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Each one Teach one: Hip Hop`s Politics and Practice

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2013-05-31
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Each One Teach One: Hip Hop's Politics and Practice

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A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (Development Studies)

February 2010

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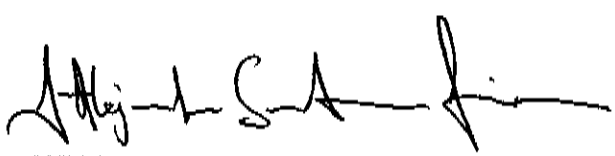
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ABSTRACT

Hip Hop, a global youth culture and a powerful means of education is also incredibly understudied and often misinterpreted. In the wake of capitalism's failure to reduce inequalities and to deliver an ethically sound notion of transformative development, our focus would be better directed on the exposure of alternative forms of education; in this case: Hip Hop. A phenomenon that contests and challenges the dominant (Western, mainstream) culture and it is this dynamic that allows for an alternative notion of development and consequently an alternative development action. This research wants to explore the politics and practice of the Hip Hop community in order to focus on Hip Hop's capacity to make people reflect and transform human perspectives, encourage awareness and freedom of expression thereby creating a space for alternative action. This is the potential of Hip Hop to affect a given individual's perception of reality, consciousness and/or awareness of political and social issues.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Research Report is my own, original, authentic and unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts (Development Studies) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.



Jan Alejandro Santana Fiorenza

09 June 2010

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents, Laura and Eduardo. Finally!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe this research to you both. Thank you Lisa and thank you Michelle. Without your commitment, contributions and dedication who knows what would've happened. You're most appreciated and highly respected!
Peace!

PREFACE

The first time I met South African 'heads'[1] was one Sunday morning in March at an outdoor basketball court in Johannesburg.

A cipher had been lit on the sideline. It was a steady rhythmic beat, sparked by a tall young man 'boxing' with his voice. Panzuli's face is long yet he holds a genuine smile tattooed across the cheeks, when he's not beat boxing that is. On that occasion, Panzuli's facial expressions kept constantly morphing at the speed of his sound. He was wearing black and green sneakers that gave out a faint red-tinted glow every time the sun shone on them. This was caused by dust particles that were clinging on to the leather up and above the soles of his shoes. I had previously heard that a simple way to tell where a South African lives is to look down at the shoes. If the shoes don't show any signs of soil then that person is likely to reside in a well-off neighbourhood. Panzuli lives with his sister in a rough zone of Soweto. Even his pair of navy socks had a reddish tinge to them. Idem his baggy green shorts worn in proper tune with Hip Hop 'style', below the waist. Panzuli had a t-shirt on, which he also wore loose. It was red and it matched the colour of his corneas, whereas his large irises were as black as pupils, but shinier. His crown, a woollen black hat with a visor, covered up most of his dreaded dome. All of a sudden, Panzuli added some 'voice scratching' and decided to speed up the beat. The result was an explosion of 'drum and bass'. By then there was a crowd of people cheering him on. There were more precisely twenty-three 'spectators' - eight of which, female. After about ninety seconds of frenzy, Panzuli cut the sound off, abruptly, to bring it back again, with a rewinding motion all the way back to the original 'simple' beat that had started it all. At this point a young MC[2] that goes by the name of Tokyo started freestyling[3]. A third person, Mo Places, then added more beat boxing and sound effects to the whole.

[1] Individuals characterised by a true passion for Hip Hop who also take an active part in the practice of the culture.
[2] MC is an acronym for: Master of Ceremony or Microphone Controller. It's to be understood as synonymous to the term rapper.
[3] Freestyling is when an MC performs an unrehearsed verse inventing it as he/she goes along.

Even the people playing basketball had stopped to listen –as I frantically reached for my phone to press record:

"...The world's a web, we make it infinite, so intricate, but why inanimate?
So listen to me when I spit at them who're non-adapt to face the facts
I'm making tracks about the tracks that people left when people came
To invade and shame, shoot and blame, trade and slave to pave the way
For 'jesus inc', cash is king, bitches, 'bling'
And all that other 'TING' to hold you down, and forgive,
Mentally forget to make you think..."

The next Sunday I was invited by Panzuli and Tokyo to a Hip Hop festival and benefit show. Tokyo couldn't make it though as he had to work, instead we were honoured by Sezi's presence - Panzuli's sister.

I was slightly disappointed on landing. I had been expecting a festival type ambiance with lots of people outside, different stalls selling music, clothing and food but all I saw was a small conglomerate of five people (all girls in their early twenties) standing outside the entrance to the club, seemingly waiting for somebody. Sezi, PanZuli and I paid the fifty Rand entry fee, each, and proceeded to enter the club. It was dark inside and silent. I began to wonder what it is we just paid for when I suddenly realised that the club was actually full and that all around me there were people sitting down waiting for the show to begin. I felt lifted, maybe the set up wasn't quite what I was expecting from a festival but at least this could explain why it was so deserted and quiet outside. The atmosphere was the one of a theatre, not of a festival. We had arrived just in time and were forced to hurry to secure some seats as two more small groups of people had come in behind us. The lights go on just as we had found seats facing the stage on some steps on the right hand side of the club. The stage was centred on the back wall of the club. It was approximately 6 metres in width and 4 metres in depth. A woman stormed in. Head held high. She was short but her posture was powerful, her expression grave but her eyes were shining from

the emotion. She was dressed in all-black clothes, black boots, around her wrist she carried a red, yellow and green bracelet and her hair was tightly twisted into cornrows. She greeted the audience with energy and thanked us all for coming to show support. Her voice is strong, clear and loud but her tone was welcoming and even comforting. The audience responded well to her. PanZuli leant over to my ear and sayid: 'you'll see, this lady is dope'. The audience was clapping and cheering and a heavy beat started playing in the speakers and suddenly scratching had begun. I gazed to my left and spotted the DJ in his booth. He was in his twenties; was wearing a baseball cap slightly pointed to the right and a bright yellow singlet over a baggy white t-shirt. He had one huge earphone stuck to the right ear and the other hanging around his neck. The lights had gone off on stage and were now shining on the booth. All the attention had shifted to the DJ as he scratched and mixed the vinyls until the lights went off again to be switched back on, this time to illuminate the stage. The lady from earlier on was standing with her arms up, her fists closed. Complete silence had taken over the club. She performed a poem. It started slow then sped up and then slowed down again. Unfortunately I was not yet in possession of a voice recorder but I remember that the poem talked of flowers, of rivers and clouds. It talked of concrete, of rain, of shackles and whips; it was about pain and tears. Tears that would moisten pain and allow for new flowers to bloom. It was a poem for all the women of the world; in particular it was a poem dedicated to the women of Zimbabwe. She left the stage as the crowd clapped hands wildly. Two young men entered. I was told they're from Mozambique. One started beat boxing while the other rapped at a slow beat. The latter rapped clearly. He didn't bite his words and used a clean English. He performed two songs. They were both heavy with messages of unity, respect, solidarity and freedom. For the third song the beat boxer joined in on the rap. Unfortunately I didn't understand this last song. They were mixing what I was told to be Tshonga with some Portuguese but the energy of the flow made my head bounce to the beat. I looked around and realised that I was not the only one. It almost seemed like I was in one of those group dances where the leader tells the crowd what moves to do and the crowd follows blindly, but in this case the performers had not given out orders they had just tuned the audience to

their heart beat. When the two Mozambicans left the stage, another man replaced them. He is a poet from Zimbabwe in his late twenties. I didn't catch his name but his performance was memorable. His voice, deep and husky, spoke of knowledge as wealth, of education as rifles, and of love as bullets of peace directed at those who have lost hope and at those who are afraid of change. The first woman who opened the show re-appeared on the stage thanking the audience once again for their support, asking the crowd to "make some noise for Women of Zimbabwe Arise" (a powerful social movement in Zimbabwe made up of women), and the crowd went wild. The high pitches from the women in the audience almost shattered my left eardrum. "Make some noise for all freedom fighters in Zimbabwe, in Palestine, for the Saharawi peoples and for all the oppressed people in the world. Let them know we are here, let them know we care, ladies and gentlemen. Please MAKE SOME NOISE!!!" By then everyone in the crowd was standing. The lights had gone off and the majority of people were jumping with their fists raised. Lighters were also lit, some were spraying deodorant or some other flammable aerosol on the lighters producing flames, others were screaming as loud as they could. I saw Sezi crouching down holding her ears. PanZuli was waving his left fist in the air and was bouncing up and down while he making what sounded like native Indian war chants by tapping his right hand on his mouth. The club was vibrating with energy. The yelling, screaming, whistling and stomping seemed never-ending until the lights went back on. The DJ slapped a beat on and a one-hour break was announced between three and four o'clock. I couldn't believe it was already three! We got up and headed towards the exit for some fresh air. We sat ourselves down on the grass, in the sun, just in front of the club and laid back. I counted one hundred and eighty-six people coming out of the club, plus roughly another three-dozen people that were already standing around outside. I heard people talking about finding somewhere to eat. If anybody had come up with the idea of selling food at the event they would've been making a lot of money, which could also have gone to charity along with the money for the entrance.

Sezi pulled a bag of weed out of her bag and rolled a joint. I was not so comfortable being around kids and parents as a joint was being passed around and PanZuli must've spotted my worried expression because he tells me to look around. I noticed that there were at least 15 small groups of people scattered around the space outside the club that were either in the process of smoking or of preparing joints. I wondered why wherever there is Hip Hop there is also Marijuana. Rappers from all over the world and in many different languages had dedicated one or more songs to this plant - Cypress Hill (New York), Bone Thugs 'n' Harmony (Cleveland), Snoop Dogg (Los Angeles), Bias B (Melbourne), Bliss 'n' Eso (Sidney), Assalti Frontali (Rome), Neffa (Milan) NTM (Paris), Saìa Supa Krew (Marseille), Ken Ring (Stockholm), Timbuktu (Malmo), Fuerte Apache (Buenos Aires), are just some rappers, some more famous than others, around this planet that have written a personalised anthem in honour of weed. I asked PanZuli exactly what the link was between Hip Hop and the herb? "I don't know, but I started listening to Hip Hop at around the same time that I started smoking Zol." He claimed that it was because they both open people's minds. He argued that smoking joints would help him write more creatively and refrain him from stressing. Beat boxing was similarly a way to let go of tension. "I would always feel better after beat boxing. Less tense. As if the blood was flowing faster and smoother." I asked Sezi who her favourite rappers were: "Talib Kweli, Mos Def, Dead Prez, Immortal Technique, Tumi, Proverb, HHP" - I was intrigued by the fact that they were all male artists so I asked her about women in Hip Hop. "Women in Hip Hop? There are many but 'women in rap' is hard to say. I love Lauryn Hill. Pam the Funktress is really cool too, Jean Grae. The real cool women though are not famous. They're there but they don't make it often to become stars. There are many break-dancers, graffers. But they might just not make the wall. Their masterpieces remain as sketches in a diary or a notepad. It's the same thing with rap. That's the difference with the men. Women I think have the potential to be the best rappers out there. The woman gives birth to life so of course she can give life to Hip Hop. But it's not in society's interest to listen to woman." I thought of Freire, when he states "liberation is a painful childbirth". Sezi continued: "Women need to take care of things, they don't have time for a rap career, and if they had time, it just wouldn't be

acceptable spending any time on it." I could have let her go on but I was curious in finding out how she had gotten into the Hip Hop culture. Sezi told me that her and PanZuli had started together in 1993. They had gotten a tape from an older cousin who lives in the United States. It was mixed by the cousin and contained tracks from NWA to Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, X-Klan, KRS-ONE, etc. "The lyrics were just intense. I had never heard anything like it until then. They were talking about serious things going on. I saw the other side of America. Swearing, sure, but in the right places. I got interested in history and politics through this. I wanted to know why, when and how. Who we are and finally what we are. To me it was like a wake up call." I asked her if that was the reason why she was studying medicine. PanZuli burst into laughter and said: "she needs a doctor that's why she's studying to become one". Sezi's answer was shy, yet honest: "I really don't know why I'm doing it, probably because my mother wanted me to." PanZuli was looking in the distance smiling. Sezi kept talking: "I'm not into Hip Hop as much anymore as I was back in the day, but it has all changed as well. When there's a serious event I'll be there but now it's all for the show. Hip Hop is a message, maybe the strongest means of delivering a message but if the message is meaningless, then why express it? This is what's happening now. People are just talking shit." At this stage PanZuli tapped me on the shoulder and pointed at a group of people standing round in a circle. It was a cipher. We got up to listen. On one side there was a rather chubby man in his early twenties. He had a joyful expression and wore a black t-shirt and camouflage (military style) shorts, a watch around his right wrist, and a black baseball cap. His shoes were shiny white. His flow was slow and articulate. On the opposing side was another young male, tall and slim, wearing an old pair of blue trousers, a green sports jacket, an old pair of 'Converse' shoes and a bright blue beanie – There was a more serious look on his face, almost a sad expression. His flow was faster, his voice deeper. The battle between the two played on for the better part of fifteen minutes. They were constantly coming up with punch lines. They used metaphors and similes, to construct complex rhymes at very fast paces. I wondered how the brain could react so quickly, and why we were so slow at picking up signals. The last thing I

remember was the serious look on the taller freestyler's face as he concluded the cipher with:

"Cos like the sun I never left
I've just been shining somewhere else
But everyday I get back at you
To shine on you and check on you
To show you where I'm at,
So close your eyes and shut your trap
Yo, this is where I'm at,
I'm still here,
Don't fear me
I will only burn you
If you disrespect me.
I'm still here,
It's all clear
That you need to reflect
On what's left to protect,
Cos these posers fail to impress me,
And pigs they want to harass me
for smoking some grass, see
They're snitching out back,
trying to arrest me
but I'm still here."

As the time got closer to four, more and more people showed up so we headed into the club before all the seats would be occupied. Now the majority of the people in the audience consisted of young women and men between the ages of fourteen and thirty. The first-lady of the event re-appeared on stage. She stood proudly and thanked everybody again for showing up. She thanked in particular Magamba - the Cultural Activist Network, the Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum and LNM Entertainment for the solidarity and for maintaining a spotlight on the Zimbabwean crisis. "And finally, a special thank you goes out to the young ones present in the audience for

showing that they care about the world in which they live in. MAKE SOME NOISE!!!" As the crowd cheered, a young woman appeared on stage. PanZuli and Sezi stood up from the excitement and told me to listen close. She was minute but her presence was mighty. Dressed in a long green skirt, a wine-red sleeveless top with large buttons, her feet were bare but her left ankle sported a red, black and green anklet. Her long dreadlocks were tightly wrapped in a green material and were sticking slightly out from the top. Her face was attractive, her presence a blessing and her voice was soft and comforting. She too was a poet. Her performance was above anybody else's. It was not the usual dedication to women. The poem didn't consist of just spoken language but also of body language. She gesticulated wildly, yet elegantly, as she spoke her poetry. The poem was probably the longest poem I had ever heard but the silence from the crowd as she concluded her performance was proof of her skill. Everybody was left dumbstruck, wanting more. The announcer came back on stage to warn everybody that Tumi and the Volume were going to perform next...

Hopefully these *vignettes* have served their purpose, which is to provide a window from where the reader, who might not have had any prior experience with this particular youth culture, can begin to understand the Hip Hop lifestyle and more importantly acquire an interest in the politics and practice of Hip Hop.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research intends to explore the *politics and practice* of the Hip Hop community in the context of global capitalism. This is especially relevant in times such as these when individuals and communities are faced, and left to deal with, the consequences of yet another economic crisis. The key question I had initially intended to pose was whether or not Hip Hop could provide practical alternatives for the realization of individual, and community 'development'. As I delved into the topic I very soon learned of several ways in which this question could be confirmed with a positive answer[4]. There are in fact several projects[5] that have been proposed and implemented on Earth by 'heads' or through the active involvement of 'heads' at levels that seek to affect especially on the human development of individuals, and in some instances of collectives of individuals i.e. of communities. Furthermore, Hip Hop is a perception, and the Hip Hop movement appears to be centred on the concept of 'knowledge of self', rooted on the *credo* 'each one teach one'. This led me to believe that Hip Hop artists could answer for alternative forms of 'education' and ways of viewing 'freedom'. *Was this the case?* These alternatives, which I will eventually discuss in detail can be better understood if imagined as nodes, distinct from each other, yet all branched to the same network, to a global perception web being woven by imaginary, yet visibly loud and untameable spiders - 'Heads'. Therefore what I believe to be more interesting is to study the nature of the spiders, their movements, their lifestyle in an attempt at understanding *what* inspires them to weave the nodes that connect Hip Hop to the notion of human development - and *why*? This is precisely what became of my exploratory aim. Specifically, I explore debates on education and freedom from an alternative perception to what I call the

[4] The mechanics as to how this occurred, and why, will be explained in the section on methodology.
[5] I present, and refer to examples of these projects further down.

'mainstream' vision rooted in the idea of Western, cultural and political, supremacy. Rather than presenting my findings in a standardised fashion I have opted to incorporate them throughout the text in an attempt to better illustrate the connection, either in confirmation or counter-argument, between the literature and the data collected.

A great deal of the analysis presented here suggests that Hip Hop manifests as a global counter-hegemonic, anti-imperialist perception in continuous conflict with, and ever so more opposed to, the Establishment – appropriately referred to in the Hip Hop 'slang' with the word 'Babylon[6]'- its prescriptions, and its all-pervasive notion of development. Furthermore, this research offers a critique of the practical shortcomings, and theoretical myopia of the development doctrine thus far, and addresses concerns about the global economic system's failure to reduce inequalities whilst apparently clearing the ground for a fascist 'renaissance'. Thus, to borrow from Isaac Newton's famous expression I shall *stand on the shoulders of:* Amartya Sen (2001), when arguing for alternative notions of development that seek to establish humankind as the beneficiaries of the development doctrine; Paulo Freire, when I speak of alternative education; Bob Black (1985), for a discussion on the implications of institutionalized labour in relation to his arguments on freedom; Joseph Stiglitz (2002), to define globalisation; and, Arundhati Roy (2004), to better grasp the concept of 'Empire'. These *giants*, some 'larger' than others, serve to provide the theoretical foundation for exploring and examining alternative politics and practices. I am hopeful that through my ethnographic research on the *politics and practice* of Hip Hop conducted in Johannesburg, South Africa, I will be able to: (1) provide multidisciplinary ground for the study of Hip Hop in the context of development; (2) explore the limitations of the existing definition of development; (3) illustrate, through my case-study, how the youth have found in Hip Hop a democratic and free platform where they can experiment spontaneous counter-hegemonic, and sometimes revolutionary practices to the established neo-liberal economics that in turn lead to development as I shall proximately define. Finally, this research

[6] This is a notion that an ever-increasing number of anti-imperialist and anti-fascist movements around the world borrow from Rastafarian culture in reference to Empire i.e. 'the system'.

acquired a particular interest in exploring the attempts to escape the mechanics and limitations of capitalism on the part of individual members of the Hip Hop community.

But first...

What is Hip Hop?

Before I realized Hip Hop was all of us
I used to think Hip Hop was in the States
And the rest of us are followers
I was quite alarmed to discover how wrong I was
And quite relieved to discover that it belongs to all of us
Hip hop is independent minds, thinkers you don't have to write scriptures
Just subscribe to the principles
It's not just the elements, the heads and listeners
Without us there's no Hip Hop, Hip Hop lives in us
I used to think that hip hop is anything with ebonyx
That has an explicit lyrics sticker on it
I used to think that it was songs with the strongest language that were dishonest
A foreign culture that we adopted
I used to think that I could hear it
When I cranked up the sound and when I turned it down then it got clearer
And when I looked through the window I'd swear I was near it
"Hold on" it's not a window - I'm looking in the mirror.[7]

The ancients, whether they'd be Greeks, Hindus or Japanese all believed that nature consisted of five elements. The first four elements are the expressions of nature. They describe matter –air, water, earth and fire. They are seen as boundaries, as four points encompassing a grey area. This grey area is the fifth element, referred to by the Greeks as Aether and by the Hindus as Akasha, representing that which was beyond the material world. Similarly, Hip Hop's version of Aether - 'knowledge of self' - can be explained as that quintessence resulting from the interaction and interconnectedness of four forms of material expression universally recognised as the

[7] Proverb. *I Am Hip Hop.* The Manuscript.

elements of Hip Hop. These four elements are Break Dancing, Graffiti Art, Rap[8] and being a DJ.

David Toop explores the origins of Hip Hop in *Rap Attack* (1984). The culture, brought together by the five elements (dj, break-dance, rap, graffiti, knowledge of self), starts in the Bronx - an area of New York City characterised by "project housing and burnt out buildings".[9] The Bronx was in fact a so-called ghetto, "an area of extreme urban deprivation".[10] Before there was Hip Hop, DJ's would either wait until the end of the song to change the vinyl or they would mix the previous song to the next one on the play list by matching the two respective beats without interrupting the sound. This was all going to change. On the 11th August 1973 on 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx, Jamaican born 'Kool DJ Herc' revolutionised the practice of disk jockeying when he began cutting between bars on two turn tables, therefore extending the break (part of a tune in which the drums take over). 'Kool DJ Herc' would often be found in the park performing his new style for the local kids at no cost. Some of these kids grew up to become the pioneers of Hip Hop and are still known to this day as 'Cop la Roc', 'Pebley Pool', 'Timmy Tim', and last but not least, 'Krs One' - The 'ambassador' of Hip Hop, also known as 'the Teacher'. A new form of dancing developed as a consequence of the DJ's focus on the break that would become known as break-dancing, and the way of chanting over this new music became known as rapping. The culture had remained 'underground' in the initial years. 'Underground' in Hip Hop language is to be understood as not being part of commercial popular culture. In other words, 'underground Hip Hop' seeks to escape from the tentacles of capitalism. More on the ways in which, and why this happens, will be discussed further on. It wasn't until graffiti artists began to cover the New York trains with 'pieces[11]' that Hip Hop edged its way into the mainstream. Since the mainstream refused to acknowledge the brilliance of their art and in an attempt to establish their power and re-appropriate space graffiti 'heads' turned to

[8] Rhyming over a beat.
[9] D. Toop. (1984). *Rap Attack.* (p. 12). Published by: Serpent's Tail
[10] ibid. (p. 14)
[11] Short form of the word 'masterpiece'. It is a large and labour-intensive graffiti painting. If placed in a difficult location and well executed it will earn the writer more respect.

mobile canvases[12] to send their work to the *Big Apple*. As Toop put it: "(i)f the city refused to come to young blacks and Porto Ricans then they would go to the city".[13] These are facts, events from the past that helped give rise to Hip Hop. However, facts are not the same thing as history - as Krs One phrased it:

> "Hip Hop's true history and origins is not a materially recorded thing. Why? Because Hip Hop is not a material thing. Hip Hop is an idea. Hip Hop is a behaviour, a way to view the world, **a perception**. How do you document the history of a perception? How do you explain the history of a perception? This is why all the history books on Hip Hop are wrong, every single one is wrong, and the reason they're wrong is because they're documenting Hip Hop with an outdated methodology."

Rap Evolution

Toop, however, traces back the evolution of rap across African-American and Afro-Caribbean music (jive, bebop, Acapella, Doo-Wop, toasts, prison and army songs) all the way to its origins in West African traditions[14] where the griots of Nigeria and The Gambia would entertain people with vernacular poetry and disputes would be settled with spoken rhyme.[15] Hip Hop may therefore be described as a cross-cultural phenomenon where the oldest traditions blend with the most advanced musical technology. Toop describes Hip Hop as a "downbeat" lifestyle characterised by a dress combination of casual and sports wear. A street movement that is minimalist in its choice of instruments but whose objective is to maximise its expression. For example in hip hop: a DJ with two turntables is enough to make music, a cardboard strip is a break-dancer's dance floor, and any available wall or train surface becomes an art gallery for a spray can artist. From this we can begin to acknowledge that *expression* is core to Hip Hop. More precisely, self-expression is so important to 'heads' that alternative ways of practicing it are constantly being conjured up. Toop

[12] Graffiti 'pieces' on train carriages are more commonly referred to as 'panels'.
[13] Ibid. (p. 25)
[14] ibid. (p. 8)
[15] ibid. (p. 19)

also states that competition is at the heart of hip hop[16] and treats it as an idealistic movement capable of expressing and promoting a positive and realist attitude based on self-determination.[17] "It provided refuge from heroin" and "helped bring formal rival gangs together"[18] displacing violent competition with a much more peaceful form embodied in rap and break dancing battles between street blocks. As mentioned above the boroughs around New York, in particular areas inhabited by minorities, mainly 'Latinos' and 'African-Americans' but also Greeks, the Irish and Italians, were rife with social inequalities that fostered an unhealthy and self-destructive environment for its inhabitants. As with any society the most important inhabitants are its youth as these are the beholders of the future, so it goes without saying that if you have youths growing up being bombarded with drugs and violence and negativity that will have a considerable negative impact on the future of that society.

Paul Gilroy (1993) has argued that Hip Hop is a 'popular modernist' vernacular expression that resists a Eurocentric post-modern fragmentation, and has advanced the notion of a black Atlantic Diaspora that ensures a modernist continuity and tradition.

Russel A. Potter (1996) refutes Gilroy's argument when he describes Hip Hop as a highly sophisticated and radical post-modernism, and claims that its representational strategies have a liberatory potential.[19] Much of his work focuses on Hip Hop vernacular, or 'Black English', as a language of resistance. According to Potter hip hop is resistance and has had "more crucial consequences than all the books on postmodernism rolled into one".[20] It is in fact on the subject of Hip Hop's politics of resistance that Potter builds his case. Hip Hop becomes an effective way to communicate history and is associated in this text as a "cultural recycling center" and

[16] ibid. (p. 15)
[17] ibid. (p. 78)
[18] ibid. (p. 14-15)
[19] R. A. Potter (1996). *Spectacular Vernaculars: hip-hop and the politics of post-modernism.* (p. 9-13). Suny Press.
[20] Ibid. (p. 13)

a "counter-formation of capitalism".[21] He analyses discourse between rappers and the media, rappers and politicians, rappers and critics. Furthermore, Potter raises an interesting point relating to the fact that although hip hop is born within the greater context of African and African-American culture it is nonetheless readily accepted, and all the more practiced amongst people of all colours. Hip Hop could therefore contribute to pave the way for the emergence of an anti-racist society - Hip Hop music and culture's "most revolutionary work is to connect across racial polarities".[22] Finally, Potter's is in many ways a call addressed at the academics to rid the academy of its prejudices towards Hip Hop, somewhat forewarning intellectuals not to treat the subject with presumptuousness.

Potter's study is useful to my research in that it supports my hypothesis that hip hop is an effective mechanism to transmit various perspectives, several histories even of the same event which opposes the mainstream account of history, as always being written by the victors.

Rap is *'la fureur de dire'* as the late French anthropologist Georges Lapassade (1998) wrote at the end of the 1980's. This expression highlighting what rap is -the fury of saying/speech -captures at once the rage and energy with which rappers express themselves, while at the same time, it speaking of speech concentrates on the pacifist nature of how this rage is expressed. Rap may also be heard as modern-day poetry and rappers often represent street-poets engaged in commenting and critiquing the social realm. In fact a rapper cannot be without being opinionated. Rap has been referred to as representing *power to the people* through *power to the 'word'*. The *'word'*, also to be understood as speech, needs to be uncensored and free. In fact independent rappers are usually extremely conscious of 'freedom of speech' and often promote it:

"I'm independent in every single sense of the word
I say what I want you fucking little sensitive herd,

[21] ibid. (p. 108)
[22] ibid. (p. 20)

This is America, I thought we had freedom of speech
But now you want to try and control the way that I speak
...I ain't got no motherfucking deal with Pepsi
No corporate sponsor telling me what to do
Asking me to tone it down during an interview
Trying to minimize the issue but I'm keeping it large
I love the place I live but I hate the people in charge
Speaking is hard when you got strings attached
So I'm going to say it for you because I ain't got none of that."[23]

It is often the case that record companies (and corporate sponsors) set standards on their artists content, meaning many signed rappers are subjected to censorship from their employers. For this reason most conscious and underground rappers seek to release their material through independent record labels.

As the name of a Krs One album suggests, rap is 'education and entertainment'. Rap therefore brings politics to the party. It is this ability of expressing socio-political themes in a way that is appealing to a young audience that connects rap with human - individual and community-based - development.

As time progresses, so does the rap phenomenon, and new sub-categories are created. Rap, in the late 70s and early 80s, is often described as 'Old School rap'. There were practically no existing rap music videos at this moment in time, which allowed for a creative development of the music that escaped the mechanisms of the market, meaning that the music was 'underground' as opposed to mainstream. Videos are undoubtedly commercial and mainstream because there is simply no way of getting the videos out there if the corporate world (record companies, music channels, marketing firms) will not stand behind you. However, with the creation of Internet and 'Youtube' in particular new possibilities have now opened up for 'underground' artists to propagate their 'word' and creativity in video format.
That rap in its early days was 'underground' is also evident when looking at the

[23] Immortal Technique. *Freedom of Speech.* Revolutionary Volume II (2003).

length of rap careers in those days. They were considerably short, as the sound of rap would constantly evolve with the arrival of new rappers to the scene. 'Old School' rap was often focused on good times, parties and friendship although socially oriented rap songs such as 'The Message' (1982) had started to appear, and new terminologies were created to define the messages of rap music in the '80s and early '90s. Rap had now become 'conscious' as well as 'gangster'.

'Conscious', because the artists are describing life in the ghettos, the social discontent, the economic isolation, racism, gender inequality, police brutality and so on; and 'gangsta', because it reflects the violent lifestyles of some inner-city youth (crime, guns, drugs and gangs). This latter category of Hip Hop was appealing to a broad audience across the globe, arguably because its themes (economic isolation, crime etc.) were common for every ghetto in every city of the world and they therefore appealed to the ones who could relate with those rap-stories, as was the case with the rise of a Hip Hop movement in the Cape Flats (Cape Town) area[24], but also to a more vast range of people who didn't necessarily live those experiences first-hand but that could, for one reason or another, empathise with the marginalised and disempowered. Despite its local roots, many of the issues that rappers were breeching reflected broader, global problems of the same calibre: it was not just 'African-Americans' who were discriminated against but in fact there was a wider group of individuals of all colours and ethnicities that experienced the same marginalisation as a result of a powerful and growing global economic system.

Needless to say that this potential of rap to communicate messages "straight to the heart"[25] was seen first as a threat by the national authorities[26]. Secondly, as argued by Tricia Rose (1994), this potential was recuperated in the form of a high profit money-

[24] Adam Haupt (2008). Stealing Empire. HSRC Press. (Chapters 5, 6)
[25] Expression used by Afro-Swedish underground rap artist 'Latigo' during an interview conducted on Skype on March 13th 2009.
[26] Rappers such as Tupac, Snoop Dogg and Mos Def in the U.S.A; Ken Ring and TLK in Sweden; Assalti Frontali and 99Posse in Italy and many more in different countries have on repeated occasions been denied to perform their music on stage for the political contents that were considered anti-patriotic or violent, or in some way a threat to the stability of society.

making scheme by the corporate record companies and "legislative mechanisms"[27]. In other words, rap was absorbed by the pop industry resulting in a loss of the conscious aspect of it, and from the late 90s until today we have witnessed the development of a new category, 'commercial rap' or mainstream rap. This is a 'watered-down' form of rap music that focuses heavily on the beat, hooks and choruses, and much less on the verses (It is not the focus of my study as the messages are in line with Western/capitalist culture and really they fail to reflect the reality of the lives of the vast majority of the population whether in the USA alone or universally). They have little to do with education and much more with (vulgar) entertainment - the main themes being centred on "the accumulation of wealth, male sexual conquests, drug abuse and misogyny"[28]. The 'commercial' rap artists themselves (for example: Snoop Doggy Dogg, the Notorious B.I.G, Nelly, Dr. Dre, Jay-Z and so on) have therefore embraced the hegemonic culture, which rests on the accumulation of profits. Adorno[29] claims that popular culture is in direct opposition with the enlightenment of consciousness:

> "Progressive technical domination becomes mass deception and is turned into a means of fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves." (1991: 92)

Furthermore, as argued by 'bell hooks' in Haupt (2008)[30]:

> "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in 'gangsta' rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist patriarchy".

Ironically, these are the very same values they once rejected as underground Hip Hop artists. To illustrate this point, *Let's Get Free* is the name of an album by the

[27] Adam Haupt (2008). Stealing Empire. HSRC Press. (p. 184)
[28] Adam Haupt (2008). Stealing Empire. HSRC Press. (p. 147)
[29] T. Adorno (1991). The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture. London: Routledge.
[30] Adam Haupt (2008). Stealing Empire. HSRC Press. (p. 147)

'conscious' rap group Dead Prez, whereas *Get Rich or Die Trying* is what the 'commercial' rapper 50 Cent is all about. Also, *Keep Your Head Up* is what the late Tupac rapped in honour of women whilst Snoop Dogg asserts on several occasions that: *"bitches ain't shit but hoe's and tricks."*

Conscious Hip Hop can be said to have taken off from where the black consciousness discourse of political leaders and analysts such as Malcolm X, Steve Biko, Huey P. Newton, Marcus Garvey, Patrice Lumumba etc had left it. The underground MC Slege makes the following link to indicate that Hip Hop discourse has in fact renovated the black consciousness ideology and argues that people now see conscious Hip Hop artists as contemporary black intellectual leaders:

> "Because we don't have your Mandela's anymore, we don't have your Steve Biko, we don't have your Malcolm X's. In society, in general we don't even have leaders who are morally upright, black leaders who we can look up to and say *yo this person is bringing out something very close to my heart, he's making me feel proud of being a black person*. Not Malema, not Zuma, I'm sorry they just don't do it, so a young person searches for an image of themselves elsewhere. *'Where do I see a picture of me elsewhere than on this dirty block, doing the same old things that we do everyday but in a different environment? Where can I see another side of power? What it could mean to be black?* So you see conscious rappers on TV and you're like ' Damn I've never seen black people talk like this.' That's what entices me. It's a search for identity."[31]

It has allowed for the continuity and enrichment of a belief system proposed by intellectual leaders who focused on intelligently discussing and highlighting issues of inequality and social injustices, that had a great relevance especially to the marginalised ranks of society, before being slain. African-Americans, in particular, suffered from the political assassination of many black leaders (including the reverend Martin Luther King Jr) followed by a crisis in the black consciousness movement. Large strata of the population became traumatized. One could argue that

[31] Statement by Slege during the focus group.

a psychological depression lingered in the air for decades, added to the fact that those urban neighbourhoods largely inhabited by non-WASP[32] minorities were, as Toop described, deprived of basic services, with high levels of unemployment and literally submerged by some of the most destructive drugs known to mankind (Crack-Cocaine, Heroin, Alcohol). The risk of a collective amnesia was imminent; the population was painfully divided ultimately finding a medium in Hip Hop for the continuation of the black consciousness counter-hegemonic discourse.

> "To add to what she was saying, I think that hip hop has made a lot of people conscious because you find that people who believe in justice listen to hip hop. They have been influenced by hip hop to read more, to intellectualise their mind, to decolonise the mind. It encourages people to go out and find out - especially about black consciousness. Because as a black sister living in post-apartheid South Africa there's a lot of dynamics in finding a proper way to actually define identity in that sense. I think the first encounter I had with hip hop was Talib Kweli, and he encouraged me to go out and find your history."[33]

Aerosoldiers

The relationship between graffiti and Hip Hop culture arises both from early graffiti artists practicing other aspects of Hip Hop, and it being practiced in areas where other elements of Hip Hop were evolving as art forms. It is part of a movement that rebels against authority often expressing a political practice. Artistic graffiti is a modern-day offspring of traditional graffiti that has elevated itself from just scrawling words or phrases on a wall, to a complex artistic form of personal expression that challenges the urban 'greyness' of the city by bringing life in the form of message and colour to cement - A contemporary message of the *vox populi*.

The spray can movement, like rap music, has its roots in New York City (NYC). Subway trains were the first to be targeted by NYC graffiti writers. The complex

[32] WASP – White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant
[33] Statement made by KarB during interview.

subway lines became 'communication lines' for the graffiti writers and crews[34] working in the five boroughs. The movement began with writers trying to tag as many trains as possible. Once writers discovered that they could 'hit' as many trains as possible at the train yards overnight, with little fear of being caught, the emphasis shifted from quantity to quality.

In order to stand out from other tags, writers began to stylize their work. New styles of script were created, including calligraphy, block-style and bubble-style. Writers then moved on to scale and colour. Tags became larger and depth was added to create three-dimensional effects. More elaborate 'pieces', often covering entire train cars or walls, started receiving attention from the art world. In the words of individuals that contributed to the establishment of modern graffiti as an art form, described in Hoban's *Basquiat,* the graffiti movement tried to present itself "as an alternative to the bourgeois" and as "a tool for mocking bogusness" by reclaiming public space - "Wherever we got an idea we'd write it"[35].

Forget the TV, about to hit the streets and do graffiti
Be careful don't let the transit cops see me.[36]

The New York City (NYC) Metro Transit Authorities (MTA) launched a campaign to rid the subway system of graffiti ('No graffiti will run') in the late 1980's. Though this act in many ways ended the NYC subway art era, the idea of creating graffiti art had already expanded outside the NYC area. Graffiti and rap were spreading quickly hand-in-hand across the United States and simultaneously also across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and into the rest of the world. Hoban (1998) explains the movement in the following way:

[34] A group of *writers* or graffiti artists. Some crews are members of gangs, or are associated with gangs (sometimes for procurement of art materials or for protection while painting), but most crews are unaffiliated with gangs. It can happen that an ordinary group of friends suddenly form a crew if they are all interested in graffiti and want to start collaborating. By painting in a crew with the crew name there's a smaller risk of being held responsible for the works if a member gets arrested, because from a legal point of view the name could have been painted by anyone in the group.
[35] Phoebe Hoban (1998). Basquiat: *A Quick Killing in Art.* (p. 47) Penguin Books. New York.
[36] Tupac Shakur. *Old School* (1995).

> "These were not the random jottings of individuals, but the coordinated efforts of an entire subculture."

From this assertion we can begin to understand how the political practice of individuals, in this case graffiti artists, may result in the empowerment through direct action of an entire community.

The "discovery" of graffiti in turn influenced "a major art-world revival"[37] that led to the development of a new art movement - Neo-Expressionism. "By 1983, the art market in New York alone was estimated at $2 billion."[38] An account, of the graffiti movement, written in those times by Haring[39] for the magazine *Vogue* reports the following:

> "The entire misrepresentation and manipulation of this hypothetical 'group' is a perfect example of the art world of the early eighties. People were more interested in the phenomena than the art itself. This, combined with the growing interest in collecting art as an investment and the resultant boom in the art market, made it a difficult time for a young artist to remain sincere without becoming cynical."

In this instance, the 'group' refers to graffiti artists and *crews*, whereas 'the phenomena' serves to indicate the affirmation of modern graffiti as an art form. This quotation serves my research in that it highlights the predatory nature of capitalism whose sole *leitmotif* for acquiring interest in graffiti does not seem to be out of an appreciation or understanding of the art but for the mere purpose of acquiring a profitable capital investment. That Hip Hop culture became prey for the market was evident as early as 1984 when Suzi Gablik wrote her book *Has Modernism Failed?* She sets the scene by posing the following fundamental questions[40]:

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[37] Phoebe Hoban (1998). Basquiat: *A Quick Killing in Art.* Penguin Books. New York.
[38] Phoebe Hoban (1998). Basquiat: *A Quick Killing in Art.* (p. 9-10) Penguin Books. New York.
[39] Haring in "Basquiat". (p. 33)
[40] Suzi Gablik (1984). *Has Modernism Failed?* In, Phoebe Hoban (1998). Basquiat: *A Quick Killing in Art.* Penguin Books. New York. (p. 40)

> "Are we confronted with yet another instance where mass-consumption capitalist economy expands into a taboo area in order to transform private behavior into a commodity? Does becoming part of the art establishment give new meaning and purpose to these artists' lives, or has it merely spawned another money-making game for its participants, while weakening graffiti's soul energy as 'outsider' art?"

Finally, Phoebe Hoban illustrates throughout her biography of Jean-Michel Basquiat how the market - whose *agents* in this case are marketing officials, bankers and industrialists (capitalists) - seek to commodify the practices of the youth with the intention of promoting these practices for the formers' own private profit[41]. This is important to keep in mind because the alternative art form (graffiti) that at one stage became almost entirely absorbed by the mainstream art scene, of galleries and exhibitions, managed to survive the devastating crisis that so heavily affected the Neo-expressionist movement in the nineties. A short walk and a minimum of attention paid to the trains and walls of metropolitan cities like NY, Prague, Rome, Berlin, Moscow, Melbourne, Tokyo, Cape Town, Johannesburg etc. will provide evidence of the underground resistance and even proliferation of 'not for (economic) profit' graffiti art. Promoe, a Swedish underground rapper and graffiti artist raps:

> Kids, (freedom fighters)[42] strapped with Crylon that unlike rappers can't go POP
> so they stay underground until the day *graff* is legalized[43]

Almost as if to declare that to resist the market one should avoid entering it. If being absorbed by the market is impossible to avoid, as was the case for graffiti art and rap music in the eighties, a way to limit the commodification of the movement (in this case Hip Hop) as demonstrated by the 'heads' of today is to continue the underground practice of the culture in parallel to the mainstream's version of the culture until the inevitable crisis of the mainstream is reached where the commodified version can no longer produce the required profits for the capitalists.

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[41] See chapters 2, 4 and 17.
[42] From the song *These Walls Don't Lie*
[43] From the song Ambush in the Night

At this point it is no longer in the interest of corporations to promote it and what remains of Hip Hop is what was from the beginning and what fundamentally always will be. Gablik, who at the time of writing on the graffiti movement sounded pessimistic at the "hyjacking"[44] of the culture by what she defined as 'mass-consumption capitalist economy' is surely rejoicing at the liveliness and originality manifest in Hip Hop culture that survives to this day. Hence, I would stress that Hip Hop's politics of resistance should be further explored by the Academy.

[44] The expression used by the artist 'Slege' during the focus group in reference to the way in which corporations appropriate Hip Hop and distribute aspects of the culture at a cost for the private profit of the same corporations and often to the detriment of the Hip Hop artists themselves.

CHAPTER TWO

HIP HOP RESISTANCE

This practice of resistance is in direct correlation with how 'heads' understand their culture as was revealed by 'JV' in a focus group that I conducted:

> "...that's why when it (Hip Hop) first came out people thought it was just going to die after two, three years. But thirty years down the line we're still here...I also think that youth culture, youth in general - always on that next tip. And the 'corporates', that's why they spend millions of dollars in market research trying to find out what the next thing is. So with things like Nelly, and all those commercial what, what, what. They're going to die out tomorrow, right? Because they've got no substance. Nothing else but what they're saying right now which is why Nelly versus Krs One - who do you still hear about? What happened to Nelly[45]?..."

And Slege expanded on this:

> "Hip Hop does not speak for those who have a voice. It speaks for those who are the voiceless. Also an important point that we need to look at, as she was saying, is that Hip Hop was small when it started. That's what made it appealing to those of us who were listening to Hip Hop when it started because nobody was down with Hip Hop. Most people didn't understand it but you would have one with the saggy pants and people would look at you and think you look funny but now if you don't have the saggy pants you look funny. You know what I mean? So it's like the whole shit is switched."

GoryLah expressed the following along the same lines:

[45] A commercial rapper who reached fame thanks to the advertisement and air-play that he received from corporate radio and television channels for a Summer hit whose chorus is: "It's getting hot in here so take off all your clothes".

> "There is commercial Hip Hop now but I realise that most of heads are becoming demoralised because this commercial is now diluted...these days those super commercial cats have changed their attitude into more hyper commercial orientations so I think that's some of the reasons why a lot of the MC's lose interest in Hip Hop...So we're just hoping that one day people will understand and come back to real Hip Hop."

To which Slege adds:

> "The corporate structures have hijacked Hip Hop. You know what I mean? They control it right now. The people have to take it back."

GoryLah, one of the participants in the focus group, expresses his desire of becoming a Hip Hop activist. He forms part of a nine-man crew that met in school. The crew has set up a bedroom-recording studio in the house of one of its members in order to record songs independently:

> "We met in the same platform and just decided to kick it off, to start this movement...In terms of production we do our own...we just go and record by his crib...He's got everything there all in the crib...We started releasing material this year... We distribute independently, strictly independently because the big distributor has a check on the content of your stuff".

The crew, apart from releasing politically conscious rap, is currently undergoing the bureaucratic procedures necessary to enlist a 'Hip Hop society' in the local University. Their intention is to provide a platform along the Hip Hop *credo* 'each one teach one' in an effort to unite 'heads' under a common banner and promote mutual collaboration amongst each other i.e. in GoryLah's words, to join forces - "mesh everything together", meaning the five elements (rap, graffiti, DJ, break-dance, and Knowledge of Self) "to try to mobilize so that we can come together" in order to "resurrect that spirit" of non-commercial Hip Hop on Campus. For Beanie, a Hip Hop society is important because:

"With that hip hop society we can engage a lot of cats so that here at school we can get a studio, organise ciphers, put up graff, release mixtapes every month."

They plan to use radio airtime from the university radio station to promote the Hip Hop movement, and encourage the youth to enter an open discussion on the contemporary political context. The MC, which I refer to as XZ believes profoundly in instituting a Hip Hop society in order to get the 'word' out:

"We need people to get together. We need to assemble and talk about Hip Hop and talk about the way forward. Because if it's like this for ever, we're never going to get the word out. It's important to get the word out. I mean we can't be underground forever. So we have to have institutions...where we get together, we spread. Each cat talks to a cat, that cat talks to...you know network is like this....we can even organise a ministry where cats can record, get their word out. Talk to the people so it's not about you just singing Hip Hop. It's about you telling the people, educating the people about Hip Hop.

Slege explains why political discourse is important for, and relevant to Hip Hop:

"I think that one thing that is cool about Hip Hop compared to other genres of music and stuff is that in Hip Hop you find that it's always being connected to a social movement, social change. Throughout its history you can say that it has played a major role in places wherever it's been at. Even if you talk about France today, the problems that people like the Arabs and the blacks are facing with the racism with the whites gives them a voice that they can use to mobilise and conscientise the young people...People don't talk about social issues it's all about the same stuff. We can basically guess what they're going to say...We wanted to bring the idea of social change again but using it in a South African, more relevant to South African context, post-Apartheid you know what I mean? So young people are still aware of what goes on in society, how society is structured and what it means to be marginalised...Not the illusion we're believing. This thing is now completely tied to the way the world is. Like the illusion of

independence in South Africa."

From the comment above, especially when Slege talks about France, it should be noted that Hip Hop could provide individuals on Earth with an informal education of worldly events and political situations in the form of a commentary of realities. In this case I am referring to the harsh realities that Arab and Black minorities are faced with in France. Furthermore, if we were to listen to other European conscious Hip Hop groups we would soon learn that racism is still present in European societies. Even in those 'model' countries such as Sweden:

"...Rinkeby, en annan svartskalle fòrort presis som Alby
Politiker kommer dit men dom bryr sig inte ett skit
Och tror att det ska bli bra om dom sjunger sin jàvla sang..."

"...Rinkeby, another blackhead neighbourhood, exactly like Alby
Politicians come here but they don't give a fuck
And they think it's going to be alright if they sing their damned song..."[46]

The above rap, by Swedish Hip Hop crew The Latin Kings (TLK), comes from a song that if translated would be called: *Welcome to the Ghetto*. Here, TLK are fairly explicit in their demonstration of how Swedish society has created neighbourhoods (ghettoes) - such as Rinkeby and Alby - that are strictly inhabited by immigrants (referred to with the derogatory term as: 'blackheads'). Furthermore, this song also indicates that the only time Swedish politicians care to visit these areas is just prior to the elections, and even then all they do is promote 'Swedishness' by, for example, singing the National Anthem.

Hip Hop in South Africa

Cape Town, or more precisely the Cape Flats in the early 1980s are commonly referred to as South Africa's birth ground for Hip Hop culture. South Africa was in

[46] The Latin Kings. *Valkommen till Fòrorten*. Valkommen till Fòrorten. Translation by author.

the throes of apartheid (rap music was banned by government until 1993), and the Hip Hop 'revolution' that gripped the 'United States of America' (USA) seems to have inspired the South African youth to fight their own revolution. For example, Tokyo, an MC, graffiti artist and break-dancer states:

> "For us who were in the time of apartheid growing up, you accepted things as: *this is the way of life*. The living conditions and the killings - *It's the way of life*. We grew up like that. The only time I got opened up was when I started with Hip Hop... I think maybe the art form has a way of just getting to you and encourage you to start asking questions and the picture doesn't look as acceptable as people tell you. You start questioning the basics and I guess that starts a pattern that opens things inside of us."

Songs that call for resistance, like *Fight the Power* and *Fuck the Police* performed by rap groups Public Enemy and N.W.A. respectively, spread quickly across the country and seem to have had a special resilience among much of the youth in their struggle against Apartheid. I have included the following extracts from the 'focus group' as they seem to indicate that Hip Hop does in fact inspire individuals, to this day (fifteen years after the official end of Apartheid), to oppose hierarchy and resist power:

> "I feel that the government is my enemy. I don't have enemies they're just picking at me I don't have nothing to do with it, they're just interfering in my business."[47]

> "You've got to resist you know? You have all these things like oh your hair's not straight enough, oh your skin's not light enough, oh your skin's not dark enough, you're inadequate. Give us your money and we'll make you what we tell you had to be... They're just producing the same pair of shoes with two different colours or three different colours and then they're like yeah you have a choice. And I always think oh is it me? Then I'm like shit it's not me it's them.... There's

[47] Statement made by SilV.

no diversity. You have to subscribe to this otherwise you don't belong. So you have to resist."[48]

"For me the State is my problem. It's a problem to the Hip Hop culture because when the people are suffering then you are suffering because Hip Hop is not just about hip hop, it's about the society as well as what's happening to the society, and shit like that. So the more we have a line, when we know that this is what you represent, this is what we are representing there is not going to be disintegration between hip hop heads."[49]

"I believe there is an enemy... Really Hip Hop as a way of living is under heavy attack. In 'America' we have your 'Hip Hop police', which come from the C.I.A. group. These are the facts that side. When an artist decides to do any creative whatever they are scanned intensely because of the threat they impose to the general society and the influence they have. So heads must understand that they're going against an opponent that is fully invested in making sure your art form does not even get a second of voice."[50]

"Have you heard the phrase: *you can silence the press but you cannot silence the people?* So even these police and the political pressure there to repress Hip Hop you cannot stop shows from happening, you cannot stop ciphers from taking place. The Hip Hop, even though people profess it to be dead, it still exists in the street culture of the people so no-one can kill hip hop but the people dying out themselves."[51]

In opposition to apartheid and censorship, many young South Africans embraced all aspects of Hip Hop, including graffiti and rap but also turn-tabling and break dancing. David Coplan's brilliant research (1985) on South Africa's 'black' music and theatre indicates that the people of this country who have been involved in these arts have been adapting African-American or Caribbean genres of music to their musical

[48] Statement made by JV
[49] Statement made by XZ
[50] Statement made by Tokyo.
[51] Statement made by KarB.

context, ever since the 1940's, in order to engage critically with the political reality of the Nation. Similarly, Adam Haupt (2008) argues that early South African Hip Hop crews such as 'Prophets of da City' (POC), 'Black Noise' and 'Brasse vannie Kaap' (BVK) were inspired by 'Yankee'[52] Hip Hop to "construct" their own "black nationalist narratives that rely on the notion of a global black experience of oppression and resistance"[53]. It is fundamental to point out that in order to locate Rap music in the South African context it is important to be aware of the background of Kwaito culture and its relationship to Rap music. The most popular youth movement in South Africa presently is Kwaito, a form of music that often avoids dealing with serious issues (Swartz, 2003; Steingo, 2005). Swartz (2003) concluded that Kwaito was not South African rap but rather a local form of music that had evolved to meet the needs of the youth living in South Africa[54]. It is therefore not in my interest to include Kwaito in my study of Hip Hop. To get back on the subject, South African 'heads' transformed music into local expressions of culture, frustration, rage and hope that often challenged "hegemonic representations of black subjects" and "neo-colonial discourses[55]" in order to tell their own stories. Examples of this can be heard in songs by POC and BVK as mentioned by Haupt (2008)[56] but also from the testimonies of most of the participants in this research. For example, Beanie, one of the 'heads' that I interviewed, in connection with what I have just discussed, expressed the following:

> "Hip Hop promotes for you to speak out and say what you think. The system back then saw that it could revolutionise the people. So they had to stop it."

And JV, in response to Beanie, expressed the following important comment implying that democracy on its own does not guarantee freedom, or development:

[52] I use the term 'yankee' in order to avoid confusion as the term 'American' by definition includes the American continent in it's entirety. The term North-American does not specify which country I am talking about either, so in lack of a more specific word to indicate the country 'United States of America I have decided to use the descriptive appellative 'yankee'.
[53] Adam Haupt (2008). Stealing Empire. HSRC Press. (pp. 145-146)
[54] Swartz (2003) performed an analysis comparing Kwaito and rap. The comparison was conducted using Hall's (1997) concept the "circuit of culture" that allowed for exploration of five levels of meaning that included representation, production, consumption, identity and resistance.
[55] Adam Haupt (2008). Stealing Empire. HSRC Press. (p. 184)
[56] ibid. (p. 184)

"However nothing has changed since apartheid. Same shit, different party."

A simple yet devastating description of a reality in perfect contradiction with the image the 'Rainbow Nation'[57] seeks to portray.

In this chapter we have seen how Hip Hop inspired the marginalised South African youth during the final years of Apartheid to 'fight the power'. More importantly, we begin to understand the motivations of artists to commit themselves to social justice, caring for human beings, and an equitable society. One way in which 'heads' got involved with a practice of resistance was by forming 'crews'. These are collectives of individuals that organise together to create (or occupy) spaces (such as recording studios, universities, radio stations, basketball courts, etc.), which can then be used by the collective to discuss and promote their ideas with broader audiences. Hip Hop is a platform where individuals can share their experiences and learn from each other. Finally, we come to the realisation that Hip Hop is first and foremost a powerful medium of communication (audio and visual) that challenges hegemonic thought patterns and culture and at the same time attempts to build awareness among citizens, and to allow for discussion on what it means to have a just society.

[57] 'Rainbow Nation' is often used as a synonym for South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, HIP HOP AND CULTURE

One objective of this research is to establish a link between Hip Hop and Development. A second objective is to argue that in order to get over the crisis in development theory[58] we may need to redefine Development. I will therefore begin with an overview of the main notions and 'prescriptions' that have constructed Development theory thus far, followed by a discussion on the relevance for redefining the notion of Development.

The progression of Development Theory since the 1950s has gone through various mutations[59]. In the Post-Second World War Consensus classical Dualism Theory is introduced, which draws attention to the potential problems that could arise if, and when, certain aspects of a given culture, or institution etc., are taken as *de facto* in explaining another, potentially un-related culture (which undoubtedly displays, and functions according to, a different set of criteria than the 'dominant' culture).

Within this timeframe (1950s and 1960s), development was seen as synonymous to industrialisation, which encouraged policy makers to focus particularly on privatisation for economic growth, by inevitably favouring a select few entrepreneurs to guide the country away from subsistence agriculture and towards industry (propelled by interests and profit). More often than not, development was thought of as primarily an economic phenomenon, whereby once enough capital is circulating, development is said to have occured. Of course, this only confirms Marx' and Engels' prophecy that with the development of the market as the most reckonable force, we are condemning all other social relations to being reduced to

[58] Refer to E. A. Brett (2008) *Reconstructing Development Theory: International inequality, institutional reform and social emancipation.* Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics.
[59] For a better understanding of the evolution of the development doctrine see: Ranis, G. "The Evolution of Development Thinking, Theory and Policy". Yale University Economic Growth Center, Discussion Paper, No. 886, May 2004.

economic ones[60]. Nonetheless, in a global society that is so reliant on money as the universal 'middle-man' of all transactions (i.e. services are provided at a cost), if a country does not have economic development, it will never have the human, educational, social or physical development that is required to be deemed a developed society. Yet this begs the question of what exactly a developed society is. According to the dominant international institutions (e.g. IMF, World Bank, etc.) when a country is capable of entering and sustaining its position in international markets, so as to rival the developed countries' productions, it can be said to be developed, as according to a perfect market, to be able to compete against another firm is to have innovated in such a way as to gain a competitive advantage (over market share) (Cook and Mosedale. 2007). However, the only way you could have perfect competition (i.e. so as to counter-act all the social inequalities, of course, in this case you would still be left with physical inequalities i.e. natural inequalities) would be to ensure that everyone has the same access to resources. In this sense, privatisation will never be successful because it (apparently legitimately) awards contracts on the basis of skill when in reality it rewards those who already have money to be able to invest (even in their own personal stock), while it disregards others who aren't at the same 'competitive level'. In short, it appears to have a redistributive function, and no doubt to a certain extent it does, but it does not do this selflessly but rather it does it in the interests of profit, which means that those individuals will always remain on top (i.e. the most powerful) because they will not agree to any transaction that does not benefit them, that in some way entail good returns.

The 1970s are often remembered by the images of massive student protests and insurrectionary guerrillas around the world that called and fought for the end of military conflicts, and for 'democracy' and 'freedom'. However in the reality of Development theory the decade of the 'hippies' brought with it an appreciation for the necessity of technological change, in order to allow for development, or more specifically, growth. There was a 'need' for economic stability particularly on a

[60] Marx and Engels (1848). The Communist Manifesto.

macro level, which led to a liberalisation process, prescribing privatisation and competitive exchange rates, to allow the private sector to flourish. It must be stated that although privatisation was largely accepted by neo-liberal theory as the bridge to 'development', it remains evident that it encourages corruption and gives anybody with the right amount of money the capability to influence even public affairs. In other words, it becomes difficult to separate business transactions from personal interests as was proved to be the case with the phenomena of 'clientelismo' in Latin America and the 'Mediterranean' countries of Europe, 'neo-patrimonialism' in Africa and, later, in the greater post-Soviet area. Hence, economic stability was more of a dogmatic belief than an actual reality.

Since the '80s and '90s, after three or four decades of expecting the Washington Consensus model of development to show improvements, when aid was shown not to be sufficient for a 'big push' into 'development', developed countries (DC) redesigned their development strategies, this time advocating a process of privatisation that would inject the capital needed in an industry while also providing the knowledge and technical know-how for an enterprise to grow. There is an assumption in the World Bank's "Bureaucrats in Business" (1999) that privatization is an economically sound investment -Ramamurti (1999: 142). The argument is that it will eventually allow for greater consumer choice, lower taxes, attractive returns to investors and higher exports, as private firms are thought to be more efficient (than public ones). Despite a wave of privatization, however, it should be noted that State Owned Enterprises (SOE) still account for roughly the same percentage of GDP ten years ago as they did thirty years ago (Ramamurti 1999: 138). This indicates that States have elected not to sell those industries that are most profitable for them, or at least the ones they have been most successful with. In this light, it could be argued that privatization is in fact beneficial as it allows states to free themselves from supporting unproductive and inefficient industries. This assertion is in opposition to Shirley (1998) who states that the more valuable assets tend to be privatized.

Ramamurti (1999: 146) points to the fact that 'Bureaucrats in Business' advocates

privatization based on the 'success' of already successful SOEs before privatisation while at the same time it condemns SOE practices in poor countries as an argument for privatization when there is no evidence to suggest that a liberalization process would be more effective in an already poor regulatory environment. For example, we can look at the case of Senegal, where pre-privatization attempts to reform the public sector had limited success; yet after privatization we still have not seen a significant increase in Senegal's development, as it remains 97th (out of 112) with regard to its Human Poverty Index[61]. Most 'lesser developed countries' (LDC) are uncertain about implementing privatization policies, especially after decades of nationalized industries, and particularly since a lot of ex-colonies might be reluctant to hand over power into foreign hands. They are hesitant regarding how resources will be distributed across society -Ramamurti (1999: 145); about their capability to regulate monopolies; and about local entrepreneurs being able to deliver, not to mention the insecurity of relying on foreign capital and industries (because then if a crisis hits one country, all will be affected, as we have seen with the recent global credit crisis). On top of this, LDCs might have even less incentive to invest in a privatization process when privatization fails in other LDCs, e.g. Ghana where in 1995 they adopted an Accelerated Privatization Programme whereby 200 firms were to be divested. Three years later, only a quarter of those firms had been sold. Furthermore, the gross sales proceeds amounted to 63.1 billion Cedis, yet only a third of that had been recovered - Ariyo and Jerome (1999: 204).

Following an *enlightened* separation of institutions, Yarrow (1999, p. 158) argues that privatisation can be seen as an attempt to separate the political from economic relations i.e. to reduce the influence of the political on economic decisions. This statement appears to be a legitimate and rational argument, yet it decisively decides to over-look the fact that economic decisions have an infinity of consequences on the political and social realms and so no economic decision should be void of a thoughtful reflection on the political, social and physical effects on those people concerned. The conscious rapper Immortal Technique, makes the following self-

[61] http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_SEN.html

explanatory observations on the implications of privatization in developing countries (DCs):

> "We were promised a better life in our home countries where we were told that privatizing water and electricity would make things run more efficiently. Instead the quality remained almost the same and the prices increased until it became an unaffordable luxury. Some corporations are more efficient than Government but their motivation is not to help the wellbeing of the people - it's only about profit. Everything else: their image, their human resources, their public relations only exists to protect the reality behind it. Once upon a time we were told that nationalization would prevent growth by limiting competition. That our countries were nothing without the companies that invested in us, and so they privatized everything. Everything in our countries was owned by people that had no connection with our culture, by those who never had our interests at heart. They didn't care about our survival or wellbeing they just wanted to turn a profit by raping our land, by exploiting our people, our industry, and our resources and took everything we built and made it theirs. First by creating racism to justify slavery, building the capital for capitalism and then when they gave us what they call liberty everything we had was still owned by them. Our governments told us that socialism was the real enemy and that we would have freedom but the foreign powers and corporations were the ones with the real freedom. The freedom to take all the wealth generated by our work and our lands and give us only a small percentage of the scraps from the table. Their lust for power and their greed drove them to betray not only us but themselves, and the word of their own God."[62]

As the 1990s were reached, the wealthy had increased in numbers and in wealth; and at the same time the poor also increased in numbers and became more marginalised. Although it had been debated earlier, the issue of 'human development' was brought into the spotlight by economic theorists such as: Stiglitz, Sen, Ranis and Nussbaum, who extended the focus of Development theory to promote ulterior areas of interest such as: "quality of life" - infant mortality rates, literacy, health, etc. This is not to

[62] Immortal Technique. *Open Your Eyes.* The Third World (2008)

imply, however, that income becomes irrelevant, but rather that it no longer remains the sole indicator of development. In order for sustainable development to be successful, human and social development needs to be promoted. Further arguments in the name of human and social development often criticize the inequalities created by the hegemony of capitalism and tend to highlight the importance of civil society's active participation in the social sphere, as is the case in Escobar, (1995); Fisher and Ponniah, (2003); Mertes, (2004); and de Sousa Santos, (2006).

So, there are numerous studies conducted over the last 40 years eager to show how neo-classical development, as well as socialist development theory, has perpetuated inequality through their emphasis on market-oriented, technology-based, resource intensive and undemocratic development strategies. In addition, it is widely acknowledged that Third World development strategies have largely been imposed from above and have failed to improve the quality of life of the majority. Thus, the 'failure' of development has led to an increasing acceptance of the shortcomings of top-down processes as well as a loss of interest in the very meaning of development. In the wake of capitalism's failure to reduce inequalities and to deliver an ethically sound notion of transformative development, our focus as human beings (and especially for those of us who are scholars of Development Studies) should be on the exposure of what really constitutes development. This is why we need to study alternative ideologies of development that include concepts like "democratic public action", "participation" and "empowerment". Simply put, a development theory that does not focus solely on social level, rather, one that fails to ignore humans. However, these concepts are vague. They mean nothing if we do not have an accurate understanding of 'freedom'. 'Freedom', at least according to the 'rationalists', is in many ways linked to 'knowledge' as I will explain further ahead. And 'Knowledge' is always attained through practice whether this is of a formal (institutionalized) or an informal (alternative) nature. This research will therefore explore how human (individual and collective) development is promoted in a Hip Hop environment, and the notions of 'Freedom' and 'education', which I will expand

on below, will provide me with the framework for an analysis of human development.

Why Hip Hop?

I am hopeful, as mentioned earlier, that through my ethnographic research on the *politics* and *practice* of Hip Hop 'heads' in Johannesburg, South Africa, I will be able to: (1) provide multidisciplinary ground for the study of Hip Hop in the context of development; (2) explore whether the existing definitions really capture all that development is; (3) illustrate, through my case-study, how the youth have found in Hip Hop a democratic and free platform where they can experiment spontaneous counter-hegemonic, and sometimes revolutionary practices[63] that in turn lead to individual and community development of the 'human' kind. Excuse the play on words.

What I take development to be is a two-tiered notion. By this I mean that it involves two steps: the first is a thought-provoking process whereby any given individual is introduced to a new perspective on reality (education); introduced to social, environmental, political issues that change that individual's perception of reality itself (knowledge). The second step logically is the translation of this thought into action, motivated by a desire to improve or contribute to how society works. Conscious Hip Hop becomes relevant in this case as it:

> "alludes to the belief that you need to engage in a serious amount of critical introspection before you can make a meaningful contribution to your political and social context as a hip-hop artists, intellectual or activist." (Haupt, 2008: 144)

Several examples from the fieldwork that I conducted seem to validate this theory. The break-dancer known as 'JV' was given a mix tape by her cousin and argues that "consciousness breeds consciousness" and that "you can't be

[63] Alternative practices to the established neo-liberal economics and 'Western cultural order'.

conscious unless you've had some sort of outside influence" which according to her Hip Hop can provide, as well as books and experiences. KarB, a rapper and graffiti artist 'describes her first encounter with Hip Hop as highly influential to her view of life. She tells of how the rapper Talib Kweli encouraged her to go and find out about her history, to know where she comes from. Hip Hop culture then encouraged her "to find out about black consciousness, to read more and to decolonise the mind." She tells of how rappers such as Immortal Technique and Ben Sharper are trying to educate people on social ills such as HIV/AIDS, on the phenomenon of exclusion, police brutality and corruption and at the same time trying to warn the people, from their own personal experiences, of the dangers and realities that exist during conditions of state and market oppression. 'XZ', one of the MC's who are trying to start a Hip Hop society, is an openly declared anti-capitalist. He believes that the content of underground Hip Hop "is obviously against capitalist ideology". Hence this is the reason why he identifies with Hip Hop culture in the first place but also because Hip Hop is like "a book that tells you to go on...it teaches me just like reading." 'XZ' has therefore indicated that Hip Hop can be motivational during tough times, in other words that it can give an individual the courage or the strength to confront a particularly difficult situation - This is something that many of the participants could relate to. We would all agree that adolescence is a critical moment in the life of a human being. It is a time when we can experience confusion and even an excessive amount of self-awareness. A fear of not fitting in that could result in the phenomenon we commonly refer to as an *identity crisis*. When existential questions such as *why are we here?* And, *why do we do the things we do?* fail to lead us down green pastures, when reality slaps us across the cheeks and leaves us in a sensitive state of mind is when one could become host for a visit from depression - what we could define as a state of psychological disempowerment. Metaphorically speaking, in times like these it is usually when we *see the light at the end of the tunnel* that we accumulate our strengths that permitting us to get out and go on. It appears then from my observations that Hip Hop often acts as that light, the motivation for the

disempowered youth to continue in life's daily struggle.

Getting back on the subject, whereas some scholars argue that economic growth is the key for development, others have contested this by claiming that a given society will develop by improving the quality of life of its members. Where some shift their focus on ecological preservation others argue in favour of technology, if not both. However as I have outlined above, for the purpose of this research I will take development to constitute the transformative effect on people as a result of being introduced -through some form of education- to a new, or an alternative perspective on reality. How, after all, can the quality of life be improved or developed if we lack a clear understanding of how life should and could be improved? Thus, for a society to develop, its members need to be consciously aware of what is wrong and what needs to be changed collectively, for although a society is made up of individuals, it is nonetheless a collective of individuals that makes up a society. For this reason, I want to focus on Hip Hop's relationship with development to the extent that the former could provoke reflection on certain issues, thereby raising awareness, which in turn could propel action. Once this action is taken it can be said to physically constitute a form of development (from individual reflection). This action, like any other action, then has ramifications for the world around it, which could potentially manifest itself as human development. It is this potential that I have intended to explore.

Today the notion of development is more readily understood as the injection of capital into an economy. For me, as discussed in more detail above, this assertion is surely misguided: rather than focusing on teaching our children how and why they should do something, the mechanics of how things work, we send them to school where they are largely taught not to question, not to probe and not to deviate from the main line. One of my interviewees, although we had wandered slightly from the topic of Hip Hop was disgusted to find that one of her university professors at a masters level insisted that she was wrong in expressing herself on the creation of African states as being unique in that they were created in times of peace, rather, as

the professor wanted, that they had *not* been created in times of war. This I think demonstrates how closed-minded society is becoming and how rigid we are in our understanding of what is acceptable and what not. Are we all supposed to fit into tiny little boxes? Are we supposed to feel awkward if we deviate from normalcy - whatever that means? Are we supposed to condone the local university spending 4000 rands (!) on having a mural removed from an (ugly) red brick wall, when all that paint did was add a bit of colour, and undoubtedly empower whoever did it to express themselves? After all it wasn't a scribble or an ugly careless drawing, someone had quite seriously taken the time to create something that they thought would add to the atmosphere of the place.

Amartya Sen (2001)[64] claims "Opulence has increased" and millions of people are "denied elementary freedom" no matter if they live in the rich areas of the world or the poor ones. This claim can be validated by focusing on the statistics that show income-ratio of the one-fifth of the world's population in the wealthiest countries to the one-fifth in the poorest countries that more than doubled from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 74 to 1 in 1995 as shown in the 1999 United Nations *Human Development Report*[65]. Every single day, twenty-four thousand people perish as a result of not being able to obtain life-sustaining food[66]. In addition, the 'National Association for the Prevention of Starvation' estimates that:

> "(e)very day thirty-four thousand children under five die of hunger or preventable diseases resulting from hunger[67]"

And 'Starvation.net' argues that:

> "if we were to add...waterborne diseases and AIDS (to the numbers that die from starvation)... we would be approaching a daily body count of fifty thousand deaths[68]."

[64] Sen, A. K. (2001) Development as Freedom. p. xi.
[65] United Nations. *Human Development Report*. (New York: United Nations, 1999)
[66] The United Nations World Food Programme, http://www.wfp.org/index.asp?section=1
[67] http://www.napsoc.org

These figures do not solely involve the poorest countries they also include developed ones. In fact, the 'US Department of Agriculture' findings estimate that twelve million families in the United States alone show worry and are insecure over their next meal[69]. Sen (2001) goes on to argue that millions of people are caged as a consequence of economic and social misery, cultural authoritarianism, as well as by unfair and abusive politics and politicians, whether they realise it or not. And to the point, these circumstances will only change once people do realise the cages that they exist within, realising that it is not their free will that dislikes colourful and thoughtful paintings in one place (a gallery or a museum) and not in another (on a train or a wall or the side of someone's house –I mean isn't that ridiculous that if a person wants to paint the outside wall of their very-own property they have to first ask permission from the council? And no doubt the more *radical* a person is labelled as the less likely they are to get permission. But then that very same council relinquishes its responsibility when it comes to paying for your wall to be painted when the paint is cracking or to fix a crack if the wall is breaking –why because it is your property, but its not really yours because you can't decide what to do with it, or at least you can decide so long as we don't disagree. That is how we're increasingly being subjected to see freedom.

The reason why, more and more, people are confined to economic and social misery is most likely because of the hegemony of capitalism whose mainstream 'pop' culture seeks to absorb every form of expression, as well as cultural and physical capital, for private profit[70]. Alternatively, 'conscious' Hip Hop artists aim to distribute forms of expression freely not merely for private profit but also for a collective profit. Haupt (2008), argues that youngsters from all angles of the globe were inspired by "the potential of Hip Hop's challenge to social injustices". This highlights how the struggle of one person or of one people can become the struggle of all peoples. A

[68] http://www.starvation.net
[69] Reported by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), http://www.frac.org
[70] This is illustrated quite clearly by the fact that wealth has increased globally but simultaneously so too has inequality –thus logically this could mean that resources are being taken away, or at the very least abused, from certain peoples while these same resources are exploited by a few for profit.

personal example that I can give is that had I not possessed the Tupac 'All Eyez on Me' album, purchased in the latter half of the nineties I would not have known about the existence of political prisoners in the USA - Mumia Abu Jamal for instance. Tupac's acknowledgment influenced me to inform myself on the subject so without it, I would never have become interested in Mumia's cause. This ability to provide people with knowledge is another indication of how Hip Hop acts as an alternative to the corporate sources of information that work in the name of, and contribute to the perpetuation of capitalism. According to Karl Marx, capitalism is a system founded on competition whose objective for each competing agent is to make a profit (accumulate capital). The bourgeoisie (capitalists) have the monopoly of the means of production (factories) whereas the proletariat's (workers) only commodity is labour (labour theory of value), resulting in the latter having to settle for a mere subsistence wage. This is because Marx assumes that there are more potential workers than there are available jobs (the "reserve army of the unemployed"). In a situation like this, the bourgeoisie is a parasite that must exploit the proletariat's labor force or there can be no profit. This is a clear case of what I refer to as 'negative' competition inherent in capitalism. Furthermore, the capitalists will want to expand their business and increase their profits by employing machinery. Consequently more workers will be out of their jobs and the wages (which may have increased over time) will return to subsistence level. Capitalism, still according to Marx, is characterized by a constant cycle of economic "booms" followed by crises. They are bound to happen, and the result is that at each crisis the smaller firms will go under as the stronger firms gain a considerably larger slice of the market cake until they emerge as monopolies. Marx depicts a scenario where exploitation of the masses and misery due to capitalism's notion of development are unavoidable. The proletariat's only option to free itself from exploitation is finally to revolt. In opposition to the Marxist opinion we can look at Cook and Mosedale's (2007: 11) where they say that competition is ideally supposed to drive down the price of the product towards the cost of producing that product: perfect competition. However this is fundamentally impossible and cannot happen because capitalism is a system founded on debt. The financial institutions in a country (i.e. banks) create money according to how much is needed. The

government, or any individual for that matter, requests a certain amount of money and obtains it. The problem is that once this money is distributed to the individual, it is now worth its actual value plus an added percentage: interest. This means that the existing money is no longer worth the amount it actually is but in reality it is worth more. So, in order for that individual to pay back this extra amount of money they need to make a profit! This process is undoubtedly a cyclical one as it is a system based on debt, which will continuously call for the exploitation of many in order for few to make a profit. The driving force of business is therefore profit, and will never be able to be uncoupled from a process of exploitation. Thus capitalism is a system characterised by unfair and dysfunctional politics because the power is distant from the many –and consequently, politicians are not accountable to them, while at the same time it claims the opposite as truth.[71] In addition, the extent to which modern-day, representative democracy is actually representative has also been a subject for debate. Sen (2001) argues that to adequately understand development one must look further than gross national product and other "income related variables". I would like to add to this that one must look at alternative forms of cultural expression that are directly in conflict with the mainstream forms in order to understand exactly what it is that constitutes development in this alternative case, and how it can be translated into the bigger societal picture.

For Sen (2001), development is linked with improving the quality of life and with extending freedoms. Some of the questions this research seeks to explore is how is this concretely manifested in 'Hip Hop ideology'? Can Hip Hop help to improve people's quality of life? In what ways does Hip Hop empower its community members? And, what freedoms does Hip Hop promote?

According to Sen (2001), in order to judge economic development we need to look at the "impact of democracy and political freedoms on the lives and capabilities of the

[71] i.e. that today is the most advanced form of society that has existed, presenting its peoples with democracy, accountability and equality, regardless of whether or not this is actually the case. It is quite clearly the case however, whether you are on the left or the right, that these notions and values are not respected, and are often misunderstood and confused.

citizens[72]". He argues that to understand the content and the force of economic needs, discussion and exchange are required. That "political and civil rights guaranteeing open discussion, debate, criticism, and dissent, are central to the processes of generating informed and reflected choices".[73] This I found to be particularly important in Hip Hop due to its inclusive and democratic culture, where debate and (constructive) criticism are part of a routine. Yet this contention is in direct conflict with contemporary society's primary communication mechanism: the media. Today it is of general knowledge that various newspapers and television stations are owned and controlled by the same individuals. For example, Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi "controls about 90 percent of Italian TV viewership,"[74]. This can signify that it is these individuals -such as Berlusconi and Rockerfeller- who end up dictating the news, in order to manipulate the masses. An example that we could refer to in order to spark the argument that the media sometimes seeks to manipulate the people can be found when analysing the coup against the President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez[75] and the strategic role the media played in trying to keep the population from rioting: misinformation was key. Which brings us to the question: should governments withhold information from citizens? The argument for withholding information being that citizens are not always capable of fully understanding the situation and therefore they could react dangerously for society at large, when informed about a possible threat, or whatever. For me, having top-secret files, available to a select few is indicative of the opaque and unaccountable nature of modern-day society. Rather than deliberating on whether or not to divulge or withhold information it would seem more logical to develop the education system so that all members of society are at an intellectual level capable of reflection and restraint. But of course, this would not really be conducive to business, and hence the education system reflects the labour force needs: unquestioning and obedient workers.

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[72] Ibid. p. 150
[73] ibid. p. 153
[74] Paul Betts, "Ciampi Calls for Review of Media Laws," *Financial Times* (London), 24 July 2002, p. 8.
[75] See Julian Borger and Alex Bellos, "US 'Gave the Nod' to Venezuelan Coup", *Guardian* (London), 17 April 2002, p.13 and a documentary presented by the Irish Film Board titled - *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.*

Sen (2001) goes on to concretise the framework for this research when he states that public discussions play a crucial role in the formation of certain understandings and beliefs, in the formation of values. The use of democratic institutions "is conditioned by our values and priorities and by the use we make of the available opportunities of articulation and participation";[76] that public discussion is powerful - that it "can also make democracy itself function better". [77] I'd take it one step further - public discussion is democracy. The freer and more accessible it is to the people results in a democracy that is just that -free and accessible. It characterises the nature of the democracy. However it is not enough. We must also pay attention to the content of democracy. One cannot, for example tick the United States Government in the democracy box solely because its citizens are guaranteed the right to vote and enjoy basic human rights. Democracy is not just nature, but much more, it is also nurture. A democracy is to be judged by its content, by its activity and practice. The horrific acts of torture that took place at Abu Ghraib is an example of practice that cannot co-exist with the notion of freedom, and less so with the ethos of democracy. The President of the U.S.A. at the time, as Chief of the Armed Forces should in the very least have resigned from his position in shame. Especially if we remember that his predecessor, Clinton, almost had to leave the Oval Office covered in shame for the sake of his lies as regards to his mistress. In Northern Ireland at the time of my writing we are witnessing a very similar event. This time a Minister has resigned for the lies of a cheating and corrupt wife. All this in the name of: democracy. Speaking of Northern Ireland, will the 'democratic' British institution ever apologize to its Celtic neighbours *d'outre mer* -their first colony- for the manner in which they brutally conducted their Imperial quest? But I'm overtly transgressing from the subject here. What was meant parallels Sen's argument that the issue of practice is "of central importance in the contributions that can be expected from civil rights and political freedoms." [78] This is related to my research because Hip Hop, in different ways, provides the young members of civil society with diverse *fori* for political

[76] Sen, A. K. (2001) Development as Freedom. p. 158
[77] ibid.p. 158
[78] ibid.p. 159

discussion and participation to take place. It is very much bottom-up and often centred around political/social issues.

Furthermore, Sen (2001) proposes the idea of individual freedom as social commitment and individual responsibility arguing that in this sense freedom is both necessary and sufficient for responsibility. The freedoms people enjoy and value allow them to be more complete social beings meaning that they are vested with the power to interact with this world and to influence it. Following on this argument comes the notion of 'freedom of expression' that is conceived by graffiti artists in particular as they are constantly interacting with the urban greyness of the world by trying to alter it with a few spray cans and artistic creativity.

> "The social commitment to individual freedom, need not...operate only through the state, but must also involve other institutions: political and social organisations, community-based arrangements, non-governmental agencies of various kinds, the media and other means of public understanding and communication..."[79]

Two of the main catalysts that got me interested in this study are: first, that the formal practice of education is narrow[80], and second, that much of the information we receive comes from limited and selective sources – i.e. the education system and mass-media. It was interesting therefore to explore "other means of public understanding and communication" that are used in today's world to represent alternative perspectives, such as Hip Hop, which is in Amartya Sen's (2001) understanding of the word: free.

Like Sen (2001), I appreciate the claim that people themselves must have responsibility for the development and change of the world in which they live, however this also means that people must engage the structural constraints in order

[79] Sen, A. K. in *Daily Struggles: The Deepening Racialization and Feminization of Poverty in Canada* by Siu-Ming Kwok and Maria A. Wallis. (2008). p.276

[80] See: Willis, P. (1984). "Education, Cultural Production and Social Reproduction". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, v5 n2 p105-15.

to change them. Thus, the need to engage hegemonic structure is accepted as a possible solution for development action taking place. Hip Hop's potential effects on promoting awareness of socio-political issues to an audience is important, and the fact that Hip Hop discourse is often counter-hegemonic allows for the marginalised members of society to be and feel represented.

It seems therefore, that the object of development studies is the social, economic and political inequality with respect to under-developed and developing countries. No matter what development implies (the implementing of policies or not) reflection as a consequence of awareness is always the first step to development.

I propose based on the information collected in this research, that alternative practices (to capitalism), as is the case with Hip Hop may positively influence human development. However, in order to accomplish this arduous task the alternative culture in question must above all have a transformative effect on the individuals that are part of its community. A transformative effect occurs in an individual only after being 'enlightened' with newly acquired knowledge imparted by means of 'education', or 'pedagogy'. In this sense: culture needs to provoke thought by raising awareness, and it is through the self-transformation as a result of the experience that stems from this acquired awareness that the individuals can then act concretely in their social sphere.

Culture and Hip Hop

Art and culture are central to raising awareness (building consciousness). In understanding that from when we're born everything we perceive is filtered through a cultural lens, we can begin to comprehend the force behind the idea of culture and how in turn this affects all of our perceptions.

The term *culture* is used in a myriad of ways. It is a mere notion but it has gained so much importance that it seems almost tangible. Yet in the world of today it becomes

difficult to even conceptualise or to understand where one culture begins and the other ends. Brightman (2006)[81] claims that the term culture is of little use and is a mere word replaceable with others like 'habitus' and 'hegemony'.

When talking of culture, Sewell (1999)[82] highlights the important part played by anthropologists in tackling this notion and distinguishes between two fundamentally different meanings of the term culture. The first meaning defines culture as an "aspect of social life that must be abstracted out from the complex reality of human existence". Culture is thus defined as system (as structure). It is also implicit that a contrast between culture and another "equally abstract aspect or category of social life" will occur, as long as it's not culture. In this meaning the term only takes "the singular" form whereas if the term is to be used in the plural the contrast will be "between one culture and another." In this second meaning when we talk of culture we're taking it to represent "a concrete and bounded body of beliefs and practices[83]".

I am interested in exploring the relationship between Hip Hop as "category of social life" (i.e. in the first meaning) and an equally abstract aspect or "category of social life" – development. By this, I mean that development is a continuum in the sense that it has no starting point, no finishing point, and in this way it is constantly present. Society is dynamic, never static. It is constantly evolving. In contemporary society people have the power to technologically mould the society in which they live, which implies that any action they undertake is an attempt to improve or redress what was not functional. In this sense, action constitutes development (although it should be noted that I am not ignoring the possible negative consequences of actions).

Sewell goes on to argue that culture should be understood as "dialectic of system and practice[84]". In other words as a dialogue between structure and agency of agents

[81] Brightman, *Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification.* (2006).
[82] *The Concept(s) of Culture*, (p. 39) in "Beyond the Cultural Turn". (1999). Bonnell, V & Hunt, L. (eds). UC Berkeley Press
[83] ibid. p. 39
[84] ibid. p. 47

- Hip Hop needs to be seen, in this same light, as: a constant dialogue between the Hip Hop Community[85] and the Hip Hop artists through their expressions. From my findings it appears evident that Hip Hop is not just a term that involves system and symbols rather the Hip Hop community is composed of a structured collective meaning that adheres to a particular system of beliefs and codes, whilst relating to particular symbols such as the spray-can, the microphone and the turntables, but also image and clothing. These symbols are then also the means through which the practice of the culture occurs.

Hip Hop culture is also to be understood as an educational creator of meaning with a significant potential to provoke reflection in an individual or a group. C. W. Mills (1959)[86] states that people learn to think in different ways through their own "reflection and by their sensibility" which is what allows them to realise the "cultural meaning" of given societies[87]. This relates to the concept of reflection, which is not simply relevant but central to my analysis. Mills (1959) describes the sociological imagination, which is one and the same as self-consciousness or awareness. He argues that self-consciousness is continuously changing as new information is absorbed, and new stages of understanding, or 'enlightenment', are reached: thus there is a constant trans-valuation of values. In this way, new pieces of information change your thinking and perception of the world: the first stage of Hip Hop.

In his definition of culture, Lionel Trilling (1965)[88] includes a people's culture primarily as the technology they use, the way in which the same people behave and act, their organisation, their theological beliefs and their value system. This may not be enough to justify Hip Hop as culture, however Trilling (1965) concludes with two more dimensions: "a people's art and thought". It was in fact Hip Hop's potential to provoke thought by communicating thought that stood as one of the key areas of

[85]The Hip Hop community is to be understood as those people who live by Hip Hop, by those that represent it and those who feel represented by it.
[86] Mills, C. W. (1959) "The Promise" in the Sociological Imagination. New York: Oxford University Press: pp. 3-18.
[87] Ibid. p. 8.
[88] Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovlanovich, 1965, uniform edition 1978), preface.

interest for this research.

Culture and Development

In 1968 UNESCO[89] proclaimed that "if man is at the origin of development, if he is the agent and beneficiary thereof, he should, above all, be considered as the justification and finality of development." Ignoring/overlooking the sexist phraseology, the statement insists that the focus of development should be on the individual who has the potential to "pass it" on and will benefit from it at the same time.

UNESCO further declared that education, information and cultural progress act as necessary tools by which economic and social development should be shaped. In this light, education which transmits knowledge and values is linked to culture, in that it is seen as a cultural process (as well as an economic process), and at the same time linked with democracy as the latter's values are "inculcated in and sustained within society" through culture and education. This however implies that it is not just culture but also democracy that is a necessary criterion for economic and social development. For this reason it would appear valuable to explore the link between a democratic culture like Hip Hop, and development -which is precisely the aim of this research.

Serageldin (1992)[90] argues that development needs to focus on two forms of change: "promotion of cultural identity and empowerment of the people". It is implied in this assumption that the latter reality cannot be realised without taking into account the importance of a society's cultural aspects. Rap, break-dancing and graffiti are functional examples of how empowerment occurs through the promotion of culture. By rapping, a Hip Hop artist is vested with the power of professing her/his word to

[89] Salim A. Salim, "Culture and Development in Africa": *Proceedings of an International Conference* held at the World Bank. Washington, page 10. (1992)
[90] Serageldin in Culture and Development in Africa: *Proceedings of an International Conference* held at the World Bank. Washington, page 19. (1992)

an audience and by spray-painting on a wall that same artist re-appropriates a public space for freedom of expression in the very same way as a break-dancing crew freely expresses its own individuality in a crowded urban street corner.

This chapter has: 1) presented an overview of the main notions and 'prescriptions' that have constructed Development theory thus far; 2) discussed the relevance for redefining the notion of Development especially as we are presently confronted with a crisis in Development theory; 3) established a link between Development, Hip Hop and culture on the basis of consciousness by individual reflection.

I have taken development to constitute the transformative effect on people as a result of being introduced -through some form of education- to a new, or an alternative perspective on reality. Hip Hop can provoke reflection on certain issues, thereby raising awareness, which in turn could propel action. Once this action is taken it can be said to physically constitute a form of development (from individual reflection). This action, like any other action, then has ramifications for the world around it, which could potentially manifest itself as human development.

In the next chapter I will introduce the concept of Empire followed by a discussion first on 'freedom' and secondly on 'education' in relation to their hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and revolutionary notions by drawing from the existing and relevant literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDUCATION IS FREEDOM

Empire and Democracy: Two Sides of the Same Coin.

"I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, a more worldly-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place."[91] Winston Churchill, 1937.

"...Using war, disease and sanctions that killed millions. They supported corrupt governments that were almost like the old slave masters in their repression of the people. Because their loyalty was to those who enabled them, installed them and kept them in power. They became the bastard children of American Industry - cleptocracies, governments of thievery. They protected the corporations and went to war against their own people to preserve those profits. The puppet rulers were given billions of US tax-dollars to fund civil wars, right-wing death squads, execute political dissidents, sympathetic clergy and even overthrow democratically elected governments. And so the age of revolution began again. They painted it as God-less terrorists versus the Free World and the Free Market but the Free Market has never been free because the market does not regulate itself. It is manipulated like a puppet and it survives because of its image. Destroy the image and the enemy will die. Such is the same in the rap Industry for the major labels - superpowers - treat the underground like the Third World. When they need new assets, new honours to prostitute our side and put on a shelf to use their songs, when they needed new concepts, music and publishing to steal from producers they came to the underground, to the Third World. They took our culture, our property and our Industry, and our resources even using our own people to help them exploit us. From behind the mask of efficiency they claim that we need to succeed. They are no better than us. Their economic

[91] Quoted in Editorial, "Scurrying Towards Bethlehem", *New Left Review* 10, 2nd series (July/August 2001), p. 9, n. 5.

advertisement was always a lie – a few got rich but most were given an illusion of wealth almost as if it was designed for failure. Opportunity comes at the price of the soul in the music. So remember what they are underneath the fancy architecture, glittering rented jewellery, the cars, the IMF loans...twenty-year contracts and oil blood-money. Build your defences my independent brothers and sisters. They'll stop at nothing to get what they want. They paint the Third World/underground as savage and backward but the superpowers are no less corrupt. They've just learned to disguise it better because they fix elections too, they embezzle tax-money, they go to war for resources, they fund terrorism for their own benefit and when there's enough at stake history has taught us that they'll even assassinate their own Presidents."[92]

Immortal Technique, 2008

"I will never apologize for the Unites States of America – I don't care what the facts are."[93] George Bush Sr, 1988.

When I began to analyze the lyrics of several hip hop artists from around the globe - for example: Immortal Technique, The Coup and Lost Emperor (USA); Keny Arkana, Rocca, and NTM (France); Loop Troop, Timbuktu and Fattaru (Sweden); 99 Posse, Sud Sound System and Assalti Frontali (Italy); POC, Black Noise, BVK (South Africa); The Herd, Pegz and Terra Firma (Australia) - I noticed that *Babylon*, meant as the system of Empire, is a common and recurring theme. Babylon is the first Empire spoken of in The Bible. In the opinion of many 'heads' Babylon survives. It is still the same Empire that has established the system as it is (in the shape of a compartmentalised pyramid of power), and that has controlled large parts of human civilization for thousands of years by controlling knowledge. Babylon seems to have survived by moving West from it's original point of departure in Mesopotamia and by changing name as it moved. More specifically, Babylon became Egypt, then Rome, then the Holy Roman Empire, then the Portuguese and Spanish Empire, followed by

[92] Immortal Technique. *Open Your Eyes.* The Third World (2008)
[93] Bush made this remark in refusing to apologize for the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane, killing 290 passengers. Appears in: "The Loneliness of Noam Chomsky" written as an introduction for the new edition of Noam Chomsky's *For Reasons of State* (New York: New Press, published January 2003).

the Dutch Empire, and finally the British Empire that then established itself as the Anglo-American Empire. Whether this is true or not is not for me to say here, however this assumption is worth looking into especially when considering some historian's claims that ancient knowledge such as astronomy and geography had been seemingly purposefully limited in ancient times[94]. For example, that there have been Sumerian relicts found on all continents, that the Vikings had already found a way into the Americas, that the Mayans (amongst other ancient civilizations) had profound knowledge of the alignment of stars, of the cycle of the sun and the moon and that Earth was not flat. Furthermore it is often believed that ancient civilizations were backward and un-developed yet we still haven't found a way to accurately describe how megalithic constructions such as the pyramids in Egypt materialized. My intention is not to speculate or construe conspiracy theories. However it is a fact that 'democratic' countries have successfully undertaken coordinated imperialist politics to this day. For this reason it becomes important to study alternative politics of resistance to Empire.

The definition of Empire that I wish to rest my arguments on comes from the powerful essays and speeches of Arundhati Roy (2004) - a woman whose dark, penetrating eyes see the lies where others see the light; a brilliant intellectual; finally, a lively political analyst and activist from the world's largest democracy, India. She describes Empire in the twenty-first century as a triumvirate composed of religious fundamentalism, nuclear nationalism and corporate globalization[95].

A discussion on Empire may initially seem out of place in post-colonial times, and linking Empire to democracy may even sound ludicrous to some. However, the survival of Empire in the current political situation, characterised by neo-liberal markets and modern representative democracies, has been the subject of a fiery debate that has cleared way to a growing amount of literature -from Noam Chomsky to Naomi Klein, Edward Said to Amy Goodman- construed from recurring world

[94] See J. Kenyon. *Forbidden History*: Extraterrestrial Intervention, Prehistoric Technologies, and the Suppressed Origins of Civilization (Paperback). New Horizon Distributor.
[95] Arundhati Roy (2004). *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*. Flamingo: London. (p. 8)

events such as wars of conquest, manipulation of the masses, and economic domination of native peoples by foreigners. As evidence, Roy (2004) highlights the USA's underlying imperial intentions by deconstructing the US government's argument for going to war against Saddam Hussein in Iraq. First she explains that the US government was a close ally of the Iraqi president in 1988. It was the same year that the US government provided Hussein "with five-hundred million dollars in subsidies to buy American agricultural products" (2004: 29) - the very same year in which the Iraqi despot invested in chemical weapons and machine guns to attack the Kurdish minority. Consequently, hundreds of villages were turned to dust and thousands of Kurdish people were killed. Saddam Hussein was rewarded with one billion US$ in subsidies for the year that followed the initial attempt of ethnic cleansing at the cost of the Kurdish people (2004: 29,30).

"Here's the truth about the system that will fuck up your mind
They gave Al Qaeda 6 billion dollars in 1989
To 1992 and now the last chapters of Revelations are coming true...
But you act like America wouldn't destroy two buildings
In a country that was sponsoring bombs dropped on our children
I was watching the towers and though I wasn't the closest
I saw them crumble to the earth like they were full of explosives
And they thought that nobody would notice the news report that they did
About the bombs planted on the George Washington Bridge
Four non-Arabs arrested during the emergency
And then they disappeared from the news permanently
They dubbed a tape of Osama and they said it was proof
Jealous of our freedom? I can't believe you bought that excuse
Rocking a motherfucking flag don't make you a hero
Word to Ground Zero
The Devil crept into Heaven, God overslept on the 7th,
The New World Order was born on September 11th...
...And just so conservatives don't take it to heart
I don't think Bush did it because he isn't that smart
He's just a stupid puppet taking orders on his cell phone

From the same people that sabotaged Senator Wellstone
The military Industry got it 'popping' and 'locking'
Looking for a way to justify the Wolf Ovitz doctrine
And as a matter of fact, Rumsfeld, now that I think back
Without 9/11 you couldn't have a war in Iraq
Or a defence budget of world conquest proportions
Killed freedom of speech and revoked the right to abortion
Tax-cut extortion, a blessing to the wealthy and wicked
But you still have to answer to the Armageddon you scripted
And Dick Cheney you fucking leech tell them your plans
About building your pipelines through Afghanistan
And how Israeli troops train the Taliban in Pakistan
You might have some house niggers fooled but I understand
Colonialism - is sponsored by corporations
That's why Halliburton gets paid to re-build nations
Tell me truth. I don't scare into paralysis
I know the CIA saw Bin Laden on dialysis
In 98 when he was top ten for the FBI
Government ties is really why the Government lies
Read it yourself instead of asking the Government why?"[96]

Roy is especially critical of the USA sanctions on Iraq - sanctions that lasted a decade after the first Gulf war of 1991. She condemns this as an act of imperialism explaining that half a million children perished because of the limits that were imposed by the sanctions. Food, clean water, hospital equipment, medicine were all denied to the local population (2004: 31). Furthermore, the USA's second invasion of Iraq in 2002 should have been deemed an illegal occupation according to International Law – What ever happened to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction? And what exactly was the link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda? These questions still need answering by the former President of the USA (the same president who defines as peaceful a nation that has been at war every day, and against different peoples, for the last fifty years). Roy's claim for Empire, however, rests also in the knowledge that

[96] Immortal Technique. *The Cause of Death.* Revolutionary Volume II, 2003.

the US government, and military, manifested an imperialist ideology when they went to great lengths to manipulate the American citizens' grief through the corporate media – "acting as the US government's mouthpiece", into believing that a war against Saddam Hussein was a war against those terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center[97] (2004: 45). The US government's brainwashing *en masse,* alongside with the bombs dropped on civilians from: Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Korea, and Vietnam to Baghdad, and the instalment of USA military bases on the soil of foreign countries could somewhat easily be argued as evidence for the expansionary practices of Empire - whose enemies are not the so-called terrorists of, or inspired by '9/11' but the human population at large.

Further evidence of Empire's desire to control the political and economic life of foreign countries can be gathered by looking at the 'other 9/11'. That terrible September morning of 1973 when a *junta* of fascist generals, headed by Augusto Pinochet, backed by the US government and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) raped the Chilean population of its democracy. Chile's democratically elected coalition was inspired by Pablo Neruda's poetry, and led by Salvador Allende's humanity, courage and respect for democracy - defined by his imploration[98] to the people of Chile not to take up arms against the vile actions of military terrorism, and the refusal on his part to be sent into a comfortable exile. Instead he barricaded himself in the government building (Palacio de la Moneda) because that is where the people had wanted to see him in the first place. He was under siege and like any respectable captain had preferred to remain on board of the sinking ship that represented Chilean democracy. 'La Moneda' was being bombed on all sides; the armed forces had surrounded the building but were kept at a distance by few members of the Presidential Guard until the very end. After the international community failed to denounce the Chilean army's actions, President Allende ordered his guards to lay their weapons down and return to their families. A few moments

[97] According to a *New York Times/CBS News* survey, an estimated "42% of the American public believed that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon", in: Arundhati Roy (2004). *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire.* Flamingo:London. (p. 104).
[98] See Allende's final presidential speech to the Nation, broadcasted by 'Radio Magallanes' on September 11th 1973.

later he would die from a shot to the head by a sniper[99]. Unfortunately this episode is but one amongst many other cases of US imperialism.

> "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."[100]

Henry Kissinger, ironically a Nobel Peace Laureate and President Nixon's National Security Adviser at the time pronounced the quote above. Kissinger's statement provides explicit evidence of the USA's hypocrisy in their way of viewing democracy i.e. the latter must serve the interests of Western Imperialism. Chile's democracy (the longest standing democracy in American history) was overthrown in a bloody coup that installed a fascist dictator, General Pinochet. Augusto Pinochet[101] would rule the country with an iron fist for decades to come - resulting in the torture, 'disappearance', forced migration and assassination of thousands of political activists and civilians[102]. The failure to convict Pinochet for crimes against humanity is further evidence of how powerful the imperialist machine actually is[103]. As described by Galeano (1998) and Chomsky[104] (1985) relatively few Latin American people have not suffered from US backed repression. The people of Panama, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Cuba and Venezuela can testify. African examples of countries that have been attacked by the USA include Somalia, Libya and Sudan. This list however does not include the USA's covert operations[105].

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[99] This information was acquired from an interview that I conducted on August 5th 2009 with a surviving member of Salvador Allende's Presidential Guard.
[100] Quoted in Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 265.
[101] See Amnesty International, "The Case of Augusto Pinochet" (http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/chile/pinochet_case.html).
[102] See Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, 2nd ed., trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998); Pilar Aguilera and Ricardo Fredes, *Chile: The Other September 11*, eds. (New York: Ocean Press, 2002)
[103] See Clifford Krauss, "Britain Arrests Pinochet to face charges by Spain", *New York Times*, 18 October 1998, p.1:1; National Security Archive, "Chile: 16,000 Secret U.S. Documents Declassified, "Press release, 13 November 2000 (http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20001113/)
[104] Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: US Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace*, 2nd ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1985); Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).
[105] Arundhati Roy (2004). The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire. Flamingo:London. (p. 54)

Underground rapper Immortal Technique addresses concerns about US Imperialism. He recalls events in the history of the USA, (almost in response to Churchill's quote) to indicate that a country that has behaved so brutally in the past can by no means guarantee that it will not behave in a similar way again by performing the following words:

They bombed innocent people trying to murder Saddam
When you gave him those chemical weapons to go to war with Iran...
How could this be the land of the free, the home of the brave?
Indigenous holocaust and the home of the slaves,
It's corporate America dancing off beat to the rhythm.
Do you really think this country never sponsored terrorism
And human rights violations? We continue the saga.
El Salvador and the CONTRAS in Nicaragua
And on top of that you still want to take me to prison?
Just because I won't trade humanity for patriotism...
Read about the history of the place that we live in
And stop letting corporate news tell lies to your children...
Democracy is just a word when the people are starving

Ideologies of Freedom

The concept of freedom for the ancient Greek civilization, as described by Hobbes (1642), was reserved to politics and religion and was naturalized in the power and autonomy of the State. As a consequence citizens were subjugated, *ipso facto,* to laws that would constrain individual freedoms for the price of living in an orderly State[106]. However, the binding authority of the state in the Greco-roman belief system did allow some space for the freedom of the citizen who was vested with civil rights. Hence, when talking of notions of freedom in the West one must take into account the concept of civil liberties and the 'rights and duties' discourse. More importantly, Socrates, Aristotle and later Descartes offer a 'rational' view of freedom - associating

[106] Thomas Hobbes. (1642) De cive, X, 8.

it with knowledge i.e. a decision made is more or less free depending on how much knowledge was acquired by the decision-maker on the subject of the decision prior to the actual making of the decision. "Knowledge of self" has often been described as the fifth, and most important element of 'Hip Hop culture' - as a constant "state of mind" to be pursued by all practitioners of the 'four elements'. As one of my 'informers', Tokyo, states:

> "knowledge is freedom from mental slavery"[107]

KarB, claims that:

> "Hip Hop promotes for you to decolonise your mind".[108]

Scholars often known to come from the 'Enlightenment' such as: John Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill define freedom as a reality free from external obstacles[109], such as the authorities of church and state. It is an ideology that focuses on the independence of the individual from political constraints to freely pursue private profit of material as well as spiritual goods. It is from this contention that the moral backbone of classical liberalism draws its inspiration. This school of thought is in fact the dominant belief system in liberal democracies - characterised by capitalism, universal suffrage and representative government - although not entirely incompatible with political systems that are less than fully democratic as is the case with modern-day Russia. Interestingly enough the notion of freedom that results from Hip Hop ideology borrows from the ideas of these 'enlightened' intellectuals in that it is an ideology that wishes for its members to be "left in peace", free from the constraints imposed by 'external obstacles' - *"The government is my enemy"* was expressed by SilV, one member of the Hip Hop community who participated in the focus group. All ten participants agreed with

[107] From an informal conversation with Tokyo.
[108] From the "focus group". Statement made by KarB
[109] This is what Isaiah Berlin refers to by the term "negative liberty".

SilV.

Moving on, scholars such as Kant and Hegel define freedom as the liberty of the individual or the community 'to do'. In other words freedom is thus defined as: "self-realization", attained mainly through the agency of the state. Thus freedom can similarly be described as striving to reach a "higher self", or as achieving "self mastery"[110]. This school of thought has often been associated in the past century with the rise of the totalitarian state, the latter as argued by Hayek suppresses liberty in the name of liberty itself. Hip Hop however, embraces this view also, although in the case of my experience in South Africa it hardly ever happens through the agency of the state. That Hip Hop's notion of freedom is in many ways similar to the view that defines it, as self-realization is fairly obvious. This can be witnessed, for instance, in the ideology behind graffiti where, for example: "stealing (spray) cans has always been" an integral "part of the culture"[111]. 'Heads' do not necessarily believe stealing is legitimate but the practice of graffiti is, and for this reason it is often the case in some countries such as the USA and Australia that a young person will be refused the sale of spray cans. Furthermore, the outcome for getting caught stealing spray cans is no way near as serious as what you would get for 'defacing' a wall. There is the case of a man who tagged the word 'Dorps' so many times and all over the Australian train lines. He eventually got caught by the police and was sentenced to twenty years in jail, or a two hundred thousand dollar fine. For graffiti artists the issue then is not so much about how to procure the instruments, or about getting caught with stolen spray cans but rather getting caught doing your tag. In other words being recognised. It is after all a clandestine art. Graffiti artists do not appear afraid of taking risks in what they see as their duty towards civil society to express themselves freely by spray-painting the walls of most public and private spaces, *without permission*, as if you need permission then you are not freely acting. I asked five members of a Melbourne based graffiti crew, the 'Fresh Mess Crew'[112] (FMC) why they go through so many hassles just to get a wall painted without knowing

[110] This is what Isaiah Berlin refers to by the term "positive liberty".
[111] Statement made by JV during the focus group.
[112] A group of 'heads' that practice graffiti in Melbourne, Australia.

how long the 'piece will stay there for before the council removes it. The five had previously stolen two boxes of aerosol cans (forty cans in total) from a commercial warehouse. The cans would be used for a 'session' which involved 'bombing' the local train yard until dawn, when the train security discovered them and gave chase. Getting caught would have meant a fine of several thousand Australian dollars and a short prison sentence. 'Jewelz', a member of FMC stated that he would rather go to prison and lose his employment than quit doing what he does best.

"...plenty of dull walls in prison..."

The idea of freedom associated with the French radical tradition comes mainly from the political philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Jacobin regime brought to power during the French revolution (1793-94). It is usually described as an idea that aspires to achieve "the democratic 'self rule' of both the individual citizen and of civil society as a whole"[113] through the power of the state. However, Rousseauian liberty differs from the humanist tradition according to Isaiah Berlin in that it describes the participation of all members of society in a "public power which is entitled to interfere with every aspect of every citizen's life"[114]. In this case the state must therefore guarantee autonomy for its citizens' participation in what is usually referred to as the 'general will'. In general, the members of the Hip Hop community showed that the 'general will' was in complete opposition to the notion of 'free will', which according to MB: *"hardly exists because you're constantly being conditioned by your parents, the media, and the school system to act in a certain way so it's hard to be objective about different sorts of choices."* JV built on this argument with the following statement: *"The closest thing to 'free will' that hasn't yet entirely been taken away from us is: 'freedom of action' and Hip Hop encouraged me to take my life into my own hands"*. It is then through the power of Hip Hop and not through that of the state as argued by Rousseau; that the members of the Hip Hop community practice "democratic *self rule*".

[113] Paul Michael Cohen. (1997). "Freedom's Moment: an essay on the French idea of liberty from Rousseau to Foucault". (Page 2). University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London.
[114] Berlin. (1958). Two Concepts of Liberty. (page 162-3).

The complete opposite to Hip Hop's notion of freedom comes from the libertarian tradition. Murray Rothbard[115] explains this view as: the freedom from the "initiation of force" or the "non-aggression against anyone's person and property". Furthermore for this school of thought the people are free only when they act without limitations in accordance with their rights. Whereas they are not free if forced by other people or different institutions such as: the church or the government, to do anything that they have not formally agreed to. For example: if the State tried to redistribute the wealth of the population by taking a percentage of wealth from the wealthy that would signify a loss of the latter's freedom because the notion of private property for the libertarian doctrine is sacrosanct, in fact freedom can according to this ideology be considered as a product of private property. Therefore, "freedom and equality are incompatible".[116] This last assumption is often criticised by many scholars that have written on the subject of freedom. Furthermore, 'heads' make a clear distinction between person and property. The latter is usually understood as having no rights – *"The use of force, especially against private property is not violent; the idea of property is what is violent".*[117] This assertion is in line with John Zerzan's theory of property as can be seen in the anti-globalization documentary 'Surplus'. Zerzan, a man who makes his living by donating blood, is described as the ideologue of the Black Bloc. The social movement inspired by insurrectionary anarchism that is always present at the various summits (G8, WTO) and anti-war demonstrations. They are known at these events for "running in the wrong direction[118]" – towards the police as opposed to away from them. In other words for rushing between the peaceful demonstrators and the police when the latter decides to charge on the former as witnessed during the Seattle and Genoa G8 summits. However, they are better known (thanks to the corporate media) for vandalizing and smashing the windows of corporate businesses such as Banks, Mc Donald's, Starbucks etc.

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[115] Murray Rothbard. For a New Liberty (p.23)
[116] George G. Brenkert. (1997) "Self-ownership, Freedom, and Autonomy" (page 27) in "The Journal of Ethics". Volume 2, no.1
[117] From an informal conversation with 'Mo-Places'.
[118] Sentence used by 'Militant A', the lead rapper of Assalti Frontali.

Mostly Anarchist and Socialist criticism revolve around the fact that right-wing libertarians ignore that there exists plenty of coercion within social relationships in capitalist society. One of these scholars is G. A. Cohen who argues for a socialist, egalitarian society that seeks to guarantee both freedom and equality. However, Cohen makes it quite clear that a state of equality will necessarily limit freedom in the sense that is understood by libertarians although less so than the coercion employed to protect an order constructed on private property.

Furthermore, as has been pointed out by Balagopal[119] freedom in a socialist society should strictly be defined by the civil liberties granted to its members and must not be looked at in Liberal terms and much less so in a Liberal context. Hence, what we discover is that the notion of freedom taking a socialist stance is more directed at 'freedom from' rather than 'freedom of'. Although globally 'Hip Hop ideology' tends to promote socialism in favour of capitalism, the dominant notion in socialism of "freedom from" is not complete for 'heads' as they argue for a more holistic vision of freedom that incorporates the 'positive' freedoms as well as a strong focus on knowledge that stands at the basis for freedom.

I will conclude the section on freedom by outlining that what I found to be the most similar approach to what Hip Hop considers freedom, can be found in Bob Black's essay *The Abolition of Work* (1985), which leans on the ideas of William Morris, Marshall Sahlins, Paul Goodman and Charles Fourier as he builds his arguments and criticises both socialists and capitalists for their excessive focus on labour i.e. the production and consumption of commodities. Black (1985) argues that humans can only be free if rid from jobs and employment. In fact his tactics can be summarised in the final sentence: "Workers of the world...*relax*." In other words, if people reclaim their time from employment they can still perform necessary subsistence tasks turning them into voluntary and free 'play' i.e. what Black coined as the "ludic" approach. This is precisely the approach towards work that I have observed in the

[119] K. Balagopal. What is 'Socialist Freedom'? (Aug. 5,1989), *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 24, No.31

Hip Hop community. Work does as a matter of fact feel like a constraint, an obligation to the 'heads' that I interviewed. The people that felt in this way had regular jobs. They claim that work occupies their time therefore they are not free to engage in the activities that they wish to engage in. On the other hand 'heads' that make a living either through Hip Hop or through alternative, informal methods turn them into voluntary acts characterised by 'play' rather than subordination. When I asked 'TwoDudez', who make their living from Hip Hop by organising venues for Hip Hop gatherings in private clubs, and by writing rap songs, whether or not they regretted turning their hobby into their profession they stated: "The worst that can happen is when work starts feeling like office. When that's the case we know that it's time for a break from work". In other words it is time for a 'joint', which brings me to the alternative money-generating scheme as practiced by three of my informants. N-Tokyo 'pushes' Marijuana when he's not setting up his informal food catering stand at different sporting events. The catering business is unstable – "Sometimes I can make 200 Rand in a full days work and other times I can make 2000 Rand. Still it's heavy work that involves a lot of preparation - you need to get food from the market first, then prepare it, then you need to set up the stand, argue with people that want free food. I give them some at the end of the day if there are left overs, and there's always the risk of getting a fine from the authorities for not having a licence... The 'weed business' is much less stress and generates a lot more profit." Broccoli is also specialised in 'ganja'. You can find him everyday sitting in the same park playing his guitar when not taking care of his customers. He's in his early twenties and has been 'dealing' for the last five years. He shares a house with several of his friends. Together they are saving money for a farm in Kwa-Zulu Natal in order to escape 'Babylon'. Similarly Prism, an MC, is also specialized in Cannabis and already owns a farm in Malawi, his country of birth. He came to South Africa at the age of thirteen -this was the same age in which he discovered Hip Hop- to live with his uncle. Since then he has been doing odd jobs but selling the herb has been a constant. He made enough money to buy land in his native country so he did, and now he's saving up for machinery that will simplify the task of working the land - "Two more years and then I'm off to my brothers and sisters in Zion".

The Limits of Formal (institutionalised) Education

In the wake of capitalism's failure to reduce inequalities and to deliver an ethically sound notion of transformative development, our focus should be on studying the potential of an alternative, informal education to translate development awareness (acquired through the informal education) into action. In this case: the alternative form of education was provided by Hip Hop culture. This culture contests and challenges the dominant (Western, mainstream) culture and it is this dynamic that allows for an alternative notion of development and consequently an alternative development action. Furthermore, understanding youth culture today implies a necessity for studying that which the youth relates to and identifies itself with. As Dimitriadis (2001) argues it demands that one looks further than school life.

"Man that school shit is a joke
The same people who control the school system control
The prison system, and the whole social system
Ever since slavery, know-I'm-sayin?

They schools can't teach us shit
My people need freedom, we tryin to get all we can get
All my high school teachers can suck my dick
Tellin me white man lies straight bullshit
They schools aint teachin us, what we need to know to survive
They schools don't educate, all they teach the people is lies

School is like a 12 step brainwash camp
They make you think if you drop out you aint got a chance
To advance in life, they try to make you pull your pants up
Students fight the teachers and get took away in handcuffs
And if that wasn't enough, then they expel y'all
Your peoples understand it but to them, you a failure

Observation and participation, my favorite teachers
When they beat us in the head with them books, it don't reach us
Whether you breakdance or rock suede Adidas
Or be in the bathroom with your clique, smokin reefer
Then you know they math class aint important 'less you addin up cash
In multiples, unemployment aint rewardin
They may as well teach us extortion
You either get paid or locked up, the pricipal is like a warden
In a four year sentence, mad niggas never finish
But that doesn't mean I couldn't be a doctor or a dentist

Cuz for real, a mind is a terrible thing to waste
And all y'all high class niggas with y'all nose up
Cuz we droppin this shit on this joint, fuck y'all
We gon speak for ourselves...Cuz see the schools aint teachin us nothin
They aint teachin us nothin but how to be slaves and hardworkers
For white people to build up they shit
Make they businesses successful while it's exploitin us
...And they aint teachin us nothin related to
Solvin our own problems...
Aint teachin us how to get crack out the ghetto
They aint teachin us how to stop the police from murdering us
And brutalizing us, they aint teachin us how to get our rent paid
...They aint teachin our families how to interact
Better with each other...They just teachin us
How to build they shit up...That's why my niggas
Got a problem with this shit, that's why niggas be droppin out that
Shit cuz it don't relate, you go to school the fuckin police
Searchin you you walkin in your shit like this a military compound
...So school don't even relate to us
Until we have some shit where we control the fuckin school system
Where we reflect how we gon solve our own problems
Them niggas aint gon relate to school, shit that just how it is
...And I love education, But if education aint elevatin me,

It aint Takin me where I need to go on some bullshit, then fuck education."[120]

From this song, we can begin to understand the limits of the education system, the alienation that the youth may be confronted with as a consequence of such a system, and more importantly, this rap introduces also some alternatives to a formal education that often fails to be of relevance to large sectors of the population.

Paul Willis' (1977) groundbreaking study, *Learning to Labour*, shows the level of alienation felt by the working-class "lads" towards the education system, which he describes as an institutionalized process of social reproduction, meaning: "working class kids get working class jobs". In his work, as pointed out by Diane Reay[121], Willis argues that it is not the practice of schools that is the problem (i.e. the source of alienation) but "the place which schools occupy within the structures of class domination, and principally the demands that schools make on pupils' time". More importantly, Willis brings into light the importance of peer-group cultures even if they represent cultures of resistance towards the established order, in his case: 'the school'.

> "The group is special and more than the sum of its individual parts...the power that is thus generated in the group and its unspecified open nature, constitutes an important social force. It is partly from this source that wider symbolic cultural articulations are generated."

The young members of the group studied by Willis were able to break through the limits imposed by formal pedagogy to create an alternative environment for the development of personhood although by reinforcing their social position. However, Willis's "cultural level" as argued by Pardue (2007) may also provide a favourable environment for transformative agency.

Paulo Freire (1993), famous for his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* is the first to theorize a radically democratic form of education, more adequately: a 'liberational' education

[120] Dead Prez. *They Schools*. Let's Get Free.
[121] http://www.multiverse.ac.uk/viewarticle2.aspx?contentId=471

whose main objective is to raise consciousness[122]. Freire shows that the education system is firmly locked to the ideological principles that answer to the socio-cultural forces that has created it (the education system). It works in a vertical fashion from top to bottom where the only purpose of the pupil is to 'receive', 'memorize', 'repeat' and finally 'archive' the information. He finally claims that what all the education systems have in common is the desire to domesticate the people[123]. The pupil is not the subject of his education. "We work on the pupil. We don't work with the pupil"[124]. Freire proposes an alternative. In his desire to promote and improve the level of adult literacy he argues that the 'to do' approach, specific of the formal education system, needs to be replaced by a 'what to do' approach and as a result the pupil will learn to read the world, and not merely the word. Furthermore, Freire points out two specific and distinct moments on a pupil's path towards liberation. The initial moment, during which the pupil becomes aware of the depositary character of all education systems that don't regard the pupil as subject of the education process; the final moment, in which the depositary structures are taken down and replaced by approaches that seek not to teach the pupil but to learn with the pupil. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* it is thus from a post-modern, humanist tradition of absolute respect for the human being that Freire builds his theory of education. Hence, in his definition of "full humanity" a human being: (1) is incomplete and aware of being incomplete; (2) transforms his/her reality, thus transforming the world around him/her: "To exist humanely is to *name* the world, to change it"; (3) transformation of reality through self-transformation: "cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity"[125].

That education needs to be imparted horizontally in a comradely way was expressed by the 'heads' during the focus group. In particular there is a strong belief that people should form networks of knowledge amongst each other and set goals that the group will will strive to achieve as one:

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[122] P. Freire (1993). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum,
[123] ibid. (pp. 62 – 63).
[124] ibid, (p. 93).
[125] P. Freire (1993). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum, (pp. 73 – 76)

> "Let's educate each other. Let me get to overstand now, in that way I can start now educating myself and get out of my little box. Because we're all in boxes at the end of the day and to open them up we've got to learn the next box and then put it in your box and yours grows."[126]

Pereira (1997) is one amongst many intellectuals who cannot conceive the existence of a liberational education in capitalist societies. He builds on Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" in these words:

> "Departing from this verification [concerning] the unequal distribution of educational knowledge, one can observe that the school fits quite well, in an almost perfect circularity, within the law of the return of symbolic capital: the symbolic capital returns to the hands of those who already possessed it...Everything indicates that the practice of school [read: institutional] education cannot be liberational, not because the professors don't want it to be or that they adopt conservative pedagogies, nor can it be attributed to any such blatant statist policy, but rather because this is more or less written into the logic of educational insertion in the process of cultural transmission in capitalist societies" (Pereira 1997:37).

Grounded by Althusser's (1984) description of school culture as "culture of a secondary level," Pereira warns us of it becoming "a means of inculcation of socially dominant norms and values" i.e. by transmitting to students capitalism's cultural hegemonic 'art of articulation' (Pereira 1997:41).

Derek Pardue (2007)[127], illustrates some concrete examples of Hip Hop pedagogy. Pardue takes us on a voyage into the 'Brazilian (Hip Hop) jungle' to discover what could happen when local 'heads' get sponsored by the State, or N.G.O.'s to promote and distribute 'culture' and 'education'. The 'State' is to be understood in *Gramscian* terms as an "ethical" state. One which Lloyd and Thomas (1998) describe as aiming

[126] statement made by Tokyo.
[127] Derek Pardue (2007). *Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into "Heaven" and "Soul" in São Paulo, Brazil.*

to "form citizens and to gain consent...The subject is to be formed as one who consents to hegemony" and although schools are of crucial importance for this, "the work of formation is continuous, taking place not only through pedagogy but through the work of intellectuals in all the spheres of civil society".[128]

From Pardue's account it appears that 'heads' in Brazil are extremely politicized. They have a strong sense of group organization and they have been able to web an important social network. They have a tendency to occupy public spaces, often transforming these into appropriate *fori* where the youth can express their experiences of personhood, which is affected by a reality of social inequality, by reversing the negative stigma of "marginal" and at the same time call for political change. In other words we are dealing with the idea of "cultural politics" as defined by Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998).

Furthermore, most Brazilian 'heads', as stated by Pardue, either work for the State, or are sponsored by N.G.O.'s so although Brazil and South Africa are two countries that we often find facing each other in political, social, economic, comparative analysis it is not my purpose here to provide one on the subject of Hip Hop. My study focuses on the politics and practice of Hip Hop artists and does not look at the State or NGO's relation to Hip Hop. However, from the information that I have, based on the interviews that were conducted with hip hop practitioners and the 'strictly' Hip Hop events that I attended; I can assure that there is no comparison, so to say, between these two countries on the level of institutional (State or NGO) involvment, at least according to my findings. In the current reality of 'Joburg heads' there is very little attention given to Hip Hop culture by the popular ANC Government.

Where for the most part the Brazilians enjoy the support of the State for the creation, or the transformation of a space to even state their 'anti-State' rhetoric; in South Africa the 'State' seems to have forgotten the transformative potential, inherent in Hip Hop's progressive cultural force. A force so feared by the Apartheid regime in

[128] Lloyd and Thomas (1998). (p. 21)

the late 80's and 90's[129] that it went to great lengths to criminalise Hip Hop gatherings, which were also aimed at reclaiming public space. This does not mean that municipalities never sponsor Hip Hop events. In fact, every year for the last few the City of Johannesburg has hosted a Hip Hop festival in the central district of Newtown, however it must be said that this particular event charges an entry fee. It therefore goes against the principle of 'free entry' that is valid for Hip Hop practices such as ciphers and b-boy circles resulting in the exclusion of a lot of 'heads' that would otherwise attend the festival, and ultimately the festival is caged in by a fence that goes around its whole perimeter as if to keep the 'heads' within a limited space. What I'm getting at is that the 'former' South African State was more affected by Hip Hop and *vice versa* than the current 'democratic' State is. In fact not even one of the people that I interviewed had ever received a pay-check from the 'State'. As mentioned earlier, the State in apartheid South Africa, fearful of the messages and practices of Hip Hop tried to squash the movement with all necessary force whereas the post-apartheid State tollerates the practice of Hip Hop but only as long as it remains in a determined space. Thus the argument for Hip Hop reclaiming space from the State at events such as the Newtown Hip Hop festival cannot be made.

This chapter began by discussing some of the shortcomings of liberal democracy in the broader context of Western Imperialism, as witnessed by different individuals within the Hip Hop community across time and space, allowing for further analysis of the word Freedom. From the powerful expressions of dissent resonating from these artists we can begin to understand why alternatives are needed. Particularly alternative understandings of what it means to be free. This chapter sustains that a discussion on Freedom can hardly be made without considering the importance of Education. That we may also find it crucial to search for alternative forms of education that could in turn produce widened conceptions of human freedom as well as notions of development rooted in human well-being. Finally, Hip Hop is portrayed as an expression of the ideas of many of the theorists of education, development, and freedom.

[129] Refer to literature on the Hip Hop movements that exploded in the 'Cape Flats', a periphery of Cape Town.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

This research explored the *politics and practice* of the Hip Hop community in the context of global capitalism. The key question I had initially intended to pose was whether or not Hip Hop culture could provide practical alternatives for the realization of individual, and community 'development'. A positive answer to this question came slamming at me as soon I delved into the topic. I must confess that I began by lazily typing in 'Hip Hop development projects' on a major Internet search engine. I got linked up with 542,000 web pages in a mere 0.27 seconds. I was amazed and couldn't avoid sympathizing with those researchers that didn't make it to experience the modern wonders of 'information and communication technology'. Granted, not all the pages were useful (in fact most of them were totally un-related to my research focus), although they did indicate that Hip Hop was, and still is, currently being used around the world in the name of development.

The first link[130] I opened gave a description of the "Messengers of Truth" (MOT) project, promoted and sponsored by one of the United Nations (UN) bodies; the UN-HABITAT[131]. The MOT project was officially initiated in September 2004 during the 2nd World Urban Forum held in Barcelona, Spain. It consists of: a team of thirteen international rap artists from Greenland to South Africa, a group of break dancers and a film director. UN-HABITAT describes the rationale behind the summit in the following way:

> "the project...brought socially committed Hip-Hop artists, youth groups and representatives of the music industry, from Africa, Asia, Europe and the

[130] http://www.bestpractices.org/blpnet/BLP/hiphop/summitbrief.pdf
[131] UN-HABITAT is the lead UN agency for housing and urban development and is task manager of two of the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs): access to water and sanitation and improving the living conditions of people living in slum, especially the youth.

Americas, together to raise awareness on the positive role and potential contribution that the Hip-Hop movement can provide for the world's disenfranchised youth while at the same time providing a platform to be heard by political leaders...The *Hip-Hop Summit* resulted in the adoption of a *Framework Declaration of Principles and Call for Action* by the artists, youth groups and representatives of the music industry." [132]

The objectives and contributions of MOT were mainly concerned with raising awareness of HIV/AIDS, but also with promoting the UN Millennium Development Goals[133] (MDG) that seek to reduce "abject poverty" by the year 2020, promote "education, heath care, gender equality, social inclusion, good governance and improving living conditions in slums and inner cities." As expressed by the MOT programme, the three primary objectives are:

. "To inform youth living in slums[134] and inner cities of the Millennium Development Goals through the songs and performances of socially committed Hip-Hop artists, singing and rapping in different languages worldwide;

. To empower youth organizations worldwide by providing platforms where their voices can be heard and to help legitimize their participation in decisions that affect their livelihoods;

-1. To support projects worldwide demonstrating how youth organizations have been able to solve critical social, economic and environmental problems of direct relevance to the Millennium Development Goals in their respective communities."

The UN project for development, centred on MDG's can be criticised for being unrealistic in the objectives that it seeks to accomplish in such a short time and with practically no real strategy - in the sense that it all sounds very good on the theoretical level but the MDG's might be too ambitious, and arguably too idealistic. Finally the UN cannot, in any way, guarantee that the international community will

[132] http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=6591&catid=531&typeid=59&subMenuId=0
[133] www.unmdg.org
[134] UN-Habitat has estimated that disenfranchised urban youth make up 60 percent of urban slum dwellers.

genuinely join forces to set these up (the goals), or even score them. The MOT project, however seems to have been successful in raising funds and getting large crowds of young people together for it was repeated in October of the following year (2005) in Johannesburg, South Africa; and again in December 2007 in the city of Mannheim, Germany.

The next link[135] sent me deep into the red-hot Australian desert where Hip Hop activists have been working with marginalised Aboriginal communities since 2004. The *Indigenous Hip Hop Projects* (IHHP) take the form of workshops aimed for the youth that teach "performance skills", "community strengthening", and "health" education. Maurice Rioli, from the Elders Council in the Tiwi Islands (Milikupiti) made the following statement:

> "I'd certainly love to have them back. It is a program which I believe can develop young minds. I was wrapt they were able to bring out different qualities in different kids. I was just wrapt with the concept of the Indigenous Hip Hop Projects. I can't express how good they were."

As I opened more links I became aware that Hip Hop was being taught in schools as a means to get kids interested in poetry, and even history (this connects the notion of development with Hip Hop and education). To remain in the subject of education I also discovered that many North-American colleges/univerisites are promoting courses in Hip Hop studies. Even Hip Hop group therapy for the youth has sprung up as an alternative dedicated at tackling violence, and drug and alcohol related issues. Furthermore, that there was correlation between Hip Hop and development became evident in the first book I loaned from the library. Adam Haupt's, *Stealing Empire*, shows examples of South African Hip Hop crews, such as Black Noise, BVK and POC, that "contributed to the development of South Africa's relatively new democracy" by creating public spaces and inspiring freedom of speech for the

[135] http://www.indigenoushiphop.com/index.html

voicing of dissent, and constructive criticism towards State-politics (2008: 184) Haupt also claims that 'conscious' Hip Hop "is often employed by networks of youth workers and community activists" (2008: 184). These events go further than music as they often include the holding of workshops and "a number of local and international education initiatives" such as "anti-drug tours, voter education initiatives and school hip-hop workshops." (2008: 191). All this meant that I would soon become convinced that the purpose of this research had to shift its focus from ***how*** Hip Hop could be related to development, to explore ***what*** it is about Hip Hop that inspires 'heads' to take on the development discourse and provide alternative ideas, practices and finally, ***why***? It was therefore Hip Hop's potential of provoking thought (the first step of development) - as previously argued in Part One - that I became more interested in exploring.

It was not relevant for this research to analyze censuses or other statistical procedures in order to quantify my findings. The focus is more about exploring the behaviour of 'heads', as well as the nature of a political movement (Hip Hop) and it's relationship with individual and/or community development. This research therefore demanded a qualitative approach; meaning that the data was gathered primarily through interviews, discourse analysis of lyrics, documents and videos as well as by the use of ethnography and participant observation techniques. I found the qualitative method to be the most appropriate style of research for a study on Hip Hop, especially because its practices – for example: rap and graffiti - are phenomena that are, as argued by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990), "difficult to convey quantitatively". Furthermore Hip Hop is a relatively new phenomenon. This means that a qualitative research approach has the potential to generate a greater understanding of these phenomena as well as to offer new perspectives, new ways of looking at them. (p. 19). Keyes (1996) observes that the growing body of scholarly work on Rap to date has primarily drawn from analyses of lyrics rather than ethnographic inquiry I would like to add to this that I have found academic work on graffiti to be minimal, almost non-existent.

Hip Hop culture is very expressive, however in order to understand it fully it is not enough to just hear it or see it. One must experience it - according to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) this is ultimately what ethnographers need to do when conducting research in order to produce accurate written accounts. (p. 17). For good ethnography a researcher needs time, as s/he has to establish a good relationship with the people s/he studies in order to make high quality conclusions based on a deep understanding of the topic[136]. The previous statement turns out to be very true in this case because I had less than one full year to write up the report and I am convinced that this is simply not enough time for an intensive and complete research. Some could argue that no research is ever complete and I would agree to this - however 'twelve months' is an insufficient timeframe, especially if studying a topic from scratch. By this I mean a topic that you have not already conducted previous studies on. I am, however, hopeful that I have at least managed to expose Hip Hop's politics of resistance and that I have accurately captured the general perceptions of the Hip Hop movement.

I made sure - inspired by ethnography as a medium to collect information and as an appropriate way of entering the realm that I wished to study - to attend numerous Hip Hop events and gatherings in the Johannesburg metropolitan area, and some that took place in Soweto. This was necessary partly to find out ways in which 'heads' interact amongst themselves, and to observe concrete aspects of Hip Hop practice, such as ciphers and graffiti. But also to get an idea of what the Hip Hop lifestyle entails and the ways in which 'heads' seek to tackle the System.

Amongst these events was a benefit show in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe[137], a Hip Hop street festival (animated by MC's, graffiti artists, break dancers, and DJ's), a Hip Hop discussion night in parallel with a graffiti art exhibition that portrayed 'pieces' sprayed by a joint collaboration of foreign and local

[136] Patricia Adler and Peter Adler (2003). *The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field.* (p. 42)
[137] I have added an extract of a 'vignette' in the appendix from the field notes that I took of this benefit show. The intention is to provide the readers with a description of the environment in which Hip Hop can be found to operate its pro-development strategies.

crews, and also countless Hip Hop parties some of which of the formal kind such as the ones promoted by the Monday Blues Crew and other more informal gatherings that would take place anywhere from a basketball court to a person's house. I made sure to be armed with a voice recorder every day from the first day that it entered into my possession. This technological instrument made it very easy, especially at ciphers, to store the various comments and rhymes with which the Hip Hop community expressed their opinions. I would be writing down field notes of the events, either during or short after. Jotting down field notes was very helpful for two reasons that I can think of: (1) they allowed me to have some primary data already in written format, which simplified the task of analyzing the findings; (2) they served as practice for my observation skills.

Ensuring validity is never an easy task even more so when trying to ensure validity on a study that is largely structured around people's perceptions. For this reason, I conducted twenty in-depth and open-ended interviews with individual members of the Johannesburg Hip Hop community and I held a focus group that saw the active participation of ten 'heads' that did not know each other and were forced to voice their opinions in the presence of other active members of the Hip Hop movement. All my informants were under the age of thirty. I got the interviews done in different places – on university lawns, at a basketball court, on the balcony of my apartment, in a garage that was set up as a 'chilling' zone, sitting on the grass of Zoo Lake, in one of my participants' office etc. In other words I tried to conduct my interviews in places where the respondents would feel the most comfortable. My aim for the interviews and focus group was: to get an account of what Hip Hop means for each individual; to address different issues that revolve around politically and socially conscious messages in Hip Hop; to engage the 'heads' in a debate around the notion of development; and finally to get some answers as to why Hip Hop culture seeks to politicize the youth. I was welcomed with much enthusiasm as I explained to the participants what research I was conducting and why. Not one of these individuals desired a 'Participant Information Sheet' to review. Only the participants whom I could not get a 'recorded consent' from signed the 'Informed Consent' form.

However, most 'heads' did express the wish to be referred to by the use of pseudonyms in order to guarantee that confidentiality would be ensured. This was mainly because the participants find themselves conducting activities that are often bordering between the risky and the straight-out illegal. I have therefore changed the names of these individuals and refrained from including other possible identifying material.

As mentioned in the introduction; rather than presenting my findings in a standardised fashion I have opted to incorporate them throughout the text in an attempt to better illustrate the connection, either in confirmation or counter-argument, between the literature and the data collected.

I was impressed with the interest that 'heads' showed towards this research, and their desire to contribute to it and even aid me with it. I had initially feared that South African 'heads' would have regarded me as just another white boy trying to capitalize from Hip Hop but that was not the case. Instead they honoured me with their attention and introduced me to other 'heads'. Snowballing technique was therefore used but never had I expected it to be so easy to bounce from one participant to the next.

CONCLUSION

As you will have read by now, the perceptions of individual Hip Hop artists that I have described in this research indicate the conscious desire to resist the hegemony of capitalism. Capitalism is seen as an ideal system for the exploitation of all peoples; however, Hip Hop, which I have defined as both a movement and a perception, is usually concerned with speaking for those that are amongst the marginalised ranks of society – *the voiceless*.

The members of the Hip Hop community that I have had the chance to speak to have all become part of Hip Hop culture at an early age, usually in their teenage years. Some even sustained that they had been listening to rap music all their life indicating that Hip Hop can be served to mould young minds. The fact that some of the 'heads' came from wealthier families than others - visible from the way they dressed as well as where they came from: whether from a city, township, or a rural setting – indicates that Hip Hop transcends the notion of class. Also the fact that my informants were of African, European and Asian descent implies that the Hip Hop movement sees past skin-colour and ethnic features leads me to believe that Hip Hop can educate the youth to build a non-racist society.

Some important discoveries that I have made relate to ways in which Hip Hop can and has influenced individuals and collectives of individuals to acquire an interest in politics, to read books and pursue a more relevant form of education to the realities that affect us, to strive for knowledge, to distrust the corporate media, to be independent etc. I have also argued that the more recent generations have been taught to respond mechanically through pre-programmed reflexes via the media, lifestyle, etc. This means that there is little to no thought process involved in many of our day-to-day actions, they are mechanical which indicates also how little emotions and feelings factor in to our decision making process over how to act, especially as we get older. Hip Hop is particular in its ability to nurture the subjective perspective but not in an individualistic sort of way (as does the capitalist, mainstream

culture) but rather in a more collective way as different (his)stories connote different emotions, or perhaps the emotions are even spelt out implicitly, either way emotions are a universal characteristic, a part of every human that is un-ignorable and so shares a unique capability to cradle empathy and, consequently, solidarity.

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RECORDING CONSENT FORM

I, _____, consent to my interview with Jan Alejandro Santana Fiorenza regarding his research on Hip Hop's politics and practice being recorded.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any unauthorised persons, and will only be processed by the researcher.
- All tape recordings will be kept in a safe place only accessible to the researcher
- No identifying material will be used in the transcripts or the research report.