Name of Project: School House Rights Rock (R.O.O.T.S)

Date of Interview: August 27, 2016

Location of Interview: Itta Bena, MS

Name of Interviewer(s): **(A)**

Name of Interviewee(s): Emmanuel Candelario **(B)** Frank Antonio Lopez **(C)**

Name of File: Ipad

[0:30] **A:** Can you tell me why are you here and where are you from?

[0:33] **B:** We’re here because we were invited. We built with some community in New Orleans, through a conference that the Kellogg foundation provided and some folks who were there remembered us and the work that we did resonated with them so they reached out to us to present to some young people yesterday and today through workshops and performances apart of a collective called The Peace Poets that use music and poetry to address social justice issues.

[1:09] **A:** How long have you all been in the poetry business?

[1:14] **C:** So we’ve been rocking poetry and spitting together since we were sixteen years old. We grew up together in an organization called The Brother and Sister Soul of Harlem Rights of Passage Organization for the Black and Latino community in Harlem and the Harlem area and yeah we’ve been rocking the mic for around fifteen years together now and as The Peace Poets officially around ten years.

[1:38] **A:** Do you see schools’ rights being disregarded?

[1:42] **B:** Yes absolutely. Education is based on geographically, like, the tax bracket of that community which already sets up the system for failure and for educational resources to be mismanaged and disproportionate to the needs of the community and to continue to oppress historically looted communities so, absolutely.

[2:10] **C:** And of course at the end of the day the people that feel that are predominately the Black and Latino communities, impoverished and disenfranchised communities.

[2:21] **A:** What are you doing to impact your community or change these school rights?

[2:29] **B:** Well we’ve been through the brotherhood/sister soul politicize and that was our first step into educating ourselves and then extending that education. They resonate with the message of ‘each one, teach one’ so through our poetry we’ve been able to travel to many communities in New York but also outside of New York, uhm, throughout the world, basically to share our stories but also give the opportunity for folks who may not ever have a chance to tell their story to share that, to write, to really reflect on their experience and to know that their struggle is a political message.

[3:11] **C:** So we believe in the power of story and just like ya’ll and the work that you’re doing, we believe in the power of a counter narrative (?) in the face of systematically put out media that the story that has been told about our communities and we believe that our young people and art is a powerful way to retell that story and create and live in a world that we want to see.

[3:38] **A:** What are the narratives that the community have of using young African-American men and just children in society—what are their rights? What are their stories?

[3:53] **C:** So a huge narrative that is put out is communization (?) of young black and brown men throughout the nation and the counter narrative is obviously the success stories that aren’t highlighted in the news many times. Many times you have to see them on social media and be the ones to take initiative to share those stories or to film those stories as media makers and artists, we know that the power of having a platform of having a stage or screen where you’re able to tell the story how you want it to be told.

[4:26] **A:** When you think of African-American men in society, what three words come to mind?

[4:31] **B:** Power, resilience, history.

[4:35] **A:** Can you explain?

[4:38] **B:** Well through the Brotherhood/Sister Soul they gave us an understanding of our own culture through Pan-African/Latino history and an understanding of the African diaspora so we know that there are links connecting all throughout the western hemisphere and the African continent and also Europe where African people and African descendants have been struggling to find equality so connecting to those stories, learning our history, learning about some of the icons who we stand on their shoulders, even folks who are of color who they may not necessarily have African descendancy still are able to have a better life in this country because of the struggles that African-Americans fought for. So we feel connected through our history but also through the legacy of struggle that gives us the opportunity to be here today.

[5:44] **C:** I would say invention, diaspora, and uhm…beautiful. We forget many times the creation that African Americans have brought to this country; that this country was built on, not just the backs but with the hands and the minds of African- Americans in this country. Diaspora in the sense that we forget the history that came before; we hear about slavery in textbooks but we forget the lineage, the history, and the rich culture, art, and society and civilization that comes within the African diaspora. And beautiful because sometimes we forget to associate that word when you’ve just seen a one-sided, flat, two-dimensional image on the nightly news or the way that African-Americans are portrayed in the media and as the media being a huge component of the development of society’s eye, I believe that it’s important again to have a counter narrative

[7:07] **A:** If you had one minute to encourage young African-American men, what would you say?