

Cindy Campbell

Jamaica: the “Muse of Hip Hop”

Object: a poster of Bob Marley

It's like someone waved a wand over the neighborhood.

My family emigrated from the beautiful island of Jamaica when I was a small child. My father, Keith Campbell, was really into music and he loved Bob Marley. Reggae and hip-hop are cousins—Jamaica had the “toasting” on the mic and speakers. So, if I’m here with hip-hop and Bob Marley is there with reggae, he has to be invited. That’s why I brought his picture as my object. In America, we lived in the Bronx at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue. On August 11, 1973, I rented the recreation room in the building to give a back-to-school party. It became the first hip-hop celebration. We just wanted to get together some money to buy clothes for the first day of school. My brother, DJ Kool Herc, now rightfully credited as the founder of hip-hop, brought all his equipment down from his room.

Herc’s love for the drums and bass became famous for extending the beats on the songs using two turntables. He was playing music partly for the B-boys, a name he coined for the breakdancers. The B-boys needed to show their moves, and to do that, they needed the beats to go longer, so he extended them. I was a B-girl back then, also.

So hip hop came about not from illegal, drug or counterfeit money, or blood money, but from a family just trying to make things work. We changed the world. You no longer had to be in a gang—you could be a rapper or an MC, a DJ, or a breakdancer. Something special was happening at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue back then. It’s like someone waved a wand over the neighborhood. In 2016, the City of New York renamed the street Hip Hop Boulevard.



Bio:

The “First Lady of Hip Hop” Cindy Campbell was the catalyst for the humble beginnings of hip hop. In 2007, Cindy and DJ Kool Herc’s contribution to have 1520 Sedgwick Avenue remain as affordable housing was recognized by the United States of America Congressional Records Proceedings and Debates of the 110th Congress First Session. Cindy continues to encourage and work together with her legendary historian brother, DJ Kool Herc. She is always scouting for the next vision of the future. Cindy holds a degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She is a former Miss Black America Beauty Pageant contestant and a licensed cosmetologist. She earned her esthetician license with the prestigious Christine Valmy International School of Skin Care and Make-Up and holds a Real Estate License with the State of New York.