Later, Namkung became a student in one of Fairchild’s psychology classes, and following the semester’s “rap-ups,” the two decided to collaborate on a rap together. When the suggestion was made that Namkung write a piece for Pitzer College’s first annual Love-In, an event organized by Fairchild’s first-year seminar, War and Peace, Namkung agreed to write a rap only if Fairchild collaborated with him.

Namkung selected the beat for the rap, and the topic was chosen based on the theme of the Love-In. The two met in Fairchild’s office where they wrote and discussed their rap until the final draft of “Make Love, Not War” was finished.

“I had never imagined that I would be writing a rap with one of my professors. However, I feel like we have a close relationship that has a lot of friendship qualities in it, so it was much easier and less awkward than I would have expected,” Namkung recalled.

Namkung also learned about politics and peace-making from Fairchild in the process of writing their rap. “Working with someone on writing a song on a topic like war allows me to learn a lot, which is especially valuable when that person is as knowledgeable as Fairchild,” Namkung explained.

Fairchild’s interest in the rapping medium derived from a history of studying the rap culture and those it affects most. “I have an unquenchable thirst for freedom and liberation and improving the life circumstances of African Americans. As such, I am one who is more than frequently dismayed at the content of popular music, particularly rap and hip-hop,” Fairchild noted. He admits that there are a few conscious rap and hip-hop artists, but most are “promoted by the powers that be and the mass media that take us to a low level of thought, language and function.”

As an African American psychologist, Fairchild realized the problem of ever-increasing profane, violent, and misogynistic messages that popular music seems to promote, and instead decided to utilize the medium to convey more positive messages. “I wanted to think about demonstrating alternatives. Different ways of presenting information. Keeping it real, but also tapping into the popularity of rap and hip-hop and the linguistic invention inherent in rhyme,” Fairchild explained. “And so I thought for years about doing something of a more positive nature, and I thought about doing poetic biography.”

Fairchild’s first opportunity to practice this form of rapping was in 2003 when he was asked to introduce President Laura Skandera Trombley at her inauguration. At the proposition, he wondered, “Wouldn’t it be cool if I could make it rhyme?” He was given Trombley’s biography, and created a rhythmic introduction for the new president. “And it worked, and once I did that [I noticed} it was kind of a challenge to tell a real life story and make things rhyme . . . but it worked with her introduction, and [so] I put my thoughts to putting the biography of Sojourner Truth together,” Fairchild reflected.

In Fall 2004, Fairchild successfully produced his first CD titled A Woman Named Truth: Sojourner Truth, a compilation of rhymes both written and performed by Fairchild, set to various types of background music.

Fairchild noticed that the use of rhyme to describe a person or experience was a very unique way of stretching and enhancing the mind. “As a psychologist and as a teacher and as a writer, I found the task of writing in rhyme to be an interesting, almost other-worldly experience,” he described. Fairchild had found a creative outlet unlike any other he had used before. He explained that psychologically it is unique to most academic outlets because, “It’s a right-brain activity, the way neuroscientists and psychologists talk about specialization.”

The use of rhyme as an expression was so rewarding that Fairchild decided he could also encourage it in the classroom to benefit his students. He explained, “Because I found it to be a challenge—and a rewarding one—I started to incorporate the writing of rap as an assignment to students just as a final end-of-the-course exercise in which they would rhyme out what they learned.” Fairchild clarified that rap does not figure into his classes very prominently throughout the entirety of semesters, but almost all of his students are asked in the end of their courses to present a “rap-up.”

In asking his students to write in rhymes, Fairchild takes classroom learning to a unique level. “I do it as an alternative way of thinking, an alternative way of creative expression . . . and people come up with some really creative things. I think it’s a great exercise,” he concluded.

Not only has Fairchild helped his students, but they have helped him as well. When Namkung and Fairchild worked together to write “Make Peace, Not War,” Fairchild admits to having not only taught Namkung about war, but also having learned from Namkung quite a bit about the rapping medium. “He really showed me how to write in a way that had more beat to it, and gave me a better sense of style and rhythm,” he explained.

Both Fairchild and Namkung expanded their learning experience by bridging the gap between professor and student to create a rap that followed Eiglish’s vision, for utilizing the musical form to impart a positive message. Their collaboration illustrates how communication between faculty and students fosters transformative academic growth.