

'Grand Hank' Blending the chemistry of rap into a positive message

By Junious R. Stanton

Tyraine Ragsdale is a scientist. Grand Hank is a rapper.

Ragsdale is a graduate of University City High School and the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in chemistry. Hank got his start in the Mill Creek Housing Project at 46th and Brown Streets and graduated into the leader of Grand Master Hank and the Punk Funk Nation.

On the surface, these two brief biographies would lead the casual observer to suspect they had little in common. Actually, Tyraine Ragsdale and Grand Hank are one and the same.

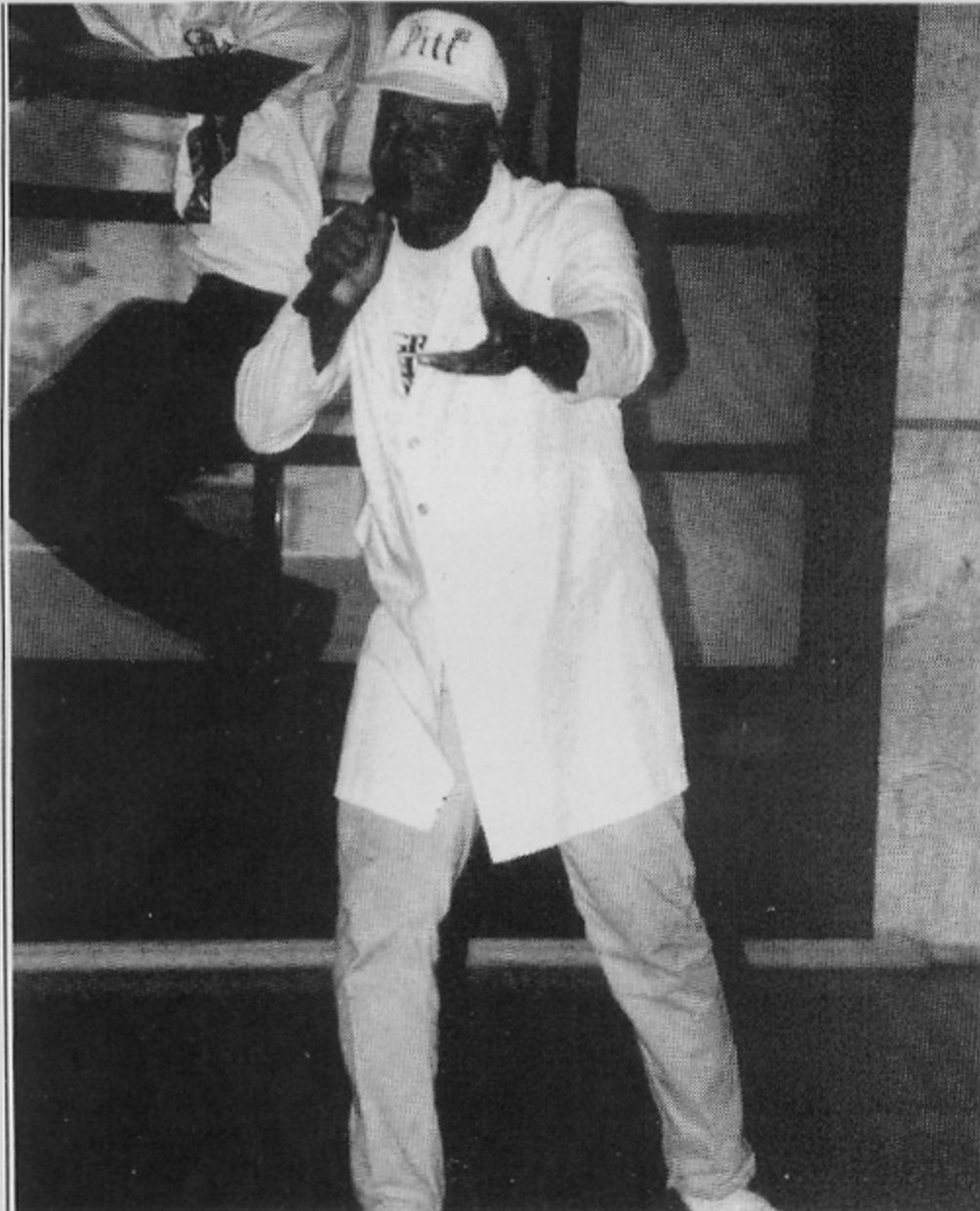
Grand Hank the leader of Grand Hank Productions, Inc., creator of the Education Rap Lecture.

Ragsdale got his start in entertainment as a D.J. when he was a teenage performer with the group, Punk Funk Nation in West Philadelphia. He left the group after graduating high school in 1988 to attend the University of Pittsburgh where he earned his degree in chemistry.

Upon his return, Tyraine got a job with Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals as a chromatographer, a medical specialty. His primary job responsibilities are to isolate and purify new compounds used are used to manufacture new drugs.

Growing up in and around the social ills of the Mill Creek project, led Ragsdale to look for avenues to use his new education in more than the traditional way of go to school, get a job, leave the neighborhood.

"Growing up in Mill Creek, my environment was not conducive to education. I made a commitment to myself that if ever I was in a position to have any influence on



Tyraine Ragsdale a/k/a "Grand Hank" is blending rap and science into an educational message.

children that I would encourage them to overcome the negative effects of their environment," Ragsdale explained.

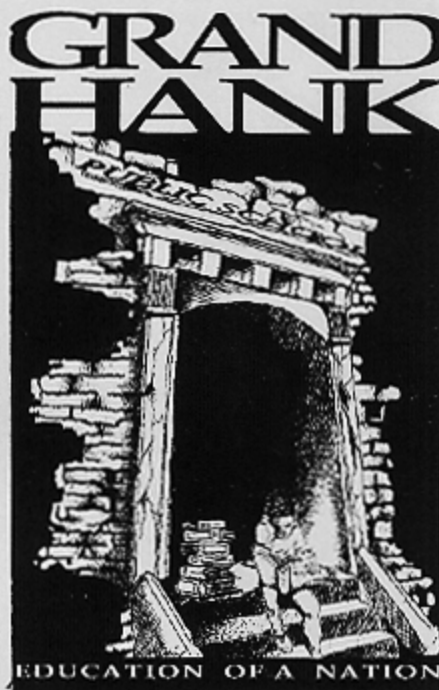
"In 1988 the killings and drugs were hot. Responsible black role models, especially black men role models, were few. Bullets were flying and the males were just ducking and running.

"Nobody wanted to get involved. Somebody has to do something and develop something positive

people can benefit from."

Grand Hank Productions, Inc. was founded in 1989 to produce material to stimulate life affirming values and education using rap to get the attention of teenagers and young adults.

Hustling to perform in concerts in his neighborhood and throughout other parts of the city, Grand Hank's lyrics tell it in hard driving Hip-Hop dialogue to a slamming beat.



"Grand Hank is a role model. Not just a rapper," declared Ragsdale. "As a rapper, I serve as living proof that education works. The environment may make a prediction about you but it is the individual who will ultimately determine his or her destiny."

The Educational Rap Lecture is a synthesis of his experience with hard-core Hip-Hop and his desire to educate, inspire and influence urban youth to achieve despite the rampant social forces that conspire against not only their success, but their very survival.

Grand Hank's repertoire includes a combination of rap, lecture and audience interaction to reinforce the importance of education, science, black history and self-respect.

In addition to the lecture there is an audio cassette an album entitled "Grand Hank, Education of a Nation." Both are available at their concerts or by telephone at (215) 724-5260. Their mailing address is P.O. Box 23488, Phila., PA 19143.