

Toni Blackman's Cypher Workshop description for Jacob's Pillow

Workshop Description: Toni Blackman's Signature Cypher Experience

The Cypher has always been more than a circle — it's a practice, a process, and a pathway to growth. In Toni Blackman's signature **Cypher Workshop**, participants are invited into a transformative space where freestyle, creativity, and community intersect.

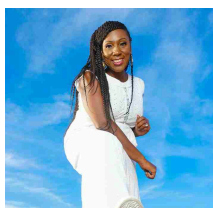
Through a blend of freestyle exercises, movement and vocal warm-ups, wordplay, performance prompts, and guided conversation, Toni leads participants on a journey of becoming more fully and freely self-expressed. The session is not just about rapping or rhyming (we will primarily use the spoken word) — it's about unlocking presence, confidence, and creative flow in ways that impact how we show up onstage *and* in life.

Tailored to the dance community, this workshop recognizes that dancers often use their bodies as voice. Here, we honor the whole being — body, mind, and spirit — as instruments of expression. Participants will discover how the principles of the Cypher can deepen artistry, expand improvisational skills, and strengthen the sense of connection to both self and community.

Seasoned in facilitation and rooted in her own artistry, Toni has led hundreds of Cyphers worldwide with MCs (rappers), dancers, and creative visionaries. Her gift lies in translating the wisdom of the Cypher so that all of us — regardless of medium — can access its lessons in creativity, resilience, and human connection.

Cypher Workshop with Toni Blackman: Where Hip Hop Meets High Vibrations

Step into the circle with Toni Blackman, the first official U.S. Hip Hop Ambassador and a global advocate for the transformative power of the Cypher. Drawing from her groundbreaking work featured in multiple documentaries and her latest book, *Wisdom of the Cypher*, Toni offers a workshop experience that merges rap, poetry, and mindfulness into a sacred space for growth and connection. These creative sessions are the perfect foundation for onstage jam sessions, public performances, songwriting, and production, as they foster community, boost confidence, and unlock deeper creative potential.



With a legacy of Cyphers addressing gang violence prevention, HIV awareness, conflict resolution, and more, Toni brings unparalleled expertise to this dynamic session. From Lyrics for Literacy in Senegal to gender violence prevention in the DRC, and a recent soul-stirring Cypher at Vibrate Space in Accra, Ghana, her workshops transcend art, becoming acts of collective healing and empowerment. Currently in Dakar, Senegal where she led residencies over the years, Toni's has taught and performed in 50 countries around the world including 16 in Africa.

Inspired by the spiritual essence of African traditions, Toni's Cypher creates a space for emotional release, soulful expression, and shared humanity. It's more than a workshop — it's a journey into Hip Hop's power to foster belonging, validation, and transformation and ideal not only for rap lyricists, but singers and spoken word artists as well.

Join Toni to experience the Cypher's energy exchange and discover how it can ignite your creativity, strengthen your spirit, and connect you to a global community.

How would it work?

Toni facilitates a warm up and a few exercises from her signature Cypher workshop and then we freestyle on related topics. Here's a sample list of improv prompts. Some of these same topics can also be used as songwriting prompts where Randy provides the melody. Each of the prompts can ignite creativity while raising awareness about the importance of forests and sustainable practices.

Freestyle Topics/Improv Prompts for a Rap Cypher and Improv Jam Session

1. "Planet's Pulse"

- A vibe-driven anthem about forests as Earth's lifeline.

2. **"Carbon Snatchers"**
 - A high-energy track celebrating forests' role in the climate fight.
3. **"Roots & Tribes"**
 - A soulful ode to Indigenous Peoples and their connection to the land.
4. **"Wildlife Symphony"**
 - A melodic tribute to the biodiversity thriving in forests.
5. **"Vanishing Fields"**
 - A powerful track on deforestation, with vivid imagery of loss.
6. **"Green Comeback"**
 - An uplifting song about restoring forests and rebuilding hope.
7. **"Breath of the Earth"**
 - A chill track focusing on forests' role in cleaning the air and balancing water.
8. **"Future Forest Funk"**
 - A funky jam envisioning sustainable living and collaboration.
9. **"Dollar Tree Dreams"**
 - A clever spin on the economic benefits of investing in restoration.
10. **"See the Trees"**
 - A reflective piece on transparency and accountability in conservation.
11. **"Nature's Battle Cry"**
 - A hard-hitting track about resisting deforestation and exploitation.
12. **"Echoes of the Forest"**
 - A hauntingly beautiful song giving the forest a voice.
13. **"Money Grows on Trees"**
 - A witty banger on how forests sustain billions of livelihoods.
14. **"Greenhouse Guardians"**
 - A fiery track honoring forests as climate change heroes.
15. **"Stand Tall"**
 - A motivational anthem rallying listeners to take action for nature.

These titles are designed to spark curiosity and resonate with young, creative audiences while keeping the focus on the importance of conservation and sustainability.