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The Philadelphia Section's Chemistry Program at the Franklin Institute, sponsored jointly with the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists & Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE), was attended by about 200 black students from middle and high school. It featured an inspirational lecture on contributions to science by Africans and African-Americans, and an educational rap lecture by a chemist-rap artist. A lecture by Ivan Van Sertima of Rutgers University made the point that many important scientific contributions have been made by blacks, and there's no reason not to continue that tradition. He made a strong case for completing one's education and making the most of one's talents.

Following the lecture, the students toured the Franklin Institute, which is dedicated to science education. The teachers in the group met privately with Van Sertima to gain further insights into motivation of black children. In addition, the teachers met with Tyrane Ragsdale, also known as Grand Hank, whose specialty is educational rap lectures. Ragsdale—a chemistry graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and a mass spectroscopist with the Robert W. Johnson Research Institute—told the teachers that kids do listen to rap and repeat it often, and so it would be good to give them a very positive rap about education in general and science in particular.

The program concluded with Grand Hank's educational rap lecture, which tells of the importance of education and science, and celebrates contributions of African-Americans to science and technology. The message was clear: "You can be a scientist. You only need to focus on school, and work toward that goal."



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