a descriptor or adjective, with a more fluid character. This speaks to the variety of perspectives on what Hip-Hop is, and how it came to be. Because Hip-Hop is many things to many people, there is no singular truth. Instead, there are many stories and many experiences that collectively create the history of Hip-Hop.

This guide is designed to open conversations among your learners about multiple truths, be it through the eyes of immigrants developing an American identity, the history of Hip-Hop or the urgent debate over the ethics of gentrification. *Taking Over* addresses the multiple perspectives that one community expresses about the changing face of Brooklyn. Working through the exercises and projects in this guide will introduce students to the complexities of managing multiple perspectives at once to find the story buried within. The discussion prompts and readings are aimed at building a bridge between Danny Hoch’s piece and your students’ lives. Through the process they will become more adept participants in their own communities and more incisive observers of the stories they witness around them.

Because the ideas in *Taking Over* are multifaceted, we have provided you with a variety of information to support you as you work with your students through the guide.

Rationale and **Exercise** sections are intended to offer you context for the articles and workbook portions of the guide. Some of the exercises are simply recommended discussion prompts for unpacking the particularly knotty areas of understanding. Comprehensive details or links to websites concerning areas that are covered briefly within the guide can be found under the heading **More Information**.

The Discovery Guide is a starting point. Please adapt the material and extend the learning activities to meet the needs of your particular community of learners. Our hope is that the content is not merely useful, but also inspirational, and that you and your students will find joy in the process of learning through the multifaceted art of theatre.

The Discovery Guide is not designed as an independent workbook. It is a resource for learners to develop skills in critical thinking and cross-cultural empathy, which are essential in Theatre Arts and History-Social Sciences and other content areas. Oral discussion and writing prompts are designed so that students may relate key ideas to their personal experiences and the world around them. Teachers are expected to adapt or extend the prompts. Teachers may choose some prompts for small group discussion and others for the whole group.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF THE LESSONS

In order to provide a comprehensive and sequential unit of study, we suggest that students have the opportunity to explore the whole variety of lessons in the Discovery Guide.

The activities are designed for completion in sequence.

Introduce the vocabulary before students encounter it in the reading. The activities and writing prompts on pages 4 through 11 are to be completed before the students see the production of *Taking Over*. The discussion and exercises on pages 12 through 15 are intended to stimulate reflection, analysis and further inquiry after students attend the play. The Internet links, films and books on page 16 will be useful throughout the process.

How to Use the Discovery Guide

THE GOALS

Regardless of grade level, the unit is designed to teach enduring understandings that students will take with them for life. One set of these understandings is about the art of theatre. The other is drawn from the play's themes. Charted below are some essential questions that can be raised before, during and after students' experience at the performance to guide them toward the enduring understandings.

	THEATRE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	SOCIAL AND LITERARY THEMES
Enduring Understandings	<p>There is a valid story and perspective within each individual that can be told through a unique voice.</p> <p>Communities in transition or struggle will resist oppression using the tools available to them.</p> <p>The aesthetic of an art movement is made up of each unique piece, assembled in a unified way.</p>	<p>Embracing diversity and fusion is a key element of being American.</p> <p>Change and progress frequently result in conflicting views of what the ideal future looks like.</p> <p>Persuasive rhetoric relies on the acknowledgement of and response to contrary viewpoints.</p>
Essential Questions	<p>Can someone retain their own perspective while embracing many diverse views?</p> <p>What makes sampling or fusion techniques such potent storytelling tools?</p> <p>How is an aesthetic constructed?</p>	<p>What are the primary elements that make up a community?</p> <p>Do ethical questions arise when a community structure begins to change?</p> <p>Is contemporary America made up of many different types of people collaborating, or many people from diverse backgrounds becoming one nationality?</p>

How to Use the Discovery Guide

THE STANDARDS

Teachers should “bundle” one of the recommended theatre focus standards with a focus standard from another content area to help design their classes’ integrated units of study.

For instance, you might be able to “bundle” one of the recommended History-Social Sciences focus standards with a focus standard from Theatre Arts and another content area such as Language Arts to help design the classes’ integrated units of study.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS

Literary Response and Analysis: Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

3.4 Determine characters’ traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue and soliloquy. (9-10)

3.9 Explain how voice, persona and the choice of a narrator affect characterization and the tone, plot, and credibility of a text. (9-10)

3.3 Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author’s style and the “sound” of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both. (11-12)

Writing Applications:

2.4 Write persuasive compositions. (9-10)

2.1 Write fictional, autobiographical or biographical narratives. (11-12)

Speaking Applications

2.3 Apply appropriate interviewing techniques. (9-10)

HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE

Historical Literacy: Understand the reasons for continuity and change.

National Identity: Recognize that American society is and always has been pluralistic and multicultural, a single nation composed of individuals whose heritages encompass many different national and cultural backgrounds.

Understand the American creed as an ideology extolling equality and freedom. Recognize the status of women and minorities in different times in American history.

THEATRE

Artistic Perception: Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre

1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as acting values, style, genre, design and theme, to describe theatrical experiences.

Creative Expression: Creation/Invention in Theatre

2.2 Write dialogues and scenes, applying basic dramatic structure: exposition, complication, conflict, crises, climax and resolution.

Historical and Cultural Context: Role and Cultural Significance of Theatre

3.2 Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture.

Aesthetic Valuing: Derivation of Meaning from Works of Theatre

4.2 Report on how a specific actor used drama to convey meaning in his or her performances.

Before the Play



WELCOME TO TAKING OVER: Page 2



WELCOME TO TAKING OVER: Page 3

READING AND EXERCISES

This section provides some background information about the three primary themes that arise in *Taking Over*: the nature of the Hip-Hop aesthetic, the process of gentrification in America and the nature and history of polycultural community structure.

Pages 2-3: Welcome to *Taking Over*

Exercise: Read “Welcome to Taking Over.” Discuss what students expect this play to be like. How does the mix tape metaphor inform their expectations. What else in their lives might be described using this image?

Exercise: Look at the photo on page 3. Ask students to describe what they see and feel. (This picture was taken in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, the setting for *Taking Over*.)

Pages 4–5: Toward a Hip-Hoch Aesthetic

Rationale: *Taking Over* addresses community issues through the lens of Hip-Hop. In order to understand how the form of Danny Hoch’s performance informs the content of his piece, this section lays groundwork for understanding the complex aesthetic that defines Hip-Hop and broadening assumptions that Hip-Hop is simply another word for rap music.

More Information: Danny Hoch positions himself as a Hip-Hop theater artist, which means that *Taking Over* is a Hip-Hop piece. Much of the information in this article is sourced from Hoch’s

“Toward a Hip-Hop Aesthetic” (available at www.dannyhoch.com/pdf/TowardsAHip-HopAesthetic.pdf), which discusses in more detail his view of the multi-disciplinary arts movement that he is participating in.

The use of “polycultural” in this guide versus the more familiar “multicultural” is an intentional alliance with the style that Hoch practices. The word multicultural recognizes that people of many different ethnic backgrounds may make up one singular community; “polycultural” assumes that not only do they co-exist, but act on and integrate with one another. Understanding that subtle difference will illuminate why all of Hoch’s characters are Hip-Hop, not just the ones who rap.

Exercise: Before the reading, ask the students to define Hip-Hop. Write their definition on the board. After reading “Toward a Hip-Hoch Aesthetic,” re-visit the definition. What are some things that could be Hip-Hop under the Discovery Guide definition that were not under the student version? Is slam poetry Hip-Hop? Could there be a type of food that is Hip-Hop? Do students want to change their definition? Discuss the idea that sampling is a common thread between Hip-Hop culture and polycultural communities. What are some examples of sampling in diverse places? Consider something like California Rolls in sushi restaurants, which takes elements from traditional Japanese culinary tradition and mixes it with the local tastes and available produce. Encourage students to come up with other examples.


Before the Play

Before the Play
Toward a Hip-Hoch Aesthetic

Danny Hoch, the performer and creator of *Taking Over*, is not just an actor or a writer. Hoch is a member of a group of artists that pioneered a style of performance they call Hip-Hop Theater, using the creative strategies that define Hip-Hop culture as a launching point for a new type of play. *Blow Up the Clay, the Child*, and in the Classroom (all produced at the 4th Stage Theater in the past two seasons) share some commonalities with the work that Hoch and his peers initiated and brought into the mainstream. They all use solo performance, channeling a variety of characters. They related heavily to the work of the late, brilliant actor who received around the world the recognition of a Pulitzer Prize in 1991.

To what makes something "hip-hop"? You might think of it as a form of collage, integrating many different perspectives into a vibrant mosaic of expression. Think of the DJ, a familiar face in hip-hop. The job of the DJ is to mix songs from different sources to create a new and unique type of music. Samples of music, sound or speech become the ingredients for the DJ's creativity. Each beat, sample or voice remains distinct, the art of the DJ is in the recombining and timing of the pieces. In the same way, Danny Hoch recombines the art of the actor in *Taking Over* to create a larger picture of the actor's *genre* in Brooklyn. Rather than words, Hoch is sampling pieces of text and mixing them for his own voice. Thus *Taking Over* can be seen as a metaphor for *reappropriation* in the arts.

Danny Hoch was born into the Hip-Hop generation in Brooklyn, New York, where he still lives today. He is a rapper, graffiti artist and break dancer. But he is also an actor and performer with a passion for theater. Making these competing parts of his identity, Danny found ways to integrate them, weaving the Hip-Hop aesthetic for the stage.



DANNY HOCH

TOWARD A HIP-HOCH AESTHETIC: Page 4

Exercise: 1 Minute + The World
Danny Hoch uses this exercise, based around discovering one's own battle, when he teaches in detention centers. The preceding article deals with oppressed communities formulating a way to make their voices heard; this exercise is about that content, not the structure. Many students will struggle with discovering something they feel is important enough to say to the whole world. Remind them that their story and experience is unique, because no one else can see the world as they do. Nothing is too small to share if it's meaningful to the storyteller and presented with honesty. As they write, you may wish to prompt them with suggestions or prepare them with suggestions to the story.

The fundamental idea of this exercise is that every student will approach their rant in a unique way. What may seem pedestrian and obvious to one student may be the most closely guarded secret of another. Offer them suggestions for a launching point, but remind them that there is no correct answer. This is the beginning of understanding that each personal truth has value.

Exercise: Danny Hoch
Reappropriation is a tool that Hoch uses in his play, as well as a necessary element of Hip-Hop. Hoch performs ethnically diverse characters in *Taking Over*, even though they aren't his cultural identity. This is a type of reappropriation. In the sidebar titled "Danny Hoch," there's a brief sketch of how he came to be a Hip-Hop theater artist. Is merging his Hip-Hop background with his theater skills its own type of reappropriation? While theater doesn't seem like a site of oppression, are there groups of people who find plays inaccessible? By changing the language and style of theater, does Hoch make it more approachable for people who previously might have felt excluded? Discuss with your students things that they have reappropriated in their own lives as a source of pride rather than oppression. Is it a word, like queer or nigga? An idea like ghetto fabulous? Ask them to identify some things that they'd like to see reclaimed that are still a sore spot. How is reappropriation a form of resistance? Is it connected to the "battle" aesthetic of Hip-Hop?

Exercise

Imagine that you have just one minute to express your most important thoughts to the world. How can you do that? Write about a personal triumph, tell a story of struggle, or share a moment of joy. You'll have one minute to write your thoughts, and then you'll have one minute to read them aloud to your class.

Vocabulary

Aesthetic: A group of principles that indicate a particular style or taste.

Blatant: A harsh way to get one's message across.

Caliber: A quality or standard of something, especially a person's performance.

Collaboration: The process of working together to create something.

Defiance: A refusal to obey or a refusal to accept authority.

Empower: To give someone the authority or power to do something.

Genre: A category of artistic composition, as defined by style, form, and content.

Identity: A sense of self or belonging to a particular group.

Integrate: To combine different elements into a whole.

Metaphor: A figure of speech that compares two things, often with the intention of making a point or illustrating an idea.

Reappropriate: To take something that has been used in a particular way and use it in a new way.

Sample: To take a piece of something and use it in a new context.

Seamless: Without any visible joints or connections.

Stylish: Having a distinctive and fashionable appearance.

Textual: Relating to or consisting of text.

Timing: The act of choosing the right moment for something to happen.

Unique: Existing in one form only; not like or comparable to anything else.

Visual: Relating to or consisting of what can be seen.

World: The entire earth, or a particular part of it.

TOWARD A HIP-HOCH AESTHETIC: Page 5

Before the Play



TAKING OVER: Page 6

Page 6: *Taking Over*

Rationale: *Taking Over* assembles a cast of characters with vastly differing views on the changes taking place in Brooklyn. Danny Hoch manifests that cast through his own voice and body. Hoch becomes a medium for the voice of a community. His fundamental empathy for the stories that he portrays makes the discussion of the issues presented by the performance even more complex. Not all of his characters are likeable and few seem clearly right or wrong. By personifying them, Hoch makes his own perspective transparent and humanizes his characters. They become magnified facets of Hoch's personality and mouthpieces for contrary arguments.

Exercise: Read the synopsis of *Taking Over*. Discuss the structure of the play. Why might Danny Hoch decide to embody all of the characters, rather than writing a play where other actors play each part? Is it strange for Hoch to play a woman or someone of a different race? Consider the way that may change how we perceive the character. Is this a type of reappropriation, or is it something different? From the synopsis, discuss whether or not the structure fits into the Hip-Hop aesthetic discussed earlier. Why or why not?

Exercise: Who Was Here?

In thinking more critically about the way that neighborhoods change, it is important for your students to experience someone else's perspective. A student's view tends to be primarily informed by their school and home culture. Encourage your students to seek out an interview subject who will challenge their assumptions about their community. The questions listed are intended to be a jumping off point. Have them propose their additional questions in class to ensure that they are probing deeper into the questions of neighborhood identity, belonging and access. The additional questions will likely provoke the most interesting answers. Before they begin their interviews, review with your students good interview technique. Remind them that the key element of a successful interview is listening. Encourage them to wait even longer than seems necessary to ensure that their subject is finished talking. Often some of the most revealing responses occur when an interviewee is trying to fill a silence. An interview is not about having a balanced conversation. You already know what you think – focus on what *they* think. Remember to take notes.

Before the Play

Immigrant Domain

"You know who spends all the money? It's tourists. They ain't tourists-tourists. I'm talkin' about the people that came here as tourists and then they stay here. I call them 'resident tourists.'" — Danny Hoch

"We'll have strong feelings about what makes a place home and how much it can change before it doesn't become someone else's. Communities have historically called urban renewal, beautification or revitalization a colonialist behavior because the rebuilding of a neighborhood often displaces the current residents. While programs for gentrification are being developed and being put into a designated urban area, developers insist that moving people out isn't the goal. In what ways is gentrification, and how does it take a neighborhood out of the hands of the residents?"

The term gentrification is a relatively new one, coined in the 1960s. It usually happens like this: A designated urban area becomes desirable to groups like students and artists for its old streets and low rents. Artists tend to bring in galleries and wealthy art patrons, making the area more attractive to middle-income, young buyers for the "hip" character. As a neighborhood becomes more desirable, housing developers build fancy apartments and condominiums. Affluent residents attract high-end businesses and cafes, which push out longstanding businesses and push up property taxes and fees. Suddenly, the original residents find they can no longer afford to live in their own neighborhood. Often, they are forced to relocate to an area that is less expensive. In most cases, city regulations require that new developments retain some amount of low-income housing. The current minimum requirement in Berkeley is 10% of new units for low to middle income residents.

This might seem a simple issue of an upper class taking funds from a working class that cannot defend itself. But this is not always the case. There are strong arguments on both sides. Positive outcomes of gentrification include increased safety, improved housing and more amenities. On the flip side, because the community living in the area changes, the original residents often don't benefit from revitalization. Many also say that the cultural flavor of the area is lost as the influx of new businesses catering to upper class tastes. Most of all, accounts and wealthy art patrons, making the area more attractive to middle-income, young buyers for the "hip" character. As a neighborhood becomes more desirable, housing developers build fancy apartments and condominiums. Affluent residents attract high-end businesses and cafes, which push out longstanding businesses and push up property taxes and fees. Suddenly, the original residents find they can no longer afford to live in their own neighborhood. Often, they are forced to relocate to an area that is less expensive. In most cases, city regulations require that new developments retain some amount of low-income housing. The current minimum requirement in Berkeley is 10% of new units for low to middle income residents.

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Vocabulary
gentrification: a kind of bias, especially one that is positive

an anecdotal, making references to Danny Hoch to address it in a performance. Though people have researched the nature of urban renewal, the term is still used because of the common-sense question: "How can you tell if the place is better or worse?" Gentrification is a term used to describe the process of renovating and improving a neighborhood that has become run-down and neglected. With the changing neighborhood identity, rates of income and property taxes went down. But as long as the city can't, many residents have found that new homes made less sense than the old one, and much more expensive. The city couldn't do anything about it.

"We're not allowed to maintain culture in the face of colonial attack. And essentially what gentrification is colonial attack. Neighborhoods that are gentrifying, they're under siege. By the middle class and the upper middle class and the rich." — Danny Hoch

Revisited Hoch's quote on page 8 (reprinted here for reference):

"We are not allowed to maintain culture in the face of colonial attack. And essentially what gentrification is colonial attack. Neighborhoods that are gentrifying, they're under siege. By the middle class and the upper middle class and the rich."

— Danny Hoch

IMMIGRANT DOMAIN: Page 8

Page 8: Immigrant Domain

Rationale: Gentrification is a complex and contested issue; if it seems to have a bias toward people with more money or power, that's because it does. Gentrification does disenfranchise some people; for others, it improves their quality of life. The question is whether the end justifies the means. In order to begin answering that question, it's important to be able to empathetically view all sides of the argument. *Taking Over* will help your students to meet some of the characters on both sides of the fence. A better understanding of the facts of the process will allow your students the resources to draw their own conclusions.

Hoch's quote embedded between articles equating gentrification to colonialism is a potent statement. For some, colonization is a part of progress, with some inherent disadvantages but a positive outcome for the majority. For those not part of a privileged majority, the balance of benefit appears unacceptable.

Exercise: Read Danny Hoch's quote and the "Immigrant Domain" article after reviewing the definition of gentrification on page 5. Discuss the impact of gentrification from the perspective of the original residents of a community and of the people moving into a community. Make sure students understand what gentrification is and why it is happening. Review the timeline of events, placing particular emphasis on cause and effect relationships. Discuss how Los Angeles fits into

the gentrification argument. Ask students: Is this happening in your community? Where on the timeline do you think your city or neighborhood falls? Are there other places in Los Angeles that seem to fit some of the indicators for gentrification? Are you among the privileged, or the overtaken?

Exercise: Revisit Hoch's quote on page 8 (reprinted here for reference):

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— Danny Hoch

Colonialism: *n.* The governance of one nation by a distant nation that often operates under different cultural and religious mores and has a differing ethnic makeup.

Define colonialism for your students, if it isn't a concept that has appeared in their previous class work. Britain's colonization of India, for example, led to compromise of national identity, changes in language and culture, and India's dependence on Britain for financial and social infrastructure. On the positive side, India's emerging unity as an independent nation is due in part to stability provided by Britain's presence. Discuss with them the analogy between gentrification and colonialism. Are there similar positive and negative outcomes (such as the subjugation of culture to a ruling class)? Is gentrification a colonial attack? Are gentrifying

Before the Play

neighborhoods under siege? There can be many differing stances on Hoch's view, so encourage your students to explore all aspects in discussion.

Additional Exercise:

Gentrification Debate

Prepare a debate based on the information presented. Have one team take the position that gentrification is good for a community and the other team take the opposing view. Both perspectives are entirely defensible. Renewing communities get better schools, become safer and property values rise. But the issue of displacement and rising costs is a significant one. Encourage them to use information gained from the guide and from discussions in their debate. Each team should get 2 minutes to make opening arguments, an opportunity to rebut the other side and an additional 2 minutes for closing remarks. Allow students 2 minutes with their team to discuss their closing remarks before they present them. For a more rigorous debate, allow time for research.

More Information:

Rockefeller Drug Laws

While *Taking Over* only mentions the Rockefeller Laws briefly, they are an excellent example of public policy supporting a racial and fiscal bias. Read the sidebar with your students to familiarize the class with the fundamental ideas presented in the laws. In addition to the information covered in the Guide, more in-depth analysis of the reasons for and impact of these laws can be found at the sites below.

<http://www.prdi.org/rocklawfact.html>

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/statebystate/newyork/rockefeller/>

Exercise: I Am Here

In contrast to the *Who Was Here?* interview, this exercise asks students to return to their personal perspective while exploring ideas of belonging and community. Rather than asking themselves the same questions they asked their interview subject, this mapping project becomes a visual representation of their own domain. You may wish to select a single area for the whole class to map, or each student may choose their own; it might be the school, their neighborhood or the whole city. The outline doesn't have to be geographically accurate; what goes inside the box is what matters.

When approaching the exercise, begin by defining the words in the Key as a group. What does safety mean to your class? Is it a place where your friends go or a place where people look like you? What is out of place? Somewhere dangerous, or where different languages than your own are

spoken? Full access means that any time of the day or night, this location is open and safe for you, like your bedroom or a close family friend's house. Partial access means that you are comfortable there, but don't have total control over the space, like a classroom that you enjoy being in or the gym, if you play sports. No access means that when you are in that space, you don't feel like you have control over what happens there and you feel uncomfortable. For some students, this may be the Principal's office or a particular street that is unsafe for them.

Once everyone has completed their map, share with the class. Take note and discuss the differences between maps. Is it illuminating to realize that some people feel unsafe in your safe areas? Why do some students map large areas and others only local areas? Does having a car or the ability to get around easily make a difference?

If your class is interested in going deeper into visual representations of the community, you can break them into small groups and have them work on shared, large-format maps. When their perceived boundaries interact and overlap with other students', they will begin to develop a more communal understanding of the architecture of their neighborhood. Invite them to bring in music that seems connected to certain areas or found objects like flyers or ticket stubs that represent a particular place to add to their map. Have the groups present to the class the collage of the neighborhood as they see it.

Before the Play

The Battle for National Identity



THE BATTLE FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY:
Page 10

Page 10:

The Battle for National Identity

Rationale: In order to fully understand why culturally diverse communities are particularly susceptible to the drawbacks of gentrification, it's important to discuss the polycultural nation that America is, and how it came to define itself that way. Unfortunately, we have not always been as respectful of cultural differences as we are now, and we still have a way to go before we have perfected that goal. This article discusses the continuum of integration that the United States Civil Rights policy is traveling.

The salad bowl and melting pot are illuminating metaphors for our own internal struggle with what makes up an American. The characters in *Taking Over* are very much a salad bowl – remaining distinct within the larger framework of New York. There are first- and second-generation

immigrants represented, coming from positions of affluence and access (such as Franque) or looking for opportunity (like the Dispatcher) to improve their life.

Exercise: Read “The Battle for National Identity.” Explore how the idea of the melting pot might have begun. Is there a relationship between the “melting” idea and the decision to structure America as a series of united states? Is the idea of the United States more a melting pot or salad bowl in the first place? Discuss with your class the historic examples of inclusion and exclusion.

Unpack the idea of unequal access as it relates to contemporary society. Are there communities that still don't have full protection under the law? Is there still a gender bias in the workplace in America? Are certain classes or races still not encouraged to pursue certain careers? Are marriage laws for gay couples a civil rights issue? What about immigration laws for illegal family members of American citizens?

Additional Exercise: Ask students: Is your neighborhood a melting pot or a salad bowl? Do all of the houses look the same from the outside? When you walk down the street, do you hear many different kinds of music blending together? Think about the kinds of food available in walking distance from your school. Is it mostly mom-and-pop ethnic eateries? Mostly convenience food like McDonalds? Or is it mainly diners and cafés serving modern American fare like hamburgers and pie? What do these observations say about your area?

Stephen Colbert from Comedy Central's *Colbert Report* made up the term “Lunchables” to refer to areas with no integration, where each element is sealed off from the others. Most areas aren't simply a salad bowl or a melting pot. As a class, come up with a new metaphor for your community identity.

Exercise: Taking Sides This critical writing exercise is meant to help your students draw their own conclusions from the ideas presented thus far. Encourage them to draw on their interview, their own mapping exercise and the discussions that you've had in class when considering the stance that they will take. Use the worksheet “Crafting a Persuasive Argument” (included) to help them develop their essay in a way that anticipates and defends against rebuttals. There are any number of valid viewpoints on the issue of gentrification. Help your students understand how to clearly defend their position by integrating an understanding of multiple perspectives into their essay.

After the Play

The worksheet is titled "Response to the Play" and is labeled as an "Exercise". It contains five questions, each followed by several lines of space for writing:

- 1. Did the play change your mind about anything? How?
- 2. Do you think that Hach is fair to everyone represented in the play? Does he have to be? Explain.
- 3. Why does Hach place himself at the end of the show?
- 4. What is Hach's opinion of gentrification? How do you know?
- 5. What makes Taking Over Hip-Hop Heated? (Or why isn't it?)

RESPONSE TO THE PLAY: Page 12

Page 12: After the Play

Rationale: These short answer prompts are designed to allow your students to process *Taking Over* through critical thinking. While the experience of liking or not liking a play is always valid, this section will help them process the issues presented in the performance through style, structure and story in an analytical way.

Exercise: Response to the Play

These response questions target the primary ideas in this guide. Questions 1 and 2 investigate techniques in rhetoric and the power of empathy – when students have their minds changed, is it because of the information presented, the way it's presented or both? Questions 3 and 4 have to do with identifying the author's perspective within the work by thinking about how he places himself within it, literally and through his opinions. Finally,

Question 5 returns to the issue of style. From all of our exploration of Hip-Hop aesthetics, are your students able to identify the Hip-Hop elements present in the show? Before discussing the play as a group, give them some time, either as homework directly after the performance or the next day in class, to fill out their answers. Once they are complete, have a discussion with your group. There are many different answers that are valid, as long as the students can substantiate them with what they saw in the performance.

For reference, below is a review of characters:

ROBERT begins and ends the show. Views himself as the original, authentic Williamsburg American immigrant. At a Williamsburg Community Day, Robert lays out his vision of what makes an appropriate Williamsburg resident and pleads with all of the hip, rich people moving into the neighborhood to find somewhere else to live.

FRANCQUE, a real estate broker for high end luxury lofts in Brooklyn. Francque is an immigrant himself, from France.

MARION, a long-time Williamsburg resident babysitting kids and chatting with a friend about the changes in her neighborhood. She recounts an experience of taking expensive croissants from a café without anyone noticing. She perceives herself as having become invisible to the new people moving into town.

KIKO, another Williamsburg native chatting with a local film crew, trying to fit in. While not invisible, Kiko's overtures clearly make the P.A. uncomfortable.

STUART, a housing developer profiting from the revitalization of Williamsburg. He sees himself as a realist, making money off of inevitable change.

EL DISPATCHER speaking primarily in Spanish, El Dispatcher bounces between talking to his taxis in machismo slang, and admonishing his Americanized children to speak English so that no one thinks that they're immigrants.

KAITLIN, a stereotypical affluent suburban refugee, selling cute kitsch bags and shirts on the streets of Williamsburg. She complains of being oppressed by her rich Michigan parents and brags about dating a Dominican to give herself more credibility as a New Yorker.

LAUNCH MISSILES CRITICAL, a Hip-Hop MC rapping an aggressive message of revolution, clearly overwhelmed by the changing environment around him. As part of his agreement with Galapagos Art Space where he's performing, he has to make announcements for the upcoming week of hip, gentrified programming.

DANNY as himself, talking about his experience of watching Williamsburg change so drastically. He recalls witnessing someone stabbed in the neighborhood that recently has become a hot spot for things like organic vegetables.

After the Play



SECRET CODING: Page 13

Page 13 : Secret Coding

Rationale: Now that you've had the opportunity to see Danny Hoch perform his piece, you can begin discussing with your students the theatrical tools that Hoch uses with his own particular Hip-Hop twist to create the structure of his performance. This final section deals with taking the myriad of information about differing cultures that your learners are now more attuned to, and translating them into a story. In order to represent a perspective that is different from your own, you have to develop empathy for someone else's experience. Coding can be a key to understanding and identifying otherness and sameness, and breaking down those barriers.

Exercise:

Read the article "Secret Coding" with your class. Ensure that everyone understands the basic idea of a coded prop or costume. Discuss the graffiti example and how it relates to reappropriation. Is graffiti always art? Is it always coded? Is coding positive, negative or neutral? Why?

How does coding represent itself on your school campus? Are there stereotypes at your school that are identifiable by an article of clothing? If your school were to adopt uniforms, would that end that type of coding, or just change it? Individually or, if your class did the large mapping exercise together, as a group, take a minute to give a coded prop or costume piece to each area of the map, representing the most dominant group there.

Are there ways that coding can be used as an exclusion tool? Some behavior is coded as well, like handshakes or language. Can different languages be coded to deny someone access? Discuss with your students how they may have excluded someone through coding, or been excluded.

Exercise: Cast Your Neighborhood

This exercise invites students, like Danny Hoch in *Taking Over*, to create characters from the people whose stories they witness every day in their community. By taking the characters beyond just one particular teacher or one particular friend, students will begin to tap into the larger orchestra of their neighborhood. When we think about what someone's favorite saying might be or what their most

important thing is, we feel more connected to their interior life and it seems more real to us. Begin by walking through the example with your class. They will be using their imagination; the favorite saying doesn't have to be something that they've heard a person say before, it only has to sound true to them. Imagine what they want most, in the depths of their heart, and what keeps them up nights worrying. The most important person or object can be a friend or thing. It all depends on the character. The first person that they should make a character for is themselves. The rest they can choose and name on their own.

Exercise: We Are Here

This is the final step in understanding the interior life of someone different than yourself. Ask each student to choose one of the characters that they invented. Encourage them to choose someone that is the most unlike them, because it will be the most challenging and also the most illuminating. Return to the very first exercise, 1 Minute + The World. Only this time, ask each student to try to imagine the rant coming from this character's voice. Have them rehearse at home and perform for the class. Discuss why they chose this character. What was the original character profile? Did they learn anything from being in someone else's shoes for one minute?

After the Play

Additional Exercise

Throughout the guide, there are four different quotes that deal with what Hip-Hop artists perceive as the purpose of the movement. Identify all four with your students. They are:

“The selection of experiences, memories, and the entire scope of a person’s being come into play in the creation of the self. We do not just pick one record at a time. Our inner DJs are like a multiarmed being, our records are infinitely grooved, and the sounds of our lives captured and mixed, remixed...”
— robert karimi, pg. 3

“The Hip-Hop generation is working inside and outside ‘the system’ in the arts, politics, business, education and activism...Part of Hip-Hop wants to be accepted, and part of it does not.”
— Danny Hoch, pg. 5

“Hip hop is blues filtered through a century of experience and a thousand miles of asphalt.”
— William Jelani Cobb, pg. 13

“Hip-hop is folklore is gospel is order is *ocha* in orbit, no bulls—t, no doubt. That’s what I think it is. I think it’s spirituality. I think it’s truth. But mostly, it’s a folkloric medium enjoyed by billions of people all over the planet that is rooted in the idea of movement.”
— Marc Bamuthi Joseph, pg. 15

As a class, discuss the similarities and differences among the quotes. Why are there so many different perspectives? Try to come up with your own definition of Hip-Hop.

Exercise: After the students have seen the play, have them write a letter using one or more of the following elements of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, response to literature or persuasive.

Mail their responses to:
Center Theatre Group Education
601 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012