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Author

James, NeEddra L

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Medicine Music

NeEddra James | UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism Audio Thesis, 2026



Medicine Music is a narrative audio documentary that follows hip-hop entrepreneur Khafre Jay and his company Hip-Hop for the Future as they use street canvassing to fund Flow Lounge — a weekly open mic and social justice rap competition in the Bay Area. Jay’s fundraising pitch is deliberately confrontational: he names race, death, and white apathy out loud on sidewalks in wealthy San Francisco neighborhoods, breaking every norm of liberal donor culture to compel engagement with Black public health. The piece examines whether the infrastructure Jay is building — and the rhetorical frame sustaining it — delivers equitably on its promise. Specifically, it asks whether the women whose suffering anchors his pitch are materially present in the organization’s yield. *Medicine Music* traces the distance between the moral weight of Black women’s pain as fundraising currency and the organizational structure that revenue actually flows into — and lets Khafre’s own words carry that accountability by the end.

Medicine Music

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

Host Intro

Charitable giving has grown to a half-trillion dollar industry in the United States. Even as the economy has bounced up and down since 2020, charitable giving has grown faster than inflation for the first time since 2021. A lot of that giving is online. But, every now and then you might be approached by an old school street canvasser like hip-hop entrepreneur, Khafre Jay. He describes himself as, “your mostly friendly, neighborhood black activist,” and he's leading a controversial campaign to save black public health through hip-hop culture, one donation at a time. Reporter NeEddra James has the story.

STORY

[0:39.210] Khafre: Hey, you guys talk to black people? No?

Passersby1: Wait. No, we, we're busy. We have to go. Have a good day.

Khafre: Okay. Thank you. Have a good day. You scared me for a little bit.

(chuckles)

Khafre to driver: You should park it up and come help me save women ...

[fade under; keep rolling]

T1: That's Khafre Jay, the CEO of Hip-Hop for the Future. The first time I met Khafre, I was walking to my car and caught a version of this:

Khafre: You guys care about black women dying from child, okay.

You guys care about black women surviving childbirth, white lady with the baby?

Trying to make sure my daughter lives as long as yours. Ma'am, you have two

minutes for black children? Okay. Just teach 'em not to talk to black people.

Okay. Good modeling. I didn't expect you to be that kind of white liberal lady.

Passerby: Have a good day.

(keep rolling//fade under T2)

Khafre: I won't. I'm trying to get white people to care, but they care more about shopping at Madewell.

T2: As far as I could tell, Khafre's approach was breaking every fundraising best practice. He didn't hedge, or soften his pitch when people walked by. And his critique of what he called “white apathy” broke the norms.

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

Khafre: Hey. Hey, you guys care about black women dying from childbirth?

Man on street: No, thank you.

Khafre: I knew that was a long shot. White man. Hey, hey, be careful. He is not gonna step up for Asian people when you need him to.

[[START fade under T3 — @ “need him to”]]

T3: Here’s this guy saying the quiet part out loud. I’d never seen anything like it.

Man on street: Be careful.

Khafre: I don't have to be careful, white man. It is not 1842, white man. Enjoy your whiteness.

T4: Asking person after person if they care about black death; and these people – these people are walking their dogs, they’re stepping out of ice cream shops, pushing babies in strollers, or looking down at their phones while crossing the street.

Some people appeared startled by the question. Some were offended that he referred to them by their race. A lot of them said they cared. But they often said so as they walked past Khafre.

[Fade up]

Khafre: Like, this shit is uncivilized out here. These motherfuckers are eating ice cream, walking dogs, drinking matcha... [Fade under]

T5 NeEddra: I spent a lot of time following Khafre and his team around.

Khafre: This is NeEddra, right here, oh oh, y’all met.

Dami: Oh yeah I met her at Flow Lounge

Khafre: Dami is Nitty420 brother

Dontrell: how about you bro’man’

Khafre: that’s Dontrell right there

Dontrell: you care about black women...

T6 NeEddra: Being out there, in neighborhoods where THE CHEAP HOUSES ARE a million and a half dollars, watching people ignore him as he tried to get their attention:

Khafre: ...Not as important as walking the dog to you though,

Sydney: I have a girlfriend who does work on this...

Khafre: I got a girlfriend too. Don’t make me good with women’s issues, white lady. If we were dogs?

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

[Start to fade under T7]

Sydney: : Don't be antagonistic.

Khafre: I'm not antagonizing you. Don't be a Karen. I'm not hurting you. I'm not aggressive. All right?

T7 NeEddra: I had so many questions for him. We met up a few days later to debrief.

ACT 1 -- the pitch/the Iago test

NeEddra: I don't know if you're, mama used to say this, but well, my grandmother would say you always catch more, more flies with honey.

Khafre: Yeah. I don't want flies. You know, I have so many good meaning white people tell me, you know, you catch more flies of honey. I'm like, first of all, what makes you think I should have to give you some honey? And what makes you think I want flies? Your flies aren't invited to the cookout and I shouldn't have to buy honey and sweeten up my rage. Period. People should see that I shouldn't even have to stand in this white neighborhood crying out for help because we're dying, period.

[[Ambi - fade up but still very low – Chestnut street/SF Marina]]

T8 NeEddra: When I documented Khafree working in San Francisco's Marina neighborhood I tried to squeeze in questions in between his pitches. When the lunch crowd passed, I asked if canvassing was hard when he first started out.

Khafre: it was difficult to ask people for money at first. Well, just at first, 'cause I've always had mouthpieces, you know what I'm saying?

T9 NeEddra: Yeah, I was finding out. Khafre could talk. He was funny, lyrical, and charismatic. He says he **honed** his fundraising skills over fifteen years ago working at Greenpeace, the environmental justice org.

[4:11.361] Khafre: I got hella good at it. It's kind of why I ended up running and managing the whole Bay Area Street team.

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

T9 NeEddra: Khafre was at Greenpeace right in between the 2008 financial crisis when millions of people lost their homes and savings — and the Occupy Wall Street movement when the idea of wealth redistribution was a mainstream conversation.¹

Khafre: So, when I started working for Greenpeace, I kind of got the game on how to fund a movement.

Khafre: I got fired for stuff that most white folks get to do that. Uh, and I –

NeEddra: what?

Khafre: Huh?

NeEddra: What do you mean?

Khafre: I messed up. I made a mistake. Oh, one that white folks commonly get to do. I didn't even mess up that bad, but it was, it was hard.

T10: I asked Khafre what happened at Greenpeace a few more times after that conversation. Each time I asked he told me he made a mistake.

He left Greenpeace with two things: 1) an idea to replicate the street fundraising model . But this time, the plan was to fundraise in white neighborhoods and use the funds to incubate black artists and hip-hop education programming.

[5:13.810] Khafre: Um, when I started canvassing for myself, I remember I used to say, Hey, you guys care about education. Uh, and I talk to people and halfway through they'd be like, well, those kids need to pull up their pants and stop listening to that rap music.

T11 NeEddra: This happened so frequently that Khafre started A/B testing his pitch.

Khafre: You know, then I start saying, you care about brown kids and hip hop, you know, uh. And I was like, black kids in hip hop, you know what I'm saying? I was like, you care about black kids? I just took the hip hop out.

T12 NeEddra: He says that experience shaped how he fundraises today.

¹ <https://fcic.law.stanford.edu/>

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

Khafre: I learned pretty fast, like people will waste your time. And it's not called, catching, it's called fishing. I only got a certain amount of time to talk to people. I need to maximize the value of those people. Maximize the quality of those people as far as their output for black neighborhoods. Most people don't even like black people. Um, most people don't respond back, and you end up wasting your time with a lot of people who don't give a fuck when you say benign things.

T13 NeEddra: There were people who stopped and listened. Khafre calls them the 'good white people.' Here's how he described them when we were debriefing in the studio:

Khafre: my entire business is banked on 90% white people stopping for me, giving me money. I have white people say, you go get 'em, keep causing this good trouble.

NeEddra: What about the people who don't stop and get mad at you and then post stuff on Reddit?

Khafre: I don't care. They're not gonna donate anyway.

T14 NeEddra: Well, he was right about that.

I mentioned Reddit because I'd just scrolled through a reddit post that was a few months old titled — "Beware of scammers claiming to raise money for black women and babies."²

It had over 350 upvotes. And 105 comments.

In post after post — people described Khafre and his team as "race baiting," "harassing," "aggressive," and "rude."

There was a thread where everyone was naming where they ran into Khafre and his team. And one poster says:

"They canvas 24th st in front of Whole Foods.... If you don't stop they'll yell , "Oh ..."

Khafre: you don't care about black people!

And another person replies:

² <https://www.reddit.com/r/sanfrancisco/comments/1ouqomh/comment/noei99q/>

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

*"Thought they were Greenpeace but heard what i thought was something about black people when I walked by them."*³

(Fade down under VO)

T15 NeEddra: In February, Ariel Zilbur, a reporter at the New York Post, ran a story titled, 'Wealth distribution officers' harass San Francisco residents: 'Do you care about black mothers?!' I mentioned it to Khafre during our debrief.

NeEddra: Ok, so, the New York Post has an article about you. Have you seen it?

Khafre: Hip-Hop for the Future?

NeEddra: Yes.

Khafre: No!

NeEddra: Okay, there it is. Okay.

Khafre: Oh shit. Are you kidding me?

NeEddra: Look

Khafre: Serious?

NeEddra: Look. So,

Khafre: Wow. When was this?

NeEddra: February 23rd

Khafre: Holy Sheesus. See, that's why I'm working so hard. I don't even know. Oh my God. Oh, I remember this. There's also a Reddit post about me scammers.

NeEddra: Yeah. Beware of scammers... What does it say? Claiming to raise money for...Black babies and black mothers or something.

Khafre in studio1: Oh, I love it. Oh, I love this.

T16: NeEddra: Khafre's reading parts of the article out loud and gets to the last sentence. The reporter says he reached out to Khafre, but didn't receive a response. That's when I notice Khafre reaching for my keyboard and I say:

NeEddra: ... Don't be putting comments from my IP address!

³https://www.reddit.com/r/sanfrancisco/comments/1ouqomh/beware_scammers_claiming_to_raise_money_for_black/

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

Khafre: Yeah, Oh, I can't wait to talk to him. You didn't ask me for no comments. You didn't reach out to me at all. I would've definitely talked to y'all.

NeEddra: Oh, that's interesting. So the reporters...

Khafre: I never heard, I never heard them reach out to me at all. I would've responded, I would've gave them the interview of lifetime.

T17 NeEddra: The reddit user who started the thread didn't post about race. The original post focused on Khafre's actual business. It reads, quote: "Beware scammers claiming to raise money for black women and babies

r/sanfrancisco

•6 mo. ago

Beware scammers claiming to raise money for black women and babies

You may have seen these guys out and about in the Bay Area aggressively trying to get donations purportedly to address the high mortality rate of black women and children.

They are actually paid "Wealth Redistribution Officers" with a group called Hip Hop for the Future. They are not with any legitimate charity that distributes funds for that cause. Don't be fooled.

T18: The user is right – "Wealth Redistribution Officer" *is* the actual title for HipHop for the Future's canvassers. The title reflects Khafre Robin Hood Theory.

I think that are white people as a whole. I don't want people to mischaracterize my words and bring it to, I don't owe black people, no white people as a social group. They owe us. They need to pay. They need to pay.

I think, I mean, it's, it is my Robinhood theory, you know what I'm saying? And it took me a while to realize that grassroots fundraising wasn't a white thing. Uh, and there was a significant click moment in my head when I was like, oh, snap. I could do, I could do this same stuff and bring that wealth to black neighborhoods. Oh man, I could fund hip hop with it. You know, I've never looked back since then.

T19: Khafre and his team aren't "with" a charity. They aren't "with" a nonprofit either.

Here's how he explained the company when a pair of nurses asked in San Francisco:

The Nurses: you have, like, are you running your own organization?

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

Khafre: So this is my own company. It's a social purpose s corp status business. I'm a single black father with full custody, so I can't keep building 501c3s. I got eight employees, six black men, and one gay white dude. You gotta have a gay white man. I need a, I need a white woman. I, I need a white woman working with me too. I feel really safe then.

The Nurses: pregnancy? What do you guys do for that

Khafre: So I was throwing drip fist and I brought the pregnancy village over to help. Um,

The Nurses: So what is the pregnancy village like?

Khafre: So this is a five member coalition. Uh, it's basically a one stop shop. It was developed by UCSF. Okay. Uh, and it was recently passed on a four coalition members, so it wouldn't be some white overarching thing, like they wanted to make sure we had community ownership. I'm the fourth member, so I. I guess I technically do maternal care. Uh, but they bring a mobile ultrasound vehicle from UCSF, doulas, gynecologists. They got, uh, domestic violence people from Black Women Revolt. They have early childhood development people, homeless prenatal services.

The Nurses: is it non-profit based or is it like volunteer?

Khafre: So, we paid \$2,000 a year just to invest in a pool, so we have some ownership over it. IAh but yeah, what's the most uncomfortable exorbitant amount you can give a black man between a dollar and a million and seventy two?

The Nurses: Can I just scan this character?

The Nurses: Do. You have cards?

Khafre: The only thing that I have for you is this is the flyer. Okay?

The Nurses: is this the same QR code?

Khafre: No, it's definitely not just best of the website, and this is for me specifically, so I know that people donated through me. Okay. Uh, and we all have our own individual QR codes. Gotcha. So you can support the organization

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

T21: One of the nurses donates and the other says she'll donate after visiting the website.

Last thing about the reddit post. One user, deep in the thread shared that HipHop for the Future was not a charity, but a for profit SPC. Here's what they said:

They are not a charity as you might believe. They are a for profit "SPC" social purpose corporation. No charity rating. No public information about their distributions. Or how much their officers get paid. Pretty scammy.

T 22 Here's the thing: in California, social purpose corporations are for profit entities. The absence of a charity rating is a feature. Not a bug. SPCs are bound by almost all of the same rules as other ordinary corporations. They just combine a charitable purpose with profit-making objectives, similar to public benefit corporations. Here's Khafre and I again in the studio :

Khafre: I started doing my research and nonprofit i know it's a lot it's a a lot. First of all, I don't think the white man needs to ask me any questions. You know what I'm saying? I think they need to give me my money and leave me alone. I did research about just different entities and I think seven years ago or something, the Social Purpose Corporation status came up, which is, uh, kind of between a regular shareholder company and a B Corp. I don't have as much reporting

T23 Khafre doesn't have any shareholders making him his own board, but he says he welcomes investments from the right people in the future.⁴ He's also the entire C-suite – all company governance, operations and management is centralized with him – including HR.⁵ He told me his primary motivation for picking the SPC is his daughter's future security.

Khafre: I can't build legacies that aren't mine. I can't risk, you know, her safety and eating food, you know, on hoping that everything's cool. 10 years from now, I need to start building my own legacy, right? Uh, and that's just my responsibility to my daughter.

T24 When we had our final interview in April 2026, it'd been nearly six months since I started following his work. One of the first things he told me last fall was that he planned to launch rap competitions in San Francisco and San Jose. I wanted to wrap up with some insight into how his growth plans were going.

⁴ Khafre on Chestnut - get the clip

⁵ <https://bizfileonline.sos.ca.gov/search/business>

 STATEMENT OF INFORMATION 2025.pdf

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

NeEddra: So where are we? We are in Q2, and when we met, it was, I think it was August last year, and I started reporting in November. And you were saying your goal is to get. A space in San Francisco and a space in San Jose. So where, where are we in that?

Khafre: So right now we're at about 375 month of donors doing about 6,500. Uh, which puts me back to square zero. ... So I had to just put that on my back so we're up to where I'm comfortable again.

T25 I'd heard some of these numbers before when I documented Khafre pitching. He often told people on the street how many more donors he needed to make San Francisco or San Jose possible.

NeEddra: How do you, how do you calculate the number of people you need?

Khafre: Uh, based off of average donation?

NeEddra: Mm-hmm.

Khafre: So we got an average of \$17.24, which is not high enough. I like that to go up, but we got a lot of broke folks that donate five bucks, you know what I'm saying? And so my demographic's gonna look different from a greenpeace. But yeah, uh, just calculating it based off of our average. That's it. So if we got 375 monthly donors, average is \$17.24, I know about where I need to get. Um, and then plus building my staff. Mm-hmm. You know, a lot of this is in my fielders for having done this so long. My job is to get about. Seven more staff members. Mm-hmm. Which takes a lot of infrastructure support.

T26: I asked Khafre several other questions about his scaling vision and his strategy for getting there.

NeEddra: So talk me through your vision for scaling up. How does that happen?

Khafre: Yeah, I mean, so for me it's just like, how gray am I gonna be once I get San Jose open? You know what I'm saying? Like, it's not a matter of if it's gonna happen. Uh, I could get enough monthly donors by myself in two years, you know what I'm saying? If I get more people I could probably get 'em in two months.

Medicine Music

NeEddra James / Audio Capstone 2026

T27 Khafre's monthly donors are his most predictable revenue stream. But at roughly \$6,500 a month, that barely covers Flow Lounge and his contribution to Pregnancy Village.

The rest is a bet — a bet that enough white people people will care enough, consistently enough, to keep payroll rolling and the DJ spinning. Whether his canvassing strategy gets him there is an open question.

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