(Intro to The Roots "The Seed 2.0")

Ben: I going to keep this short because y'all are busy working on Audio Essay Three, and I am busting my ass video conferencing with all of my students.

Um, this week is conferences. I think everyone has already signed-up for a time to meet with me—hell, I've probably met with half of you by the time I post this. Still, if you have not signed up for a meeting, you'll want to email me to set that up ASAP as availability is limited.

Then, next week, you all are going to submit Audio Essay Three on Tuesday, April 21ˢᵗ at 1:45pm. You will then have the rest of the week to listen to each other's essays and make comments. Like last time, you can respond however you would like, I just ask that we stay professional.

Also, due that week in SR 10, which asks you to provide specific examples of how marginalized voices, not necessarily African American influence current communication technologies. I think this is a fun prompt, and I am intrigued as to what y'all will discuss. I know it's weird that it is due the same week as Audio Essay Three, but that edit was a full class decision back in February.

The week after that we were going to read Byron Hawk, but y'all said fuck that, so we are just going to have personal conferences, and y'all are going to keep working on your final projects. As most of you remember, you have six options for your final project. These options are listed on the final project prompt, which you can see by clicking on the link in your syllabus under the Assignment Overview heading. If none of these six options work for you, feel free to pitch me other final project ideas. I am pretty flexible with all this stuff, and at the time of writing this, I have already approved one alternative project.

Oh—also that same week Sonic Reflection 11 is due. Remember SR 11 is optional, I would really only do it if you missed, or got a less than desirable grade on, a previous sonic reflection. Otherwise, it is worth skipping. That said, I do like the prompt, which asks you to create a 10-15 song COVID-19 playlist using *Spotify, YouTube,* or whatever shareable platform you would like.

Finally, the week after that is finals. You need to submit your final projects to *Slack* by May 5ᵗʰ at 2:15pm; then, you have two days to listen/read/engage each other's projects and make

comments before they get graded and y'all head off to graduation or summer break or whatever.

Some of you might hear from me after that when I ask to publish your final essays on my website, but you don't have to say yes if you have other plans for that work. I just know you are going to create cool things, and I want other people—mostly in the composition and rhetoric community—to have a chance to hear what you are doing. So, I will be asking several of you in I can publish you work on my website, but don't feel compelled to say yes.

And, yeah, with that sentence, I just realized that this will probably be my last audio lecture of the semester. I mean there is really no need for another one after this, since we are just turning things in and having personal conferences. If you have any questions at this point, you will just have to reach out to me directly. I mean, I will still send you email updates every Monday, but this is the last lecture, which is really a bummer. I have enjoyed this class immensely. The conversations have been engaging, the work you have been creating has been phenomenal, and your approach to assignments has been inspiring. Teaching this class has been a great experience all around, and I am extremely lucky to have been able to work with all of you this semester. So, sincerely, thank you. This has been wonderful

Now, I'm going to go cry for a bit, and why don't y'all listen to DJ Spooky, aka Paul Miller, who Banks quotes on the first page of this last chapter: "DJing is writing, writing is DJing" (153). The track is seven minutes long, so if you are not feeling the music, just skip ahead.

(DJ Spooky "Peace In Zaire")

Ben: Though short, Banks's final chapter is dense. As he wraps up the threads of his argument and provides his audience with two major takeaways, he uses more complex lists, nonessential clauses, and compound-complex sentences than he has in the rest of the book, and I think this is because he is arguing that when we think about the DJ as digital griot as model for writing, we can't think about one or two cool practices, we need to be thinking about the entirety of the cultural contexts in order to understand the principles, priorities, and purposes it provides us for thinking about composing in multimodal environments. This really connects back to the question of how scholars in composition and rhetoric think about digital composition, and it is the first of two major takeaways from this book.

The first takeaway. Banks argues that digital composition should be about more than information literacy or using new technologies; instead, it should be a *digital humanities* project that connects digital technologies to humanistic inquiry. This is to say that Banks

argues it is not enough to snag a few cool compositional practices and run with them—scholars need to be paying attention to the ways in which technologies, power relations, social networks, and cultural connections co-create the worlds in which we live and how we understand those worlds. Looking at the DJ in these terms allows us not only to see how cool it is to layer, mix, and loop tracks but also to understand the principles that undergird these practices:

> In terms of principles, the digital griot demonstrates a synthesis of [1] deep, searching (crate digging) knowledge of the traditions and cultures of his or her community and futuristic visions; [2] the skills, ability, and comfort level to produce in multiple modalities; [3] the ability to employ those skills toward the purpose of building and serving communities with which he or she is aligned; [4] an awareness of the complex and layered ethical commitments and questions facing that community; and [5] the ability to "move the crowd," to use those traditions and technologies for the purposes of persuasion. (155)

This leads Banks directly to the second takeaway of the book, that the newest generation of scholars studying African American rhetorics should see their work in terms of digital humanities:

> [A] second (implied) argument throughout this book has been that we must imagine an African American rhetoric 2.0, as a digital humanities project, as a thorough linking of texts, techne, and technologies in the examination of how black people have engaged in the techno-dialogic, or the mutually constitutive relationships that endure between humans and their technologies. (155)

Considering what such a project would look like, Banks provides definitions of African American rhetorics from five different scholars, including himself; however, he does not want to just relate these definitions to digital spaces. Similarly, he wants to push past the American Council of Learned Societies definition of *digital humanities* as a project that "cultivates leadership in support of cyberinfrastructure" and "encourages digital scholarship." No, for Banks, African American rhetoric 2.0 needs to answer bigger questions, specifically,

> How have "African Americans created the nation's survival technology" (Dinerstein 22)? How have black people imagined and reimagined what it means to be in relationship with everchanging technological landscapes? Landscapes where, as

Johndan Johnson-Eilola argues in his book *Datacloud,* large-scale changes are difficult to document in the ways we are used to. . . . I hope to see scholars and students explore the complicated ways in which micro- and macro-level technological developments in American society affect African American life and the discursive production that emerges from those moments (158).

To answer these questions requires a lot of skill and dedication. Banks argues:

Bold, creative, innovative uses of technologies; deep inquiry into technologies' influences on African American lives and African American influences on technologies; African American survival technologies across eras; digital scholarship; development of cyberinfrastructure for studying black texts and discourses—all of these and more are crucial to the development of African American rhetoric as a twenty-first century discipline that thoroughly values and thoroughly weaves together spoken, oral, visual, and digital means of persuasion. (159)

And this means, for Banks, that students need to take into consideration the whole of the Black experience: Saturday night and Sunday morning, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., public discourses and private vernaculars. All scholars in African American rhetorics should be able to see the entirety of the Black experience in all its rich diversity in order to respect the past and imagine the future. The DJ as digital griot provides a framework for this. As Banks argues:

This framework includes an understanding of writing and technology as tools to preserve cultures even while planning future agendas; a focus on technologies as tools for reform, resistance, and renewal—as possible elements of a progressive politics of transformation; a set of ethical commitments that requires us to confront systems of oppression and exploitation in solidarity with those who have been systematically excluded from our society; the ability to produce in multiple modalities and to understand the conventions, possibilities, and constraints of various modalities; a deep and searching understanding of the traditions and cultures of one's community; and a rhetorical focus on being able to move the crowd, which requires (among other things) an ability and willingness to speak across the continua or tensions that mark a particular community at a particular time. (161).

Banks claims that we can see the beginnings of this work in the projects he mentions in his shoutouts throughout the book—diNubia, Cyber-Church, Arthur Flower's Rootsblog, Diva

Delight, and Marcyliena Morgan's Hiphop Archive. He also points to scholarly work by Carmen Kynard, Elaine Richardson, Dara Byrne, Tyrone Taborn, and others. And after giving these examples, he gives a specific definition of what African American Rhetoric 2.0 should look like:

> Theoretically, this means an imperative to "noisily bring together competing and complementary beats without sublimating their tensions," as Weheliye reminds us (13). Ethically, it is a call to identify who and what we are here to serve, willing to stand not only with black people but also with others who will struggle with oppression. Pedagogically, it means a firm commitment to build from the truths and tropes of black experiences in writing curricula, courses, assignments, evaluation, feedback, and teacher stance and delivery—not just for black students but as a part of the education of all students receive. . . . Practically, it means working to increase meaningful, transformative access to digital technologies for people on their own terms. (164)

And that's the argument. Pretty solid, right? Banks is a great writer—a solid speaker too. I was actually going to end this lecture by playing Banks's 2015 Chair's Address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication, titled "Funk, Flight, and Freedom." But I decided not to do that. I mean it is a great speech, and you should listen to it. I am actually linking to it on our D2L page so you can listen to it, but since this is the last audio lecture, I want to end it with something meaningful to me, so here you go.

(Teddy from Bob's Burgers *singing "Wonder" by Natalie Merchant)*