

Dear Reader,

As a teaching artist in the Bronx, I wanted to find a creative way to spark a conversation about graffiti with my elementary and high school students. So I showed them pictures I'd taken of graffiti and they would be amazed, wondering what secret parts of the city I had gone to capture these photos. My students were always shocked when I revealed that these pieces were right across the street from us. That they had passed them every day without second thought.

This inspired many thoughtful discussions about where art exists, to whom art is for, and what we determine as art. It is important to note that graffiti, with its controversial past and present, is an art form pioneered by Black and Puerto Rican people. Hip hop and graffiti culture were intertwined and exploded through the Bronx, changing the world and spawning the careers of some of the biggest artists of the 20th century, including Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. More importantly, graffiti did this without the permission of major art institutions—places that have long excluded the creative works of people of color. Graffiti is an art form that moves through and reflects the community I grew up in. But we are rarely taught its creative, social, and political significance, so I wrote *Boogie Boogie, Y'all* to encourage enthusiasm towards the art form for a new generation.

It is my hope that people will see the art in the Bronx--the art that surrounds them in both grand and everyday places--from a new perspective. We are surrounded by creativity everywhere we go. We just have to take the time to stop and look at the art on the wall!

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles G. Esperanza', written in a cursive style.

Charles G. Esperanza