Written by Darren D. Moore
Monday, 04 March 2013 09:51

Recently I attended the So So Def 20th Anniversary Concert at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta.

On Saturday, Feb. 23 I sat quietly in the front row and mingled with Atlanta's finest including notable radio and television producers, journalists, entertainers – the who's who in the entertainment industry. I had the opportunity to get up close and personal with the entertainers, some of which included So So Def founder, Jermaine Dupri, Kris Kross, Da Brat, Jagged Edge, Xscape, Bow Wow, Anthony Hamilton, Lil Jon, Franchise Boys, Bass All Stars, INOJ, Bone Crusher, Jaquon, Dondria, YoungBloodZ, Nelly, Ludacris, Big Tigger, Pastor Troy, Usher, Young Jeezy, Jay-Z and Mariah Carey.

One might ask why this college professor would be attending such an event. In response, I say, "I love hip-hop." I have been an avid fan of So So Def for years. Not only do I love hip-hop, *I am hip-hop*
… well sort of. I believe hip-hop is a culture. It is an expression, a way of being in the world. Through hip-hop, people communicate their thoughts, share their experiences, reflect on the harsh realities of today, talk about great moments in life, and discuss life's tragedies.

Hip Hop is not all about the flashy cars, dollar bills, objectifying women, promoting violence, etc. Though it may include all of the fore-mentioned things in certain situations, behind the velvet curtain many musicians are simply trying to express themselves. Hip-hop is an art form, a way to externalize internalized feelings. When I listen to hip-hop, I focus on the beat and rhythms – the percussion that is accompanied by the words of a skilled lyricist. The first thing that I do is move my body to the beat of the music. Call it rapping, R&B, poetry, spoken word; it's all about feeling. What do you feel when you listen to hip-hop?

Sometimes, I feel on top of the world, when I listen to hip-hop. That may sound a bit crazy, but if you think about it, music is, or should I say can be, a form of therapy. Many researchers have shown that music can assist with reducing depression and anxiety, promoting relaxation, and some argue that it may modify the release of stress hormones. In addition, hip-hop specifically, under close supervision has been found to be a successful intervention with at risk and delinquent youth, juvenile offenders, and has been found to promote literacy, and can assist with establishing a therapeutic relationship between therapist and client. I have connected with a number of individuals young and old in therapy using metaphors from hip-hop. A therapist can use anything including art and music to facilitate healing. In addition, hip-hop and other forms of expression can be a positive way for young people to articulate how they feel, which is why I am a supporter of Minneapolis Beats and Rhymes after school program ("Hot Cheetos and Takis").

Before you dismiss hip-hop due to some of the negative stereotypes associated with the genre, take a step back to see if there are any positive aspects. I am hip-hop. Just as music promotes healing and soothes the soul, I as a marriage and family therapist do the same thing. I help clients find a way to express themselves, often to their loved ones, family members, spouses, and friends. I help clients explore the double entendre embedded in their life stories in efforts to find solutions to problems. I am hip-hop. I guess you can just call me the hip-hop doctor. I had a wonderful time at the concert. It definitely was a great experience and I had the opportunity to reminisce about the good old days growing up on the north side of Minneapolis. Kris Kross' "Jump" used to by my song, though I never got sucked into the baggy jeans or wearing pants backwards. I specifically remember listening to them on the steps of my childhood home, while eating White Castle – you know before they closed the one on West Broadway. Well that's all for now, hope to talk to you soon, but until then, stick around, there's Moore to come.