

Taking a break - dance

BY TANISIA MORRIS

This local b-boy is taking his handstands from the streets into the lab.

Every Tuesday for the past few months, old-school hip-hop funk jams have blasted out the doors of the Bronx Music Heritage Center Lab.

Inside on a recent evening, Nelson Seda, a Puerto Rican b-boy who goes by Chief 69, spun his body around like a windmill.

"You'll get it, I didn't get it the first time," he encouraged the attendees as they tried the move. "Don't quit on me."

B-boying, or "break dancing," is one of the four elements of hip-hop culture, which includes graffiti art, emceeing, and DJ-ing.

The hip-hop dance style was born in the Bronx in the '70s where b-boys and b-girls were inspired by the dance moves of James Brown and his 1972 hit "Get On The Good Foot."

B-boying has its own signature dance moves that

involve spinning, rocking and intricate footwork.

A regular in the street scene, Seda has performed at local events, colleges and parks around the tri-state area. But he was determined to share his knowledge of hip-hop culture with South Bronx youth not always aware of the borough's rich history.

"I seen him dance all the time and I like his style," said 16-year-old Jordan Grant, a member of the global b-boy organization Bronx Boys Rocking Crew, where Seda is a Bronx chapter president. "I wanted to combine his style and my style to see what I can get out of it."

Chris Nieves, a program director of the non-profit Women Housing and Economic Development Corporation encouraged Seda to teach the workshops at its new Music Heritage Center in Melrose Commons, whose mission is to preserve and promote the musical and artistic history

of the South Bronx.

"I loved that he was young and knew so much about the history of hip-hop and b-boying, and wanted to give that back to the community."

Besides teaching how to do b-boy moves like freezes or downrocks, Seda also talks about the Bronx crews who created the moves and the social ills, including from the Bronx is Burning years, that influenced hip-hop culture.

Seda, who wasn't even born when hip-hop was created in the mid-to-late '70s, pulled out his laptop during a workshop to show students dance videos featuring the original b-boys of the '70s and '80s like the late Wayne "Frosty Freeze" Frost of the Rock Steady Crew or the Zulu Kings, the b-boy crew of hip-hop pioneer Afrika Bambaataa's Universal Zulu Nation - a 39-year-old awareness group predating the formation of hip-hop.

During the workshop, he emphasizes the impor-



Nelson Seda, who goes by Chief 69, puts students in his break dancing class through their paces at the Bronx Music Heritage Center Lab in Melrose.

tance of building muscle strength to avoid injury.

He told Elise Perez, 18, a newbie b-girl from High Bridge, that she needed to stretches and upper and lower body exercises like squats and push-ups to help her perform moves that re-

quire balance, flexibility and upper body strength.

Perez battled Grant in a practice breakdancing session and emerged with a smile on her face.

For Seda, the workshops are also a way to bring the community closer

together. "I think that's an issue when you live around in an environment that's so hostile, and then after all of that comes them hopefully walking away with a sense of the history."

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