

Increasing Health Awareness through Hip Hop Music

Proskauer For Good on June 20, 2019

In recent years, increased transparency into the nutritional value of our food has enabled consumers to make more informed decisions on their own eating habits, knowing that their choices directly correlate with their overall health. Leaders behind this movement are hopeful that initiatives such as the [new laws](#) on food labeling that require calorie counts, fats, and sodium levels to be included on menus will encourage healthier selections. However, the effectiveness of these or other health education initiatives has often been criticized as unsustainable or ineffective, especially within high poverty communities and among youth.

In 2005, frustrated by the lack of health information in these high-need areas, Dr. Olajide Williams, then a doctor at Harlem Hospital Center, proposed an innovative technique to promote health education in these at-risk communities. His big idea – to communicate important health information through a catchy rap song. Three years later in 2008 he founded [Hip Hop Public Health](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering positive health behavior change through the power of hip-hop music. Their methods are unique, and the premise is simple – by providing youth with information on health and nutrition through a catchy medium, they empower them to make healthier choices, and help reduce preventable poor health conditions and childhood obesity. The organization has recruited the talents of many artists including Doug E. Fresh, Chuck D and DMC. A full library of health-related hip-hop tracks now lives on the organization's website for easy access by students all across the globe.

On June 12, Proskauer was proud to support Hip Hop Public Health as a sponsor of their first-ever fundraising gala. The organization's commitment to serving underserved communities dovetails with many of the firm's corporate social responsibility efforts in these same communities. In January, Dr. Williams, now Chief of Staff of Neurology, Director of Acute Stroke Services, and Associate Professor of Neurology at Columbia University, [served as a panelist](#) alongside Margaret Crotty, Executive Director and CEO of [Partnership with Children](#), and Dennis M. Walcott, the President and CEO of the [Queens Public Library](#) and former chancellor of the New York City public school system, in a thought-provoking discussion on how poverty and trauma can affect brain development. Highlighting the neurological and social-emotional impacts on healthy brain development, all three panelists concluded that working directly with youth in the prime stages of development is the most effective way of combatting a wide variety of issues including childhood obesity, school absences and social-emotional health.

The known impact of working directly with youth is a leading force behind many of the firm's CSR programs. In September, we will begin our fifth year of our signature education initiative, [Adopt-a-School](#), which offers targeted programming for high school students from low-income communities. We will also begin our eighth year with [Read Ahead](#), a non-profit that provides one-on-one weekly mentoring in lower-income elementary schools to develop healthy social-emotional skills. Additionally, many partners at the firm continue to serve as board members for a large number of non-profit organizations leading important work in this space.

As we continue our commitment to underserved communities, Proskauer is proud to support organizations like Hip Hop Public Health and salute leaders like Dr. Williams, who create innovative and meaningful methods of change.

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