

Pierce Freelon | Candidate for Mayor of Durham, Professor, Artist-Organizer

Pierce Freelon is a musician, professor and social entrepreneur with a passion for creativity and community. Born and raised in Durham, Freelon has taught in the departments of African American studies, music and political science at UNC Chapel Hill and North Carolina Central University. Pierce is the founder of Blackspace, a digital maker space where young people learn about 3D Printing, coding and electronic music production free of charge. He also co-founded Beat Making Lab, an Emmy-Award winning PBS web-series and social entrepreneurship community program. He is the youngest person to be appointed by the Governor to serve on the NC Arts Council board of directors. He has also served on the boards of the Nasher Museum of Art, KidZnotes, the Durham Library Foundation and others. Freelon has traveled the world engaging communities in political education and organizing, teaching music and history, and building institutions for creative expression and social justice. Pierce lives in Durham with his wife Katye and their two children.

EDUCATION

2008 - M.A. in Pan-African Studies (Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY)

Masters Thesis: Sankofa: Pan-African Migrations in Hip-Hop Music and Culture

2006 - B.A. in African and Afro American Studies *awarded with distinction and highest honors (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC)

Honors Thesis: Blackademics: the Development of a Hip-Hop Curriculum Based on the History of the African American Experience and Struggle for Freedom and Equality

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Community Programs

2014 - Founder of Blackspace (Pan-African digital makerspace based in Durham)

2013 - Co-founder of Next Level (Cultural diplomacy program at UNC/US State Department, for which Freelon raised over \$1,000,000)

2012 - Co-founder of Beat Making Lab (PBS web-series won an Emmy-award in 2015)

2010 - Co-founder of Poetic Justice (Hip Hop/spoken word after-school program with Durham Crime Prevention Council)

2008 - Program coordinator for Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz

Adjunct professor/visiting lecturer

2009 - 2016 - UNC Chapel Hill; Department of African American and Diaspora Studies/ Department of Music (Chapel Hill, NC)

Course load: AAAD 401; AAAD 356; AFAM 259; AFAM 356; AFAM 375; MUSC 239; MUSC 159

2008 - 2011 - North Carolina Central University, Department of Political Science (Durham, NC); Piedmont Community College, Department of Music (Roxboro, NC)

Course load: POLS 4881; HUM 120; MUS 112

2007 - 2008: - Syracuse University; Department of African American Studies (Syracuse, NC)

Course load: AAS 207; AAS 409

Artist

2015 - present - Co-founder of 5P1N0k10: a political Hip Hop x Puppet show

2007 - 2015 - Co-founder of hip hop and jazz band *The Beast*

SELECTED RESIDENCIES, LECTURES, WORKSHOPS

2017

Blackspace WokeShops (free digital media workshops for Durham youth): Conscious Coding/3D Printing, Digital Storytelling, Street Griot, Blackspace Poetry (Durham, NC)

Brave New Voices (San Francisco, CA)

Just Space (Duke University social justice conference - Durham, NC)

John Hope Franklin Young Scholars Program (community workshop - Durham, NC)

My Brother's Keeper (Black history month lecture, Chapel Hill, NC)

Rhythm and Race (Raleigh, NC)

2016

Hayti to Haiti: Beat Making Lab (Durham, NC / Matenwa, Haiti)

Tedx Durham: Centers and Edges (Durham, NC)

Blackspace Block Party (Durham, NC)

Black Wall Street Beats (Moogfest, Durham, NC)

Darth Vader Youth Hackathon (web-app development program by Blackspace, Durham, NC)

Virtual Reality Lecture (Black Wall Street Homecoming, Durham, NC)

2015

Nguvu Ya Weusi: Black Power from Carolina to Congo (Goma, Congo and Chapel Hill, NC)

Cristo Negro | Diablo Blanco (Portobelo, Panama and Chapel Hill, NC)

Audio Immersion (Allied Media Conference - Detroit, MI)

Black Revolutions (University of Puget Sound, WA)

2014

Black August: Black Liberation Youth Cypher (Chapel Hill, NC)

TEDx: Mid Atlantic (Washington, DC)

Beat Making Lab projects in: Nairobi, Kenya; Cabarete, Dominican Republic

2013

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation International Conference on Family Planning (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

Beat Making Lab projects in: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Chapel Hill, USA; Dakar, Senegal; Goma, DR-Congo; Portobelo, Panama; Suva, Fiji

2012

Global Voices: Citizen Media Summit 2012 (Nairobi, Kenya)

Mashable's Social Good Summit (New York, NY)

TEDx: Sticky Ideas (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

United Nations Foundation: Rio+Social (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Juvenile Justice and Crime Prevention Council (Durham, NC)

PUBLICATIONS

Blackademics Interviews: Freelon ran a popular blog called Blackademics where he published one-on-one exclusive interviews: Dr. Maya Angelou, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Paul Mooney, Tommie Smith, John Singleton, Rakim, Amiri and Amina Baraka, Herbie Hancock, Gil Scott Heron, Danny Glover, 9th Wonder and others (www.blackademics.org/interview-archive).

Book/Journal/Magazine/Newspaper Contributions: Freelon has written over 50 columns in The News and Observer's Durham News: April 2010 - present.

“Born and Raised” in 27 Views of Durham: The Bull City in Prose and Poetry; 2012.
“Gwendolyn Brooks,” “Eldridge Cleaver, Soul on Ice,” and “Martin Luther King, Jr. Strength to Love” in 1,000 Key Moments: Books.

GRANTS/FELLOWSHIPS

2012 - present - Various grants from Grable Foundation, WUNC, North Carolina Arts Council, Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, etc.

2013 - \$1,000,000 US Department of State grant for “Next Level” program at UNC (Chapel Hill, NC)

2013 - Freedom Foundation: Levey Award for Excellence in Education (Philadelphia, PA)

2012 - Center for Global Initiatives faculty research grant (Chapel Hill, NC)

2008 - DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/National Endowment for the Arts: American Masterpieces Grant Award (Washington, DC)

2007 - OMA Diversity Programming Grant, Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY)

2007 - Chancellor’s 2007 Research Grant, Syracuse University/University of Ghana, Legon (Accra, Ghana)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS/AWARDS/HONORS

2016 - Movement of Youth “Spirit of Excellence in the Arts” Award

2015 - Emmy Award for Beat Making Lab

2015 - Leadership Triangle Goodmon Award

2015 - Hip Hop Education Center “Extra Credit” Award

2014 - Triangle Arts Award, The Independent Weekly

2012 - 2015 / Board member, Sacrificial Poets (Durham, NC)

2012 - 2015 / Board member, Nasher Museum of Art (Durham, NC)

2011 - 2016 / Board member, KidzNotes (Durham, NC)

2011 - 2015 / Board member, Durham Library Foundation (Durham, NC)

2010 - 2013 / Board member, North Carolina Arts Council (Raleigh, NC)

2010 - 2012 Best of the Triangle: Best Hip Hop Band, The Independent Weekly

2007 - Sankofa Bird Award for Community Leadership (Syracuse, NY)