

Raoul Juneja, aka Deejay Ra, is a hip-hop deejay who brings his credibility to many causes he believes in. Being instrumental on many topics, here is a person in the hip-hop culture who has set out to make a difference and backs up his convictions with action.

Deejay Ra has brought many topics to the 'eyes' of the hip-hop community. His work is based on not only providing information but he truly has a sense of wanting to inform and help empower the culture of hip-hop.

Deejay Ra is more than a deejay. He is a social activist with many messages. His Hip-Hop Literacy Campaign is centered on encouraging teens to read. Deejay Ra says "put down the gangsta rap CD and pick up the gangster fiction."

Last February, this 24-year-old deejay / social activist, decided he wanted to connect with youth who weren't interested in reading. He chose to combine his passion for the written word with his passion for music. To him, it was an obvious pairing because he knew that many teens memorize the lyrics to their favorite songs. Thus, the Hip-Hop Literacy campaign was born. But how do you use rhythm and rhyme to put books in hands? Inspiration came in the form of author Elmore Leonard, who wrote the novels that many popular movies are based on, including "Get Shorty," "Out of Sight," and "Be Cool"; movies that not only appeal to a younger audience, but that boast such celebrities as J Lo, Christina Milian and Outkast member Andre 3000.

When Leonard came to Toronto last year to promote his new novel "Mr. Paradise," Deejay Ra convinced the publisher, HarperCollins Publishing, to donate some books for a campus

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Written by Robert ID1508

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giveaway. The response from the students was remarkably positive and DeeJay Ra realized just how strongly teens related to the movies based on Leonard's books. As DeeJay Ra explains, "teens need to not only understand the story, but they need to have a connection with the characters." And with books that have had movie adaptations, there is an instant connection when teenagers can associate a character with some of their favorite celebrities.

That gave DeeJay Ra another idea. "As a DJ, I thought I'd be in a good position to suggest entertainment-related books for youth," he recalls. Since there's no one more in tune with who teens are listening to than a DJ, DeeJay Ra continued his campaign by promoting titles by popular musicians such as Ashanti and the late great rap icon Tupac Shakur. Using community radio and television shows to give away more books, he's been spreading the beat across Canada.

But how is street poetry connected to literacy? "In hip hop, the emphasis is on fans being able to rhyme along with popular tracks, or even 'freestyle' and make up their own words, which develops incredible vocabulary skills," DeeJay Ra explains.

Let's take it further. Reading and having a good vocabulary are important factors in the definition of literacy, but according to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, to be truly literate you must also be able to write, you must be articulate, and you must be well-versed in a specific area. Well, what does that mean? It means that beyond reading about the late rap icon Tupac and rhyming along with him, you should also be able to write a couple of well-crafted sentences about how Tupac's music makes you feel. And you should be savvy enough to have a spirited debate with your best friend about the importance of his career in the hip-hop landscape.

MTV Books Canada is a sponsor of Raoul Juneja aka DeeJay Ra's rap literacy project and has been donating copies of hip-hop rap icon Tupac Shakurs "Rose That Grew From Concrete" and Jam Master Jay's "Heart of Hip-Hop" biography for DeeJay Ra to giveaway at schools. DeeJay Ra recently agreed to have his profile setup on their site so fans can check out his 5 favorite music videos or send him messages. Find a link for his profile [HERE](#) .

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Be sure to check out the latest "Hip-Hop Literacy" college radio PSA from Deejay Ra featuring "Oz" and "Above The Rim" actor Leon, recently recorded to commemorate rap poet Tupac Amaru Shakur's upcoming June 16th birthday.

Listen to Leon's shout out [HERE](#) .

More information on Deejay Ra can be found at these sites -

<http://www.lyricalknockout.com/>

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\*Photo of Leon from "Above The Rim" courtesy of New Line Cinema.