Dr. Vajra Watson

PROTEST

"We underestimate young people. They're ready to grab the mic.
Are we ready to listen?"

Dr. Vajra Watson and partners founded Sacramento Area Youth Speaks? SAYS ?in 2009 to give young people an insight into their lives, and a handle on their future, through literacy. Last year SAYS reached out to nearly 10,000 students. Also director of the Education Partnership Consortium at the University of California, Davis's School of Education, Dr. Watson's motto is ?education for liberation, not education for incarceration. ? it is very dangerous to educate for the status quo to just continue."

In particular, Dr. Watson encourages young people to use hip hop and spoken work poetry as a means of protest, drawing on hip hop's rich and influential legacy as a vehicle for cultural production and social critique. "Every young person needs platforms for their voice to be heard," she says. "Whether that student is rich, poor or middle class; whether that student is from an urban, suburban or rural neighborhood, youth need outlets to authentically express their insights and ideals."

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