



# Bryan Eason

## Engaging Children and Youth Using Rap and Hip Hop

Video (6:45): Bryan Eason, a public-school educator in Dallas, a former Ella Baker Trainer for the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools®

Bryan Eason is a musician, activist, community organizer, and public school teacher in Dallas. For the past 14 years, he has served as staff person for the Washington, D.C.-based Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools®. He teaches children and youth with special needs and uses his training as an advocate and a Freedom Schools teacher to reach young people and give voice to their concerns using contemporary music and rap. He embraces the motto, "Serve first, then lead," so thoroughly that he says, "It is now the air I breathe." He works all over the United States organizing young people in Children's Action Teams.

## Engaging Children and Youth Using Rap and Hip-hop

### Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via Internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly. *This video can be found at [www.gcorr.org/series/vc3](http://www.gcorr.org/series/vc3).*

**Preview the video.** Read through the lesson plan. Have for display or sharing a covenant of care for the session. Think about asking members in the session to read the Scripture(s).

### Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20
- Listening and Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Construction paper, assorted colors

- Notebook paper
- Pens, pencils, and markers, assorted colors
- Paint stirring sticks for each participant (optional), available at local home-improvement store

Prepare for the activity “Join the Protest/Make a Statement” by creating your protest sign or statement of hope.

## THE STUDY SESSION

### Get Started [10 minutes]

Have the altar set up with the Bible, hymnal, and a candle. Have other candles burning around the room. Have music playing softly as people gather. Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read the statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents *Vital Conversations* to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Introduce yourself and say a word about why you have accepted the role of facilitator for this session, what your musical connections are, and what visions you have for the time together. Read aloud or have a volunteer read the Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20. Have a time for prayer. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice.

Review, read, and post a covenant that you have created (or the group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant.

**Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide.** Explain that this is a resource to help them capture thoughts and ideas from the video presentation as well as a place to make note of visions they have for ministry. Allow time for them to scan the questions to help focus the viewing and listening process. Say that at the conclusion of the video, there will be five to ten minutes for the group to add more information and answer questions on their Listening and Looking Guide. Also, tell the group that there will be opportunities to add more information to the sheet and to reflect upon their notes. If time permits, ask the group if they feel the need to see the video again.

Introduce the video presenter: Bryan Eason is a musician, an activist, a Dallas-based public school teacher, and summer staff member for Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools®. He shares how the church might engage urban children and youth of color using rap and hip-hop. He is an advocate for Freedom Schools.

### Play the Video [15 minutes]

Encourage participants to jot down short notes on their guide but as much as possible remain attentive to listening to and experiencing the presentation. At the conclusion of the video, give group members an opportunity to respond to the questions and statements on the guide.

### **Remember God's Word [10-15 minutes]**

Bryan Eason shares how Ephesians 6:10-20 is his favorite passage of Scripture as he navigates the violent times (music and culture) in his life. Invite everyone to share their favorite Scripture that supports and nurtures them during the rough moments they experience in the world.

### **Hear My Fear, Share My Pain [10-15 minutes]**

Have the group revisit their responses to the statement: "Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons, is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until this happens." Ask if there are any persons who are willing to share their thoughts in reference to the statement.

### **Join the Protest/Make a Statement [15 minutes]**

Bryan Eason calls on all of us to be "outraged" about issues that are ripping to shreds the vision for the beloved community. He says, "You don't have to be black to be outraged." Distribute construction paper (2 per person), markers, notebook paper, and paint sticks (optional). Ask everyone to think about what they would say if they were to join a protest or vigil. Ask them to make a short statement that identifies their outrage or their vision for resolution. Place this statement on construction paper using markers. Using the notebook paper, give more meaning to the statement by writing a paragraph. Glue this statement to the second sheet of construction paper – then glue both sheets together, back to back. (Optional: Glue the paint stick between the two sheets of construction paper to make a sign that could be held during a protest march.) Provide an opportunity to several persons to stand and share their statements of frustration or hope.

### **Reflect and Share [10 minutes]**

Allow time for members to reflect on what has been shared in the group. Allow time for them to add additional notes on their guide and to complete their vision, their commitment, and draft their social media share.

### **Closing Devotions [10 minutes]**

Invite group members to sit in a circle. Invite them to carry this one line from the rap with them during the week: "My day is on fire." The context of the line is the success a student feels upon completing her or his homework – "my day is on fire, I got my brain rolling."

Just for a moment, stop and breathe. Make yourself remember that amidst the pain and negativity, there are the moments – that time – when you know that you have made a difference, that you know that you have made a correct decision, that you know you have tapped into your spiritual strength to challenge injustice sometime, somewhere. Your day is on fire!

Invite people to share their excitement, their commitment, their vision – and ask that as they bring their witness to a close, simply say "My day is on fire!" After everyone has spoken, offer this prayer (or ask a volunteer to pray): Lord, thank You for speaking to us through the music. Help us to turn negativity into positivity. Help us to believe that there is a way through, there is a way out of the madness, the anguish, the injustice that so many face on a daily basis. Make us servant leaders so that we can embrace every child and make their needs our priority. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

## Listening and Looking Guide: Bryan Eason

What line(s) stood out for you from the rap?

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Bryan Eason challenges America to rethink the impact of its “violent culture and music.” Do you see violence in America’s culture? If yes, name few examples:

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How do you respond to his statement: “Until the killing of black men, black mothers’ sons, is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers’ sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until this happens.”

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Bridge between cultures: Think about a song that you know from another culture or in another language besides your first language. What is that song and how does it speak to you?

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Cultivate a new vision:

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Make a commitment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tweet This/Post on your social media: \_\_\_\_\_

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