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# Triangular relationships between commerce, politics and hip-hop : a study of the role of hip-hop in influencing the socio-economic and political landscape in contemporary society

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# Triangular Relationships between Commerce, Politics and Hip-Hop: A Study of the Role of Hip-Hop in influencing the Socio-Economic and Political Landscape in Contemporary Society

*A PhD Thesis to the Anthropology Department, Faculty of Humanities: University of the Witwatersrand.*

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28 February 2017

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**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES** **DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

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## PREAMBLE

*"The existence of music is potentially threatening to men to the extent that it insists on the social relatedness of human worlds and as a consequence implicitly demands that individuals respond".*

*Christopher Norris (1985)*

Frankfurt School theorists, such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, argue that cultural production attains status within the public sphere when its values are no longer serving the interests of those who create it, nor of a particular sector of society, but belong to a universal, humanist and emancipatory logic. The Frankfurt School theorists argue "culture thus comes to express values, hopes, and aspirations which run counter to the existing reality" (Swingewood, 1998, p. 41).

This study will argue that; (i) that the evolution of hip-hop arises out of the need by young people to give expression and meaning to their day-to-day socio-political and economic struggles and the harsh realities of urban life, and (ii) that hip-hop has become the audible and dominant voice of reason and a platform that allows youth to address their plight, as active citizens, and (iii) that, as a music expression, the hip-hop narrative can be used as an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey to gauge the temperature and the mood of society at a point in time.

My research question is premised on the argument that the youth looks at society and their immediate surroundings through the lens of rap music and the hip-hop culture. It presupposes that it is this hip-hop lens that has become the projector through which the youth views and analyses society and then invites the world to peep through, to confirm and be witnesses to what they see.

It is not the purpose of this research to argue how much influence hip-hop has on young people, but instead to look at how youth is using hip-hop to express their discontent and what the various sites are where their relentless desire for

a better life is being crafted and articulated. In my investigation, I have argued that it is at these social sites that open or discreet creative expressions are produced/created by the hip-hop generation as the subordinate group and directed to those perceived to be the gatekeepers to their aspirations and their rites of passage. In my investigation I have explored how, out of indignation and desire, the hip-hop generation has employed creative ways to highlight and vent their frustration at a system that seems to derail their aspirations.

This is the story of hip-hop where Watkins (2005) argues that the youth have crafted "a vision of their world that is insightful, optimistic and tenaciously critical of the institutions and circumstances that restrict their ability to impact on the world around them" (p. 81)

With regard to hip-hop in South Africa critical questions and a central thesis to this paper begin to emerge as to whether hip-hop, as an artistic expression and a seemingly dominant youth culture, has found long-hidden voices through which young people now engage with this art form to address and reflect on their socio-economic and political conditions as active citizens in search of a meaningful social contract.

By investigating the triangular relationship between commerce, politics and hip-hop, this study looks at how creative, adaptive people with unrealised potential, who find themselves trapped by illusion and exploitation (realistic or perceived), always try to find a meaning to make sense of their worlds.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## So, What's in a Song Really?

The song has always been the carrier of memory, vividly captured by the wondering, inquisitive eye and curious ear as they navigate and witness what goes on in society. The song is later regurgitated in carefully constructed melodies that harmoniously and rhythmically carry cautious words of wisdom. In most cases, the words are very clear to the intended audience and listener but conveniently ignored so that acts of injustice can continue uninterrupted.

Writing in *The Sunday Times* (17 January 2010) Oyama Mabandla reminisced of the apartheid era when he said:

> In 1964, as they faced the gallows, Vuyisile Mini and his two comrades had broken out in song, "Nantsi Ndod'emnyama Verwoerd". Instead of cowering in fear for what awaited them, they marched to the gallows in full voice and in a breath-taking display of bravery, an unthinkable belief in the ultimate victory of our cause.... Music has been the leitmotif or our quest for freedom. The leaders of our freedom struggle were musical.

These unsung heroes sang freedom songs as they faced their last moment at the hands of the executioner ready to cut short a life worth living. Unperturbed by the noose figuratively about to separate the body from its head and the spirit from its flesh, they sang as they walked into death for a good and noble cause.

In his article, Mabandla continues to say:

> against the din of repression, we posited hope and music. Jive and defiance. And the world would respond to this indefatigable spirit of resistance with a Nobel Peace Prize for Chief Albert Luthuli, the erstwhile president of the ANC, in 1960. We had arrived on the world

stage. And the battle for South Africa was on.

Music in this instance is used as a symbol and as cultural representation through which people interrogate their role and space in a socio-political setting and appropriate culture to tell their story. Rather than shed tears and cry as a natural emotional response by human beings to certain feelings, usually sadness and hurt, they resorted to songs of fortitude. Similar to the Negro Spirituals sung by the slaves in the plantations, which were meant to see them through the day and escape the pain from the continuous and resolute flogging meant to cow them into submission, these comrades broke into the protest songs that had become therapeutic in the pursuit of freedom.

And it was with music that the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, led by Jonas Gwangwa, travelled across Eastern and Western Europe and Scandinavia, to raise funds for the exiles living in the camps in Tanzania, Zambia, Angola and elsewhere. It was that sweet, melodic and critical voice of Mirriam Makeba that highlighted the plight of those who remained trapped inside the apartheid state.

Hugh Masekela's "Stimela" and "Mbombela" by Bayete told the story of cheap labour transported from the hinterlands of southern and central Africa to mine minerals that would enrich the capitalist system, whilst Brenda Fassie warned of the imminent black rule with her song "Black President". Sipho Hotstix Mabuse's song, "Chant of the Marching", and "Isililo" by Sakhile, raised the level of consciousness amongst the oppressed and how to triumph in the midst of adversity. Mercy Pakela, in the most abstract manner, sang a song "Ayashisa Amateki" – the sneakers are too tight - and in the most subversive way to mean life under the repressive regime had become unbearable in the township.

The message was clear for those who were prepared to heed Stimela's song to "Look, Listen and Decide" and for those who were prepared to carry on with the struggle for liberation to hurry as Dorothy Masuka's song said

"Khawuleza" (hurry up). These were the songs that inspired the multitudes of the oppressed and the dispossessed people to never cower at the barrel of a gun brandished by a regime determined to defend a system that had been rejected by humanity and the world at large.

The South African music narrative has been influenced by over 300 years of oppression. Michelle E. Vershbow (2010) argues, "The liberation music of the apartheid-era was in response to a history of oppression that dates back to long before the implementation of Apartheid". The arrival of the British 150 years after the Dutch settled in South Africa in 1652, the removal of the Khoi from their land, the discovery of gold in 1867, the formation of an Apartheid state in 1948 are reflected in the music compositions coming out of this part of the continent. Vershbow (2010) says:

> Throughout every stage of the struggle, the 'liberation music' both fuelled and united the movement. Song was a communal act of expression that shed light on the injustices of apartheid, therefore playing a major role in the eventual reform of the South African government.

Writing in the online magazine, Music in Africa, Robin Scher (2014) argues, "As one of the most widespread forms of mass resistance during the struggle, the array of protest music that emerged as early as the 1920s provides an alternative documentation of the struggle against Apartheid". Scher argues that during the struggle for liberation, protest music became a tool that helped shape people's thoughts and messages soon spread throughout the country (both inside the prison and outside) and eventually to the rest of the world.

It was these songs that becamethe signature and soundtrack of the people's quest for liberation throughout the years of oppression. However, no amount of protest songs (from inside or outside the country) with their corresponding and clear messages (covert or overt) would have predicted what was about to unfold in June 1976.

Tired of the songs and the resistance leadership either in exile or in prison, the youth of 1976 took their fight straight to the organs of power in the manner and fashion that Scott (1990) calls the rupture of the political "cordon sanitaire" between the oppressed and the oppressor. The gloves were off; the hidden transcripts were laid bare, expressed and acted out in front of the gaze of the powerful. The accompanying indestructible beat of "toyi toyi" meant nothing else but a call to chant, sing and dance, but the Soweto Uprisings of 1976 suddenly gave the song an identity and the audience rose up to dance in defiance.

The music had said all it could. It was now left to those who cared to listen and to act. Those who were meant to listen had failed and those who asked to be listened to took action by any means necessary.

**Two Genres and a Mic: The Fight for Authenticity**

Up until the late 1980s the youth really had not been active participants in the creation and production of South African music: the musical heritage and cultural landscape had been the preserve of the adult. The youth had been spectators during the period of marabi (1920s), accappela (1930s), pennywhistle jive (1950s), soul and jazz (1960s), mgqashiyo and scathamiya (1970s), bubblegum and reggae (1980s), gospel and new rhythms (1990s). It was only in the 1990s, except for early hip-hop influences in Cape Town, that through Kwaito (1990s), afro-soul, and hip-hop (2000s) the youth became active players in cultural creation and in crafting the dominant social narrative through music.

David Coplan (2005) asked the right question:

> Now, the struggle against white colonial nationalism is over and the struggle to expand the size and power of the black-nationalist elite has begun. For the millions of black urban youth, who will never belong to the nouveau riche or even *vouveau ouvriers noir*, the question has been what to do with their energies since they are no longer required for political upheaval (p. 11)?

The youth led a different struggle after 1994 in South Africa. With new forms of expression it was at this stage that the youth, emerging from a long and protracted struggle for liberation, shifted their focus by confronting creatively and through music what had been the culture of domination.

The stage was set for a struggle for the soul and heart of the post-apartheid youth. Who best represented the so-called 'born frees' in their quest to be heard was the tussle between two contending genres in South Africa – Kwaito and hip-hop.

Towards the middle of the 2000s the shifting cultural consumption patterns amongst the youth and the emergence of a strong and audible hip-hop culture as the dominant urban soundtrack in South Africa, to which the youth were now dancing in their newly-found creative freedom, meant the youth was now split between the Kwaito nation and the Hip-Hop generation. There were visible signs that Kwaito – the definite youth sound of the early 1990s, was fast losing its groove. Losing the game was not as a result of a generational gap but more of intra-generational cultural contradictions that were a consequence of apartheid crea where the post-1994 youth suddenly found themselves split according to those living in the townships and those who had settled in the suburbs and language became the dominant factor in the expression of the youth's sentiments.

A war of words soon dominated showbiz news as to who was the authentic voice of the liberated youth in South Africa. Rap musicians ridiculed Kwaito for saying something but nothing, and the debate focussed on what each was capable of saying in a 16-bar verse. Hip-hop artists saw themselves as having the ability to influence the youth in a 16-bar verse, which could shape their identities and inspire them to imagine a world full of aspirations and hope.

In one of the sessions held under the banner *The State of Hip-Hop in Joburg*, which I hosted as part of the focus group discussions, the famous and legendary rapper and award winning artist, Amu, now popularly known as the "Principal" says the reason why most artists resorted to Kwaito was because "hip-hop was too difficult". Difficult in the sense that it had a lot of English words in it and for most young artists emerging from the townships it was not easy to make the transition. Writing a 16-bar verse both in the most imaginative poetic form and in English was like reciting the poem, "Daffodils" ; a hard act of constructing words for township youths who grew up speaking an indigenous language amongst themselves.

The obvious constrast between black families living in either the township or the suburb at the dawn of democracy exposed the realities of where South Africa was in terms of the '"aves" and the "have not's" amongst Black South Africans. Steingo (2005, p. 348) says that "in the final decades of apartheid deracialisation of formerly discriminatory policies, upward occupational mobility among black workers, and rising unemployment resulted in declining interracial inequality but rising intraracial inequality especially among the black population" (as cited in Nattras and Seekings, 2001, p. 47).

Nattras and Seekings (2001) reveal that in 1975 only 2% of households in the top income decile were black, while 95% were white; by 1991, 9% were black and 83% where white. This changed drastically as black household income

percentage in this decile rose to 22% by 1996, whereas a reduction to 65% of this decile for white household income was recorded.

By 2007 the black middle class had grown by 30% to 2.6 million with a collective spending power of R180 billion. This was reflected in *Black Diamond 2007: On the Move* - a study conducted by the University of Cape Town's Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing and TNS Research Surveys. More interesting were the figures from the study showing 12% of South Africa's black population accounting for over half of black buying power.

The resulting impact of this upward social mobility of black families meant that Africans were no longer confined to the townships, at least not because of economic circumstances. There was a significant shift from the townships to suburbs as black families started to migrate to areas previously a preserve of the white population, with figures rising to 1.2 million of adults now living in the former white suburbs compared to only 0.45 million in 2005. The article, "The Future of South Africa's rising middle-class", published in the *Africa Report*, showed that this figure had, by 2012, risen to 4.2 million (52%) of middle class families moving to the suburbs with more than 50% sending their children to private schools and accessing education and new cultural spaces and new identity began to emerge (Benjamin Dürr: 27 Nov 2012)

In an interview conducted with the award-winning, legendary, hip-hop artist Mr. Selwyn, one of the pioneers of the South African rap music scene, as he reflected on the "cold war" between Kwaito and hip-hop, he argued that Kwaito was never viewed by hip-hop artists as music that inspired intelligence. According to Mr. Selwyn, hip-hop, unlike Kwaito, inspired one to read, to think and to push the boundaries by writing brilliant and thought-provoking lyrics, thus cementing one's skill and respect as a master lyricist, whilst articulating critical issues affecting youth in the townships.

There was so much "beef" (tension) brewing between the two groups you could slice it with a knife. Rap musicians also hit back and accused Kwaito of being nothing but a 'whack' (meaning pathetic) excuse for hip-hop. In this case Kwaito was seen as lacking artistic appeal and content as evident in the sentiment expressed by one Kwaito-turned hip-hop artist and member of the then popular hip-hop outfit, H2O (quoted from *YMag*), who said: "because you just repeat the same thing over and over again in Kwaito, it gets boring", whilst another member echoed the sentiments and said: "with hip-hop you get a chance to really talk to people while performing".

To the advocates of Kwaito, the debate was more about who is authentically South African and best represents the aspirations of the youth, and whose musical style best arrogates the township flavour and is rooted in Afrocentricity. Just like the Northern Sudanese whose folk song "Dalaka" can only be sung by unmarried girls (Stokes, 1994,p. 17), the post-apartheid township voices could only imagine Kwaito as the sole legitimate sound whose song could be sung for and on behalf of young people in South Africa, therefore denouncing any form of transculturalism.

New ethnic boundaries and cultural spaces meant that the youth from the townships would align themselves more with Kwaito whilst those living in the suburbs became more oriented towards hip-hop and the battle would soon be about boundaries, space and access to resources (global media and internet) rather than about ethnic or racial identities. The township became the epitome of what is deeply rooted in the South African music tradition, whereas the suburbs became the outpost of American rap.

Just as Stokes (1994) argued, "music is used to erect boundaries, to maintain distinctions between us and them and how terms such as 'authenticity' are used to justify these boundaries" (p. 6). The tension between Kwaito and hip-hop was about authenticity and definitions of ethnic boundaries, of who is more South African than the other. Stokes (1994) argues: "music is socially

meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (p. 5). Stokes argues that the way people think, write and even dance to music determines or exemplifies their ethnic orientation and even identities. It is these identities and social boundaries that determine what is and is not music. South Africa's popular indigenous genres are constructed and mobilised according to ethnicity, space, identity and language.

Leppänen & Moisala (2003) argue that culture is understood to be a process of constructing meaning; where music is investigated as a field of cultural meanings cited in Hellberg, 2007, p. 367). Kwaito as a music genre had taken a specific cultural identity and affirmed its position as a meeting point between South Africa's cultural expression and the individual who experiences and engages with it. Shunning any outside influences or domestication of foreign musical styles meant Kwaito had assumed the role of cultural preservationist and a culturally ethnocentric attitude, accusing hip-hop artists of either being coconuts (those living in suburbs and who speak English with a twang) or American implants.

Ironically, the dispute was not about the contradictory narratives coming out of the young energetic creatives who suddenly found a platform to express themselves but about who was keeping it real between Kwaito and hip-hop. A popular saying "asimo States la" (this is not America) would be accorded to the suburban hip-hop youth as American phonies. But, as Adorno (1976) argued, "genres carry the marks of the contradictory tendencies of the society as a whole" (p. 76) a statement that "there is Unity in Diversity".

However, the encroachment of foreign musical styles is not uncommon anywhere around the world. Just as Stokes (1994) argues, "the incorporation of and 'domestication' of musical difference is an essential process of musical ethnicity" (p. 17). Stokes argues that in Suyá musical practice all of their songs come from outside their own society (the Amazon people) but all were

made their own by the context and style of the localised vocal performance. In a rapidly globalising environment culture and tradition defies borders and a purist approach to culture is doomed at the starting block. Therefore the appropriation of American rap music (a dominant hip-hop expression) by South African rappers who localised and inflected it to fit their own cultural contex becomes unavoidable. The dominant culture's hegemonic aspirations of wanting to appropriate the cultural space are defeated when the same subcultural groups, from the same culture alter it and make it their own. Stokes argues, "subcultures borrow from the dominant culture, inflecting and inverting its signs to create a bricolage in which the signs of the dominant culture are 'there' and just recognisable as but, constituting a quite different, subversive whole" (p. 19).

It is not my intention to adjudicate on who best represents the cultural repository of South Africa's artistic expressions because it will depart from the real test of how the youth have appropriated music to deal with socio-economic and political discourse in the new South Africa, be it through Kwaito or hip-hop. For the purposes of this argument, the stark contrast between Kwaito and hip-hop, as artistic and socio-political construct, is not about the appropriation of musical styles or language used, but more about what each genre sought to express in its message.

Clark and Koster (2014) argue it is through using hip-hop, this definitive cultural expression of the youth, that rap musicians engage their communities, using social coded language and symbols to inform, question, challenge, and confront the established social structure. The need for social change in South Africa, particularly post 1994, may not have the same characteristics that are found elsewhere in Africa.

In a nutshell, the story of South African music is one that has creatively unshackled itself from the dark days of racial oppression, evolving from protest music to just music for the sake of music, whose various genres have

made a marked impression on the world music scene with a special twist that carries with it the unmistakable flavour of the country.

# CHAPTER 2. SAGGY PANTS AND BACKPACKS: HIP-HOP AND STREET CREDIBILITY

*Siz 'n Scoop*, the *Full Clip* hip-hop show on Thursday nights, is in full swing at the Y-Fm studios – an urban youth radio station in Johannesburg. A few hip-hop look-alike youths, with their saggy pants, backpacks and twisted caps, have been gathering outside the studio since nine p.m. There is a two-hour wait before their carefully chosen hip-hop banging beats and rap lyrics will be tested on air; that is, if they pass the first test conducted by a mean-looking man – the "selector" - who apparently "knows" what real hip-hop is and who's got the flow and swag to go with it and who has not. Unyielding despite rejection by the remorseless and rigidly unpleasant selector, who denies them the opportunity to spit their rhymes on air, they persistently come back every Thursday to give it yet another shot. When most young people are indulging in "Phuza Thursdays" (drinking Thursdays) at posh clubs and hotel bars, like the Southern Sun Hyde Park down the road from Yfm, these young people pack the waiting area every Thursday night to have another go at hip-hop. When asked about why they come back time and time again after such distasteful rejection every Thursday, they all say hip-hop is their chosen career and to them "hip-hop explains life in the streets and speaks truth to power" and hip-hop can change lives.

Again, somewhere in the metropolis, youths, with their signature bags suspended prominently on their backs and full of carefully constructed lyrics and beats, invade public urban spaces (the so-called hip-hop sessions) where the hip-hop culture and rap music are used as a platform to register young people's aspirations for a better life for all. These are the sites where, as Haupt (2008) argues, conscious hip-hop has done two things:

> it has constituted a public in which young subjects can congregate to make sense of the reality of post-apartheid South Africa; as well as

creating a public platform from which this community can articulate its reading of reality (p. 205-206).

With an unrelenting spirit and the will to be tested against their equally resolute peers, the same youths sign their names on a register of rap aspirants waiting to jump onto the stage on Sundays at hip-hop sessions spread throughout Soweto, such as "Slaghuis"[1]. This is one of the many hip-hop sessions in South Africa where youths gather on a specific day of the month to show off their rapping skills "hip-hopping" for recognition and approval. Here, at Slaghuis, there is no pre-selection to test one's rapping capabilities; by simply signing up and putting one's name on the register, one is guaranteed a short or long stint on stage, depending on how well the hip-hop aspirant is received by a crowd that is eager to unleash insults should the performer be 'whack' (bad rapper). How long those lucky-to-be-chosen rappers last on stage is in the hands of the heartless and half-drunk ringmaster who emulates amateur nights at The Apollo. He is assisted by a merciless crowd who quickly boo the unlucky ones off the stage with a barrage of invective before they even finish 16- bars of what they thought was a killer verse.

With unflagging boldness and the optimism that one day their story will be heard, and just like *Siz 'n Scoop* at Y-Fm on Thursdays, these hip-hop hopefuls daringly come back again and again, on a dedicated Sunday, to give it one more shot. These sessions give the youth a platform where they bravely grab the microphone to unleash their toxic rhymes laced with hopeful messages of a life as they see it or wish for, hoping that someone is listening.

As these young people give it their best to try and find resonance with the audience, they are reminded that the central tenet of hip-hop is its power to articulate and convey a message through words or simply the "word". It is

[1] Slaghuis, an Afrikaans word and, loosely translated, it means the butcher shop and when put into action youth at these sessions either get a nod of approval or get chopped off stage faster than they jumped onto it

how the rapper uses the word in crafting rap lyrics that earns them a space in the literary and creative world and therefore an audience.

### Dark City Rappers – on the street

Just up the road from Yfm, screams of the "word on the street" are carried by sad souls crying for help as they emerge from the margins. They area alone and desolate figures waiting in vain for a light to shine on their faces to reveal scars of faith long lost and deeply buried in despair but a slight hope that some philanthropic soul might notice them.

Their souls pour out loud laments of life unlived, or a purpose unaccomplished, of goals unreached, dreams unrealised. Every time a car, driven by upwardly mobile suburban families returning from work, passes by the park where these spirited souls have found shelter, they all emerge from the dark hoping that some benevolent individual might throw them something that might shine the light and see them through the night.

These same souls have developed a sense of connective marginality and, through their struggle to survive, they have established some form of "collective agency" (Dowdy) and have begun to craft a future for themselves and, out of relative obscurity, they are now determined to discover their destiny (Fanon).

This is the story of a group of young, homeless people who are living on the margins of society and who have found shelter in a park somewhere in Rosebank, north of Johannesburg. They have also found solace and a home in hip-hop and formed a group "Dark City Rappers". When asked 'why hip-hop?' they respond with what has become the answer shared by most youth who use hip-hop to escape their misery. Predictably the answer is "hip-hop speaks to them in many more ways than one".

Homelessness and the struggle to survive in Johannesburg takes many different forms that motorists and passers-by witness where begging has become a regular feature at the many stop streets.this bgging invokes varying reactions and emotions in motorists, as some perceive it as an absolute nuisance but Stones (2013) argues that it could also provoke a prod to one's social consciousness. Street begging and homelessness have become so pervasive in the streets of Johannesburg that there is a variety of offerings designed to elicit money from the motorists. On one street corner and traffic stop there could be a young person turned garbage collector carrying a black plastic bag requesting motorists to throw out trash in exchange for a little something. Then there are groups of creative performers who use inventive and well-choreographed dance moves, wearing costumes with animal tails, or those doing the pantsula jive, as well as jugglers. During the afternoon rush hour when the traffic lights turn red these homeless street beggars can be a help to motorists passing time whilst waiting for the traffic light to turn green again.

However, J Waya and his friends are a different type of homeless people; they don't beg to buy food but have been on a mission to raise money so that they can finish their album, which they have been recording for quite some time.

By sleeping in the park next to Rosebank Library, firstly, they are not far away from the African National Congress Constituency Office, which is 300 metres down the road. They have become regulars at the office and assist during election campaigns by doing door-to-door canvassing as well as distributing pamphlets and putting up street posters. They use the little money they get from the ANC office to buy food and save some for their recording. Popularly known as the 15-a-side team, part of the ANC strategy to deploy 15-member teams for election work, they became a formidable force during the national government election campaign of 2014.

They have also used the hangout spot in the park to spot motorists who drive past their hangout every evening and with whom they have developed a rapport. Their focus is getting the right kind of network to push their passion, which is rapping coupled with a recently found talent in acting and photography.

Here is Lungelo Mfengwane, aka J Waya, originally from Claremont Township, Durban, now homeless in Joburg, who turned to rap music after realising that crime did not pay him but rather landed him in jail:

> hip-hop is beautiful because....okay for me it showed me how to change the world. It showed me something like a window to something...like a window to a better life. Because, okukuqala (firstly) its funky, which is what the youth is easy to catch on; something that's nice, the youth is easy to engage in, and if we have proper leaders, people who look forward to good things, not just rapping for the fun of it but actually taking that power and using it for the good things we can do major things in the world, it can change. (29 May 2014 Johannesburg)

They are homeless on purpose. Not understood by their parents as they chase a dream not aligned to their families' wishes, they set out on the road to Johannesburg in search of this evasive dream wrapped in images of stardom and all that glitters.

One particular evening, during one of many interactions,J Waya, Brown Sugar, Ma-Downloader, and Star, rushed to my car as it approached and a loud bang against the vehicle shook it. There was a scuffle as they fought for attention, each claiming they got to the car first and should be the first one to drop "a 16" – a hip-hop verse of 16 bars. This particular evening, besides being heavily intoxicated by whatever they had consumed during the day which they seemed to be struggling to rinse out of their blood, they are all

upbeat about their future prospects. J Waya claims to have landed a role in a movie Warlander, Ma-Dowloader has just shot a DSTV Compact advert, soon to hit digital satellite television screens, and Star has landed a space at the Market Theatre Photo Lab where is taking lessons in photography. Later Star would land a job as an usher at the Market Theatre and manage to wrestle a black suit and white shirts from me as the sppropriate dress code demanded by his new job.

J Waya, who had paid scant regard to the commotion happening around the car, pushed himself close to the driver's window and dropped a killer verse, much to the dismay of the others whothen realised they spent more time juggling for position:

*"Ngithi Nkosi Sikelela Abantu bakho*
*Namhla ngicel' ukuzuza okwangempela*
*I'm ringing all the bells pushing my work in parallel*
*I'm patching up*
*Only got one story to tell*
*My pockets got to swell*
*Ngikhathel' itiye netshela*
*Kunini umuntu egubuda ezam' ukukhanda lesmeka*
*Elokhu ephila ngokuswela*
*I'm hustlin' thinkin' its hell*
*I got to stay out of jail*
*My family has got be well*
*My hard work has to prevail*
*So, siyikhomba khona*
*Othatha zonke sobona khona*
*Sifike eskhaleni sibodloz' iminyango*
*Sibambisan' indlela yonke kuze kubhodlok' indawo*
*Money on my mind but I'm thinking to hard though*
*We after everything even flipin' soprano*
*Ngoba ngifuna umhlala phansi ongenza ngiqin' amathambo*
*Experience the beauty for a rand at a time*
*I got that surgical urge to keep the cake on my side*
*God bless all my niggaz keep work on the rise".*
*Amen (J Waya, Joburg 29 May 2014)*

In this song, J Waya prays for a life-changing moment in his life. He is tired of life on the streets, hustling, stealing and getting busted, and wishes that one day he will live a good life and get his family out of poverty.

Thando, aka Star (another member of Dark City Rap), left Port Elizabeth for Joburg and ended up in the streets. Admittedly a former criminal and convict with short stints in jail, he admits that hip-hop changed his life's course. Before then Star was was doing crime but he started doing hip-hop his life changed for the better. "It hides me from a lot of things. I am even reading books" (interview with Star) and he breaks into a verse;

*'Kube ku Mama no Tata but I failed*
*That's when I started pushing smokolo its skokoko*
*Ngihamba nensizwa ngiphethe inombolo and gained fokol*
*Peer pressure kept messing with my mind at that time*
*I could not recognize what was right and advantages of crime*
*Getting locked up breaking the law*
*I was there for sho working with the flow*
*Ngabashiy' edladleni*
*Zizinqala zizikhalo*
*Ngicinga ngojulusa nomshayo iziyolo*
*Bhincilisa ingqondo nomqondo*
*Uhlal' imini yonke joe ucing' into engekhoyo*
*Kodwa kuleminyaka ngazibheka*
*Ngazixelela ukuthi Thando yenza ngoba ilife ingamajingi qhiwu*
*Kunzima, kulula uzozikhethela*

In this verse Star relates a story of him disappointing his mom and dad and ending up doing crime and hustling in the streets, mixing with the wrong people and getting locked up, causing tears. Reflecting on his life he turned over a new leaf and turned to hip-hop wrote and read a lot.

Star and J Waya are members of a crew Dark City Rap of about five members who met in the streets. It is an appropriate name for a group who live on the margins of society, in the dark corners, far away from the sight of those in power. It is a story of hope and aspirations, that when placed in relation to realities and possibilities, does not bring much hope. To them, hip-hop

represents the ultimate push for social inclusion into the realm of society and is the only medium that they feel contributes to a narrative that could be written in children's storybooks – a narrative that would tell a story of those who are still suffering from the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

This is hip-hop, whose lyrics were written in the blood of the victims of the Atlantic slave trade, in the tears of pain from lynchings and in the cries of civil rights activists. This is the hip-hop that not everybody wants to hear, as it imposes a huge responsibility on those who must act.

Unfortunately, some of the members of Dark City Rap, like J-Waya and Star, believe that hip-hop will save them in South Africa, but the real question is: Who has hip-hop saved?

However, the question 'Is there anybody out there who cares to listen?' is one of the central question to my thesis, as I unpack what has become the youth's only hope of getting noticed by a society that seems not to take notice of their hypervisibility nor of their yearning for recognition as active citizens in a system that is hell bent on rejecting them.

This is the story of hip-hop: a story where the youth have formed social groupings and created social networks in their relentless desire to paint a picture of the world they live in and a life they witness and engage with. It is a story of habitus which, according to Bourdieu (1985), is a disposition that human agents acquire through socialisation and life experiences that gives them the competence to respond in certain ways to given social situations (p. 11)

Again, this is the hip-hop story where almost four decades ago, in the mid 1980s, the prevalence of intensive rivalry and hip-hop-related gang violence in major metropolises, particularly in American cities, ensured that the older

generation considered hip-hop culture and rap music to be violent and intimidating. Since the early 1990s a different attitude towards rap music has emerged and on the face of it hip-hop, as popular culture, has become the mainstream or the default musical genre that defines the socio-political and economic agenda. Rap music has become one of the more canonical objects for discussions of postmodern culture.

It's through this art form, hip-hop, that a new life is being crafted and articulated. Through this artistic expression and lifestyle, youth have created what Tricia Rose calls "a contemporary stage for the theatre of the powerless" or what Nancy Fraser (1997) calls "subaltern counter-publics" (p. 82) which occur when socially disenfranchised collectives formulate alternative discursive arenas founded upon oppositional counter discourses and which is described differently by Dyson (in Dowdy 2007) as "a space for cultural resistance" (p. 76)

Indeed, this is the story of an artistic expression, a dominant youth culture and life style that has permeated every sector of society around the world. It is the story of a form of popular culture that, to many, has become the mouthpiece and platform for youth through which they interrogate the social contract between themselves as citizens and the state, as well as determining and registering their social positioning within their respective society and community.

It is the story of a culture and genre that seems to have occupied a space bigger than the music it represents, which speaks to youth struggles that reverberatein a world bigger than hip-hop itself.

Around the world, including the dusty streets of the "skwatta kamps"[2] in Orange Farm (the informal settlements of the metropolis), the unforgiving townships of Soweto, Gugulethu, Kwa-Mashu and Umlazi, to the dusty

[2] Skwatta Kamps is an informal housing settlements arising out of urban migration and built in areas where there are no basic services

settlements of Nairobi, Arusha, Dakar and Lagos, as well as the concrete jungle ghettos of the inner cities in New York, Los Angels, the favelas in Sao Paolo, and to the affluent suburban dwellings in Sandton, the story of hip-hop resonates in a world far larger than the genre itself.

In many places around the world hip-hop has taken itself to a different level of popularity and credibility, thus earning itself a more diverse audience than any other popular genre. This is symptomatic of the reinvention of the pop music industry and hip-hop's power to re-arrange the urban political and economic landscape, whilst addressing the social positioning of young people and their relentless desire to be heard and respected.

In the final analysis it has become clear that hip-hop has gone "hip-pop" in that it is so popular that we listen to it subconsciously; we have come to know the songs not even knowing how we know them. In the same way that Simon Frith (2007) speaks about pop music, hip-hop has become what pop music is to us; it now reaches us over the radio, through passing car windows, as sound around a shopping centre. As Halifu Osumare (2007) also argues, "for a cultural phenomenon to be popular, by definition, it must become a part of the minute-by-minute shifting, signs and representations of the folk" (p. 3). Osumare further argues "hip-hop culture has become so international in breadth and depth, with thousands of cultures throughout the globe having embraced it in various forms" (p. 20).

The Dogon people of Mali who believe that humans have power over the "word", this word and the message contained in it has the capacity to direct the forces of life to those who receive it. This orality and singing as epitomised in African American rap music, is in fact an extension of an Afro-diasporic tradition and an extension of hip-hop culture, which Walter Ong refers to as "post-literate orality" (Osumare, 2007, p. 35).

The story of hip-hop has since been written in black and white and read all over.

# CHAPTER 3. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

*"You could name practically any problem in the hood and there'd been a rap song for you" (Jay-Z)*

"Levein (2016) comments on evaluations of post-apartheid South Africa, society is still celebrated in absolutist terms – either as the embodiment of "encompassing oppression, or as flourishing democracy or narrow authoritarianism" (Levin, et al, 2016, p. 2).

This is quite a challenge for anyone interested in how South Africa has progressed during the more than 20 years since the dismantling of apartheid. Imagining South Africa requires an omnidirectional perspective by those on the receiving end of justice, citizenship and social change. The perspective on South Africa's "freedom project" of those from the affluent surburbs of Johannesburg or Cape Town is quite different from that expressed by a citizen living in the poverty-stricken townships of Soweto, Gugulethu or Umlazi.

The South African post-apartheid narrative, as experienced by the post-1994 generation, poses interesting contradictions to that told by those who fought for justice and freedom and inclusive citizenship. Naturally, the dismantling of apartheid was about economic freedom, social equality and political inclusion. At least this is how those who fought for it narrate it and how they would like the post-1994 generation to view it. They feel the forbearers' fight should be viewed as the greatest achievement in the fight for liberation. Do the around-the-fire tales and heroic conversations led by the freedom fighters find sympathy in the ardent listener when these are compared to actual lived experience and social reality on the ground?How has the post-1994 generation dealt with the obvious and widening gap between what was promised and what freedom has delivered?

The above is central to my research study as it looks at how young people – the hip-hop generation in particular – view the freedom project in South Africa from a socio-economic and political perspective as it has been handed out to them since 1994. Hip-hop can be seen as fighting for justice, citizenship and social change in South Africa but how it defines and imagines the new freedom is determined by how its performers understand the meaning of the end of apartheid.

Borrowing from Isin & Nyers' (2015) concept of citizenship, where political subjects emerge as claim-makers in their interaction with society and the State, I have interrogated how hip-hop uses its dominant influence as a voice for youth in fighting for the socio-economic and political inclusion of the "subjects of politics and the polity to which these subjects belong" (p. 1). Hip-hop has been chosen because of an undisputed acknowledgement that this culture has become the audible and dominant creative expression and voice of reason that has given the youth a platform through which they address their plight as active citizens. There is general recognition and acceptance, through hip-hop scholarship, that rap music and hip-hop culture arose out of a need by young people to find meaning in and give expression to their day-to-day socio-political and economic struggles and the lived harsh realities of urban life.

Darby and Shelby (2005) argue that hip-hop and its philosophy are examinations of life on the street and the search for wisdom by those from the street. The lyrics become a window into the rapper's socio-economic or political encounter with his/her neighbourhood and are articulated and conveyed for all to hear and bear witness to. According to Stephen Lester Thompson's (2005) "communicative-message model" of hip-hop's lyrical meaning "a successful hip-hop lyric must be a genuine testimony about the lyricist's real self, telling the truth from the standpoint of a real person and further "hip-hop lyrics mean the way messages do" (p. 119). This point is further articulated by Rose (1996) in her argument that, "Rap's cultural politics

lie in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception" (p. 236). As Rose attests, it is not what hip-hop says but more how such expressions are articulated, contextualised and how those who receive such messages react to them. Using hip-hop lyrics as a courier for the message makes hip-hop a lens through which the recipients view society and formulate their own response to what they hear and ultimately see in their neighbourhood. The neighbourhood becomes an extension of their understanding of a wider society.

Ntarangwi (2009) also reveals that youth in East Africa have used hip-hop as a lens for viewing political, economic and social conditions in their neighbourhood. Ntarangwi finds that hip-hop provides youth with an important platform for social commentary and cultural critique (p. 116).

Hip-hop's resonance with disparate young people from diverse backgrounds around the world who share the same frustrations or desires is found in its ability to engage in transnational conversations or transnationalism. The clear articulation of ghetto stories that are able to travel beyond the borders of their respective neighbourhoods is where this common resonance in the hip-hop space or fraternity that Osumare (2007) defines as "connective marginality" is found. Hip-hop's ability to imagine new realities (Bynoe, 2004, p. 22) and create a community across borders and neighbourhoods (Clay, 2012, p. 8) is what has made young people turn to this culture. It is these ghetto stories and imagined new realities, as contained in the audio and visual images that, according to Powell (1991), best articulate the inner-city hopes and dreams, aspirations, and realities of black youth (p. 245). It is this imagined reality that, and according to Clay (2012) "hip-hop become an important site of reference for youth of colour in their attempt to understand and define themselves and their experiences" (p. 93).

Rose (1994) argues that hip-hop exists as "the central cultural vehicle for social reflection" (p. 18), which Westbrook (2002) sees as "the artistic

response to oppression depicting stories of inner-city life" (p. 64). It is through this realisation and reaction to the harsh realities of urban life, Adam Krims (2000) argues, that hip-hop "pushes people to understand reality differently" (p.103), and is able "to push boundaries beyond what is visible to the naked eye" (Ariefdien and Abrahams, 2006, p. 269).

In protecting themselves youth have adopted what Paulo Freire (1970) argues is "a humanist and liberating praxis" that suggests that it is a fundamental and natural reaction for humans to fight for their emancipation when they feel subjected to domination. In fighting for their emancipation it appears on the surface that the youth have surrendered their pursuit of and interaction with the state for the fulfilment of the social contract to hip-hop as the mouthpiece and conveyer of the youth's social discomfort and aspirations.

In his argument that the ghetto is the "invincible walls" built to confine those in the margins of society, Clark (1965) best articulates what the youth see and experience in their day-to-day struggles when he says,

> The ghetto is ferment, paradox, conflict, and dilemma. Yet within its pervasive pathology exists a surprising human resilience. The ghetto is hope, it is despair, it is churches and bars. It is aspiration for change, and it is apathy. It is vibrancy, it is stagnation. It is courage, and it is defeatism. It is cooperation and concern, and it is suspicion, competitiveness, and rejection. It is the surge torward assimilation, and it is alienation and withdrawal within the protective walls of the ghetto. (p. 12).

It is against this portrayal of ghetto reality that Watkins (2005) argues that hip-hop has become "the medium through which youth articulates a vision of their world that is insightful, optimistic, and tenaciously critical of the institutions and circumstances that restrict their ability to impact the world around them." (p. 181). This view of the world is told as is, unedited, uncensored and in the

most authentic manner (keeping it real), but sometimes in an obscure manner, with the hope that the world, if paying attention and listening, will decipher the messages behind culture and take to action.

Whilst this depiction of the reality of life in the ghetto could, at face value, be assumed to be the same everywhere else, there is a clear distinction between the national setting of the United States and the challenges facing youth in post-apartheid South Africa. The reference to American hip-hop is used simply to provide background on historical conditions, characteristics and specific events that led to the birth of hip-hop in the United States, and subsequently how it has spread elsewhere.

## Purpose of research and development questions

It is not the purpose of this research to argue how much influence hip-hop has on young people, but instead to look at how youth is using hip-hop to express their discontent and what the various sites are where their relentless desire for a better life is being crafted and articulated. In my investigation, I have argued that it is at these social sites that open or discreet creative expressions areproduced/created by the hip-hop generation as the subordinate group and directed to those perceived to be the gatekeepers to their aspirations and their rites of passage. In my investigation I have explored how, out of indignation and desire, the hip-hop generation has employed creative ways to highlight and vent their frustration at a system that seems to derail their aspirations.

The manner and strategies in which the hip-hop generation has engaged in narrating their view of society is what has sparked interest amongst scholars, thus making this genre and lifestyle a subject for academic pursuit. The subject of my study is the context and the environment under which the youth's appropriation of hip-hop in post-apartheid South Africa occurs, and how they have sought to express and find the meaning of their newly found freedom and democracy as they navigate their day-to-day lives. The study investigates and brings to the fore evidence of the ways in which the

transnational circulation of hip-hop sounds, styles, visual images, and languages resonate amongst young people in post-apartheid South Africa and also how they have inflected the African-American struggles and styles in their own ways to suit the local situation.

A central question asked in this study was how, in their quest for freedom as they negotiate day-to-day life, the hip-hop generation, as self-interested and rational individuals, shape and react to their social conditions. Data collected was to prove if the youth sees hip-hop as a platform or a tool to be used in challenging society to pay attention to their plight and for government to be forced to deliver in accordance with the social contract which the youth believe exists between them as active citizens and the state. In advancing my theoretical argument, a natural question to ask was whether anyone is listening.

My research question is premised on the assumption that the youth looks at society and their immediate surroundings through the lens of rap music and the hip-hop culture. It presupposes that it is this hip-hop lens that has become the projector through which the youth views and analyses society and then invites the world to peep through, to confirm and be witnesses to what they see. However, my interest is more on how the young generation invites or challenges contemporary society to look through the lens in order to see what Susan Booysen (2016) argues is an "accumulation of reservoirs of malcontent" (p. 25) or what Chang (2005) argues is "the collective hopes and nightmares, ambitions and failures of those who would otherwise be described as post-this or post-that" (p. 8).

In what manner has the hip-hop generation, similar to the *#TheFeesMustFall* student protest, narrated and expressed the condition of the black child, black pain, the complacency of the ruling class and highlighted the remnants of apartheid in South Africa?

In addressing the research question I have looked at the rise of the hip-hop narrative in South Africa and how it describes a visible but stark contrast between the politics of the rich and poor as it unfolds in the lives of the black nationalist elite and real life as experienced youth in the townships and informal settlements in the country. Noting that the nation may no longer be divided along racial lines but between the "have and the have nots", I have interrogated how, through hip-hop, youth in South Africa is no longer concerned with the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed but rather a struggle for socio-economic resources and identity. The study looks at how the youth have used hip-hop to address themes such as the politics of language and identity, land ownership as it relates to the first inhabitants (the first people), poverty and inequality, as well as crass materialism and the quest for commercial success. I have drawn a clear distinction between hip-hop as it is mediated and appropriated in Cape Town, particularly by the Coloured community, especially those who identify themselves as Khoisan, and the character of hip-hop as traversed and expressed by youth in Johannesburg in particular.

With hip-hop fast entrenching itself as arguably the most influential artistic voice of this generation and a new social force, my interest was to probe how this culture has gone about re-shaping societal thinking, if at all, particularly in shifting the perception that hip-hop is merely an entertainment. I have looked at how hip-hop, as a cultural expression, could become an unsolicited yardstick of urban life from which public officials can gauge the mood and temperature of youth towards society.

In certain instances I have drawn from James Scott's (1990) "public and hidden transcript" to articulate the ever-existing tensions of power relations and discourse between the subordinate groups and the dominant, the confrontation between the powerful and the powerless by drawing from his studies of slavery, serfdom, and caste subordination and how the feelings of powerlessness and dependency by subordinate groups elicit reaction and

patterns of resistance. Scott defines the "*public transcript* as the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate, whilst the *hidden transcript* is a discourse that takes place offstage beyond the direct observation by power holders and consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript" (pp.10-11).

By drawing a distinction between hidden and public transcripts, considering the hegemonic aspirations of the public transcript, Scott argues that there are four varieties of political discourse that are evident among subordinate groups and they vary according to how closely they conform to the official discourse and according to who comprises the audience (p. 18). The first takes as its basis the flattering self-image of the elite, whereas the second one is the hidden transcript itself where subordinates gather far from the sight and the intimidating behaviour of the ruling class. The third lies strategically between the two political discourses already mentioned and takes place in full public view but with the identity of the actor disguised. The last one is what Scott calls the "most explosive realm of politics and the rupture of the political *cordon sanitaire* between the hidden and the public transcript" (p. 19).

I apply the concept of Scott's public and hidden transcripts to determine how the youth use hip-hop in expressing their experiences of the "fruits of freedom" as distributed out by the "new' dominant group to the newly 'liberated" subordinate groups. It is the strategic position/stance that youth have adopted and how they have chosen to use it to challenge their circumstances that has drawn my interest and that forms the basis of my research question.

Using Scott's "four varieties of political discourse" within the context of a "liberated" South Africa, I have looked at how the hip-hop generation appropriates both the public and hidden transcript on behalf of the subordinate group and, in certain instances, for the dominant group. The

complicated power relations in the South African political discourse takes an interesting twist in that the hegemonic aspirations of the elite are found within the group that once was the subordinate group and now plays a liberating role as the new ruling elite, thus transforming them into the dominant group. How the hip-hop generation, as the subordinate group, negotiates its socio-economic standing with its "liberators" - as a dominant group – is a site of contradictions and possibilities.

Drawing on Tom Palmer's reference to the age-old story of the "rude barbarians being mesmerized by the peace and prosperity made possible by the king's peace and justice", the power relations within the South African political discourse prompts a question as to whether the hip-hop generation, as the subordinate group, could surrender the pursuit for a better life in the belief that the ruling elite knows better what is good for the liberated – the basis for what Scott calls "the flattering self-image of the elite" (p. 18).

In later chapters I have sought to investigate how the agenda of the ruling elite, the ANC government as the liberator of the subordinate groups, with its publicly pronounced message of "working together we can do more", has been appropriated by the subordinated group using both the hidden and public transcript in either challenging or supporting it. How have the subordinate groups crafted their response to how much of the 'more' has been done, or whether this flattering self-image and paternalistic attitude of the elite (of "bear with us, as a liberation movement we know what is good for you") has also become the public transcript of the subordinate groups.

How, in its tenacious fight to be heard and to free itself from the ghetto, (at least not physically), has the hip-hop generation applied both the hidden and public transcripts in addressing the prevailing ills as experienced through the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty, inequality? How has the hip-hop generation, in their attempt to address what Rose (1994) argues is "a tangle

of some of the most complex social, cultural, and political issues" (p. 2), used this art form to highlight their plight for the attention of the ruling elite? .

Levin (2016) argues that "citizen action as freedom speaks to those moments in which ordinary people mobilize to confront the state not only as individuals, but as rights-demanding citizens with public claims as they reclaim public space" (p.12). How citizens choose to exercise their right in engaging government on matters concerning them is not a one-size-fits-all and, as Levin argues, the efficacy of the forms of action they choose is never guaranteed. I have decided to confine my research to one form of citizen action, the use of music as an expression of their fight for civil liberties.

von Lieres (2016) argues that new political subjectivities and struggles for inclusive citizenship have emerged and largely define themselves outside of formal state institutions. In the face of the non-responsiveness by the state to their demands the localised these struggles for inclusive citizenship have been staged on alternative arenas as platforms for the enactment of citizens' rights (p. 207). Much as Lieres does not refer to the hip-hop agency as the "localised non-spaces of political representation" (p. 207) I concur with her that there is growing recognition that new political arenas have emerged in the fight for "unmet demands for freedom, justice and inclusion" (p. 208). Hip-hop has long entered the political arena in its fight for redistribution, justice and equality, much to the ignorance of those who chose not to listen. This will be illustrated when some of the hip-hop narratives are revealed that already deal with messages which found themselves in the #FeesMustFall movement contained in songs of artists like Jay Stash featuring Kabomo, "We Keep Marching", released in 2012, or that of M'du Masilela "Bab' uGovernment", released in 2000, and many other songs since the advent of democracy. These songs have painted a narrative that suggests that "uhuru" (freedom) is still far from the gaze of those who are patiently staring at the mirage hoping that it will change into the promised freedom. Another question is - have the *#FeesMustFall* narrative and other citizen action campaigns always been

evident in the music released in the past few years and could it have been prevented had those in power taken seriously the underlying messages contained in the music narrative?

Looking at the hip-hop sites where the narrative germinates, I have examined how, in their fight to draw attention to their plight, the youth have used the "word" (the message contained in their lyrics) as a vehicle for socio-economic and political dialogue. It is this "word" that, as Paulo Freire (1968) puts it, becomes *"a reflection and action"* against social and economic injustices. This "word on the street" is then carried throughout the neighbourhood in an attempt to constantly navigate, narrate and try to find the meaning of life in the streets.

Through this genuine testimony and the reflection and articulation of stories untold by the political mainstream and other organised youth formations, the urban hip-hop voice creates a new platform for socio-political discourse – stories told by Raptivists that reflect on the social reality on the ground. Watkins (2005) argues that the art form encourages hip-hop emcees or rappers to be brave in "telling it like it is" and to be more frank in their articulation of everyday life experiences, thus making hip-hop music "a fountain of politically provocative discourse" (p. 120).

The study investigates how the hip-hop generation uses music, as a form of citizen action and a response to their perception that the state is failing to live up to its part of the social contract. The study looks at how the hip-hop generation has sought creative ways to protect themselves and to advance their interests whilst questioning the status quo. It looks at whether there exists a hip-hop hashtag phenomenon (overt or covert) that questions the ability of government to deliver on the promises of the post-1994 compromises and how that is reflected in the narrative of the daily lived experiences of young people in post-apartheid South Africa.

In applying social contract theory to analyse the youth as self-interested and rational individuals, the study looks at how the youth, as active citizens, act on their expectation of the fulfilment of a social contract by the State. Justice, citizenship and social change in South Africa is mediated through what Levin, et al (2016) refer to as "the interplay between visibility and invisibility for the struggle of inclusive citizenship" (p. 11). How young people, who still perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of the post-1994 democratic hand-outs, use the hip-hop narrative in constructing their political agenda in their fight for "re-distribution and recognition-seeking forms of justice" Levin et al (2016, p. 7) is dealt with thoroughly in the subsequent chapters of this study. My interest has been in both the visibility and invisibility of music as a social action in that whilst music is so visibly expressed through airwaves and live performances, the invisibility of it lies in the underlying messages carried through the same song that remain unnoticed. So, the beat goes on but the message is lost in the groove.

In the eyes of many young people the freedom project for South Africa is loathed by the majority of people to whom the promise of a new dawn fell far short of the expectations of the marginalised. Noam Chomsky's argument that "freedom without opportunity is a devil's gift" (quoted in Levin et al, 2016, p. 5) questions the real meaning of freedom as experienced by those to whom it is distributed. The hip-hop generation has sought ways to voice their indignation in the manner they feel is most appropriate, in the instances where "the construction of citizenship practices" (Levin, et al, 2016, p. 12) the freedom project meant to deliver in accordance with the social contract, has failed to empower the marginalised and excluded.. As the dominant and creative voice of young people anywhere else around the world where there is a feeling that government is unresponsive to the needs of young people, hip-hop has ordained itself as 'the critical poetry of our era" (Osumare, 2007, p. 39) or what I call "the spoken word of the silenced".

In this study I also argue that the interpretation of this poetry as the "spoken word of the silenced" and a vehicle by which they insinuate a critique of power, will depend on our understanding of the critical role of music as a what I call "a telescopic view through which one peeps in to see and witness the nature and the mood of society at a particular point in time". In the analysis of the hip-hop narrative I advance the argument that the manner in which we interpret the intermediate transcripts between the powerful and the subordinate groups should determine our understanding of the mood of society, at a particular point in time. This we must do by looking beneath the placid and tranquil groove that carries the song and instead listen to the message in the groove in order to understand the power relations between those at the receiving end of societal blessings and those distributing such blessings.

Scott (1990) argues that "a partly sanitized, ambiguous, and coded version of the hidden transcript is always present in the public discourse of subordinate groups but interpreting these texts which, after all, are designed to be evasive is not a straightforward matter" (p. 19). The political expressions of the poor, marginalised and the excluded use both the overt and covert expressions of disgust and feelings of indignation even though they may be maintaining an impression of deference. The interpretation and subsequent understanding of the voices of the subordinate groups will require a drastic shift from how public discourse is analysed, especially the sites and formats under which these non-hegemonic voices are produced. Unless these transcripts are properly analysed, the underlying message might be missed which could be quite detrimental to the state. Scott (1990) argues, "neither everyday forms of resistance nor the occasional insurrection can be understood without reference to the sequestered social sites at which such resistance can be nurtured and given meaning" (p. 20).

The political discourse emanating from the forever-contradictory and conflicting power relations between the dominant and subordinate groups and

how that finds expression, creatively, makes for an important observation in the study of politics and society. The lived experiences of the subordinate groups, as constructed by the dominant group, and how that is communicated back to the ruling elite, either through hidden or public transcript, makes for an important contribution in developing and advancing my theoretical construct and a new scholarship I wish to advance here.

Paying attention to what is expressed and how it is articulated or acted out might assist in foreseeing slight hints of dissent. The hidden transcripts and disguised forms of public dissent can be found in every-day-music. **Music, whether expressed through hidden or public transcripts by the subordinate groups, can act as an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey** that gauges the temperature of a society at any point in time and which the dominant group must heed and to which it must craft a response. This is a theory I want to advance here: (i) that hip-hop chooses to employing the creative space and poetic form as a way to be heard; (ii) that in the absence of physical stone-throwing, vandalism and any form of public disorder, if detected, music contains images of anger, rage and even excitement; and (iii) that creative being use a natural option for citizen action by subordinate groups against the dominant group or society in general.

**So, what is the fuss about hip-hop anyway? Why hip-hop matters**

In understanding this cultural shift, and why hip-hop suddenly mattered so much, hip-hop scholars, such as Watkins (2005) have argued that "hip-hop is unlike anything the world has ever seen: it is a vital source of creativity and industry for youth" (p. 7). To Watkins, whilst the art form itself is commercially flaunted and commands celebrity status, its strength is its street credibility and the promise of transforming millions of the youth's material conditions. Clark and Koster (2014) echo the same sentiments by stating,

> The hip hop artist's narratives shows the vastness, importance, and relevance of political and social messaging as they give the masses not only words, beats, and sounds of revolution but they offer the

potential to also provide listeners with the pledges and necessary commitment for change (p. xix).

The fuss about hip-hop is the fact that it has, as Kidula (2012) argues, "become a significant form in which urban youth can hold court for themselves and with the population at large, as there are no other public forums where youth are actually heeded" (p. 117).

To Clay (2012) "some youth embrace hip-hop culture, music and performance to articulate their ideologies and create political identities, as this genre most accurately reflects the lives, language, and rhythms of youth of colour, particularly in the urban areas" (p. 8). The manner in which hip-hop matters is also evident in Clay's assertion that scholars, activists, and hip-hop artists themselves have analysed the relationship between hip-hop culture, youth, and social change.

The study argues that it is not just hip-hop's reflection, narration and articulation of life in the ghetto that is significant, but more how these hip-hop voices have created a new platform, outside of the political mainstream and for a different social narrative, and that these tales are crafted and presented in such a manner that they have become the definitive voice for youth. These voices, from the margins of society, have managed, as Rose (1994) contends, to "craft stories that represent the creative fantasies, perspectives, and experiences" (p. 3) of youth in the ghetto whose plight, if left untold, could have gone unnoticed. To Ntarangwi (2009), "hip-hop has become an important platform through which youth can articulate political issues affecting them in ways no other medium could readily avail to them" (p. 116).

If, according to Rose (1994), hip-hop has become the courier of messages that articulate conditions of "disillusionment and alienation" (p. 159), how significant are the carriers of the "word"? How are they using this word in spearheading the socio-political discourse and the youth agenda? Venomous

rhymes and a recital of the tragedies of the ghetto have seen a new form of youth activism and the birth of Raptivists who "use hip-hop music and culture in their organising efforts because it is accessible to them, and also because it is a reflection of their everyday lives and experiences, something that other youth can identify with" (Clay 2012, p. 95). Clay argues that hip-hop has been a particularly important site for youths of colour to understand and define themselves and their experiences (p. 93), it brings a community into being and is where, Lipsitz (1995) argues, a global platform for a critical voice is formed and a level of deepened consciousness is moulded (p. 36).

And because hip-hop is really about art in the streets and for the streets, it allowed those schooled by the street to present their social critique and thus overcome the old methods of conventional schooling and science, which makes social enquiry elitist. It is this culture and genre that Chang (2005) says gave voiceless youths a chance to address these seismic changes, and became a job-making engine and a platform for youth rebellion. Suffice to say that whilst hip-hop culture was black-led it swiftly opened up to other races and became the mainstream pop culture.

Collins (2006) asks a pertinent question in her attempt to understand what she calls 'hip-hop generations's curious position of invisibility and hypervisibility' (p. 4). Collins then interrogate the effects of marginalised youth being visible and yet simultaneously so ignored. She arguest that youth's biggest test will be how it uses its hypervisibility to challenge society to listen to their plight. This will be determined by how hip-hop intervenes both from a socio-economic and political perspective and how it is engaged in resolving tensions emerging from the youth's discontent within society.

How the hip-hop generation perceives the success or the failure of the negotiated social compact in delivering on the narrative of post-liberation jargon of a "better life for all", more than two decades since the advent of our democracy, remains the central focus of my thesis.

## Research questions

I have centred my research topic by focussing on the following critical questions:

1. How has the hip-hop generation, emerging as a critical voice for youth as active citizens, used its narrative to expose the socio-economic imbalances and the harsh realities of urban life experienced by youth in post-apartheid South Africa in its fight for the equitable distribution of political and economic public goods?

2. How has hip-hop, through the emerging hip-hopreneurs, used its dominant position and recent successes to extricate itself from the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality?

3. Can the hip-hop narrative, as the critical voice for youth, be used as an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey in gauging the mood of society in its claim for citizenship?

The socio-political relatedness of rap music to society, as expressed by many scholars, puts this cultural expression and lifestyle of the youth in the centre of humanity's quest for survival. and through this study I attempt to investigate how the hip-hop voices and narrative relate to their socio-economic and politiacal ralities in South Africa'.

## Hip-Hop and Me: My Relationship to the Field of Study

In my quest to find answers to the central question, through my interaction or mere observation of the role players as they act out this culture, I was also aware of my social standing and influence within the music fraternity, which could influence the outcome of my research. However, I have avoided at all costs a research enquiry that could lead to what could be perceived as a

predetermined outcome. My interest in the subject had arisen way before deciding to enrol for doctoral research. Most of the data was collected over a period of time and dates from 2003/04 till 2007 when I eventually registered for an academic degree. For instance, my earlier encounters with hip-hop and rap music specifically, were during my employment as a record executive in the industry and from this my fascination the narrative developed. The narrative was unsolicited and not commissioned by myself or by the industry I was involved with. The writings of Gidigidi Majimaji, a hip-hop group from Kenya, sparked my interest as early as 2003 but were not known to me at the time. The work by the UN-Habitat and the gathering of the hip-hop artists at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada, in 2004, was not staged by myself but contributed to my interest in further pursuing the workings and influence of this culture and music genre.

At the time of my direct involvement with the hip-hop sessions, particularly in Soweto, the work of hip-hop practitioners and the artists themselves had spiralled beyond the control of anyone who could have had pre-determined ideas to re-direct the narrative coming out of the sessions. My involvement, besides providing a conducive environment for this culture to thrive through sound and stage sponsorship of the sessions, was as a participant observer who was obsessed with the youth's newly found freedom and their use of public spaces to express themselves. The organisers of these sessions would not have refashioned the sessions to suit my interest; instead they granted me permission to observe and even interact with the artists and my quest to how they articulated their daily lived experiences in a society that ignored their hypervisibility.

My participation and mental notes made from my observations of what was taking place at the sessions would later form a big component of what would inform this study.

Admittedly the enquiry and ethnographic work, later to be undertaken, was largely influenced by my earlier participation and observation at the hip-hop sessions. My earlier interaction with hip-hop artists, as a record executive, happened long before the decision to pursue research on this subject. I must also point out hip-hop artists, by nature, are independent thinkers and are not easily influenced by the presence of those perceived to possess some power or influence. They would not necessarily change their narrative to influence a particular outcome; the most they would do is up the ante on their lyrical delivery and flow, without changing the message.

I am quite confident that, in using the outcome of my professional interactions as a source of research data, I have taken into consideration the socio-economic positions of the hip-hop protagonists However, everyone I re-visited and contacted at the time of formalizing my research was then informed of the reasons for my interviews, either conducted individually or through focus groups. This is evident in the written questionnaire I crafted for the participants during various focus groups I hosted and conducted.

The research work conducted with the homeless young people in the area of Rosebank was not planned but was an opportunity that presented itself during the national government elections whilst they worked as volunteers for the ruling party. Upon discovering that they were rappers, I began to engage them as a researcher and asked them to participate. I am also aware of the power relation between them and myself, which could have influenced their response to my research enquiry, but I would have picked that up if it subsequently became evident. My intention was to allow a free flow of engagement and response from them as independent thinkers.

During my investigation, I have looked at how a youth that could easily have been written off as the lost, post-apartheid generation, the post-civil rights generation, and even generation X, defied all manner of categorisation and schemes that seek to suppress their ambition of finding a purpose in life.

# CHAPTER 4. HIP LIT. HOP METHOD

*In a postmodern condition science no longer is the custodian of enlightenment and the overseer of master narratives, (Lyotard)*

## The Inherent Social Reality of Music

There have been various approaches to the understanding of the sociology of music - a preoccupation by sociologists and anthropologists who spend time developing theoretical constructs that inform the connection between music and society. Pratt (1990) argues, "The music of a people is a social relationship and creates and reflects forms of community" (p. 24). Shepherd (1991) shares the same sentiment and sees music as socially located where those who engage with the musical narrative are "informed, edified, and improved through the composer's insights into the truth" (p. 57). As a natural consequence music becomes a reflection of the daily-lived experiences of a community whose fantasies are expressed through song. The social relatedness of music thus makes "the meaning of music implicated in the meaning of society" (Etzkorn, 1973, p.13) This interconnectedness of music with society is what Shepherd calls, "the open secret of the universe" which lays bare what Serauky calls the "typical and cultural conditions under which music comes into existence" (quoted in Etzkorn, 1973, p. 9).

When the secret is out and the level of consciousness is heightened, the window is flung wide open so that, "the messages of music are thus publicly accessible, not merely elements of the musician's subjective and private world." (Mattern, 1998, p. 17). Even though not complicit in this open secret of the universe, as a storyteller and keeper of memory, music becomes, according to Simmel, implicated in the meaning of society in that the artist, who creates the music, is so strongly integrated into society that the musical creations are true expressions of the essence of the community that influences its production (Etzkorn, 1973, p. 12). Music thus uses existing social realities to "provide important perspectives both on macro and micro

social processes to speak to both the elite and the subaltern" (p. 19). Pratt (1990) further clarifies this when he observes, "these cultural creations and the communities who participate in them that take on a social reality by virtue of shared participation" (p. 26) thus revealing the constituent elements that inform and influence the music, such as "beliefs, assumptions, and commitments that define the character and shape of the community" (Mattern, 1998,p, 15).

Mattern argues that by suggesting that the meaning of music is implied in the meaning of society has several implications. First, he argues that the social relatedness of music suggests that it has the capacity to communicate messages that are tied to social circumstances based on people's shared experiences. Secondly, as a social construct music is a keeper of memory and brings to light the history of a people where both the style and message reflects the social context in which such music is produced.

Mattern (1998) argues that the social condition through which such music is developed is not an individual creation but arises out of the shared experience of a community and the individual who creates the music is just a conduit to a common societal experience (p.17-18). Through his study of Edmund Husserl's "intentionality of consciousness", Jean-Paul Sartre (1976) argued that human beings do not passively receive experiences of the external world, but actively give meaning to these experiences. It is through this collective consciousness, bound by collective marginality that a society is created – a society united by the active participation of its members. Sartre argues that individuals sharing a common situation can become aware of their commonality and together work towards a shared goal that will transform the alienating situation through imagination and begin to invent their own world.

Adorno (Mattern, 1998) interprets music as a communicative model that reveals social relations of power and as a tool or resource that increases political capacity, especially for people who have historically been blocked

from participation in more traditional and institutionalized political arenas (p. 35).

## Hip-Hop: The Accidental Civic Agency?

Unlike most of the voices of dissent that have been subsumed into the nationalist agenda of the ruling party and the stripping of the subaltern's critical voice (Mhlambi, 2014, p. 127), if you listen to the ground, hip-hop has remained as an unsolicited civic agency and a potential site for everyday resistance that has given youth a platform in which to partake in new forms of political action without violent confrontation. Through hip-hop, the social relations of power and powerlessness are dealt with outside organised and formal civic or political action and the instantiations of resistance, as acts of citizen action, have been re-determined to reflect new forms of struggle where the pen still emerges as mightier than the sword.

Whilst hip-hop action may not provoke immediate and visible change, these expressed and written words will last over many year to remind those who missed the meaning of the words and the message behind them. These critical subaltern voices, whose critique of society is retrieved from scribbled scrapbooks, notepads, phone notes and voice notes, are eventually recorded and released on sound recordings and made available in the public domain. They become the new spaces of resistance "a contemporary stage of the theatre of the powerless" (Rose, 1994, p. 101), a "subaltern counter publics" (Fraser, 1997, p. 82) or a "space for cultural resistance" (Dyson, 2007), where a "revolutionary cultural force capable to challenge the status quo is enacted" (Asante, 2008, p. 8).

Emerging from what Rose (1994) calls "complex cultural exchanges and larger social and political conditions of disillusionment and alienation" (p. 59) hip-hop exposes the uneven relationship brought about by social processes and the never-ending tension between the powerful and the subordinate groups. Hip-hop's ultimate cultural weapon is expressed through a series of

16-bar verses apprehensible at the level of individual and collective consciousness and is what makes the genre resonate with people across the cultural and racial spectrum.

It is as a result of this feeling of empowerment at being heard, of being able to enact change and to practice subversive action, that hip-hop is wrestling the power away from the formal state institutions to speak about the socio-economic and political conditions of everyday citizens. Hip-hop has assumed the role of being the voice of the voiceless. It is this intersection between hip-hop and the social realities that, according to Watson (2005), has "empowered a generation of youth to believe that they not only have a right but maybe even have an obligation to a make a difference in their world" (p. 164). Watkins (2005) argues "Hip-hop's claim to fame is the claim of authenticity in its undaunted portrayal of ghetto reality" (p. 2).

The portrayal of life in the ghetto by the subaltern voices is, according to Willems & Obadare (2014), forever present and enduring in everyday forms of struggle amongst subordinate groups and is hidden and invisible (p. 9). Rose (1994) arguest that it these transnational conversations or what she calls 'cloaked speech' which are enacted away from the gaze of the dominant group and where hip-hop uses disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities (p.100),

Rose (1994) argues, "rappers act out inversions of status hierarchies, draw portraits of contact with the dominant groups in which the hidden transcript inverts/subverts the public, dominant transcript. Often rendering a nagging critique of various manifestations of power via jokes, stories, gestures, and song, rap's social commentary enacts ideological insubordination" (p. 101).

The expressions of disgust occur outside of the usual interstices of public discourse where ordinary people have, according to Chabal (2014), identified

other avenues in their quest to "resist the totalising tendencies of the state and of the political elite that preside over their destiny" (p. xiii).

Roy Bhaskar (1989) argues that for one to understand or change the social world there is a need to identify the structures at work that generate those events or discourses (p. 2). To determine whether hip-hop has emerged as a civic agency, and in response to what Corson (1997) refers to as real entities of the social world to which people behave in a certain way (p. 169), I have have looked Chabal's four critical questions: (i) How do ordinary people create and maintain the social, economic, cultural and political space they need to operate in the societies in which they live? (ii) How do they express their opposition to what they perceive as the oppressive environment that constrains their lives and activities? (iii) How is such resistance determined by the limits of the freedoms they enjoy? (iv) How effective is such resistance? (p. xiii-xiv).

Ntarangwi (1990) says, the "youth encounter and make sense of lived and imagined experiences" (p. vii) or what Westbrook (2002) refers to as "particular local visions of the real" (p. 81), out of which their artistic response to their socio-economic and political conditions is, according to Chabal (2014), "tailored to the oppression they experience" (p. xiv). Even popular music scholars have begun to advance arguments that rap music and the hip-hop culture have taken a visible and audible stance in challenging the social order. Ntarangwi (2009) argues that hip-hop music is, arguably, the fastest-growing component of youth culture in Africa today due to the fact it is adaptable to localisation through style and content. Perry (2004) argues "hip-hop speaks to youth's desire for identity, for a sense of self-definition and purpose, no matter how lawless or pointless" (p. 29). Hip-hop, as a form of cultural and artistic expression, has assumed the role of youth-social-conscientisation and articulates the voices from the margins of society. Urban youth has suddenly found in rap music, and hip-hop culture in general, a platform where their voices can be heard.

Through hip-hop's creative engagement with society, reflecting what the masses see and feel in their daily lives, this artistic expression provides new sites and spaces of resistance and social expression by "circumventing traditional gate-keeping structures that have historically excluded them from voicing their views" (Nyawalo, 2014, p. 72). Frith (2007) argues that it is the manner in which hip-hop articulates and shapes the expressions of youth in the projection of their identities that none of the older generation of musical forms could do. Frith points that even in the 1930s when jazz was seen to have a special appeal to young people, neither it nor any other form of popular music was seen as an expression of a youth culture. (p. 1)

Connell and Gibson (2003) express the same sentiment by arguing that hip-hop has the ability to mediate social knowledge whilst challenging the ideological construction of contemporary life (p. 270), which Rose (1994) refers to as the "social and political conditions of disillusionment and alienation" (p. 59). Arising out of the feeling of alienation and disillusionment many young people are picking up the *mic* to become what Bynoe (2004, p. ix) calls the "new political spokesmen" or what Perry (2004) has appropriately titled her book as "Prophets of the Hood". It is what Ariefdien and Abrahams (2006, p. 262) call the "resilience of the human spirit" that has seen the hip-hop generation determined in its fight to disclose the truth of life through social critique. With rap music becoming a "fountain of politically provocative discourse (Watson, 2005, p. 120), rappers have assumed the status of "Prophets of Rage" (Rose 1994, p. 99) in their articulation of their feelings of discontent about their daily socio-economic conditions. The manner in which they expressly speak about their local realities is so vivid to anyone prepared to listen and "cannot be removed from the discourses that construct them" (Perry, 2004p. 102), because rappers speak with the voice of personal experience.

For hip-hop to replicate and reimagine experiences of urban life it used the creative skills and ideas at its disposal, such as graffiti, breakdancing and deejaying, to give a voice to what Rose (1994) calls "the tensions and contradictions in the public urban landscape" in which this genre "attempts to seize the shifting urban terrain in order to make it work on behalf of the dispossessed" (22). Ariefdien and Abrahams (2006) confirm this sentiment by saying, "hip-hop was about using the little we have to push boundaries beyond that what is visible to the naked eye. We embrace the transgressive nature of hip-hop" (p. 269). Therefore, to understanding the experience of youth in contemporary society, and how such experiences are expressed and articulated, we need to realise that individuals coming together to create a society are there purely for their own interest and concerns and they will exert themselves to the fullest to organise themselves in a stable way. In this instance the critical social science approach confirms Newman's assertion that creative, adaptive people with unrealised potential, trapped by illusion and exploitation, will find ways to create meaning to make sense of their worlds.

The same point is made by Ntarangwi (2009) that where youth who feel left out of the "important socioeconomic and political commentaries and decision-making processes" hip-hop is a forum that allows them to bring to the public's attention issues they feel are important to them whilst using this music genre and youth culture for "their own economic and political gain" (p. 3). Traces of hip-hop's commentary on the socio-economic and political discourse in Africa are found in rap groups in East, West and Southern Africa where artists such as Positive Black Soul (Senegal), Kalamashaka (Kenya), Kwanza Unit (Tanzania), Prophets of Da City, Black Noise (South Africa), Real Elements (Malawi) and Das Primeiro (Angola) were the first generation of artists to set the tone and the role of hip-hop in influencing social change in Africa (Clark & Koster, 2014).

Berktay (2014) also acknowledges how hip-hop has been widely used not only by youth in Africa in raising social and political consciousness, but also by scholars across the continent who have explored how this youth culture has had an impact in its fight for political and social change (p. 112). Lahai (2014) also acknowledges the pioneering role of this youth culture in transforming their "societally conditioned marginal spaces into a social platform on which they have built an empowering agency that fights for better conditions of marginalised youth" (p. 218).

## Hip-Hop Scholarship in Africa

It is this world of hip-hop that has been re -invented beyond the borders of America where this culture is alleged to have originated. Elsewhere in Africa, scholars like Mwenda Ntarangwi (2009) have been studying and tracing the germination of hip-hop in at least three African countries (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda). Through his ethnographic work, Ntarangwi has discovered how the ethnography of hip-hop in East Africa is shaping the youth's own experiences within a specific politico-economic epoch and as mediated through their performances. Ntarangwi (2009) also traces the influence of hip-hop culture in East Africa through the process of globalisation, which he claims has "its roots in the historical processes of contact and conquest in overt structures of colonialism," (p. 3).

It is this popular culture that Weiss (2009) claims is clearly "a vehicle through which an awareness of the interconnectedness of peoples and places is cultivated" (p. 24). As hip-hop spreads its influence outside of America it is now being tested against how its assertive appropriation is able to incorporate local linguistic and musical idioms.

In addressing the location or place of hip-hop, Weiss (2009) argues that its true authenticity is judged by how "rap prioritizes artist's local allegiances and territorial identities" (p. 202). This argument is supported by Magubane (2006) who argues that local cultural forms are able to "assimilate and

indigenize significant elements of Western culture while still retaining a sense of cultural identity" (p. 209).

In South Africa, Shaheen Ariefdien and Zazli Abrahams (2006) also attest the localisation of hip-hop, saying "hip-hop took the language of the 'less thans' and embraced it, paraded it, made it very sexy to the point that thee is an open pride about what constituted our style, *Gamtaal..."(p. 266),* which is a mixture of Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, and Arabic, spoken mostly in Cape Town.

Because people's thought processes are socially mediated (Shepherd, (1991), it could be that "the basic qualities of different styles of music are likewise socially mediated and so socially significant" (p. 12).

In his book, *Popular Music in Western Nigeria: Theme, Style and Patronage System*, Bode Omojola (2006) argues that, "Music, as a product of the human mind, cannot but reflect other aspects of the human thought processes" (p. 14). Omojola further attests that music must be located within its relevant social and cultural environment and claims that popular music interrogates the ever-continuous process of social and human interaction and that its articulation in specific cultures reflects the social dynamics of that particular social environment (p. 5).

His categorisation of genres of Nigerian music, *highlife and juju,* as the two distinct musical styles that speak to and appeal to two different social groupings, confirms how music can assume different roles in the socio-economic and political life of a particular group Omojola gives examples of how *highlife* spoke directly to and addressed the interests of the emerging and Western-educated elite of Nigerian society, whilst *Juju,* on the other hand, was more appreciated by the Nigerian working class. Through such sociological studies it becomes understandable why a certain style of music may have emerged in the social and cultural structure of a given period,

including the sociological pre-requisites and conditions involved. Therefore, the correlation of art and life, according to Omojola, represents a "continuation of the integral relationship between music and other aspects of life in indigenous African societies" (p. 131).

What has been encouraging is the discovery of a few scholars in Africa, particularly in East Africa, such as Ntarangwi (2003), whose work contextualises hip-hop lyrics to show how song lyrics act as metasocial commentaries that are critical in the understanding of what he calls transnational interpretations and responses to postcolonial and political challenges in East Africa.

Alex Perullo (2005), in his book 'Popular Music and Tanzania's Music Economy explores the world of the bands, music distributors, managers, and clubs that attest to the lively and creative music industry in Dar es Salaam. His work has looked at the complex musical landscape in one of Africa's most dynamic cities, where most people do not consider music as industry but just another site for employment. His work looks at the appropriation of vernacular voices and the use of language to find the new hip-hop language, *'swarap'* the localized language among youth trying to build a national hip-hop culture. His work has focused on individuals who demonstrate creative practices as well as on the broader narratives of people's ability to make opportunities emerge in difficult economic and social situations. His concept of creative practices is taken from autochthonous philosophies, such as *bongo (*wisdom) and *kujitegemea (*self-reliance), used in Tanzania as people navigate and negotiate their day-to-day lives. Perullo argues that it is the bongo and kujitegemea whose flava inspires the creative spirit of the people of Tanzania to overcome difficult economic and political situations.

One of the seminal works on hip-hop scholarship in Africa is the collection of essays by Eric S. Charry (2012) covering hip-hop agency as expressed in Hiplife in Ghana, hip-hop culture in both Kenya and Tanzania, and identity

and hybridity in Mali and Nigeria. Style, message and meaning in Malawian youth rap and ragga performance gives insight into the indomitable spirit of a youth under siege in difficult post-colonial Africa. Charry (2012) offers a beautiful and quick encapsulation of the development of hip-hop in Africa, tracing it back to the 1980s when it was simply under incubation: a period when rappers were still trying to grapple with the art form itself. Charry argues that it was not until the mid-1990s that rappers and deejays began the process of the venarcularisation of hip-hop. The pioneers of the genre began winning massive audiences. Artists such Positive Black Soul (Senegal), and Prophets of Da City (Cape Town) began travelling around their respective countries and abroad as the new African hip-hop exports.

*Hip-Hop and Social Change in Africa: Ni Wakati*, edited by Msia Kibona Clark and Mickie Mwanzia Koster (2014), offers an interesting perspective on the bravery and energy of young rappers to "come from behind the microphone to effect reform in Africa. Carolin Mose offers a startling account of what she calls "hip-hop halisis and the continuities of heroism on the African landscape". *Redefining the struggle and remembering the Mau Mau through hip-hop music* by Mich Nyawalo, shows how African rappers have abandoned the imitation of the African American narrative in favour of their real social realities. Clark and Koster's examination of the ways in which hip-hop intersects with society and politics in Africa is a confirmation of how this genre is associated with commentary on society and politics. They argue that the use of hip-hop as a vehicle to express the time for change speaks to the nature of hip-hop culture: a culture of rebellion, social protest, and revolutions.

Clark and Koster's extensively researched work extends to examples of renewed social change where hip-hop has had a role such as in Madagascar where the appropriation Makoa identity through hip-hop has been used to reclaim their link as descendants of enslaved East Africans. Hip-hop agency is revealed in Mali and Burkina Faso where several artists are advocating Pan Africanism and African unity. The book is about hip-hop as a transformative

influence on young Africans, creating a generation that identifies with local and global hip cultures.

Paul Ugo and Lord Mawuko-Yevugah's (2016) collection of esays on *African Youth Cultures in a Globalized World: Challenges, Agency and Resistance* offers a beautiful glimpse into socio-economic and political developments in Africa and how the youth are shaping their destiny in the age of neoliberal globalisation. Contributions by writers such as Jasper Abembia Ayelazuno analyse how youth are exploring the dialectics between cosmopolitan and identity politics in their global quest to resist neoliberalism. This is indicative of how hip-hop has awakened the socio-political consciousness of African youth on the continent. The brave and daring youth activism in Uganda by young people using popular culture to create their own identity indicates the youth's readiness to challenge the mainstream narrative that does not address their issues. Wadele Adedeji covers hip-hop and the culture of resistance in Nigeria in their search for the path of consciousness.

## Raising the Bar: Hip-Hop Intellectuals

In his study of hip-hop as cultural and artistic discourse, Watkins (2005) states that there is a rapidly increasing number of hip-hop intellectuals, academics and thought-leaders that are fast dominating the hip-hop socio-political and economic discourse. According to Watkins,

> What has emerged is a body of thinkers who articulate a wide range of ideas that, in their unique way, map out the contradictory currents, ideas, and worldviews that percolate through the phenomenal world of hip-hop. From spoken-word artists to academic scholars, hip-hop intellectuals are translating the movement into a vast mix of critical commentary and artistic expression (p. 234).

The same argument, that rappers are taking on the role of hip-hop intellectuals, is advanced by Cornell West (2005) who argues that hip-hop

must engage in "cross-examination and artistic depiction that wrestles with the universal issues of life and death, joy and sorrow, justice and injustice, courage and cowardice, love and heartbreak" (p. xi). In the day-to-day socio-political enquiry, Darby and Shelby (2005) argue, "The bottom line is that hip-hop and philosophy are examination of life on the street and the search for wisdom by those from the street" (p. xvi).

Hip-hop has seen the rise of organic intellectuals, who, with their vast vocabulary – the language game – have managed to hit right into the core of late capitalism. Following from Georg Hegel's awakening of critical consciousness, a new breed of conscientised rappers and hip-hop intellectuals has emerged, striving for what Paulo Frere (1970) calls "the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (p. 68) where the youth feels totally obliged to respond to what it perceives to be an adult-dominated world, unless they want to face absolute obscurity.

Hip-hop is talking. Is anyone listening?

## Theoretical Framework for the Study of Hip-Hop

The peculiarity of what Collins (2006) refers to as the "invisibility and hypervisibility" of the hip-hop generation (p. 4) is what makes the study of youth culture, specifically of the hip-hop narrative as a dominant discourse in contemporary society, so fascinating. Collins exposes the contradiction of the invisibility of the continued marginalisation of the hip-hop generation in everyday life against the media's portrayal of a glamorous hip-hop narrative of poverty, drugs, violence and hypersexuality which renders the hip-hop generation so hypervisible. The invisibility of the same dominant hip-hop narrative emanates from society's refusal to make sense of the reasons leading to the construction of such lyrics and images. The hip-hop explosion McRobbie (1994) argues is "the coming into being of those whose voices were historically drowned out by the modernist meta-narratives" (p. 15), allowing the interrogation of "every breathing aspect of lived experience"

(p.14). Krims (2000) identifies a number of scholars who have made a compelling case for rap as postmodern, in particular Rose (2004) who advances a case for rap-as-music of postmodernity. Krims also argues that rap music could have become one of the more canonical objects for discussions of postmodern culture were it not for the moral panics which have congregated around this art form since the early 1990s. However, Shusterman (2000) describes rap music or hip-hop as a "postmodern popular art that challenges some of our most deeply entrenched aesthetic conventions" (p. 61), a view also supported by Potter (1999) who sees rap as a form of postmodernism who suggests that "Black cultures conceived of postmodernism long before an intellectual avant-garde in Europe started to question the intellectual inheritance of modernity" (p. 6). Pennycook (2007) argues that hip-hop, as a transgressive cultural form, "opens the space to think differently, opens the space for a different, transgressive applied linguistics that is then able to reflect on the relations between popular culture, pleasure, difference and language in ways that its rationalized aesthetic has not been able to do" (p. 56).

**Hip-hop and postmodernism**

Hip-hop's postmodernist narratives and its relentless desire to challenge what Huyssen (1984) calls "modernism's relentless hostility to mass culture" (p. 16) makes hip-hop a cultural and intellectual phenomenon that follows the aesthetic and philosophical trends of postmodernism. Hip-hop, like any postmodern music, presents multiple meanings and temporalities, locating meaning in the listener.

Angela McRobbie` (1994, p. 14) argues that

> postmodernism has entered into a more diverse number of vocabularies more quickly than most other intellectual categories. It has spread outwards from the realm of art history into political theory and on to the pages of youth culture magazines, records sleeves and the fashion spreads of Vogue.

McRobbie (1994) asserts that postmodernism deeply interrogates every breathing aspect of lived experience where the marginal group has become the vocal majority.

The argument advanced herein is that it is not the ontology of hip-hop that society should be concerned about, what hip-hop is or is not, but society should rather address itself to the epistemology of the genre in order to get to understand why hip-hop has emerged.

In following Husserl's theory of the intentionality of consciousness: hip-hop reacts to postmodern society (the intentional object) through hip-hop utterances (the intentional content) enacted through hip-hop's performativity (intentional act). Husserl argues that there is a correlation between the intentional object, which for the purpose of this study is 'society' and the intentional act (hip-hop's subversive or public transcript).

Hip-hop's quest to reflect and represent voices from the margins advances Daniel Bell's (1976) assertion that "culture has an unprecedented mission: it is an official, ceaseless search for a new sensibility" (p. 34). Hip-hop ability to provide a comprehensive or transcendental set of ultimate meanings in daily life and its role in untangling the most complex social, cultural and political issues in contemporary society is the theoretical construct I want to advance herein. Using Bell's (1976) tripartite structural arrangement of contemporary society; the *techno-economic structure,* the *polity* and the *culture arena* (p. 12) I dissect how the hip-hop generation negotiate its place in contemporary society. It is these complex and tripartite arrangements that might "seem irrational when they are severed from the social contexts where everyday struggles over resources, pleasure, and meanings take place" (Rose, 1994, p. 2). Taken seriously, hip-hop as popular music, has the "ability to mediate social knowledge, reinforce (or challenge) ideological constructions of

contemporary life and be an agent of hegemony" (Connell and Gibson, 2003, p. 270)

Analysing this triangular relationship of hip-hop with contemporary society, through which it finds its hip-hop narrative, it is in the *techno-economic* structure where the hip-hop narrative is concerned with the organisation of production and the allocation of goods and services, whereas in *the polity* the hip-hop narrative focuses on social justice and power, whilst the *culture arena* is where hip-hop's expressive symbolism seeks to explore and express the meanings of human existence in some creative and imaginative form. Through its creative intentional content, the lyrics of rap, as Pennycook (2009) would argue, "are far more central than they are in many other forms of popular culture and as a postmodern popular art, hip-hop challenges deeply entrenched aesthetic conventions" (p. 10-11).

In this triangular relationship, Bell argues, there exist the structural sources of tension between the techno-economic, which is bureaucratic and hierarchical, and the polity, which believes in equality and participation between the social structures, and the culture, which is concerned with the enhancement and fulfilment of the self and the whole person. These tensions and contradictions find expression through the refashioning of the new world by hip-hop to suit their socio-political perspective in what Fredric Jameson (1991) argues is a new culture emerging through the collective struggle by young people eager to create a new social system and rejecting a society of alienation. According to Bynoe (2004), hip-hop "visualises a new world and then makes moves to build it" (p. 23). Rose (1994) argues, "rap music and hip hop culture are cultural, political, and commercial forms, and for many young people they are the primary cultural, sonic, and linguistic windows on the world" (p. 19), which emanate from complex cultural exchanges and larger social and political conditions of disillusionment and alienation (p.59). From these conditions of disillusionment and alienation Rose argues that attempts are made by hip-hop

to seize the shifting urban terrain, to make it work on behalf of the dispossessed (p. 22)...

This invention of a new world by the hip-hop generation dictates a re-conceptualisation of our understanding of the emerging new society and the changes taking place, which C. Wright Mills (1959) argued demands a re-look at the "basic definitions of society and self" to avoid being "overtaken by new realities" (p. 165-6). As a post-industrial signifying practice, hip-hop is "giving new parameters of meaning to otherwise locally or nationally diverse identities" (Pennycook 2007, p.6).

In this move to build a new society hip-hop "encourages folks to imagine new realities and to be bold enough to conceive a new society"' (Bynoe 2004, p. 22), and, Jameson (1976) argues, is "the undermining of the social fabric of modern society by rejecting the norms and standards of the dominant class" (from Dickens and Fontana, 1994, p. 5). This is consistent with the views of Porter (1995), Shusterman (1991) and Rose (1994) who make what Krims (2000) calls is a "compelling case for rap music as a postmodern practice where hip-hop culture demonstrate how marginalised cultural practices can be deployed to challenge dominant discourses" (p. 8).

It is in this postmodern age that Bell says a new world emerges as a product of the application of modernist revolt or rejection to everyday life, (in Steven and Kellner, 1991). Andre Craddock-Willis (in Rose, 1994) maintains that rap music's distinguishing characteristic is its status as a postmodern form whose contradictory articulations are a by-product of the post-modern condition" (p. 23). It is through these tensions and contradictions that, according to Patricia Rose, hip-hop gives its voice in the urban landscape in an attempt to negotiate the new economic and technological conditions.

According to Geoffrey Barraclough (1964), this postmodernist rejection is characterised by new forms of cultural expression with a new outlook on the

world and where there is a shift from individualism to mass society (p. 232). This is in keeping with Edmund Husserl's theory of collective intentionality that individuals do not always act alone and it is in coordination with others that shared or collective beliefs are enacted, out of which collective intentionality and intentional acts are seized. The intentionality of consciousness gives way to what Roszak (1968) calls "consciousness consciousness" and the emergence of a counter-culture singularly driven by the youth as they protest against the expansion of the technocracy.

The interrogation of the role of hip-hop in influencing the socio-economic and political landscape in contemporary society already suggests that hip-hop cannot be simply looked at as something only to be consumed as mere entertainment. This fascination with culture of consumerism is what McRobbie (1994) calls "an exploitation of cultural objects out of the context of their usefulness ...[that] have been prised away from their place in history and from their role in social relations, and have been posited instead in a kind of vacuum of aesthetic pleasure and personal style" (p. 27). Rap, suggest Shusterman (2000), is a "postmodern popular art that challenges some of our most deeply entrenched aesthetic conventions, conventions which are common not only to modernism as an artistic style and ideology but to the philosophical doctrine of modernity and its differentiation of cultural spheres" (p. 61).

Confining the arts to artistic pleasure challenges its integritywhich is what Perry (2004) believes is happening to hip-hop because of the way it is fast being being commercialised and commodified (p. 3). Grossberg (1992) sees popular culture as "a significant and effective part of the material reality of history, effectively shaping the possibilities of our existence and further argues that it is this challenge to understand what it means to live in popular culture that confronts contemporary cultural analysis" (p. 69).

The fact that the hip-hop culture is so visible and its narrative so audible and yet so ignored makes the study and the theoretical interrogation of hip-hop discourse academically significant as a study that attempts to understand the complexities of youth and the society in which they live. Taking the youth voice seriously would require society to think through the implications of the youth's vernacular voices (Scott, 1999, p. 215), because, as Grossberg (1989) argues, "popular culture is implicated in the multi-layered, fragmented collection of meanings, values, and ideas that we both inherit and construct and which largely define our taken-for-granted interpretations of the world" (p. 94).

Understanding the implications behind vernacular voices in popular culture means also accepting that rap music is the soundtrack to the hip-hop generation's disaffection over being left out in the construction of a perfect society. It is these feelings of disaffiliation amongst the hip-hop generation that has prompted them to take a different position and refuse to surrender to what Jameson (1991) terms "passivity and helplessness". Instead hip-hop has accepted the challenge that art, usually being avantgarde, must lead the way and not permit itself to serve as a "reflection of an underlying social structure" (Bell, 1972), in order to transform the thinking and actions of larger masses of people. This makes rap music what S. Craig Watson (2004) calls a "forum for socially conscious discourse" (p. 21). It is through hip-hop that this generation has a dominant public voice that is used to shape national culture and public discourse (Kitwana, 2002).

Halifu Osumane's concept or theory of "connective marginality" is also applied to investigate the pathology and psychology of the ghetto. Clark (1965) argues that "the dark ghetto is institutionalized pathology; it is chronic, self-perpetuating pathology; and it is the futile attempt by those with power to confine that pathology so as to prevent the spread of its contagion to the larger community" (p. 81).

**A Generational Conflict**

The rise of the hip-hop generation, taking on the responsibility to reinvent their own world, pay scant regard to the heroic tales of the struggle against oppression as they craft their own path to suit their current socio-economic and political circumstance". They opted to discard the past, which in their opinion has not advanced their course and are questioning what Asante (2008) refers to as "the present was an egg laid by the past that had the future inside its shell" (p. 55). According to Lawson (2005) "hip-hop culture speaks to the unfinished business of social justice but in a post-civil rights voice" (p. 172).

The above observations confirm Theodore Roszak's observations who, as early as 1968, foresaw these changes in society and predicted that the generational conflict, which started in the 1960s, was going to reach its peak by 1984 and, emerging out of the counter-culture, would become radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of the adult society. It is through this generational conflict that hip-hop is refashioning the world through their music and personas in order to connect with the disenfranchised urban youth (Bynoe, 2004). This requires radical honesty by the hip-hop generation (Perry, 2004).

Jameson argues that the postmodern revolt has become integrally intertwined in the socio-political environment in that its offensive features "no longer scandalize anyone and are not only received with the greatest complacency but have themselves become institutionalised and are at one with the official". This is supported by Ward's (1997) assertion that: "postmodernist arts have their feet more firmly on the ground and recognize that they share the same world with all other aspects of cultural life" (p. 17). Again, this is advanced by Andreas Huyssen (1986) who argued that, unlike modernism which saw arts as operating outside of society and culture, postmodernism bridges the gap between culture and society which modernism once separated.

The above argument also suggests that culture can no longer fight for autonomy or semi-autonomy fearing complete disappearance or extinction. Instead, in a postmodern society, culture is experiencing a total explosion as it permeates the social realm of life, what Huyssen (1986) sees as the "reintegration of art into praxis, the closing of the gap separating art from reality" (p. 7). According to de Saint Simon (1825) the artist has always been assigned a vanguard role in the construction of the ideal state and the new golden era of the future (p. 4) - a 'new life praxis through art and politics.

The notion that culture is a potentially explosive force is evident in hip-hop's explosion and its refusal of total exclusion from the socio-political and economic transaction. Hip-hop is not independent of the society upon which it is founded; there is a clear connection between musical expression and cultural representation given the social circumstances under which this art form finds its articulation.

Hip-hop observation and articulation of lived experiences speaks to Dilthey's argument that the real understanding of a nation's life is found in the scientific analysis of the grammar, rhetoric. It is through rap music narrative that this meaning of society and its people and understood. Asante, (2008) calls for the need to go beyond the naïve idea that Black music is simply entertainment and asserts that hip-hop must be understood as an inextricable link between Black music and the politics of Black life (p. 4-5). Kitwana (2008) also attests that the hip-hop generation's character arises out of the major socio-political forces, which shaped this group's identity and social positioning (p. 9).

Shusterman (2000) supports this view and argues, "Intellectualist critics typically fail to recognize the multi-layered and nuanced meanings of popular art either because they are turned off from the onset and unwilling to give these works the sympathetic attention needed to tease out such complexities, or more simply because they just can't understand the works in question" (p. 49). Pennycook (2007) also argues that, "a further problem with dismissing

'pop culture' as superficially commercial is that it overlooks the role of popular music as part of political protest" (p. 83), a point Lawson (2005) also makes when he says, "hip-hop speaks to unfinished business of social justice" (p. 172).

Huyssen (1986) argues that art can ultimately open up "emancipatory avenues only of if it is granted autonomy and therefore to confine art to the demands of the market further underestimates possibilities for emancipation inherent in consumption" (p. 152).

Following from the above, entertainment is not devoid of social enquiry and, as Martin Jay (1986) states, "postmodernism allows what were respectable sociological issues to reappear on the intellectual agenda" (p. 167). For the purpose of this thesis the intellectual agenda is disguised as hip-hop expressions. According to Appignanesi, postmodernism interrogates every "breathing aspect of lived experience". In this instance postmodernism has entered into a more diverse number of vocabularies quicker than most other intellectual categories.

**Hip-hop: performance and language**

As Walcott (1992) argues, "Central to the hip-hop culture is the idea of performance or rather acts of performativity" (p. 102). Pennycook (2007) argues that both language and identity in the understanding and appreciation of a hip-hop performance and therefore understanding hip-hop performance should not be viewed from a live performance only (p. 58). This study will also interrogate not only the lyrical meaning of the songs but how language is appropriate in the performance of the hip-hop songs to be analysed. Bodily enactments in the physical interpretation and performance of the song amplify the performance in language, since language, according to Halliday (1978), is not necessary the end-point of competence but a by-product of performance. Bauman (1992) argues that performance must be viewed as a "marked mode

of action that sets up or represents a special interpretative frame within the act of communication" (p. 44). Zuluboy's performance of the track *Nomalanga* (a hip-hop re-interpretation of Caiphus Semenya's song) is displayed both in the vernacularisation as well his expressive performance of the song. As he traverses through the song, Zuluboy lays bare his emotional state when upon his return from exile he discovers that his long standing sweetheart that he had longed to return to and had kept in his memory through all the years, had died whilst he was still in the bush fighting in the wars of liberation.

The audience expressed grief and seemed to be sharing Zuluboy's paid everytime during the performance Nomalanga, when he broke into the verse:

*Lafika lelolanga k'dala sililindele.../*
*Bonke babethokozile ne-O'lady lijabulile*
*Langibuka emehlweni langibuza ukuthi ngihambe ngidlile*
*Langihlalisa phansi lang'buza ukuthi kukhona yini engik'zwile*
*Lang'tshela ukuthi u-Nomalanga uswelekile*

It was not the appropriation of the language that moved audiences every time Zuluboy performed this song, it was his bodily enactment and how he finished the verse having fallen to his knees like a defeated and helpless person, whose soul seemed to have exited his grief-stricken body, that made the crowds groan in disbelief and offer unsolicited condolences. This sharing of grief between Zuluboy and his audience is when performance, according to Bauman and Briggs (1996), "provides a frame that invites critical reflection on communicative process" (p. 60).

The analysis of performative theory is used here to show how performance in song becomes an act of the imagination and becomes a model of critique and a politics of intervention (Morgan, 2015), which allows us to view the production of identity in the doing (Pennycook, 2007) and where both discourse and subject are performatively realised (Price, 1999).

Ignoring the reasons behind the birth of hip-hop and its role in influencing contemporary society would be tantamount to assuming that there is unity and coherence in the social systems in a postmodern society. How hip-hop culture has, through "reverse discourse", appropriated oppressive language and images from mainstream culture in order to assert itself and be heard is nothing else but intellectual subversion (Watkins, 2005; Bynoe, 2004; Chang, 2005; Clay, 2012).

Pennycook (2007) argues that the politics of rap lyrics need to be understood not only in terms of the interpretable meaning of the lyrics but also in the varieties of language used (p. 118). Far from the gaze of the dominant group "marginalised cultural practices can be deployed to reinforce the challenge to the dominant discourse: (Krims 2000, p. 8).

**Hip-hop and postmodernism of resistance**

Two important trajectories drive postmodernism where, in the first instance the emergence of a mass industry is driven by social and economic fundamentals, whilst on the other hand the arts take a cultural route and both socio-economic and cultural aspects inform each other.

My theoretical argument supports the notion, as articulated by Lyotard (1998), that the promise of modernity to achieve "the emancipation of humanity from poverty, ignorance, prejudice and the absence of enjoyment" (302) is no longer an option. Hip-hop executes what Lyotard and Jameson (1990) term "postmodernism of resistance" and "postmodernism of reaction", or as articulated above, a "counter-culture".

Applying postmodernism as a theory in unpacking the central thesis, I will argue that rap music, as an "antifoundationalism which emerges out of a collective struggle to a create a new social system" (Jameson, 1991, p. xiii).

The thesis provides insight into of how hip-hop, as an art form, is used to articulate the actual state of affairs and to define its ambition as an artistic style that interrogates and gives meaning to its daily lived struggles as it naviates its triangulation between commerce, politics and culture. If hip-hop arises out of the postmodern condition then Jencks (1984) is correct when refuting the criticism that postmodernism is merely a nostalgic tendency. Jencks argues that postmodernism can be seen as a "radical eclecticism" proactively participating in conversations about the past and present and how each affects the interpretation and appreciation of the other.

In subsequent chapters an in-depth investigation employing the notion of "postmodernism of resistance how hip-hop culture confronts the conventional world view and fights to undermine the foundations of the technocracy, or as Lyotard calls it, the end of 'the master narratives' or what Roszak (1969) calls "daddy politics" (p. 4).

In a nutshell, the study looks at whether rap music and hip-hop culture is becoming the human narrative and has taken over from science in understanding and interrogating the meaning of society.

As Lyotard (1984) argues, in the postmodern condition science no longer is the custodian of enlightenment and the overseer of master narratives. There is no exclusivity as to who controls the forms of knowledge and the narratives. This study investigates the global influence of hip-hop and whether it is the custodian of what Lyotard calls grand metanarratives in that it becomes an all-encompassing narrative that transcends social, institutional and human limitations.

Hip-hop's socio-economic and political aspirations, as articulated in what one could call "local narratives with a global perspective", support the postmodern view of political action as something that occurs in the most common places and in normally overlooked spaces of society. By choosing a "language

game", which produces an overlooked narrative, the postmodern condition forces society to attend to what appear to be insignificant details of how people go about navigating their daily lives. Pennycook (2007) argues that "it is not only the forms of popular culture themselves that we need to look at but also the take-up and reactions to these forms" (p. 84). This supports the theoretical argument being advanced in this this study that music is an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey, a view also supported by Pennycook that "the meaning of a text cannot be reduced to the readings of the text analyst outside the context of its social (post-textual) take-up. The sophisticated and complex discussions of hip-hop philosophy, politics and poetics that abound in the US, suggest that the debate is not so much about whether we should take it seriously as how we should do so" (p. 84).

In supporting and testing the validity of my central thesis on the role of hip-hop in influencing the socio-economic and political landscape in contemporary society, I have advanced my theoretical argument that music is **an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey** that narrates the prevailing socio-economic and political realities from which society must heed and craft a response.

To support my theoretical argument, I put forward a notion that the hip-hop generation, acting out of the feeling of disaffiliation, articulate their social circumstances ***(reality)***, define their world as they would like it to be (***aspiration)*** and out of which they seek to take ***action***'.

The above is tested against Edmund Husserl's "intentional consciousness" theory, where the hip-hop generation could perceived to be concerned with its socio-economic and political reality or the postmodern condition (the ***intentional object***) and matches it against the future it desires (***the intentional content),*** then selects the language it best understands to express itself (***the intentional act***)

The argument is advanced against a premise that music is an articulation of the dominant social reality, desired or not desired (Meyer, 1952) and its meaning implicates the meaning of society (Simmel, 1882). Music, as an unsolicited civic perception survey, and because it, in itself, might not execute the solutions it desires, therefore can only offer what is preferred socio-political or economic condition. If those in the position of power are able to decipher the hidden or public transcript, and understand the meanings, they should devise a response and act accordingly

Because hip-hop is an expressive socio-political construct, and because of its capability to define and express the innermost essence of a society and to suggest that there could be an alternative to the present reality, this art form presents itself as a perfect source for social analysis. (Blaukopf, 1950; Hegel, 1967; Marable, 2002; Perry, 2004; Rose, 1994; Ward, 1997; Huyssen 1986; Jameson, 1996; Roszak, 1968; Kitwana, 2002; Collins, 2006; Linderman, 2007: Osumare 2006; Ntayangwi 2009; Pennycook, 2007; McRobbie, 1994; Jameson, 1991; Krims, 2000; Terkourafi, 2010; Omojola, 2006; Frith, 2007; Perkins, 1996; Watkins, 2005).

This new paradigm of treating music, as "an unsolicited civic perception survey" should serve as a yardstick in interpreting and understanding the social realities and the prevailing narrative but it is not devoid of challenges. For it to serve as a yardstick in gauging the mood of society, someone in the position to act must listen and pay attention. Who is listening to the 'Word'?

Is the appropriation of the word by hip-hop in responding to contemporary societal issues a political action or a response to a social situation? According to Aristotle, of prominence in society or human communities are two activities that constitute *politikos,* and they are action *(praxis)* and speech *(lexis)* out of which the realm of human affairs is constituted. If one accepts that political action does not mean protests or public violence, but, more fundamentally,

means finding the right words at the right time and conveying them at the right moment in the public realm, one can accept that is action in itself.

In hip-hop action is more to be found in words than in action itself since the art form is more geared towards articulation or expression through words of what is "going down" in the streets. Hip-hop is still more about the word on the street (the expression) than the streets in action (social action or mobilisation), even though there is evidence of hip-hop's involvement in national elections and youth mobilisation.

Even in late antiquity, the arts of war and speech *(rhetoric)* still emerged as the two principal political subjects of education and the emphasis shifted from action to speech as a means of persuasion. Juxtaposing this to hip-hop, rap has assumed a political stance where, just like in ancient Greece, to be political or to live in a *polis,* meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence. Articulating this view is Brother J of the group X-Clan who, in the foreword of the book by McQuillar (2007), says, "the greatest gift that hip-hop has given to the world is power to use the freedom of *speech* as a weapon"; or what Alim (2006) calls "*verbal mujahidin"* (p. 33) as they respond to the call to take up the microphone and use creative expressions as a weapon. This is further supported by Collins (2006) when she says "black youth in the hip-hop generation, and their supporters craft more effective responses to the new colourblind racism" (p. 15).

Just like Foucault who viewed language as a weapon of mass culture, hip-hop has turned to words for discursive power and uses language effectively to articulate the lived experience in their milieu. To Alim (2006), "hip-hop music represents a counterhegemonic discourse which comes from all up inside the actual lived experiences in the corrugated spaces of Black communities nationwide" (p. 27). Alim argues that youth have come to realise the power of language – discourse – that while it can restrict activity it can also end

resistive activity completely. He argues that hip-hop long realised that because words can kill just like bullets do, rappers engaged in the battle for the hearts and minds of the people in order to articulate their position of discontent in the hope that they would get a receptive audience.

The above is supported by KRS-One's belief in the power of the Word when he says:

*Me not believe nothing else*
*but health, wealth and knowledge of myself*
*In the beginning was the Word*
*The Word was made flesh*

KRS-One believes that the emcee is simply a carrier of the Word or the emcee is an extension of the Word, which is a gift from the Goddess. This is a gift that KRS-One was given by the Goddess on condition that he uses this gift to uplift. So, to KRS-One the lyrical persistence is not about long-term survival in the hip-hop game, but about the grace of the Word.

The question though is who is paying attention to this complex of desires, stories and concerns? In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1989), Michel de Certeau argues that in trying to understand the present way of life 'you should attend less to a total picture of society as a whole and more to the seemingly insignificant details of how people go about living their lives. By so doing so you will find in contemporary life not some falsely unified spirit of the age, but a complex mass of interweaving and contradictory desires, concerns and stories'.

# CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research spans many years, first as a non student and later as a PhD student. Research data was collected through interviews with artists and other practioners, discussions at focus groups, as a participant and observer at hip-hop sessions/shows and hip-hop festivals and secondary data was collected through a literature review, hip-hop magazines, radio airplay charts, radio shows online resources, as well as by content analysis of over 100 songs, including music videos

**My Hip-hop Journey**

My interest in in hip-hop and its underlying narrative was sparked by my appointment back in 2003 as the Deputy Managing Director of Gallo Records, the oldest and only independent record label on the Continent. Gallo Records was the home to the oldest recordings of the South African musical heritage and boasted music archives dating back to the late 1920s. It also was home to an active roster of more almost 50 artists ranging from Lucky Dube, Phuzekhemisi to Ladysmith Black Mambazo. The record label had the remnants of an old, slow and out of touch-company devoid of the vibrant sounds of the post-apartheid South Africa. Even Kwaito, the definitive sound of the newly born democracy was everywhere except at Gallo Records: the company had missed the Kwaito fever and was left licking its wounds.

As a product of the pre-democracy protest poetry movement and having been influenced by the works of Lesego Rampolokeng and Mzwakhe Mbuli, my fascination with spoken-word poetry and stanza upon stanza of carefully constructed words that carried subversive or furtive messages undermining the state, hip-hop suddenly appealed to me. With a cheque to find new talent and fresh sound capable of transforming Gallo into a dynamic youthful and culturally relevant company, I set out to sign up new artists from Afro-Soul and

Afro-Jazz to Hip-Hop. This was uncharted territory for a company that was known for traditional music from mbhaqanga and scathamiya to maskandi.

The first signing to a major, independent record label of a hip-hop artist, Skwatta Kamp, followed by Pro Kid and Mr. Selwyn, as well the label's Pan-African hip-hop group Gidigidi Majimaji from East Africa (Kenya), was to forever change the popular youth-music narrative in South Africa. This was the beginning of a hip-hop revolution as hip-hop suddenly emerged from the underground and became an active participant in mainstream music production and distribution. Both Skwatta Kamp and Mr. Selwyn continued to win the coveted best rap album at the South African music awards, which Skwatta Kamp won two years in a row.

The following year I would lead fourteen South Africans, which included print and electronic media, youth organisations, photographers and rappers, on a trip to Spain to attend the Second World Urban Forum and the 1st Global Hip-Hop Summit in 2004 facilitated by the UN's Habitat. The hosting of the Global Hip-Hop Summit was the first of its kind by an intergovernmental agency, the United Nations. The United Nations had realised that there were 300 million youth, living in slums and inner cities, who understood one language – the hip-hop language. And that if public officials needed to craft and communicate messages meant for public consumption and in particular for the youth, hip-hop would be the only language that they would understand. As an active participant in the production of this youth culture, I was suddenly drawn into understanding why hip-hop mattered so much to scholars such as Watkins (2005), Kitwana (2002) Clay (2012), Bynoe (2004) Collins (2006), Rose (1994) Asante (2008) and many others.

At this forum a case was made that since hip-hop reached a multitude of youth around the world it could play an active role in questioning the readiness and commitment by various heads of state in delivering on the millennium development goals as promised. The forum also advocated for

hip-hop to play an active role in fighting crime, drugs, gangsterism, human trafficking and child slavery. A debate had ensued during the deliberations when the hip-hop artists refused to be co-opted into the United Nations' programs, claiming to be independent of the establishment and wanting to 'keep it real'. As an interested party wanting to understand the message behind hip-hop's 16-bar verses crafted from frustration arising out of their lived day-to-day experiences, I questioned the legitimacy of their refusal to be part of the solution to the same problems contained in their own lyrics. I argued that their refusal was tantamount to making a mockery of the same youth and neighbourhoods they claimed to represent and speak for. A case was made that through hip-hop, young people across the globe have found something in common and which stretches their imagination beyond the borders of their confined social environment and that the narrative needs to be sustained and distributed using all available channels of communication. That was the end of the debate and hip-hop was co-opted into the United Nations' "hall of fame" and the artists were signed up as the UN-Habitat's Messengers of Truth.

The following year, 2005, I hosted the first African Hip-Hop Summit and Concert, attended by artists from East and West Africa, Southern Africa, Europe and North America where delegates looked at and debated the role of hip-hop in conscientising youth around the world on some of the pertinent issues affecting them, ranging from crime and drug abuseto the eradication of poverty and homelessness. A jam-packed Museum Afrika auditorium listened to young people's aspirations for a better life and how through hip-hop they have managed to tell it like it is. A moving account of the triumph of the human spirit was a tale by Emmanuel Jal, a former child soldier from South Sudan who then was living in England. His story revealed a world hidden from South Africa; a story of child-soldiers as young as eight years old who serve in government forces and armed opposition groups, fighting on the frontlines, participating in suicide missions and highly intoxicated with heavy dosages of drugs in their bodies. This was a story told by one who had seen

it all and whose mission, through hip-hop, was to highlight the plight of child-soldiers and who was now doing international work to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

This was a story of hip-hop where youth have embraced hip-hop culture, music, and performance to articulate their ideologies and create political identities. This was a story of a music genre that accurately reflects the lives, language, and rhythms of youth anywhere around the world who have therefore "turned to hip-hop culture and other forms of performance to understand and create a community with one another" (Clay: 2012: 8).

Judging from Emmanuel Jal's story, hip-hop has become the voice of reason that articulates the experiences and the collective identity of those adversely affected by such harsh conditions. It is a story of young people whose experience is relayed beyond the borders of their respective neighbourhoods: a common resonance in the hip-hop space or fraternity, which Osumare (2007, p.63) defines as "connective marginality", begins to take shape and a global platform for a critical voice is formed.

Through this connective marginality youth brought back home something bigger than hip-hop. And as Marcyliena Morgan (2005) argues, "Youth in urban communities suddenly enjoyed a renaissance of ideas and exchanges about their lives, their communities, their neighbourhood and about those who wanted to control them and held them in disdain" (pp. 206-207).

This was the beginning of my prolonged interest in the study of hip-hop and its theoretical context and my quest to understand the art and aesthetics of hip-hop, and whether anyone dared to listen to the cries and jubilation of the youth narrative told through hip-hop expressions.

Throughout this journey I have interacted with hundreds of youth, either via structured interviews, focus groups, through listening to their music sent to me

via Whatsapp, twitter, facebook, YouTube links, emails and songs/albums dropped at my office at Native Rhythms. Most of my research has been conducted through active or passive participation at hip-hop sessions around Soweto, as well as focused groups conducted in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, a field trip to Spain (World Urban Forum and Hip-Hop Summit) and Cape Town's hip-hop Indaba, as well as through interacting with Heal the Hood project in Cape Town and a group of homeless hip-hop enthusiasts living in the park in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

There is no human interaction than this that could have better prepared me to listen and understand, and sometimes be shocked, when finally pinning down what appears to be the dominant soundtrack coming out of the hip-hop expressions.

**Unpacking the Narrative**

Unpacking and understanding the dominant narrative and the reasons giving rise to hip-hop, I conducted my research at multi-sites, viz. (i) hip-hop sessions, (ii) hip-hop summits, (iii) focus groups, (iv) field trips, and (v) a literature review, and (vi) content analysis (audio and visual), and (vii) online and social network interaction with young people eager to enter the music industry.

Unpacking and understanding the hip-hop narrative followed the methodological paradigm of analysing popular music, which is regarded as a sociocultural field of study and its analysis has an important contribution to make to musicology and to cultural studies in general because of its consumption by heterogeneous groups of listeners.

In my investigation of the role of hip-hop in influencing the socio-economic and political landscape in contemporary society and in trying to understand these self-interested and rational individuals, I have tried to unpack and understand the use of language or the vernacular voices in the delivery of the

hip-hop messages and its associated performativity. The use of language also sparked my interest especially when I discovered how hip-hop genre styles (mack or party rap, gangsta rap, conscious rap and reality rap) are appropriated through language.

Ethnographic work conducted at the hip-hop sessions was also to determine if these sessions have become discursive arenas where "hidden transcripts" (Scott, 1990) had become sites of the critique of the power of the dominant class and to determine how youth is responding in shaping their world.

The aim of the unstructured interviews conducted at these hip-hop sessions was to test the assumption that these community networks have created a feeling of class community which Smethurst (2006) says '[is] often created indirectly by a cultural form that has gained a sort of class association" (p. 76). Smethurst asserts that hip-hop allows for the figuring of class and class-consciousness through a model of class identification, that is multiracial or cross racial (p. 71).

Structured open-ended interviews were focused mainly on eliciting a response around three general sets of questions: (i) the participants' view of hip-hop sessions and their affinity to such sessions, (ii) the participants' view of the world around them and what kind of society they wish to create, and (iii) the participants' view of the role of hip-hop in contemporary society.

Data was collected through a range of data collection methods such as observation, structured and unstructured interviews and or questionnaires and participant-observation, and was analysed using a range of qualitative methods, such as content and discourse analysis, where applicable.

**Sites of Hip-Hop Expressions**

Hip-hop as an art form is found in various sites of expression. The research was conducted following these sites some of which were static sites in the form of literature review and desktop research, whilst others were live

experience at hip-hop battle-sites such as hip-hop sessions, hip-hop festivals, block parties and hip-hop showcases. Hip-hop cyphers, spitting freestyle and impromptu lyrics, performed off the stage and on street corners and hip-hop freestyle showcases at radio stations.

Sites of hip-hop expressions were also found in airplay, especially radio and television, hip-hop albums and videos, as well as on social networks. Where these hip-hop sites did not exist focus groups were established to elicit in-depth information about the meaning and influence of hip-hop to young people.

Research was also conducted through unpacking, analysing and understanding the lyrical content found in the actual rap music itself (both audio and visual). In the analysis of the lyrical content and static text the focus was on the transmodality of hip-hop language and how it is used transgressively in breaking the rules of language use. The content analysis of hip-hop songs also followed Welch's (1999) notion of interculturality and the multicurality of hip-hop expressions and how the use of local lingo is a consequence of the hybridization of cultures. More importantly, the analysis of lyrical content and the use of language looked at how hip-hop emcees, particularly in Johannesburg and Cape Town, have mastered the art of transculturation (Pratt, 1992; Kramsch, 1990) and Jacquemet's transidiomatic practices (2005) where the presence of multilingual talk has become an integral part of the hip-hop language.

At the hip-hop sessions participant-observation was used to observe hip-hop enthusiasts in a live setting and to determine how young people appropriate hip-hop in negotiating their day-to-day lives as hip-hop agents.

## Field Work

Fieldwork was conducted by attending hip-hop sessions, hip-hop festivals, as well as during time spent with a group of homeless aspirant rappers in the area of Rosebank. The ethnographic approach was chosen to interpret and

understand the functions and meanings of human actions by looking at patterns of the group's mental activities, i.e. their ideas and beliefs as expressed through their music and related activities and in a defined action setting. Ethnography was chosen as a research method because of its ability to identify and locate a culture-sharing group to be studied and observed, which in this case was the hip-hop generation. Its suitability was also based on the fact that the hip-hop generation and its culture, as a group to be studied, had been in existence for a period of time and therefore developed a shared language and beliefs and could be classified as having been marginalised by society or the dominant culture and therefore provided for study a group that already had a clearly defined and shared culture (Hammersley and Arkison, 1995; Wolcott, 1987, 1994b, 2008-1; Fetterman, 2010).

**(i) The hip-hop sessions**

The study conducted at the hip-hop sessions had started over a period of time, at least as long ago as 2006 and firstly was the unintended consequence of my love and passion for the spoken word and the desire to just listen and observe what the youth spent time on during their day-to-day lives. I attended hip-hop sessions every Sunday at six different sites in Soweto (Slaghuis, Black Sunday, Dungeon Shack, Splash Jam, 1808 and Graveside) and began to establish personal contact with young people attending the hip-hop sessions.

Most of the revellers or participants at the hip-hop sessions came from the surrounding townships of Soweto but also from some of the nearby and so-called 'coloured townships'. Furthermore, the hip-hop sessions attracted those aspiring rappers from the so-called suburbs wanting affirmation that they still have some connection with the township which their parents left after the demolition of racial segregation.

My observation of the character and form of the hip-hop sessions revealed that command and access to hip-hop spaces demands that those who hold

the *mic* must have enough credibility to win the crowd or they get chucked out in a barrage of booing only because they either do not possess the flow or their story fails to make a connection with the audience. The participant's survival through a performance at these sessions was not only dependent on their individual skill but more on how their navigated the social, cultural and discursive forces and what Pennycook (2007) calls "the right words being uttered by the right people in the right circumstances, and the whole having the right effect" (p. 64). It is at these sessions that observations and search for answers could be found to the philosophical question as posed by Austin, "how is it that language can function as a form of social activity, achieving different effects, causing people to act, bringing multiple reactions" Pennycoock, 2007, p. 65)? This is what Pennycook calls the social magic of performatives. Bourdieu has been criticised by other scholars on his view that performative utterances must always fail if the speaker does not have the institutional power to speak. To the contrary, the hip-hop sessions were open platforms for those from the margins of society and did not differentiate as to who was more powerful than the other. At these sessions, word was bond; it was the power of the word and its linguistic and performatice application that earned the attention of those who dared to listen. The argument that words come from a position of social power is flawed, as there is always the possibility that any agency could emerge from the margins and can assume power through the word.

In refuting Bourdieu's argument that power over the words is always dependent on prior social conditions of power, Butler argues:

> It is precisely the *expropriability* of the dominant, 'authorised discourse that constitutes one potential site of its subversive resignification. What happens for, instance, when those who have been denied the social power to claim 'freedom' or 'democracy' appropriate those terms from the dominant discourse and rework or resignify those highly cathected terms to rally a political movement? (cited in Pennycook, 2007, p. 69).

It was at these hip-hop sessions that the ability to articulate well-crafted ghetto narratives determined or ascertained the rapper's longevity in the game and was dependent on the rapper's appopriation of the word with the hope of earning recognition and applause. The dialogical quality in the rappers' observation and commentary, as contained in these messages, was tested against how hip-hop aspirants articulated the socio-economic and political conditions prevalent in their surrounding communities. The performance and delivery of strong lyrical content as a social critic of the world, as he or she sees it, quickly found resonance in youths who shared the same sentiment.

These hip-hop sessions were heavily contested constituencies, won by those rappers whose message provided a particular context, presented in lyrical and performative style. Those rappers that, through their vocal delivery, had the ability to express familiarity with the youth's aspirations, commanded power and access to these shared spaces.

It was at these sessions I observed that these sites were platforms for constructing social narratives where the youth dealt with the material conditions of their existence and the ideals of their hopes and aspirations and wherethey articulated well crafted and clearly constructed messages with rhyming lyrics to advance a socio-political commentary on issues affecting their community and society as a whole. This is where the word on the street was crafted and shared.

One aim of the research conducted at the hip-hop sessions, was to look at whether these gatherings create a sense of collective agency and whether they support Hannah Arendt's (1958) notion of people getting together and "acting in concert" (p. 244) and form themselves in some of form of an alliance with a shared cultural expression. This is the art form that allows its fans to group themselves and categorise their own world.

To those attending these hip-hop sessions, the existence of such spaces, or what Bhabha (2006) calls "third space" (p. 6) and defied colonial constructs that separated according to their cultural orientation, The hip-hop sessions have created a sense of "collective agency" where, according to Dowdy (2007), "audience members are at least momentarily empowered to enact change, to practice subversive action, and to speak out about injustice and current political issues" (p. 75). The use of space by hip-hop is also supported by Haupt (2008) who concurs, "It has constituted a public in which young subjects can congregate to make sense of the reality of post-apartheid South Africa" (p. 205). Tricia Rose (1994) calls these gatherings "a contemporary stage for the theatre of the powerless" (p. 101) which is supported by what Dyson (2007,p. 67) calls "a space for cultural resistance".

It was at these hip-hop sessions or public spaces that rappers and hip-hop crews[3] use their neighbourhood as a launch pad and a vehicle through which the youth's social aspirations and their plight are highlighted and brought to the attention of those in power to heed and take note of. In this context, hip-hop becomes the courier of messages articulating social and political conditions of "disillusionment and alienation" (Rose, 1994).

Gathering at these spaces the youth affirmed their position and sense of belonging through what Imani Perry calls the "desire for identity, for a sense of self-definition and purpose, no matter how lawless or pointless" (Perry, 2004, p. 29).

Adam Mansbach (in Chang 2006) argues, "It is this energy that makes hip-hop's aesthetic principles its own: what's unique is not just the reclamation of public space on behalf of marginalised peoples and purposes but the audacious brilliance of jimmying open lamp posts to steal electricity to run sound systems, thus literally reclaiming power from a city that had denied it" (p. 92).

[3] Hip-Hop Crew means a group of rappers who form themselves into a group based on common identity, such as the area they come from, commonly referred in the hip-hop language as neighbourhood. The crew will have a common image and lingo, and even dance styles.

It is this energy too, that got me to sponsor all of the five hip-hop sessions in Soweto with sound and stage to give a platform to the youth eager to stand up and occupy an important space in their communities where the public discourse, normally, was always the reserve of politicians. It is this space that Ntarangwi (2009) says, hip-hop with its "contemporary and unbounded" nature has taken over to "express and assert" their own views where, for a long time they have lacked the political and economic agency to do so (p. 11).

**(ii) Word on the street competition – action research**

This started firstly with me just being a participant observer but later I began to conduct face-to-face informal discussions which eventually let to me structuring a competition "Word on the Street"'. The "Word on the Street" competition took place over the period of a year during which I exploited the already existing hip-hop sessions with their captive audience. The competition involved rappers, spoken-word poets, beat boxing who were urged to use their creative and artistic expressions to relate the realities of their day-to-day world and their lived experiences in their neighbourhood.

The "word on the street" meant anything the youth felt they needed to share that was either positively or negatively impacting their neighbourhood. The content could be delivered through the spokenword, performed as a hip-hop song, battling, deejaying or beat boxing. The competition was to be replicated throughout the major cities and those that won in one city would earn a seat on the hip-hop busbut would get off at another city and compete and fight for their seat back on the bus. This would be repeated over and over again. Only Soweto was covered and all the hip-hop sessions had a chance to put forward the best of their contestants from the hosting session.

This allowed the participants to express – uninterrupted and in the most creative rendition – what was going on within their locale which in their opinion required attention, response, and action.

The application of this method of action research meant that the knowledge derived from the participants' input was applied in analysing and understanding the real issues around community development and what was necessary for sustainable livelihoods. Using the "Word on the Street" as a method for social research, especially in the public sphere, scaled up the engaged inquiry process beyond small groups and allowed for maximum participation by a large group of youths who wanted to share the story of the social reality in their neighbourhood.

Using participants' performances to elicit a response and reflection on how participants viewed the situation around them was a ground-breaking approach to action research. Using participants from their respective communities or neighbourhoods to articulate the social reality as they experienced it, as an evidence-based and people-based inquiry, was the most creative, event-based and entertaining method of gathering data. The approach of eliciting a response from the participants, and in their own neighbourhood, meant that they could share a real life story in the presence of their peers who could either confirm or reject the claims that were creatively expressed during the competition.

For instance, a participant could, figuratively, in trying to articulate the social reality on the ground, make a claim through a carefully constructed verse: "*thina endofaya, sidle umuntu simkhwifele"* – meaning "us in meadowlands we eat and spit out a human". Much as it sounds both grotesque and laughable, when analysed it could mean "there is so much crime in my street, dead bodies are strewn by the road side". While it is a scary picture for an external and passive observer, it could be painting a picture that is close to reality (although perhaps not on the scale indicated), and could also be talking to the absence of visible policing and the absence of the rule of law. How, then, community workers and public officials engage with such grand narratives will depend on their interpretation and understanding of the underlying tone in the expression.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups were drawn from hip-hop artists and hip-hop enthusiasts, including music industry practioners, who participated in the full exploration and testing of my central thesis. Research during the focus groups was to elicit in-depth information and opinion on whether there exists a collective vision on the role of hip-hop in addressing some of the challenges faced by young people. Discussions and questions were crafted to determine if the youth experience and see hip-hop as some form of connective marginality or collective agency through which they share and express their aspirations.

The central question focused on the main question of my thesis: whether hip-hop arose out of a need by young people to find the meaning and expression of their day-to-day socio-political and economic struggles and to fight the harsh realities of urban life. How hip-hop addresses the socio-economic and political discourse in contemporary society was the underlying theme of my negotiation with the various groups and individuals I came across.

The way to obtain an answer to the above question was to get insight from the participants from the participants on their discovery of hip-hop and how the genre had shaped their perspective on the triangular relationship between hip-hop, commerce and politics and its role in influencing contemporary society.

The purpose of the focus groups was to elicit their feelings, beliefs, experiences, perceptions, or attitudes towards society and how hip-hop is best equipped, if at all, to address their day-to-day struggles as they negotiate their space in harsh urban spaces.

To solicit maximum attendance or response, reliance was placed on my vast networks and the relationships created over the years with musicologists, hip-hop artists, hip-hop activists, entertainment journalists, radio and TV presenters of hip-hop, as well as the music industry executives and hip-hop producers. The aim of the focus groups was to invite those present to debate

the research topic as well as to elicit their opinions through their understanding of hip-hop as a discourse and their analysis of music texts...videos.

Focus Groups were assembled in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Both focus groups focussed on the state of hip-hop in the respective cities and its role in influencing contemporary society.

**(i) Cape Town focus groups**

Two focus groups were held in Cape Town hosted by Heal the Hood and held at Bush Radio (2011) and the Cape Town Library (2014).

It is worth noting that the Cape Town participants in the focus groups, had been had been involved in hip-hop longer than the Johannesburg participants. With an average attendance of between 25 to 30 people at both sessions, the age group ranged from 17 to 42. Participants of between the ages of 25 and 42 constituted the majority of the participants and had and some had been involved with hip-hop for more than 20 years.

The difference in the length of time engaged in or with hip-hop, between the two cities, can be explainedby the fact that Cape Town hip-hop artists entered the business as hip-hop activists first and used rap to express their socio-economic and political discontent. Most of these hip-hop artists got involved in community development initiatives and used hip-hop to fight crime and gangsterism including drug addiction and dealing. The original hip-hop artists, who first became involved to express their view of the world, would have become community activists, determined to keep young people off the streets, especially in the Cape Flats, and the dominant narrative was about addressing social conditions, rather than material conditions.

In addition, the issue of the so-called coloured identity vis-à-vis the national question of the position of the Khoi-San people in South Africa" has sustained the Cape Town hip-hop narrative, whereas in Johannesburg hip-hop has been

driven mainly by commercial imperatives. Because the commercial imperatives are time-based depending on who is hot at the time, hip-hop artists tend to dispear from the radar screen in Johannesburg quicker than those in Cape Town, hence hip-hop's longevity is close to non-existent in Johannesburg.

**(ii) Johannesburg focus groups**

More than four focus group sessions were held in Johannesburg over the years and started at the Back to the City Hip-Hop Summit in 2011 and subsequently as well as at Native Rhythms Productions studios in Parkhurst. The sessions in Johannesburg were attended by participants of ages ranging from 17 to 30 years with an average age grouping of 25 years and with an attendance of more than 50 people each session.

In contrast to Cape Town Johannesburg hip-hop has always been about popularity and getting commercial success. Because popularity in showbusiness has a limited time span and because rappers are only as good as the test of time, they get replaced as soon as they lose relevance. Because Johannesburg rappers have no affinity for rap outside of commercial success, they tend not to have a humanist orientation towards their craft and therefore lack community-oriented solutions in their music. To them rap music has been more about flair and skill rather than using hip-hop as a tool to address the socio-economic or political ills. Because their rap is more about the dopest song (*note that rappers use this term to mean the exact opposite – the nicest or the most popular), they disappear at the same time as when the song(s) that made them popular in the first place lose steam. In this context: the focus groups in Johannesburg did not include the original pioneers of the Johannesburg hip-hop scene because they themselves have fallen off the radar. Only those young hip-hop artists still hungry for success attended most of the focus groups.

From 104 participants who signed the register of attendance and participated in the focus groups only 81 completed the questionnaire.

The most glaring observation was how participants classified themselves when asked to complete a form, which required them to indicate their race. At the focus groups sessions held in Cape Town (approximately 25 participants in total) almost all of the so-called coloured people either left the section blank or they simply wrote human, Khoi-san, African and not a single participant wrote coloured as their racial classification. This was indicative of the continued racial tension and the unresolved coloured question in the region. Shaheen Ariefdien (former member of Prophets of Da City) shares the same view in "Cape Flats Alchemy: Hip-Hop Arts in South Africa" when he testifies that "The Black nationalist period that dominated hip-hop in the United States had a profound effect on many *coloured* heads to the point that many of us rejected *coloured* identity by constructing alternative Black identities" (Jeff Chang 2006, p. 265).

As would be expected, in the Johannesburg focus groups (approximately 56 participants in total), those who thought of themselves as coloured did not hesitate to write 'coloured' in the racial classification.

Table 1

*Racial classification of participants who completed forms*

| City | Coloured | Blacks / African | Khoi-San | Human | Indian / Asian | White | None |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joburg | 7 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Cape Town | 0 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 7 | 52 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 4 |

In analyzing the music or the artists that speak truth to power and tell like it is, most participants, particularly in Johannesburg, were unanimous on Tumi, Reason, Zubz, and Proverb as speaking truth to power and as representative of reality or socially and politically-conscious rap alongside KRS One, Nas, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Black Thought, Common, Dead Prez, Immortal Techniques, Roots. Not a single one of the participants in Johannesburg mentioned any of the Cape Town artists, such as Black Noise, Prophets of Da

City, Jitsvinger, or even Emily YX? as socio-politically-conscious or reality rap artists.

Again, artists like AKA, Casper Nyovest, Ricky Rick, K.O. Kid X, L.Tido, Khuli Chana, HHP, Kwesta, and Da Les were identified as commercial rap artists along side their American counterparts such as Lil Wayne, Nicky Minaj, Drake, Jay Z, Eminem, Trey Songs, 50 Cents, Rick Ross, and others.

The Cape Town participants also identified the same American commercial and socio-politically-conscious rappers as identified by Johannesburg participants but expanded their list of local socio-politically-conscious rappers to include Prophets of Da City, Black Noise, Jitsvinger, and even mentioned one artist from the African Continent, K'naan from Somalia, as one of the hardest hitting socio-politically-conscious emcees.

The glaring absence of African artists either as commercial or socio-politically-conscious rappers, shows the South African youth's disposition towards American hip-hop and American culture and their lack of knowledge of African artists making an impact on the hip-hop scene. There was no mention of East African artists from Tanzania such as X-Plastaz, Professor J, Klear Kut, Sista P, or those from Kenya such as Kwanza Unit, Kalamashaka, Gidigidi Majimaji, or even the Bataka Squad, Jose Chameleone, Bebe Cool and Nameless, all from Kenya.

Not to be ignored is how hip-hop continues to be male-dominated; even the female participants in these focus groups did not single out even one South Africa female rapper as worthy of noting, and only mentioned the American Nicki Minaj. There was no mention of Fifi Cooper, Gigi Lamayne, Nadia Lakai, Assessa, Qba, Patti Monroe, or even Black Rock in the list of either soico-politically-conscious or commercial rappers, let alone the seminal female group, Godessa, from Cape Town.

All of the participants were scathing about government's role in improving the lives of young people, in particular, and society, in general. Their view of government was that it is populated by corrupt fat cats who are only interested in filling up their wallets and do not care about the people.

Most participants' views of hip-hop's role in contemporary society were limited to the fact that this culture has allowed the youth to freely express themselves but they did not see hip-hop as their liberator from their depressing economic or social conditions, except in Cape Town where one participant clearly stated that hip-hop is used to fight drug addiction and to rehabilitate young people.

The results coming out of the hip-hop narrative, and represented through music as played on air, had a direct correlation with the artists perceived to be more commercial and in a way lacked the narrative that addresses the plight of youth in the country.

The section below deals with my analysis of the songs that found dominance on the airwaves and the videos that did not make it to television because of their venomous lyrics and lack of commercial appeal.

## Content Analysis of Hip-Hop Lyrics

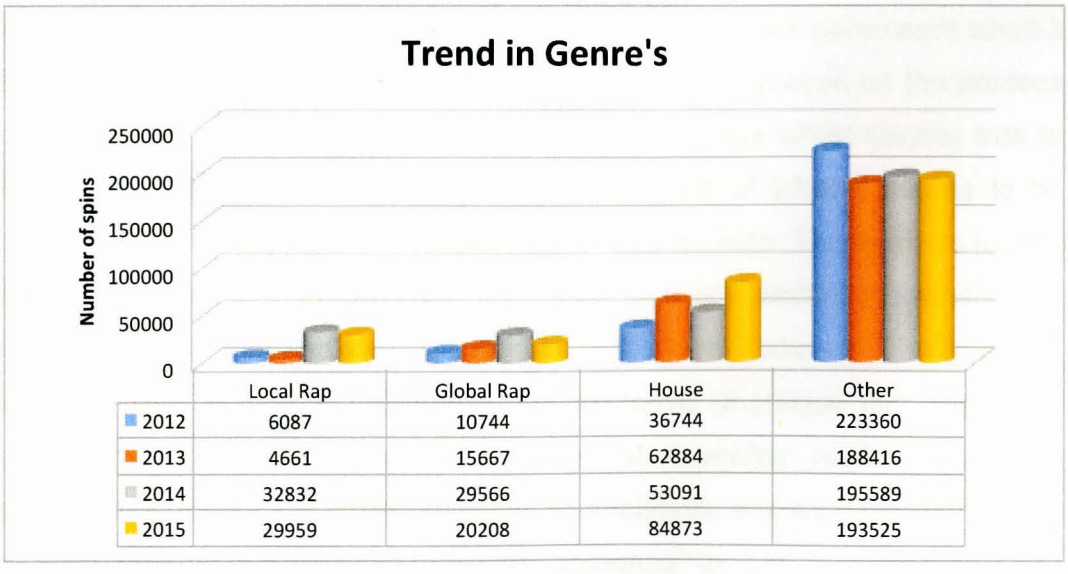
### (i) The songs

Analysis of the messages contained in the hip-hop lyrics was conducted mainly from listening to more than 100 songs that dominated the Top 100 SA Music Charts from 2012 to 2015 and those I considered to be more underground and socio-politically-conscious hip-hop, never played on radio and yet released over the past ten years, except for the songs I picked up via social networks. My analysis of the songs played on radio over the last four years was also to establish whether a case can be made that what once was marginalised as a cultural practice could soon assume a dominant position and reach unprecedented levels of attention and consumption. My research also shows how hip-hop songs that only occupied 2% of the Top 100 South

African Music Charts increased to 9% in 2015, a staggering 392% growth in airplay of local hip-hop over the last four years. When comparing local hip-hop compared to other genres, international rap music and local house music grew by 46% and 56%, respectively over the same period. This also proved that whilst rap music can be mediated globally its function and effectiveness can only be seen and felt locally by taking into account its local uniqueness. Krims (2000) argues that, "the role of rap in creating, mutating and propagating local identities can ultimately be followed best only relatively localized context, but many aspect of its formation, especially institutional aspects, should thought of as thoroughly globalized" (155).

Having determined the growth of local hip-hop music in the music charts, I then analysed the lyrics of the songs that dominated the charts to determine the dominant narrative and whether those songs had the power to challenge or influence the socio-economic and in the main the political landscape in South Africa.

Below is a chart of how local hip-hop grew over the past four years, compared to other popular genres that enjoyed local airplay in South Africa.




| | Local Rap | Global Rap | House | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2012 | 6087 | 10744 | 36744 | 223360 |
| 2013 | 4661 | 15667 | 62884 | 188416 |
| 2014 | 32832 | 29566 | 53091 | 195589 |
| 2015 | 29959 | 20208 | 84873 | 193525 |

*Figure 1.* The growth in music genres getting airplay in South Africa 2012 - 2015

The same artists that were identified as the most popular and commercial rappers during the focus groups, such as AKA, K.O. Ricky Rick, Khuli Chana, HHP, Da Les, Pro, Casper Nyovest, started appearing on the Top 100 SA Music Charts as early as 2012. Collectively, these artist were enjoying total spins on radio of 29, 959 in 2015, with AKA appearing at No. 8 on the Top 100 songs played that year and enjoying a total spin of 4, 961. In 2012, a local hip-hop song, Bosso by HHP, only appeared at No. 83 and at No. 47 in 2013. The first song to break the top 10 spot was Caracara by K.O. feat. Kid X at No. 5 with a total spin of 5875, which is the highest number of spins in the last four years by a hip-hop artist.

In analysing the lyrics, I was alert to the fact that the same song or musical text, as Meyer (1956) argued, can produce both an affect experience and an intellectual response (pp. 31-39). Norris (1989), following from the argument by Thompson (2005) that "hip-hop lyrics mean the way narratives and stories do" and that the "narrative-story model" of hip-hop lyrical meaning holds that "a successful hip-hop lyric be enlightening, entertaining, and even poignant in telling the as-if truth from the lyricist's adopted persona" (P. 120).

Lyrical content analysis focused on the use of the 'word' and the localised language (vernacular voices) and how the 'word' becomes paramount since it is used to connect with the audience. Emphasis was placed on the process of localisation as it was applied in the use of language whilst staying true to the hip-hop mantra and adhering to the principles of what it means to be authentically hip-hop, like flow, style, rhyme, and themes. The analysis looked at how hip-hop songs deliver the messages that are distinctly "township" or localised in a format and style that speaks to the local audience. The lyrics are used as what Ntarangwi (2009) calls "social forms of critique that are locally produced and mobilised to make sense of everyday realities from the perspective of the local while providing an analytical, anthropological distance to make meanings accessible to a wider audience" (p. 17).

The analysis of the politics of rap lyrics was approached both in terms of their meaning whilst also taking into account the use of localised languages in the delivery of the songs. The language of hip-hop is important in that, as Alim (2004) argues, it is often overtly used as an oppositional challenge to mainstream language ideologies. According to Bauman and Briggs (1996) performance invites critical reflection on the communicative process, drawing attention to speech as social action. Therefore, verbal performance puts language on display, making language available to scrutiny (Pennycook 2007). Perullo and Fenn (2003) argue that 'swarap' (taken from Swahili) in Tanzania became the dominant localised language and style among youth trying to build a national hip-hop culture

My focus on language usage was also to determine not only the narrative and meaning of the songs but the dominant themes permeating the hip-hop cultural milieu particularly in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Unfortunately none of the Cape Town artists had their songs featured on the Top 100 SA Music Charts because of the local issues and realities surrounding them directly.

In my content analysis, the genre system of rap music also played a crucial part, especially in the songs that dominated the airwaves, because it assisted me in understanding what was, or still is, the dominant hip-hop narrative that South African society is being fed on radio and how it is being received, thus making its analysis a matter for social debate as will be evident in subsequent chapters. For the purpose of my research, I did not attempt to break down into detail the various styles of hip-hop and the messages contained therein except to reveal that there are many styles, such as party rap, mack rap, jazz/bohemian, reality/gangsta rap, and message/socio-politically-conscious rap. But it was quite evident that the dominant songs on the music charts and those played at blog parties are party rap with a 'singy-songy' flow. Reality rap and message or soico-politically-conscious rap did not find a home on the playlist; it found its resonance mainly in the Cape and was restricted to a few

artists in Johannesburg, such as Tumi of Tumi and the Volume, Zubz the last Letter, Proverb, and Reason.

When analysing the songs I was also mindful of Phillip Tag's (1982) argument that when analysing musical discourse one "should take into account social, psychological, visual, historical, economic and linguistic aspects relevant to the genre, function, style, (re-) performance situation and listening attitude connected with the sound event being studied". The music of Rev. Tumza, and the song "Black Man You On Your Own" and F-eezy's "Sphila Dangerous" are good examples of how marginalised people use their as a form of social power to creatively appropriate political space in order to express their own views and where the lyrics are truth telling and authentic messages of their real selves even though they are conveyed in stories and narratives of the personae adopted by those lyricists.

Just to repeat my opening comment in the first chapter: in the final analysis it has become clear that hip-hop has gone 'hip-pop' in that it has become so popular that we listen to it subconsciously; we have come to know the songs without knowing how we know them. Like what Simon Frith (2007) says about pop music, hip-hop has become what pop music is to us; it now reaches us over the radio, through passing car windows, as sound around a shopping centre. As Halifu Osumare (2007) also argues, "for a cultural phenomenon to be popular, by definition, it must become a part of the minute-by-minute shifting signs and representations of the folk" (p. 3).

**(ii) The music videos**

The extension beyond oral representation of rap music and its lyrics, is best expressed through visual rendition (music videos) and I have avoided analysing the music videos of the same songs that found dominance on the airwaves. Instead, I have gone onto social networks and YouTube to find music videos that expressed a different perspective than the dominant narrative found on radio and national television. These are the videos that spoke truth to power and have never been shown on national television

because they are quite critical of a society that is failing to deliver on the social contract.

The selection of videos for analysis, such as "Mr. President" by Vice V, "Blacks are Foolz" by Slikour, "Larney Jou Poes" by Dookom, "Andivoti" by Ndlulamthi, "The Final Solution" by Sister Souljah, "Salute – Run ANC" featuring Tumi, Solo, El-Tido, Mr. Selwyn, Kabomo and Gigi LaMayne, was to establish how their narrative address the central question of my thesis and how such videos seek to expose the hidden unequal and unpalatable conditions of their socio-economic and political circumstances.

These videos represent sites of conflict and social dilemmas where the rapper as the 'metropolitsn man' develops protection against the 'metropolitan life'. The completed interpretation of the messages in the music videos highlighted awareness and predominance of intelligence, socio-political and economic astuteness in the 'metropolitan man' (the hip-hop artist), in dealing with metropolitan life, the city and the surrounding neighbourhoods. The artistic expression in music videos can be equated to how Castells (1978) analyses the relations of force between classes and how innovative cultural modes interpret and articulate these experiences as new forms of popular protest in response to the contradictions of daily existence between the dominant and subordinate groups (p. 2).

The videos sited here are also proof of the sudden evolution of Gramsci's so-called 'Organic Intellectuals'[4] (Bowling and Washington, 1999), who, according to Dyson (1991), "project a style of self onto the world that disciplines ultimate social despair into forms of cultural resistance, and transforms the ugly terrain of ghetto existence into a searing portrait of life as it is lived by millions of voiceless people".

[4] Gramsci, writing in early 20th century Italy, argued that all people are intellectuals and philosophers. "Organic intellectuals" is how he terms people who take their local knowledge from life experiences, and use that knowledge to address changes and problems in society.

These are the videos where the images and lyrics of rap extend the image of what Washington and Shaver (1997) call the "outlaw" as the rapper seeks to escape marginalization of self by the public presentation of the social dilemmas that mark their daily life.

**Field Research Conducted with Heal the Hood in Cape Town**

In trying to unpack West's analysis and understanding of the role of hip-hop in contemporary society, field trips were conducted in Cape Town (the work carried out by Heal the Hood Project in the so-called coloured townships) and Johannesburg (the hip-hop sessions), and focused on the influence of hip-hop in inner cities, squatter camps, townships and suburbia by examining the real life stories of youth chasing a dream for a better life.

Particular emphasis was placed on how the hip-hop culture, particularly in Cape Town, has been used to take the youth out of the streets. The study paid particular attention to how the youth are challenging the social and political order to come to their rescue as they continue to battle crime, drugs, rape, abuse of women and children, and search for employment in the supposed land of the plenty.

Time was spent with the founder of Heal the Hood, Emil Jansen YX? and the founder of one of the oldest rap groups in Cape Town, Black Noise. In finding answers to the question of how hip-hop has been used to get the youth off the streets, data were drawn from the experiences of youth in the Cape Flats and other surrounding coloured townships where, out of discontent and despondency, various forms of hip-hop, e especially b-boys (dance),vehas rescued the youth from gang-ridden areas in their neighbourhood and channelled their energy towards more community development initiatives and programs. In addition, by attending the Hip-Hop Indaba, hosted by Emile YX?, I was able to observe the emcee battles and b-boys dance competition, and to draw conclusions about the use of hip-hop in influencing the socio-economic

and political landscape in contemporary society. This tpoic is covered in detail in the subsequent chapters.

**Dark City Rappers: Rapping Homeless in Rosebank**

Ethnographic research was conducted for over ten months with a group of homeless young people living in the area of Rosebank, in Johannesburg, who turned to hip-hop to escape crime after being conscientised by the power of words rather than criminal activities. The members of the hip-hop outfit, Dark City Rap, appropriately named from their experiences of living in the dark shadows and margins of society in Johannesburg, used hip-hop to record their experiences and aspirations, hoping that someone would listen. I forged a closer relationship with at least two of the members of the crew, Thando (who has since found a job as an Usher at the Market Theatre and recently graduated in Photography at the Market Theatre Photographic Lab), as well as J Waya (who later enrolled for Drama at one of the training academies in Johannesburg). Information or data collected during the time spent with the group is available on video and is analysed in subsequent chapters. I also spent some time following the group during the national government elections campaign where they worked as campaign volunteers for the African National Congress conducting a door-to-door campaign in exchange for food and pocket money, which was given to every volunteer.

**Back to the City Festival: A Hip-Hop City Invasion**

Field research was conducted at *Back to the City Festival* in Johannesburg over a four-year period and involved interaction with over 40 youths. Some of the youths came to the hip-hop summit (a morning session before the festival) where they participated in the group discussions on the role of hip-hop in contemporary society. Others came as hip-hop enthusiasts coming to watch their favourite artist. Interviews were also conducted with the informal traders

who came to sell a variety of goods, including food and beverages to a captive youthful audience.

I recorded an unobtrusive account of festival revellers going about their day which was used as an interpretive narrative to describe the interplay between individual participants at the festival against the social environment as constructed by the festival organisers. My personal involvement in the panels during the summit was also reflective in that I was able to share my own experience of interacting with young people wanting to enter the music industry and the reasons why they were choosing this path as their chosen career. The participants at the summit were also asked to complete structured questionnaires and they were informed that they were part of a research study towards an understanding of hip-hop.

Of particular importance was the rise of commercial activity through the number of trade platforms created by the festival. The increase in the number of merchandise stalls selling anything from t-shirts, caps, locally branded sneakers to other hip-hop paraphernalia was proof of how this youth culture is producing hip-hopreneurs making money from a culture that first started as simply music and break dancing. This aspect is dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

The youth are attempting to emerge out of relative obscurity and have begun to see this art form as the only path and platform towards self-affirmation or what George Hegel (1967) calls "*conscientização*". To Georg Hegel *conscientização is* "the awakening of critical consciousness that leads the way to the expression of social discontents that are real components of an oppressive situation" (p. 233).

In attempting to understand the role of hip-hop in influencing the socio-economic and political landscape in contemporary society, theoretical constructs taken from the works of Antonia Gramsci, Ernert H Myer, Geroge

Simmel, Kurt Blaukopt, Max Weber, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Theodor Ardono, just to mention a few, have been analysed to determine whether music as an expression of social reality can provide answers to what appears to be eluding the political establishment – understanding the youth narrative and their dominant discourse.

Furthermore, the works of hip-hop scholars such as (Clay, 2012), (Watkins, 2005), (Bynoe, 2004), (West, 2005), (Asante JR, 2008), (Collins, 2006), (Kitwana, 2002), (Chang, 2005), (Perry, 2006), (Rose, 1994), (Reynolds, 2009), Morgan (in Darby and Shelby, 2005) and (McQuillar, 2007) and others have been analysed and referred to herein as an attempt not only to dissect the history of hip-hop, but to understand the ontology and epistemology of hip-hop.

<u>These are voices from the margins: the ones we have been waiting for.</u>

# CHAPTER 6. THE RISE OF THE HIP-HOP GENERATION

*'Creative, adaptive people with unrealised potential, trapped by illusion and exploitation, will find ways to create meaning to make sense of their worlds'*
(W.L. Newman, 1997)

## Fight the Power: The Birth of a Hip-Hop Nation

In building a picture of about the rise of hip-hop and the birth of the hip-hop generation in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, I first trace the factors that gave rise to the hip-hop culture in America and in the following chapter explore whether the same factors are present in South Africa. The use of America as a reference is to determine if the conditions giving rise to hip-hop inside America and the narrative around such development are similar or exist anywhere else.

In trying to discover, analyse and understand the issues that shaped the hip-hop generation in America during the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s I keep referring to Meyer's assertion that music in its content and form represents significant aspects of social reality.

In the 1980s youth in the United States had to deal with the realities of the post-civil rights era. Malika Asha Sanders, president of the 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, based in Selma, Alabama, and a coordinator of the March on Washington Anniversary and Protest March writing in *The Crisis* magazine of July/Aug of 2003 said: the vision for a truly democratic America was shaped by the efforts and sacrifices of everyday people. It was the tired feet of maids during the Montgomery bus boycott; the voices of children singing freedom songs in "Bombingham," Alabama; and the commitment of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee workers like Diane Nash and

Bob Moses, who braved dark, dangerous Southern roads where death lingered, that gave this ideal momentum.[5]

Conditions of employment during the earlier and the two later periods were not the same. For instance, the purchasing power of the labour force of 1960s and 1970s was much stronger than that of the 1980s and 1990s. During the 1960s and 1970s low skilled workers could afford most of what could be referred to as the American dream, which was a house, a car, and a decent lifestyle. However, today's low skilled workers, the hip-hop generation, can hardly afford the same.

Danny Hoch (2006) argues tha:t

> the end of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, the turmoil of the militarized political movements (Black Panthers, Brown Berets, Young Lords), urban blight and the advent of Reaganomics, the digital age, an exploding prison population, and epidemics of crack, guns, and AIDS – all of these forces converged to create a socio-economic landscape unlike any other in history. (p. 350).

As early as 1965, scholars like Clark (1965) prophesized the ghetto-residents' reaction to racial oppression and economic marginalisation when he stated that:

> The cumulative effect of racial oppression and economic marginality take their toll also on the structure of the ghetto neighbourhoods, which lack the resources and organisational strength to provide basic support for and minimal stability to their residents....Even those inner-city residents who are able to isolate themselves from constant awareness

[5] The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) was established in February, 1909. The NAACP started its own magazine, Crisis in November, 1910. It was named after a popular poem, *The Present Crisis* by James Russell Lowell. The magazine was edited by William Du Bois to address racial inequality in the US and its impact on educational, economic, political, social, moral and ethical issues. Finally it would stand "for the rights of men, irrespective of colour or race, for the highest ideals of American democracy, and for reasonable but earnest and persistent attempts to gain these rights and realize these ideals."

> of such relative deprivation cannot elude the problems in their own neighbourhoods, the problems, in the words of Lee Rainwater of confronting 'a world full of dangers – not just the physical dangers of the ghetto world, but also the interpersonal dangers' of their exploitative milieu (p. xi).

Clark's (1965) argument highlighted emerging trends that permeated life in the ghetto such as poverty, which had become more urban, more concentrated and deeply rooted in a large metropolises dominated by black and Hispanic communities.

Racial and class inequalities in American society became more of a frustration in a post-segregation and post-civil rights era. The youth had expected that gains made by the generation of the civil rights era would have had a would have created better lives for young people on young people in contemporary America. In contrast, whilst the young black people continued to be subjected to poor education, unemployment, and imprisonment, it became quite evident that the future of African Americans remained bleak.

Adding to the discourse, Watkins (2005) cites the aftershocks of urban renewal, re-segregation, and capital flight as the factors that gave rise to a new social and economic order in America in the late 1970s. This sentiment by Watkins (2005) is echoed by Rose (1994) when she asserts that:

> Post-industrial conditions had a profound effect on Black and Hispanic communities. Shrinking federal funds and affordable housing shifts in the occupational structure away from blue-collar manufacturing and toward corporate and information services, along with frayed local communication patterns, meant that new immigrant populations and the city's poorest residents paid the highest price for deindustrialization and economic restructuring (p. 30).

It was the emerging social and economic gap between inner cities, affecting mainly blacks and Hispanics, and the affluent suburbs settled by white and more affluent communities that defined the cultural disposition and landscape among young people in America. This created class conflict between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and between the political system and those it purports to serve and provided more reasons to investigate theories of class conflict in an attempt to understand hip-hop as a reaction to the unpalatable social conditions of the underclass.

Watkins (2005) attests, "It was in the midst of the volatile surge of social and economic change that "a youth culture vibrant with youthful and exuberant energy began to take shape" (p. 9), where by 1979 that this cultural movement that had promoted a let's keep it underground message emerged from the underground to become what he calls a "cultural and economic juggernaut" (p. 10. The reaction to this massive post-industrial shift in economic and social conditions would later give birth to a new cultural phenomenon and the socio-political connotations in rap music and lyrics contained in that music.

Rose (1994) argues that hip-hop culture emerged in the midst of youth trying to find themselves and create an identity of their own and a new social standing and status in a community where support institutions had disappeared leaving youth to find alternative social formations.

Armed with visible and unpalatable evidence of the non-advancement of African Americans in contemporary America and the continued disappearance of the Civil Rights Movement since the late 1970s, rap music and other forms of artistic expression such as graffiti began to take the lead in questioning the status quo and in articulating the 'as is' situation.

Hip-hop, as a post-modern form of cultural expression, arose out of different socio-economic and political conditions, which emerged out of the process of

urban de-industrialisation of the 1970s, and the post-industrial urban landscape in the 1980s and its inevitable impact on African American communities.

The historical gains allegedly made by the activists of the civil rights did not materialise in the lives of the youth of the 1980s in America, instead a feeling of despair especially amongst the hip-hop generation, at not seeing any visible fruits of the civil rights struggles, was visible.

- The frustration of African American youth is clearly evident from various studies and surveys, according to the America Community Survey and those conducted by various scholars such as Bruce Western (2002), Miller, Jerome G. (1993), Boothe, Demico (2007), Othello Harris; R. Robin Miller (2006), Pettit, Becky (2012). These studies reveal:A black male born in 1991 has a 29% chance of spending time in prison at some point in his life.
- Nearly one in three African American males aged 20–29 are under some form of criminal justice supervision whether imprisoned, jailed, on parole or probation.
- One out of nine African American men will be incarcerated between the ages of 20 and 34.
- Black males ages 30 to 34 have the highest incarceration rate of any race/ethnicity.

Out of frustration, hip-hop groups like X-clan released a song "Prisons" that speaks to the fact that American youth still dominate the prison population in the United States. The song starts with an introductory speech by Mumia Abu-Jamal[6]:

*Slavery is back. In fact it was never abolished. The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution abolished slavery. Except in prison.*
*At the current rate of incarceration. By the year 2010 the majority of all African American men between 18 and 40*

[6] **Mumia Abu-Jamal** (born **Wesley Cook**[1] April 24, 1954) is an American former activist and journalist who was convicted and sentenced to death on July 3, 1982, for the December 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment without parole in December 2011.

*will be in prison. The State as their captor*
*It's gonna take people who are willing to fight.*
*Not people who wanna negotiate with the enemy.*
*Prison, prison, prison, prison*

X-Clan member, Brother J, goes onto rap a verse:

*When you witness genocide everyday you get the hint*
*That the ghettos are cold like a lab experiment*
*As young women and men street hustle before they're ten*
*Graduating from juvenile halls then up the river to the*

*Prison, prison, prison, prison*

The invisible stories and experiences of this marginalised youth, told through hypervisible pop culture and carried by mass media, confirmed the general mood of young African Americans and their lives of incarceration, unemployment or joblessness, illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, crime, drugs, and gangsterism.

This is what Collins (2006) calls the new "colour-blind racism" expressed through the lives of poor and working class black youth who remain marginalised and largely invisible in everyday American life. Collins argues that in the 1990s this marginalised black youth were paraded by the mass media as this authentic youth culture glamorizing poverty, drugs, violence and hypersexuality as a way of life and expressed through music, fashion, dance and 'post-soul aesthetic' hip-hop generation (p. 4).

This feeling of despair and alienation is revealed in Antonio's Moore's article, "Can Black Boys Cry? Tears Of Trayvon Martin And Jordan Davis: The Shadow Of Mass Incarceration" (Huffington Post, 27 February 2014). Moore argues that America as a nation has become a tale of two cities: one for young black men and one essentially for everyone else where young black men are the most imprisoned group in modern history. Antonio reveals that

African-American men comprise a mere 6% of the American population, but according to the Department of Justice, they make up nearly half of the two million inmates in U.S. jails or prisons. These men are largely imprisoned for non-violent offenses. According to the U.S. census, nearly half of America's 19 million black men are under the age of 35 years, and the ratio for young black male imprisonment is around ten percent, or 10,000 prisoners per 100,000.

The above is further supported by Sophia Kerby (the Special Assistant for Progress 2050 at American Progress) in her online article: "The Top 10 Most Startling Facts About People of Colour and Criminal Justice in the United States: A Look at the Racial Disparities Inherent in Our Nation's Criminal-Justice System."

1. While people of colour make up about 30 percent of the United States' population, they account for 60 percent of those imprisoned.
2. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, one in three black men can expect to go to prison in their lifetime.
3. Students of colour face harsher punishments in school than their white peers, leading to a higher number of youth of colour incarcerated.
4. According to recent data by the Department of Education, African American students are arrested far more often than their white classmates.
5. African American youth have higher rates of juvenile incarceration and are more likely to be sentenced to adult prison.
6. As the number of women incarcerated has increased by 800 percent over the last three decades, women of colour have been disproportionately represented.
7. The war on drugs has been waged primarily in communities of colour where people of colour are more likely to receive higher offenses.
8. Once convicted, black offenders receive longer sentences compared to white offenders.
9. Voter laws that prohibit people with felony convictions to vote disproportionately impact men of colour.
10. Studies have shown that people of colour face disparities in wage trajectory following release from prison.

The above statistics have dominated the hip-hop discourse and form a battle cry by the youth who are highly visible and yet carrying invisible scars - not seen by the naked eye of ordinary Americans or pretended by them not to exist. These statistics tell stories of life and unpalatable experiences in the ghetto. Because these stories are so beautifully masked and laced with artistic images and sounds of the glorified ghetto (hip-hop or rap music) they soon are lost in translation and classified as entertainment instead of 'edutainment'.

The crisis of being young and Black in American society is best captured in Bakari Kitwana's (2002) seminal book on *Young Blacks and The Crisis in African-American Culture: The Hip-Hop Generation* in which he argues that much as the hip-hop generation was the first to come out of the confines of legal segregation, continued segregation and inequality made it completely impossible to comprehend what civil rights movements and protests had achieved.

Kitwana argues that the mainstreaming of rap music soon gave Black youth a voice and more visibility and used popular culture to articulate many aspects of the crisis of young African Americans. Themes dominating rap songs coming from visibly frustrated young African Americans touch on topics such as the skewed criminal justice system with its public policy that had glaring racial implications.

By the 1980s the Reagan administration had made it clear that it was going to have zero tolerance for drugs with its 'War on Drugs' policy. It began imposing stiffer sentences on young African Americans for being caught with even five grams of cocaine. Public policy had clearly shifted from rehabilitation to that of harsh punishment. Legislation such as the Omnibus Crime Bill of 194, the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, and the Omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, were all part of the 1980s string of legislation which were aimed at getting tough on crime. Kitwana's shocking revelation is that according to the

National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1990 most crack cocaine users were white. Yet, in the early 1990s, 90 percent of those convicted in the federal court for crack cocaine crimes were Black. As if this was not enough, Kitwana (2002) argues that the quality of life for young Blacks during the 1980s and 1990s showed that Blacks remained poor and the Black youth unemployment rate remained twice as high as the white youth unemployment rate, indicating no shift from20 years before (p. 20).

It was clear that the battle lines were drawn and, as Frantz Fanon (1963) puts it, "Each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it" (p. 206). So, to African American youth, betrayal was not negotiable.

What the African American youth saw and experienced was a list of unfulfilled promises of equality and inclusion – great disparities in education, housing, health care, employment opportunities, wages, and other areas. These inequalities, Kwitana (2002) argues, have had a huge impact on how the hip-hop generation views the world. In response, hip-hop and rap music laid the foundation in addressing their social conditions. As early as 1982, artists like Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five were exposing the realities of life in the ghetto through their most famous song "The Message", explaining the environment and the circumstances under which they lived. McQuillar (2007) says, "it was Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's innovation that would inspire a new generation of MCs to put contemporary issues on wax on a consistent basis" (p. 6)

McQuillar states that during the 1980s the rich got richer and the poor got poorer, unemployment was high, and racial tensions were even higher.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five responded with their song with its unequivocal chorus:

*So don't push me cuz I'm close to the edge,*
*I'm trying not to lose my head...*

*It's like a jungle sometimes it makes wonder how I keep from under*

The song and the chorus struck the right chords as it touched on the reality of life in the ghetto and, as McQuillar argued, it reached every poverty-stricken, desperate, angry and terrified youth in America and soon it was everywhere outside of America.

The revelatory quality of agent (the rap performers), their rap (speech), and action came to the fore. Soon the youth were able to put faces to the words, which is significant becasue as Arendt (1958) would argue, "without the disclosure of the agent in the act, action loses its specific character" (p. 244). Mcrobbie describes this as the "coming into being of those whose voices were historically drowned out by the (modernist) meta-narratives of mastery".

Black youth in impoverished communities were determined not to crumble under a system designed to destroy them. The infamous group from Long Island, Public Enemy, responded to the revolutionary call with army insignia and hellish fury in "'Fight(ing) the Power". The music video of "Fight the Power" – which also became a soundtrack for Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* – depicted crowds of boys wearing high-top fade hairstyles and girls with bamboo earrings marching and punching black-salute fists into the air whilst carrying posters of Malcolm X and other revolutionary heroes.

Emcees such as Mos Def, Nas, X-Clan, Ice Cube, Gangstarr, Arrested Development, Jeru the Damaja, A Tribe Called Quest, Talib Kweli, Tupac Shakur, all spoke of hardships and life in the ghetto. They rapped about triumph against all odds and decried gangsterism, drugs, poverty-stricken ghettoes, and the various forms of mental slavery that perpetuated subjugation. These artists raised the level of consciousness and called on the black youth to rise up against the rich who lived off them and instead advocated Black self-determination. Their music videos, coupled with their live performances as they criss-crossed America, dominated the television

screens and the music venues and their faces soon became familiar within the marginalized communities across the country. As Alim (2006: 35) would put it, this hip-hop generation "picked the *jihad bil lisaan* (tongue) or more appropriately, *jihad bil qalam* (pen)" to tell a story of a marginalised youth in a society their ignored their hypervisibility.

The following, artists, and many others not mentioned here, carried the message of a black American youth, who told a story that most people did not want to hear: artists such as Arrested Development, Eric B. & Rakim, Gangstarr, Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, Ice Cube, Jeru the Damaja, KRS-One, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, NAS, Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, X-Clan, YZ, Sister Souljah, Chuck D, and many more. These were artists whose sounds inspired and influenced the golden age of the hip-hop generation. Theirs was the Ultimate Soundtrack that reversed the 'miseducation of the Negro'.

These ghetto stories in the music were not carried only through vinyls, CDs and other forms of sound recordings, but would soon be carried through black movies that highlighted the plight of young blacks in America where the hip-hop soundtrack was the dominant feature that interpreted the souls of black folks. Blockbuster movies such as *Boyz in the Hood*, *Do The Right Thing*, *Get on the Bus*, *Sankofa* and *School Daze* looked to hip-hop and rap music for the soundtrack that resonated well with the stories being told. Hip-hop had a message that corresponded with the visuals depicting the lived experiences of black Americans in America.

Bynoe (2004) argues that the death of the civil rights and the reign of hip-hop signalled the arrival of a new breed of politician (the Raptivist) born out youth's lived experiences in the ghetto. Bynoe states that Todd Boyd argues in his book, *The New H.N.I.C.: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip-Hop*, that "hip-hop rejected and now replaced the pious sanctimonious nature of civil rights as the defining moment of Blackness " (p. 82).

Most of these artists were well read and immersed themselves in literature that created self-identity, black pride and literature that taught them about their history and the world around them. They read extensively and used these texts to craft lyrics that challenged the status quo and fought the system that sought to oppress them. They read books such as *The Isis Papers* (Dr. Frances Cress Welsing), *The Iceman Inheritence* (Michael Bradley), *Stolen Legacy* (George G.M. James), *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilizations and From the Browder File: 22 Essays on the African American Experience* (Anthony T. Browder), *The Souls of Black Folk* (W.E.B du Bois), *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* (Dr. Ivan Van Sertima), *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Dr. Carter G. Woodson), *Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.* (Dr. Chancellor Williams), *The African Origins of Civilizations* (Cheikh Anta Diop) and *From Niggas to Gods* (Akil), just to mention some titles.

These books, together with their life experiences in the ghettos and inner cities, would shape these young minds. The conscious hip-hop generation clad themselves in African regalia, defying the systems that sought to colonise them, and spoke of Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Steven Bantu Biko, Nelson Mandela, Thomas Sankara and other revolutionaries who fought for the liberation of the black race. They would quote these revolutionaries and other scholars in their music.

Moreover, these artists defied the eighteenth-century philosophers of the Enlightenment. To them their reaction to the practice of everyday life and the prevalent human condition was not out of "rational" and "empirical" philosophy (Smart, 1992) deemed to depend upon a unity of reason and observation, made possible by the practice of scientific methods of inquiry. The hip-hop generation, using creative ways of dealing with the human condition, refuted the idea of social enquiry, as espoused by Kumar (1998) that scientific

reasoning and analysis "provides an appropriately rational basis upon which social life can be reorganised and social problems and conflicts reduced". Instead, W.L. Newman (1997) argues that in a postmodern condition creative, adaptive people with unrealised potential, trapped by illusion and exploitation, will find ways to create meaning to make sense of their worlds. Therefore, according to McRobbie (1994), in postmodernity, "the coming into being of those whose voices were historically drowned out by the (modernist) meta-narratives of mastery, begin to articulate more precisely the conditions of present reality".

Now, what had been perceived in the public realm as completely irrelevant and thus demanding no attention or response (Collin's *invisible and hypervisible)* had grown to have an extraordinary and infectious charm and had been adopted by youth everywhere around the world as a way of life.

In response to their plight the hip-hop movements have taken a collective stance against perceived marginalisation of young African Americans. Also, prominent figures in the rap game have been in the forefront of highlighting the plight of black youth in America. These rappers have become the agent through which the word found expression, thereby enacting *action by* putting the context of their socio-political situation in the public realm.

Artists such as Sister Souljah soon rose to prominence after realising that war was not only fought with weapons of mass destruction (Alim 2006: 27) but through carefully chosen words that are capable of dissecting the socio-political environment of America as a *war zone.* Sister Souljah, through her song "The Final Solution: Slavery is Back in Effect", warned against modern slavery much to the annoyance of the President Bill Clinton.

Her video, "The Final Solution" depicts Black Americans, living on the margins of society, being rounded up by soldiers and taken to concentration camps as they have become a menace to society.

*Brothers go get guns and pack up on ammunition*
*Now that they see that it's a critical condition*
*Racism was here but they didn't take it seriously*
*...and then they said that +I+ was crazy*
*Violence escalating and it's sad to see*
*So many brothers being killed by the enemy*
*Mothers and daughters, fathers and sons*
*Why can't they see we couldn't WIN by the gun?*
*I TOLD you how to win but now it's too late*
*The enemy's on the rise and he sealed your fate*
*BRAIN in the weapon, technology second*
*The war drum is soundin, the tool is the record*
*The will and the skill of the black man, exact man*
*Giving a hand to his brotherman*
*A word to the wise and I'll tell you once again*
*Know your enemies from your friends*

In another song, "The Hate That Hate Produced", Sister Souljah goes on to say:

*The time for scared, lip-trembling, word-changing,*
*Self-denying, compromising, knee-shakin' black people is over!*
*If you have something to say, speak up with*
*authority and conviction*
*If not, sit down and shut up!*
*We have to have the POWER to tell the TRUTH!*
*To say WHATEVER is necessary*
*To do what NEEDS to be done*
*WHATEVER it is, no matter who it may hurt!*

Whilst Sister Souljah is a fiction writer in her own right who puts into her music what in actual fact are the lived experiences of African Americans, it was KRS-One who saw hip-hop as a tool and powerful force to advance Black self-determination and advancement and released a Malcolm X inspired album titled *By Any Means Necessary* in which his seminal track "You Must Learn" called for change in curriculum to reflect Afrocentricity and black history.

*Just like I told you, you must learn*
*Just like I told you, you must learn*

*I believe that if you're teaching history*
*Filled with straight up facts no mystery*
*Teach the student what needs to be taught*

McQuillar (2007) says these conscious rappers crafted these messages in order to convey and impress upon youth and the general black population was that all Black people have been, still are, and will continue to be in the same boat. That boat is the fight against injustice based on skin colour and, the rappers said, no Black person can escape it (p. 60).

The use of the word 'boat' is an interesting choice because it is a historical symbol of how blacks were transported in boats during the Cross-Atlantic Slave Trade that saw millions of Africans being shipped to the new world and sold to slavery. And the message conveyed through these songs and by these rappers is simply that every black person in America is cut from the same cloth of slavery and that no one should ever forget that regardless of which side of the social stratification they find themselves – they are still black and oppressed in America.

Everything expressed through these audio-visual images (music and videos) continues to constitute reality as they appear in public and are seen and heard by everybody and have the widest possible publicity, thus "squeezing out of the picture all the other complex relations which locate the text, or the image, and allow it to produce meaning", (Mcrobbie, 1994, p. 14).

The song by KRS-One bares testimony to what hip-hop is trying to express as the day-to-day experiences of life in the ghetto:

*Chorus:*
*Woop-woop!*
*That's the sound of da police!*
*Woop-woop!*
*That's the sound of the beast!*

*Verse:*
*Change your attitude, change your plan*
*There could never really be justice on stolen land*
*Are you really for peace and equality?*
*Or when my car is hooked up, you know you wanna follow me*
*Your laws are minimal*
*Cause you won't even think about lookin' at the real criminal*
*This has got to cease*
*Cause we be getting HYPED to the sound of da police!*

Who would have thought that in today's America sentiments like *"The hood is like a modern slave ship/Packed like sardines and shackled to the streets/And crack is like cotton, it grows up from the concrete",* are still being expressed by David Banner, long after the civil rights movement, through his song *Strange Fruit (*Relic, Peter. "Gotta Say it," *XXL Magazine )*

About the birth of hip-hop and the hip-hop generation, Watkins (2005) argues "Hip-hop's claim to fame is the claim of authenticity in its undaunted portrayal of ghetto reality" (p. 2) When arguing for youth involvement in societal renewal and creative change and long before the birth of hip-hop Mannheim (1967) commented, "dynamic societies which want to make a new start, whatever their social or political philosophy may be, will rely mainly upon the co-operation of youth" (p. 16). Mills (1967) already urged the need to "study these new generations of intellectuals around the world as real live agencies of historic change" if one had to understand society (p. 17). Clark (1965) also predicted back in the 1960s that the social conditions in which youth in 'dark ghettos' find themselves propelled them to realise that there was a better life outside of the ghetto. Youth, in their fight to emerge out of obscurity, refused to succumb to the predicament of the ghetto as they realised that it was not their ultimate fate but rather a reflection of social realities that needed to be fought on all fronts (p. 11)

To young African Americans hip-hop and rap music has been the leitmotif or the means to unshackle the chains of slavery since the Atlantic slave trade. Hip-hop has become the soundtrack to the day-to-day social realities,

depicted through visual images and carried through the sound that tells the story of the trials and triumphs of young African Americans.

## Hip Hop Comes to Africa

*Rap music was born in Africa, grown in America*
*And it went around the world to come back to Africa*
*like a boomerang*
*(Faada Freddy – Daara J, Senegal)*

How hip-hop has sprawled beyond the borders of what I call "Hip-Hop America" should come as no surprise given the impact of global communications and the now pervasive power of social networks. Hip-hop has effectively constructed identities of modern youth across the globe and the computer age has been instrumental in the spiralling of this youth culture to levels never seen by the previous generations.

The global impact of hip-hop has seen substantive analysis and real life stories written about this art form around the world in a number of print and electronic media and scholarly publications. Put differently by Halifu Osumane (2007), hip-hop culture has been expressed in as many languages as there are ethnic groups around the globe, and "hip-hop culture has become international in breadth and depth, with thousands of cultures through the globe having embraced it in various forms" (p. 2). Through this international and multiracial appeal of hip-hop and rap as a music genre, a global audience, with different socio-economic and political backgrounds, was born and fast developed to a global and powerful youth cultural movement.

This is a community whose membership is earned through artistic cultural representation through deliberately undermining the sovereignty of nation states by breaking down the territorially based cultural borders that divide humanity. This transnationalism has given birth to a global popular movement similar to the one described by David Solnit (Kato, 2007,p. 2) as the "new radicalism" which he poetically describes as follows:

> A movement of movements, a network of networks, not merely intent on changing the world, but – as the Zapatistas describe – making a new one in which many worlds will fit. It is a patchwork quilt of hope sewn together with countless hands, actions, songs, e-mails, and dreams into a whole that is much greater than the sum of its pieces.

Osumane (2007) argues:

> As hip-hop travels globally, particularly in the African Diaspora and Africa, the music and dance resonate across cultures, continuing the pervasive aesthetic already initiated in the international connections initiated by hip-hop's pre-texts in jazz, rhythm and blues, funk, soul, reggae, rumba, and so on. The Africanist aesthetic was already implicit in hip-hop culture that was "repatriated" so to speak, to African youth. (p. 28-29).

In her argument, Osumane advocates for a clear distinction of, on the one hand, the impact of the global reach of hip-hop culture, as driven by American rap music and hip-hop lifestyle, from, on the other hand, the African aesthetic of hip-hop culture, which is the African musical influence on American hip-hop music. To Osumane, what has become a global musical style and culture actually has its origin in the Africanist aesthetic of music, dance and poetry and the oral tradition of African people. Her argues that this influence can be traced back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, appropriately described by a dance studies scholar, Gottschild (1996) as the "Africanist presence in

American performance or the Africanist Aesthetic" (quoted in Osumane, 2007, p.22)

So, what is arguably American and now transported globally as a cultural export through the use of the "word," has always been widely regarded as a poetic form in Africa, popularly called "praise singing" - the applauding through a series of the applauding of gods, men and animals through a series of laudatory phrases that capture the essence of the object being admired. This is particularly evident among the societies where professional bards, who may be both praise singers to a chief and court historians of their tribe, chant praise songs such as those of the great Zulu Kings. The difference is that it had no beat or musical accompaniment to it.

Just like rap music has become one of the most important voices of its time by becoming the voice of the disenfranchised the voice of the praise singer, the only professional artist in certain traditional African societies, was the most important voice in the culture of African people, capable of articulating the prevailing events and stories of the time.

The duty of the praise singer extended to recounting both the positive and negative deeds of the sovereign – the King of the time in a particular society. Shouting praises meant not only bragging about the King's achievements of the time but would include details of the King's bad temper or his latest misdemeanour, including every one of the King's battles - victory or defeat. Through the spoken word the King's deeds were faithfully recounted in elaborate and ceremonial language.

A praise singer had to be an intelligent, deeply spiritual person of the highest repute in the society. The praises recited and recounted had to be memorable, composed in such a way that every line, which was spoken in classical, poetic language, would be easy to remember. For instance, in the following praise lines taken from Sibusiso Nyembezi's (1958) book, *Izibongo*

*zama Khosi (The Kings Praises),* about the great Zulu King and warrior King Shaka, one is able to get a clearer idea, through the picture being painted by the praise singer, of what kind of a ruler the Zulu king was, including his triumphs and conquering spirit (p. 30-31)

*Ilemb' eleq' amany' amalembe ngokukhalipha*
*Ozulu lizayo khwezan' abantwana*
*Ngabadala bodwa abazozibonela*

In the first line, the praise singer refers to King Shaka as an axe that is sharper than all the other axes, meaning he was smarter than all the rival chiefs and was able to beat them in full combat regardless of their military might and strength. As a result, the second line is a warning to those who might cross paths with him and it actually means King Shaka was like the coming of a heavy thunder storm and children must be taken to a place of safety and adults will have to find shelter by themselves. Interpreted it says:

*Axe that trampled over other axes through its sharpness*
*Rain is coming hide the children*
*Adults will have to seek shelter for themselves*

The praise singer also makes a mockery of those who thought Shaka was never going to be King and would never rule:

*uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi*
*bebetekula behl' emlovini*
*beth' uShaka kakubusa*
*Kakubankosi*
*Kant' ilaph' ezakunethezeka*

Simply meaning:

*A laughing stock by women of Nomgabi*
*who told a story whilst chilling at Mlovini*
*saying Shaka was never going rule*
*was never going to be King*
*only to become King after al"*

Features of in the oral tradition of African praise singing are strikingly evident in the hip-hop tradition Just as the praise singer could sing both positive and

negative praises of the subject being praised, so do hip-hop artists who have assumed the role of praise singers.

Osumane argues that in understanding this Afro-diasporic tradition, rap music and hip-hop culture should be understood within the context of the Africanist aesthetic continuum and what she says is "an articulation of the post-modern moment of intertexuality". Osumane further says; "Indeed, rap is the critical poetry of our era...Thus, the hip-hop emcee as both writer and performer is the master of the vernacular language and the invoker of the "Nommo"[7] that is the legacy of the original trickster-linguist" (p. 39).

Tang (2012) says, "When rap emerged in the 1980s in Senegal and exploded onto the Senegalese music scene in the 1990s, it could be seen as having taken a grand tour from its ancestral homeland, to its birth in the New World, and then back to Africa" (p. 79). Clark and Koster (2014) argue that hip-hop's relationship with Africa is both historical and contemporary (p. xii). It is safe to argue that it is historical because of the transnational cultural flows and how the cross-Atlantic slave trade transported some of the cultural practices from Africa to the Americas, such as praise-singing and poetry. Charry (2012) also points to similarities in the African poetic, storytelling, chanting and recitation tradition that form some foundational elements of modern-day hip-hop (p. 2).

Both Clark (2014) and Charry (2012) are in agreement that the African hip-hop tradition is a repatriation to Africa of American hip-hop and has as its influence the cross-Atlantic cultural migration. The visible signs of hip-hop and rap music in Africa were first noticed in Senegal with the formation of a rap group called Positive Black Soul in the 1980s. This was a period of hip-hop incubation in Africa (Charry, 2014) and it soon spread to other parts of the Continent, including Cape Town in South Africa in 1982 as well as Tanzania

[7] Nommo means power of the word and has its origin in the African poetic tradition, which is oral. African griots, praise poets or praise singers use the power of the Word to reflect and communicate situational conditions in the community (my inteptretation). Rap music then is an extension of African orality.

in 1984.The most widespread introduction of hip-hop came in the form of dance competitions (p. 13). Tanzania held its first hip-hop competition in 1990 and South Africa had its first major hip-hop concert in 1990 in Cape Town featuring Prophets of Da City, whilst Positive Black Soul gained airplay in 1990. Nigeria only acquired its rap voice in 1991. The subsequent years saw the commercial release of hip-hop albums in most parts of the continent, with Senegal and Tanzania releasing about 30 albums among themselves between 1995 and 1999. Earlier album releases were recorded in South Africa between 1990 (Prophets of Da City) and 1993 (Black Noise), both in Cape Town.

Although African hip-hop was a decade behind that of American hip-hop, rap music has evolved in Africa and has found its own critical voice, both as a political vehicle as well as a commercial tool for the economic advancement of youth on the continent. Clark and Koster (2012) argue: "Looking at the emergence of hip hop in Africa, variations in hip-hop expression across the continent are tied to the different cultural, social, and political realities on the ground" (p. xiii).

It is contemporary context African youth have emulated the use of hip-hop poetics as the means that bind their collective consciousness on the issues that affect them.

It is against the above backdrop that this study premisesthe argument that the youth experience urban ghetto conditions in the same way regardless of the cities in which they are residents. The argument is based on initial observations of how youth in major metropolises have embraced hip-hop as a global culture that speaks to them regardless of their cultural or racial background.

Asante (2008, p. 4) says "putting hip-hop in a proper context means understanding the inextricable link between Black music and the politics of

Black life". He quotes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on his reflection of black music and particularly the importance of the lyrics (words) as contained in the music when he said:

> They are more than just incantations of clever phrases designed to invigorate a campaign; they are as old as the history of the Negro in America. They are adaptations of songs the slaves sang – the sorrow songs, the shouts for joy, the battle hymns, and the anthems of our movement. I have heard the people talk of the beat and the rhythm, but we in the movement are as inspired by their words.

Regardless of the origins of rap music, some hip-hop enthusiasts maintain that this art form and lifestyle has outpaced most forms of mass communication in that the modern communication system through music video and especially the Internet, blogging, My Space, You Tube and Facebook have allowed an instant communication link between the global hip-hop community. Chuck D, the founding member of the rap group, Public Enemy, could not have said it better when he said, "rap music is the CNN of black America". This could be interpreted as meaning two things: either hip-hop's global reach and impact that hip-hop is bigger than any global news network or that hip-hop was telling stories, at a global level, that CNN with its global reach was failing to tell.

Ntarangwi (2009) argues that no other music style has had such a widespread presence and influence on local music in Africa as hip-hop has had within a short period of time. The spread of hip-hop culture in Africa became noticeable when cultural, economic and political conditions on the continent began to loosen up in the early 1980s (South Africa and Senegal) and into the 1990s (East Africa). Cross-cultural flows and foreign cultural forms, mostly mediated through hip-hop, began to permeate African communities. The spread of hip-hop to Africa has, according to Ntarangwi (2009), provided a

forum through which youth attain agency that enables them to variably shape their lives and participate in raising public awareness and consciousness about social and political issues while also appropriating it for their own economic and political gain (p. 3).

How hip-hop in Africa has emerged to assert a distinct identity is evident even in the works of Richard Ssewakiryanga (1999) on the rise of popular culture in countries like Uganda with its growing affinity to local hip-hop. Also, studies done by Alex Perullo (2005) of rap music's appropriation of politically and socially explosive lyrics in Tanzania, show how hip-hop reflects on the socio-economic and political life of youth in Africa. More work has been done by scholars such as Aurelia Ferrari (2007) and David Samper (2004) on how hip-hop artists are reconnecting with their past in invoking the revolutionary character of the country and reminding the younger generation of the sacrifices made by the Mau Mau in fighting for the liberation of Kenya.

Elsewhere in Europe, Jannis Androutsopoulous (Terkourafi 2010) offers insights into how the youth born of immigrant parents are using hip-hop in the development of local hip-hop discourse on topics such as ethnicity and migration, which dominate the lyrical content. In Germany, hip-hop gained prominence after German unification and gained popularity during the rise of xenophobia and assaults against asylum seekers. Migrant rap artists reacted against racist aggression and "message" or "reality rap" gained prominence. In France, Hassa (2010) also points out that 92 percent of French rappers are of immigrant descent (mainly children of North African Muslims) and constitute the highest percentage in Europe, compared to 60 percent in Germany, 32 percent in Spain, and four percent in Italy. On the rise of hip-hop in France, Boucher (1998) reveals that rap discourse has become the instrument of the immigrants of postcolonial descent to remind the French republican society of its colonial past and to voice their anger about racism and discrimination (p. 183). This is confirmed by Calvet (1994) who testifies that rap movements in France emerged as a result of marginalised groups' feelings of alienation and

economic exclusion (p. 269) and rap music, according to Jacono (2002) and Prévos (2002) found resonance with youths of mixed origin living in Paris and Marseille.

Interpreting Lull's (1995) "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" of hip-hop, Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2003) reflect how hip-hop has been transported from the United States to elsewhere around the world and refashioned and re-interpreted through localisation. Through deterritorialization and reterritorialization hip-hop is fused with local linguistic and musical traditions, using local experiences, and rap music eventually becomes recognised as a local art form (p. 467-468)

The common thread around the birth of hip-hop, its aesthetics and its subsequent cross-Atlantic travel back to Africa or elsewhere around the world, is that it arises out of the post-modern industrial patterns and socio-economic and political conditions that dominate the culture of hip-hop.

Hip-hop has gone full circle and gone back to where it all started in Africa and re-traced the route of the cross-Atlantic slave trade. The historical cultural contacts and the forced transportation of African culture into the Americas has found its way back as a refashioned call and response of the griots.

That's what's up! Transported during the cross Atlantic slave trade, hip-hop found a home in America but has now gone full circle and recycled like polished diamonds back to where it originated.

# CHAPTER 7. KWAITO: LOST IN THE SONG?

*I will narrate your lives through my chaotic, desperate, self-destructive public life. And when I die, it will be to immortalise the similar deaths of anonymous black males whose names will never scar the tissue of public attention. (Tupac Shakur)*

*and,*

*My blood shall nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue to fight. (Solomon Mahlangu)*

These are strong statements from two young people whose lives were cut short before they could flourish; one life cut short by the streets and one by a despotic system that would not allow the 'word on the street' to get by for fear of its revolutionary impact.

These sentiments are at the heart of the young people's quest for human freedom and the fight for justice, citizenship and social change. Both Tupac Shakur (the 'Raptivist') and Solomon Mahlangu (the 'Terrorist') were unrelenting in their revolutionary utterances, which made them, as I call them, the most celebrated "prophets of hope and chasers of dreams deferred". Their stance on freedom in their lifetime immortalised them and they became the symbols of hope for youth struggling to survive in a society that did not want to listen and at the same time failed to understand them. However, the warning was pretty clear in their prophetic utterances that the marginalised groups will never relent in their fight for freedom and justice. So the fight goes on whilst the spirit of the departed lingers upon the conscience of the living.

## The Rise of the Kwaito Nation

Prior to the Kwaito revolution, the youth had been pre-occupied with the socio-political conditions 'to which their parents and, inevitably themselves, had been exposed to. David Coplan (2005) says, "Among black youth who were not concerned with creating careers in the performing arts, much energy

was consumed in political struggle". Coplan (2005) argues that youth had, until the early 1990s, directed their energy into political conscientisation and mobilisation (p. 11).

After the unbanning of the liberation movements and the release of political prisoners, and in the post-apartheid dispensation, the youth found themselves idling, most of them without any relevant skill or education to engage in meaningful economic activities (thanks to the Verwoerdian doctrine).

After 1994 young men and women who took the baton from those who had paved the way for this freedom experienced a massive cultural boom. Celebratory and party songs by groups such as Boom Shaka, Bongo Maffin, Arthur, M'du, TKzee, Joe Nina, Thebe, Skeem, Chiskop, Mashamplane, Mandoza, Brown Dash, Zola, Kabelo, Lebo Mathosa, Mafikizolo, Malaika and DJs such as DJ Fresh, Revolution and Glen Lewis dominated the airwaves – much to the pleasure of the liberation movement, the ruling party. The songs brought about self-hypnosis within the elite in that they displayed a country in a party mood and was the music that brought long-lost hope to the multitudes of young people South Africa. Moreover the youth had suddenly discovered that there were more opportunities for them than becoming nurses, teachers, and police officers; music had an equal economic contribution to make and through music one could still live a decent life.

It is against these political and historical developments that a deeper analysis of the aftermath of the struggle for emancipation is pursued, within the context of the cultural liberation and freedom of expression soon experienced by a youth that grew up fighting to be heard.

In the 1990s Kwaito would emerge as the answer to a youth, who for years (besides being involved in political upheavals) had watched from the periphery as adults, at festivals, concerts and shebeens, enjoyed and revelled in adult contemporary African music from kwela to jazz, from bublegum to Afro-pop, from Jazz to R&B, and from Reggae to Mbhaqanga.

Suddenly, this newly liberated youth, post struggle, post apartheid - this post marabi, post scathamiya, post bubblegum, post 'this', post 'that' youth, - found not only cultural freedoms but also became adults in their own right. In this newly found freedom, which included freedom of movement, of gathering (at least at night clubs) and freedom to dance, the youth were suddenly exposed to night-time entertainment, something that had long been a preserve of the adults. It is important to underline this point because young people growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in traditional African families would ordinarily not have been exposed to night-time entertainment as participation in this would be met with harsh punishment at home.

Freedom and democracy not only unleashed vigour and creative juices amongst the youth, but, because they found themselves free to roam around at night in search of entertainment, they would soon be exposed to new and foreign musical expressions and cultural representations. Certain members of Boom Shaka met in a night club which is something that young people of the same age in the 1970s and 1980s would never have experienced as such an activity would not have been allowed. Boom Shaka challenged the tradition by taking to the public space what went on inside the night club when they proclaimed that said it's about time society listened to them; they literally meant it. Youth had come to the fore and wanted their voices to be heard..

By this time, bubblegum music, the country's pop music of the 1980s to the early 1990s, had lost its flavour; a new musical style, a new form of music, Kwaito, had taken root and was the new cool. This reflects what Gerhard Pinthus (1932) had argued: that stylistic changes are introduced when the social structure of the performance situation changes. In his writings Pinthus had argued that when a society becomes increasingly differentiated musical styles differ according to social subclasses; or "whenever a stylistic era has drawn to a close without an obvious immediate or organically emerging replacement" (Coplan, 2005, p. 22) new forms of music emerge.

With a name of no particular origin, because of various interpretations as to how it came about, the new sound of what then became known as Kwaito was influenced by house music slowed down from 124bpm to under 100bpm, giving it both local and global flavour. According to Steingo (2005), Kwaito essentially is a form of dance music that is intentionally apolitical and is a post-struggle cultural representation (p. 33).

The Economist had its own interpretation of the origins of this genre in South Africa:

> Kwaito began in the early 1990s, when (legend has it) a township disc jockey spun a dance track at the wrong speed. The crowd loved it. Soon, several DJs were playing British house music and American rap deliberately slowly. Some added their own lyrics. The new sound inspired new dances: the sexy "butterfly", the hip-twisting twaladza. Kwaito swiftly became the dance music for black South Africans. Talented youngsters in baggy clothes were lured into recording studios with fat piles of cash, where they chopped and sampled old pop songs, added their own beats and even strings, mixed, re-mixed and crowded the programming schedules of new radio stations founded to accommodate them (The Economist: 2000: March 2).

Kwaito swept across every street, every corner, every household, shebeens, taverns, clubs in the townships, informal settlements, rural and semi-rural households. And, as Coplan said "before long, the potential of Kwaito was clear to the most cautious studios, and in 1996 more than one thousand Kwaito CDs were released".

An entirely new youth culture and industry developed and would soon enter every facet of contemporary South African culture (Steingo, 2005, p. 339). Key recordings such as TKZee's "Halloween", Mdu's "Mazola", Chiskop's

"Claimer", Boom Shaka's "It's About Time" and Trompies's "Madibuseng" swept the charts and dominated youth-orientated radio stations.

The presence of radio stations such as Soweto Community Radio and subsequently Yfm (established in 1997) would propel youth culture and entertainment to the highest levels. Yfm, with an average listenership of 1.5 million per week, soon found itself in the middle of a cultural explosion and became the focal point for youths wanting to enter showbusiness. Kwaito would become Y-fm's default music genre and a viable commercial offering and soon became the most influential platform for young people wanting to express themselves.

Kwaito would soon dominate clothing brands, "bashes", festivals and soccer games. Loxion Kulcha, a brand founded by Sechaba Mogale, became the clothing label for Kwaito artists, whilst the music of TKZee and Mandoza would dominate soccer games. The song "Shibobo" by TKZee, for instance, became the clarion call during Bafana Bafana participation in the 1998 FIFA World Cup, whilst Mandoza's "Nkalakatha" became the dominant sound at cricket matches during the tournament in Australia to drum up support for the Proteas.

By 2005, Kwaito songs were the soundtracks and signature tunes to films and televisions shows, including adverts. As soon as Kwaito started thriving commercially, realising sales in excess of 25,000 units and creating a new breed of economically successful youngsters, the genre began to produce new acts rushing to emulate the commercial success of their forerunners, cited above.

However, most Kwaito acts played down the political energy that had swept the country in the 1990s. Kwaito became intensely sexualised , lacked lyrical content and soon became dominated by party-oriented lyrics with heavy sexual connotations performed in a rush to reap the commercial benefits.

Kwaito could only fulfil what Coplan (2005) calls "modernistic material aspirations" which, according to him, was about:

> young people's insistence on enjoying their freedom and majority status with as much in-your face sexuality as they can get, breaking away at once from the hypocritical apartheid-era repression of black sexuality, the controlling condemnation of their elders, and the finger-wagging moralism, however well-intentioned of anti-AIDS campaigners (p. 20).

Coplan's statement above bears testimony to a skit which was played over and over again during the hey-days of Y-fm, recorded from an old granny who had called the station complaining about the music (its lyrical content and visuals) as lacking morality and actually embarrassing to the values of Nelson Mandela, as she shouted: *"lento eniyikhulumayo ibolile"* (the things you say is diabolic).

Coplan argues that bubblegum got "chewed over" by Kwaito as some of its most prominent artists and musicians lost steam. He goes on to say that:

> The music expressed and embodied the new sound for the post-struggle young black lions and lionesses: a prideful, even predatory roar of pleasure hunting. In those first heady days the first freedom the youth demanded was to freely enjoy themselves (p. 15-16).

To Coplan, Kwaito was a cultural response to a a defunct, previously-dominant, cultural regime and expressed an expectation that wealth would now change hands in favour of the black majority so before long it became apparent that this new youth musical expression had taken a political stance.

Coplan (2005) states: As the focus shifted from what was wrong with the old system to was what glaringly unsatisfactory with the new, including the social dysfunction in black communities themselves, political song lyrics turned to the condemnation of alcoholism, violent crime, the abuse of women and children, or the need for children to stop marching and go back to school. This Coplan attributes to Oyaba's song 'Calling all Children' released in 1991 (p. 16)

## Kwaito and the Social Construction of Reality

As Kwaito was rising to prominence, the new political dispensation still faced an insurmountable task to unify a heavily racialised society under a common citizenship and, as Habib and Bentley (2008) argue, the challenge of how to "facilitate historical social justice while building a single national identity" (p. 14) remained the biggest dilemma in the construction of a new South Africa. The deep-seated racial hatred harvested over hundreds of years of racial oppression and colonialism was not going to disappear overnight.

Whilst Ngcaweni (2014) may have argued that "lived experiences suggest that many South Africans are exorcising themselves of the demons of racism and prejudice" (p. xvi), there still remains the challenge of achieving social cohesion 22 years after democracy, thus suggesting that building a strong national identity is still a mirage in this rainbow nation. Much as Adam and Moodley (1993) argued "in South Africa all can be winners if they compromise" (p. 29), the journey to create a society free of racial prejudice was eclipsed by the legacy of bitterness left by the invisible yet heartfelt social scars caused by years of denigration and indignity. Despite South Africans being faced with an historic compromise aimed at building a new society, Bryan Barry (in Habib & Bentley, 2008) argues that the success of liberal democracy depends on "citizens having certain attitudes towards one another" (p. 13).

For South Africa, with an unpalatable history of denigration and dehumanisation, racial redress and citizenship depends heavily on certain

degrees of mutual respect, recognition and empathy, which are devoid of racial prejudice, perceived or real. This is of particular importance to the former victims of racial discrimination where the scars are deep and the healing process appears to be a long and sensitive journey. Arthur Mafokate, the self-proclaimed King of Kwaito, just as the nation was celebrating the so-called "rainbow nation", captured very well the sentiment that the black majority was no longer going to tolerate racial denigration and mortification by the previously privileged minority with his seminal hit track "Don't Call me Kaffir" released in 1994.

Thembela Vokwana argues, "South African black popular music is an urban product. Its rise is linked to the tensions of industrialisation, displacement and adaptation of black people in the urban landscape" (in Akrofi, Smith and Thorsén, 2007, p. 7). If not speaking to the experiences of black people under an apartheid regime, popular music relates the personal relationships of black people as they navigate and try to find meaning in their day-to-day struggles to survive urban life. Inevitably these struggles to find a meaningful existence in the city dominate the existing tensions between subordinate groups and the dominant group and come to the fore in artistic expression.

It is no coincidence that Kwaito began began to articulate a political position and as, as Vokwana attests, "various artists began to court politics through vehement commentary on the realities faced by the majority of people in the post-apartheid dispensation. Popular music began to function once again as both entertainment and a critical public sphere" (p. 13).

When Arthur penned the following lyrics of the song "Kaffir", they definitely put him on the socio-political map of South African music and carved his name in the great South African songbook:

*Boss, No.*
*Boss, don't call me a*
*kaffir*

*Can't you see I am trying my best.*
*Can't you see I am moving around.*
*I don't come from hell.*
*You would not like it if I called you a baboon.*
*Even when I try washing up, you still call me a kaffir*
*Boss, don't call me a kaffir*

Emerging out of years of censorship, this song announced the hard-won right to freely express oneself in society and signalled a whole new cultural milieu.

If Kwaito had been stigmatised in the past, at the start of our democracy Arthur's seminal track, and probably the first hit single, surely heightened the level of awareness of this music genre. The impact of the message from this track, which dominated the airwaves and played at every public performance space (stokvels, shebeens, taverns, clubs, festivals, car washes, braais, and weddings), can be left to the imagination. The song gave new courage and impetus to black labourers working in farms, factories, on shop floors, and in gardens, who had suffered in silence Suddenly the words of the song spoke volumes. The song spoke directly to them and for them.

A phenomenon that was unheard of during the apartheid era, the song said the long unsaid and, as Mhlambi articulates, "The lyrics and the message contained in this song were a perfect illustration of the freedom of expression that developed as a result of the political change" (2004, p. 119).

It can be argued that during the struggle for liberation music was socially mediated and that the sociality of music was inextricably linked to the social reality of the time, and so was the textual connotation in the music. Leading up to the new democratic dispensation, the people's consciousness of themselves and the society they lived in was collectively shared through the words and symbols mutually constructed to give meaning to their social circumstances and was projected through music, at least in the main.

Because "the meaning of music is somehow located in its function as a social symbol" (Shepherd, 1991, p. 13), it requires no debate that words coming out of music post-1994, South Africa, would be symbolic of the socio-political construction of reality at the time. Because any situation and/or symbol, according to Shepherd (1991), "is mediated to an extent by pre-existing adjacent meanings" (p. 15) it should follow naturally, therefore, that music used to define the post-1994 era would symbolise the hope, dreams, aspirations and in some cases doubt or even disbelief in the reality of the freedom brought about by the new democratic dispensation.

Because music, according to Shepherd (1991), stands in the same relationship to society as consciousness, society is creatively 'in' each musical event and articulated by it (p. 83), it is safe then to argue that there was a reasonable expectation that Kwaito, as the new found liberation voice for the yout, was the music that would best articulate the meaning of freedom or the absence of it in post-apartheid South Africa. Following on Shepherd's argument that: "music is a consummatory because of the social meaning immanent in the individual consciousnesses and music events of a society and, conversely, because social meaning can only arise and continue to exist through symbolic mediations in consciousness – mediations of which music forms a part", it therefore goes without saying that Kwaito also stands in the same relationship to society as consciousness

Because music is inherently social, how the social gets into South Africa's popular music at the turn of our democracy is worth scrutinizing. As Pratt (1990) would attest, "the political meaning of music depends on its use" (p. 1), and how Kwaito positioned itself at the dawn of our democracy and its role in the social reconstruction of the post-apartheid South Africa, is worth investigation in this chapter.

Vokwana (2007) argues, "certain songs linger in people's memory precisely because they embody a history and act as mnemonic devices for remembering spaces occupied" (p. 15). The song, "Kaffir" by Arthur

Mafokate, reminded us of those spaces, physical or abstract, that the Black majority roamed until the dismantling of apartheid.

However, it was not long after the previously marginalised had voted for a Black government that the youth, through Kwaito, turned their attention to the ruling party to convert their dreams into reality and to make good on the promises of the liberation agenda. As Martin Stokes (1997) attests, "music often seems to do little more than fill a silence left by something else" (p. 2). But, contrary to this claim, Kwaito, on the face of it, was not going to allow the silencing of the revolution, arising out of a negotiated settlement, to mean all was well and the populace must sit and wait for the fruits of freedom to fall from the tree of democracy.

Emerging out of an oppressive system that had sustained itself over hundreds of years, the obvius desperation of the youth in their fight for recognition and inclusion, became apparent soon after the dawn of South Africa's democracy and the songs were there to remind the ruling party that it was not yet uhuru. Not to be left out of the reconstruction process, Kwaito took on the responsibility that should have been the preserve of the parliamentarians voted into power by the majority, of adding their voice on behalf of the marginalised voices.

There was early scepticism that the qualities of freedom, justice and equality, were still far beyonf the reach of the liberated when it could be seen that obvious structural inequalities were still prevalent years after South Africans took to the polls in 1994. And, as Amartya Sen (2000) argues, "in the absence of fair and achievable conditions for people to meet their own needs in life, there is no freedom to talk about" (cited in Thembela Kepe et al, 2016, p. 6). It was not just the youth that were sceptical of the democratic gains, but even scholars like Mbembe (2008), Magwaza & Mthimkhulu (2007) were not convinced that the end of apartheid had translated into any meaningful

redistributive justice since many blacks still lived in abject poverty without any end in sight.

It was not by mere coincidence that the release of M'du's song "Bab' uGovernment" in 2000 six years after the advent of democracy, also highlighted the lack of visible progress in the lives of the liberated. From the song it was clear that youth in South Africa were eager to reap the fruits of freedom. M'du's song articulated in no uncertain terms the conditions and circumstances that the youth still faced at the beginning of South Africa's democratic dispensation, which clearly showed the waning patience of the youths who had been the descendants of June 16, 1976 (the Soweto Uprising). The song conveyed a very clear message to government that it was time to finally deliver on the aspirations of a youth that had known nothing else but oppression and political repression. Anyone who dared to listen could not have missed the following, unequivocal lyrics of "Bab' uGovernment" by M'du:

*Bab' ugovernment seskhathele ukuspina*
*Now is the time ukuthi siyekeleni –icrime*
*Sithole isinkwa esclean sangemihla ngemihla njengabanye abantu*

*Bab' ugovernment seskhathele uk'shizila*
*Now is the time ukuthi siyekeleni –icrime*
*Sithole isinkwa esclean sangemihla ngemihla njengabanye abantu*

*Bab'ugovernment asthandi ukuba la behind the bars*
*uBaas sekasbiza six o'clock siyolala ngoba sithand' ukulwa*
*i-life soyabheda*

The song was released sometime in 2000 at the turn of the new millennium full of hope and aspirations. M'du launches a passionate plea to the government telling the powers that be that the youth is tired of hustling, turning to crime, and being locked behind bars every day just to survive. The song ponders about abandoning hope, displays a sense of despair and calls upon government to do something about the situation.

It could be argued that the rush for freedom may not have been justified taking into account that the song was released only six years after the dismantling of apartheid. Two decades since the release of the song the question may now be: what has changed? Well it depends to which direction does the pendulum swing; to some justice has been done to the quest for freedom, whilst to some there is still deep-seated injustices since the advent of democracy. To many, freedom and justice is promises of yesterday realised today and not tomorrow; it is what Nazeema Ahmed (2014) calls 'the ascent of hope' in that "throughout that tumultuous time, people never lost that hope, since the ideal of freedom held the tacit promise of a different life for the people in this country (p. 1).

The song cuts deep into the core of both the national discourse and the national aspiration and questions how the ANC government, as a former liberation movement, having dealt with dismantling apartheid, is planning to deliver on the national aspiration, which in the main is for the material upliftment of Africans. Habib and Bentley (2008) refer to the national aspiration as the actual modalities of how government is responding to the national question in economically empowering those that had been excluded by the system of apartheid (p. 5).

The song cleverly and subtly used *The Lord's Prayer* from the bible, where government is the Father with a responsibility to give His people the daily bread - used figuratively - and speaks to the national aspirations of improving the material conditions of the marginalised groups. This song was released at the dawn of the Thabo Mbeki presidency. This is the period, according to Habib (2013), which exposed "the fallacy of the vision of the 'socially responsive democratic society', as harboured by the middle and upper-middle classes" (p. 10) and where the biggest victims of the era, according to Seekings and Nattras (Habib, 2008), were the marginalised and unemployed constituting "the real underclass in contemporary South Africa" (p. 18).

The song continues:

*masblome emakhoneni siyazkhuphula*
*asifuni sihlala sishisa*
*sifuna i-brighter future*

The song depicts youths who stand by the corner everyday thinking about how to stop stealing and to turn their lives around in search of a brighter future. This cleverusee of the vernacular mixed with English had not been seen in popular music in South Africa. The youth's appropriation of the vernacular in the artistic articulation of their daily lived experience signalled a new era in that youth creatively dismantled the attempt to divide their South Africaness or Africaness by ethnicity by refusing to be boxed into a Bantustan classification as their identity. Vokwana also testifies to this denunciation of ethnic-based language usage in the music and argues, "most musicians inverted the authority of apartheid through a code switching that celebrated the diversity of people in the townships rather than specifically targeting one distinct language group, as was the case in the past" (p. 14).

Deep into the song M'du begins to bring in features of his immediate surrounding that put pressure on him to go find work and be resourceful. He complains about an empty fridge and nephews, nieces and his mother shouting at him and always asking for bread whilst his girlfriend accuses him of being useless. The artist is painting a picture of how societal pressure and the need to belong forces youths to commit crime just to bring food to the table and he appeals for opportunities which he will grab with open arms if presented to him.

Of most importance is the title of the album "No Pass No Special" – a reference to the notorious "influx control" which were measures used to regulate the inflow of black Africans into South Africa's urban areas during the pre-Apartheid and Apartheid eras. This was known as the Native (Black)

Urban Areas Act No 21 of 1923 which imposed a system of segregation that allowed black Africans access to towns only to serve white labour needs. The cover of the album has an imposing figure of M'du with his back to what appears to be a human settlement or township with him gazing into the far distance as if looking into the future and turning his back on an unpalatable past.

Through this seriously politically-conscious song, full of hopes and aspirations, M'du represents the first and possibly the last generation of Kwaito artists who understood the circumstances and the opportunities that the youth were now presented with in the post-apartheid era where a caring government was ready to present a better future. This is probably the only Kwaito song of that era that addressed and challenged the government directly to respond to the socio-economic challenges confronted by the youth post-1994. M'du's song could well be interpreted as questioning whether there was any hope or prospects of redress in the aftermath of what Habib (2013) calls "the suspended revolution". He uses this opportunity to strike while it is hot – lest the new democratic order forgets and loses focus.

Whilst M'du put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of government with the song "Bab' uGovernmen"', Mandoza, a convict-turned-Kwaito star, on the other hand had released the song *"Uzoyithola Kanjani"* a year earlier (1999), urging youth to get up and do something. This song questioned the youth about how were they going live a meaningful life if they were not prepared to get up and do something, instead of waking up every day to stand on the street corner idling, as the lyrics suggest below:

*Uzoyithola kanjani uhleli ekhoneni*
*Imali imali engeke izizele kuwe,*
*mele wena uphande yona khona manje vuka*
*Uzoyithola kanjani uhleli ekhoneni*
*Eh bafethu inyuku inyuku, inyuku iyafuneka aka gtz*
*Aw uyangithola sengiphuma kanje*

Mandoza's clear message in this song suggests that the opportunities brought about by the new democratic dispensation were there for the taking; at least to those willing to seize the moment. The gates of freedom had swung wide open for those agile enough to race right through into the world that had endless possibilities. Mandoza's song suggested that those too lazy to grab the fruits falling from the tree of liberation, skewed in favour of the previously marginalised, must not complain when the economic and social opportunities do not drop right in front of their feet.

In contrast to apartheid as a policy that denied citizens distributive justice, a new form of justice was unfolding and the mood was evident in the creative space of those ready to capture the imagination of the subordinate groups. To many they saw justice us the equal distribution of socio-economic opportunities which had knocked on the door of those who had been denied it for decades.

However, these two songs by the two most celebrated Kwaito artists reveal a contradiction in how youth see democracy and the domains of freedom unfolding in front of them. M'du believes that the ANC government, as a former liberation movement that understood the plight of the previously marginalised, should be able to provide prosperity for the youth that has been standing on the street corner waiting for a miracle to happen. The miracle, in the form of democracy had indeed occurred and M'du's song demands that now is the time for visible progress to be made towards a prosperous society.

Mandoza's song, on the other hand, believes that opportunities created by the democratic government are there for the taking, at least by those who are prepared to toil for the newly found democracy. Mandoza's song echoes Wandile Kasibe's statement that "the new dispensation came to symbolize the promise of freedom and multiple beginnings: individually and collectively...an invitation to envision ourselves differently than we had up until that point" (Ngcaweni, 2014, p. 90). This is the new beginning that Mandoza's song

holds the youth to, whilst, on the contrary, M'du's assertion is that the youth have been out there, in search of the new democratic dispensation and the opportunities it brings, but they have come back to the same street corner, empty handed and arenow calling on the government to be the one that takes on the responsibility to rescue them from poverty.

Adam and Moodley (1993) already predicted, "democracy without material gain would surely delegitimate (sic) a liberation movement that only fought for symbolic equality but also raised expectations for greater wealth and material equality" (p. 218). So, to M'du Masilela, six years into the new dispensation, freedom and democracy was still an unfinished process.

The seemingly unintended contradictions of these two songs by two young people simultaneously experiencing the dawn of our democracy are indicative of a society at a crossroad with endless imaginings of both hope and hopelessness.

### Did Kwaito Betray or Fulfil its Mission?

There is no argument that suggests that the development and emergence of Kwaito, as music genre and cultural appropriation, did not have a significant impact on the South African culture and economy. Kwaito captured the imagination of young people and even those that had graduated into adulthood. It became mainstream and featured on everything from television and radio to fashion. Kwaito provided an opportunity for the nation's youth to produce and consume something they enjoyed and could relate to.

Shepherd (1991) argues that "when people look back at a series of events they do so by means of and through the symbols created to define it and situation and symbols have a mutually interdependent relationship crucial to the constantly changing dynamics of the social process" (p. 14 – 15). Kwaito used the symbols that were created to defend apartheid and revisioned them to suit their circumstances. Kwaito used the township as the reservoir for cultural production. As Vokwana (2007) argues, "the irony of the apartheid

ideology was the enmeshment of the erasure and silencing of black identity, history, and heritage on the one hand, while simultaneously appropriating these to justify its practices" (p. 8). Vokwana testifies that one of the policies of the apartheid regime was to advance the notion of separate development through its narrative that black people must live in accordance with their means and cultural practices, moreover, in their designated areas (the townships in this instance).

The unintended consequence of this segregatory practice was that Blacks did indeed develop a vibrant culture that was resident in the immediate environment where people lived. The development of Kwaito meant that young people could only celebrate what they had – the ghetto (township) and the language of the ghetto. New songs were composed and were clearly carved out of the space where this creativity was coming from. Vokwana argues that Zola's "Ghetto Fabulous" from the album *Umdlwembe* (2002) was a good example of how Kwaito artists "turn the discourse of the township as a wasteland to the township as home, imbued with humanistic qualities of sociality" (p. 15). Rather than decry the township, the Kwaito generation saw the township as a reservoir for cultural reproduction and it was no surprise that the post-1994 period saw a cultural renaissance that had not been seen since the Sophiatown era. The township became the place of re-imagining the future whilst highlighting the ever-present poverty and crime.

Whether Kwaito fulfilled or betrayed its mission will be judged against whether it managed to craft a narrative that advanced the interests of young people at the start of our democracy, or whether it abandoned the mission of the youth of 1976 and got carried away in the excitement of freedom at last. I want to argue that Kwaito failed to capitalise on its popularity by not using its platform to remind the dominant group of the plight of youth in South Africa and to urge the government to advance the interests of youth and fast track youth development programs. The absence of a collective and sustained critical yet creative voice to remind the democratic government of its pledge meant that

Kwaito failed to position itself as having some significant political relevance that would amass the collectively shared aspirations of young people at that critical moment in our young democracy. The rhythm and the drumbeat that had been used to push the resistance agenda would soon cease to exist on the airwaves.

Kwaito's inability to drive a collectively shared agenda was its failure to have a sustained and persistent narrative of the shared aspirations and experiences of South African youth with regard to what they perceived the deliverables of the freedom project to be. Music's effect on society, according to Pratt (1990), is its ability to weave the individual experience with the wider social situations, which depends on "the dynamic interaction between the work itself and the way it is received" (p. 5). Kwaito's critical role was to give a voice, through its work, for and on behalf of those who otherwise would have found it difficult to express their emotions. Subsequent to the songs by Arthur Mafokate, Mandoza, or M'du there appeared to have been no song or period where Kwaito, as a popular form of music, served both as a critical voice or a transformative function to turn the tide in favour of the subordinate groups – the youth. Instead Kwaito became just a happy song that youth would drown their sorrows in and erupt into dance.

In a sense, Kwaito was aspirational. Some Kwaito artists simply celebrated their freedom to dance and threw sumptuous parties, wearing designer jewellery. There were exceptions such as Mandoza who reminded young people that they must work hard to enjoy the fruits of freedom, whilst M'du questioned the existence of such fruits.

Apart from these sparsely distributed messages by a few artists there was no pattern of politically-conscious songs in Kwaito music that could have sustained the messages that M'du or Arthur tried to express when Kwaito was in its infancy. Again, this does not suggest that these artists were themselves

politically inclined; the fact that they wrote a song that spoke to conditions at the time does not make them politically- conscious Kwaito artists.

By the mid-2000s Kwaito started showing signs of decline and, as Coplan (2005, p. 21) observed, "In fact, as the new millennium settles in, Kwaito shows signs of losing its grip as a form of musically embodied youth consciousness". Whilst it is not clear why Coplan sees Kwaito as the embodiment of youth-consciousness, Kwaito was dying a slow death.

The majority of the material released by Kwaito artists after mid 2000s did not strive for political correctness nor was confined to political populism and slogan-shouting politics, instead, as Impey (2001) states, Kwaito was no longer restrained by the need to comment on racial injustices and political freedoms and it expressed a new set of dreams (p. 45). The question is, what dreams?

The apolitical nature of Kwaito also caught the attention of a lot of commentators interested in whether the genre had an impact on the political discourse. There are claims that Kwaito emerged as a direct response to the demise of the apartheid State and the signalling of a new era in South African race relations and the re-imagining of a new nation – the so-called "rainbow nation". Scholars like Gavin Steingo (2016) refute the popular claim that Kwaito failed to provide any meaningful contribution to a youth that desperately needed direction. Through his recent work, Steingo argues that the youth have used Kwaito, not to escape their social conditions, but rather to expand their sensory realities and generate new possibilities.

The strongest advocate of Kwaito as an apolitical political force, Steingo argues "although most *kwaito* is in a sense 'apolitical', in another sense, it is overtly political; *kwaito* represents a radically new politics that negates politics. The so-called apolitical *kwaito* is music that represents the refusal of politics" (2007, p. 27).

The one question that scholars and journalists who have written about Kwaito and how it engages with the public discourse ask is whose politics is Kwaito supposed to have been involved in: politics for who? The onslaught against Kwaito's lack of political consciousness or engagement with the national discourse is worth investigating, especially when it is the ruling party that highlights the apolitical nature of Kwaito and the young generation. The criticism of young people's lack of interest in the political discourse, especially by the former liberation movement, only suggests that the youth's political worth is measured against how much they are involved in pushing the political agenda of the ruling party. The open criticism of Kwaito, that it encouraged youth to disengage from politics, came mainly from the leadership of the ruling party. But that criticism mainly focussed on the absence of active participation in or support for the post-apartheid democratic process rather than on how the youth was engaging government in ensuring that the post-apartheid dispensation was delivering on the aspirations of young people in South Africa.

The historic meeting between some Kwaito artists and the former President, Nelson Mandela, who was accompanied by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Bridgette Mabandla, provides no evidence of a conversation between the musicians and the former statesman. What has been written about the meeting suggests a one-sided conversation of praises if not instructive conversation either by Mabandla or Mandela of the role Kwaito was playing or should be playing in advancing the democratic revolution. Kwaito was engaged as a culture that needed to be preserved and supported rather than a critical voice that needed to be listened to. Coincidentally this happened in the same year that M'du released his stinging song but there is no evidence that suggests that Kwaito had anything to say during that historic meeting except to listen to what was expected of them.

The open criticism of Kwaito as a critical voice for young people was also evident in how the then Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC), Kgalema Motlanthe, as well as the then President of the ANC and of the Country, Thabo Mbeki, were concerned about the youth's political apathy, particularly how Kwaito was swaying youth away from active politics. Mbeki went as far as referring to Kwaito as a "distraction" from serious political issues and is quoted by Steingo (2004) saying, "People have said that the youth are only interested in kwaito, but they are registered and they will vote" (p. 29) quoted in Ancer and Sefara (2007). This suggested that Kwaito was the reason why young people were not interested in politics. Again, politics for whom? The party (the ANC) did not see a need Kwaito as a research reservoir for the purposes of collecting the views of youth on how the party was governing or what the concerns of youth were that government needed to know about and craft a response to. The rulling party needed Kwaito for its own political gains – to garner enough support from young people to keep the party in power. Again, Kwaito is to blame for this because it was not perceived as a threat to the democratic government as it offered no critical voice to cause any panic in the corridors of freedom, otherwise it would have been shunned rather than viewed as a ticket to the polls.

It is clear that both the General Secretary of the ANC and its President, also president of the country, had not listened to M'du's song "Bab uGovernment", hence Itumeleng Mahabane's Open Letter to the President that appeared in the Y Mag (2003, p. 41), challenging the President to take an active interest in what the youth were saying through Kwaito music. The open war between Kwaito and the political establishment was more about party politics and the revolutionary character of the ruling party and the much-needed support of the youth to drive the post-liberation agenda. Unfortunately Kwaito was more about its own partying character – the celebration of democracy – instead of the politics of the party. The obvious opportunities brought about by Kwaito and the youth's appreciation of Kwaito as an entertainment platform meant more fans for the party (the ANC) but the fans were more interestedin dancing

at the party for their newly-found freedom than shouting slogans at party political conferences. As Steingo (2007) pointed out,

> The crucial point is that political parties no longer affect kwaito - kwaito no longer needs politics in the traditional sense of the term. It is driven by an individualistic autosurveillance - a micropolitics that is independent of the state apparatus. Today, state politics is merely a simulacral theatre, masking its own death. Kwaito fans - much of the youth in South Africa - are fed ideology much more by the Culture Industry - or perhaps, that other CI, the Consciousness Industry - than by politicians (p. 34).

Steingo completely misses the point and actually plays right into the hands of those who wrote off Kwaito as offering nothing of substance at the critical moment of South Africa emerging into democracy. Had Kwaito realised that the youth, as Steingo argues, listened more to what Kwaito had to say than what the politicians were saying, then Kwaito should have or would have used that platform to take its message to government by conscientizing the youth about the promises of freedom that government was failing to fulfil. This is evident in Maria McCloy's writing when she quotes Mzekezeke as saying: "Before 1990 people used to struggle and cry for their freedom and after that freedom people started rejoicing and celebrating and that was reflected in Kwaito" (cited in Steingo, 2005, p. 344). The youth needed Kwaito, then Kwaito need the youth. Kwaito became the voice of the voiceless, except that Kwaito was deaf to this social reality, hence the absence of a dominant and sustained narrative that articulated the aspirations of young people emerging out of an oppressive history.

The song "Sigiya Ngengoma", by Trompies, coincidentally released at the turn of our democracy in 1994, speaks to the apolitical nature of Kwaito and a re-affirmation that this period was the time to celebrate in song and dance (as

the title of the song suggests). TKZee's "Dlala Mapantsula" continued on the same narrative of "dance ma Gents" and dance to nothingness but just dance.

It is therefore no surprise that the apolitical nature of Kwaito soon became associated with wild parties, clubbing with heavy sexual connotations and with lyrics such as

*Thixo ngi cela ungincede*
*Ungangithathe ngisase mcinci*
*Yho! Kumunandi ukuphila.*
*Hayi kum'nandi emhlabeni*
*Nkosi ngicela ungisize,*
*Ungangithathi ngisase mcane*
*Hayi kumnandi ukubenga,*
*Yho kumnandi ukujaiva*
*Ntate ke kopa o nthuse o ska ntseya ke sale monyane*
*Yho go monate go phela*
*Hayi go monate go groova*

(meaning - God please do not take me at my tender age, I am still young and enjoying partying and clubbing (Thebe 2007). This, and many other songs continue to carry the same theme: that of freedom to dance, to party and to let loose.

Steingo (2005, p. 324) agrees that there is a deliberate apolitical disposition in Kwaito and asserts that the lyrics contained in the Kwaito songs have more of a dance-orientation than any advocacy for political action – or "fundamentally a dance rather than a song form" (Coplan, 2005, p. 20). As mentioned above, Steingo argues that Kwaito's apolitical stature is in actual fact a political stance as it "represents a radically new politics which negates politics itself." Therefore, to him, the so-called apolitical Kwaito could be interpreted as music that represents the refusal of politics. Steingo (2005) argues,

> Some Kwaito really is political in the traditional sense of the word: that is to say, some Kwaito artist rap, chant, or sing about explicitly political and ideological issues. This, of course, is not the Kwaito that I am describing here and, because the apolitical variety of Kwaito is more

> common than its political counterpart, for some the Kwaito word refers only to the apolitical variety (p. 342).

This view is also supported by Coplan (2005) who is quite emphatic in advancing a notion that "direct involvement in South Africa's current political process is not a favoured activity of either black youth or their popular music heroes, and that Kwaito was not making a particular convincing effort at creating a national imaginary or imagining the new South Africa nation" (p. 20)

A view articulated by Impey (2001) was that the youth of South Africa appeared to be firm in their resolve to disengage from what would remind them of the protracted period of fighting against oppression and political protest of the apartheid era. The irony is that in 2015 leading to 2016 the same youth started seeing some cracks in the liberation agenda as espoused by their elders and "renewed objections and challenges to the prevailing socio-political order" (Susan, 2016, p. 1). This renewed anger and alienation had been buried by the Kwaito generation that had chosen not to be reminded of what the youth of 1976 had taken to the streets for.

The fact that it took more than 20 years for these voices to challenge this liberation falsehood proves some of the arguments raised by many observers, that Kwaito failed to seize the moment and to use their platform to highlight youth's socio-economic aspirations and more importantly to demand a clear political agenda that would advance the interests of youth. Mbele (2009) attests to Kwaito's failure to capitalise on its popularity by arguing that; "this Kwaitofication accentuated the culture of post-liberation accumulation and consumerism, and gradually relegated youth political activists to the margins of post-1994 youth activism".

The ANC government's back-burner approach towards the post-1994 negotiated settlement had to be brought to the fore through years of accumulated anger as manifested in the 2015-16 students' fight for what should have been put top of the agenda by the Kwaito generation. Students

took to social media and other platforms to highlight what Kwaito failed to transmit through song. It was never realised by others that this was a clarion call by the youth over their struggles to be heard and their desire to challenge the government to fulfil the promise of freedom.

Maybe the unintended message contained in the song "Its About Time" by Boom Shaka (1993) was taken at face value by those who danced to the vibrant and liberating beat of a young democracy. Ignoring the lyrics and concentrating on the pounding dance beat, Kwaito had already been relegated to the party of the apolitical. The students' protest may have been the long overdue expression of an underlying current of anger at the absence of visible fundamentals of our freedom.

There is nothing politically apolitical about Kwaito's refusal to engage in political discourse. Being apolitical is a conscious choice to disengage in politics, thus making the stance a political statement itself. By attaching this position to Kwaito is to actually elevate itto a political pedestal and status that it does not deserve and that is beyond the genre's comprehension.

Pollack (2004) captures this in his argument that the apolitical nature of Kwaito is visible in the manner in which it articulates its post-apartheid posture by celebrating the good life available to them as a result of the freedoms granted in the post-apartheid era (p. 200). This is reflected in the way in which they articulate the "material and social aspirations of the post-apartheid era, while passing over the actual dismal material and social conditions of most of its listeners" (Pollack, 2004, p. 200). A more unforgiving view is a dominant view that the genre lacks neither purpose nor meaning in the music contained in Kwaito; more so by (Madlala, 2003) who views Kwaito as music "that glorifies thuggery and self-abuse".

If, according to Pratt (1990), "music functions in important ways as political behaviour" (p. 4), and music has such an effect on people, then Kwaito did

failed to to have both purposive and effective impact on political behaviour of young people in South Africa. Its popularity did not have an impact or attempt to influence the ideas or behaviours of youth to challenge the dominant group in their fight for inclusive citizenship. . Popular music has a much bigger scope because of its ability to speak to the wider public and is capable of giving shape and voice to emotions that ordinary people find difficult to express with coherence (Pratt, 1990, p. 5).

## Not all Doom and Gloom: The Birth of Kwaitopreneurs

To echo, again, Noam Chomsky's words that "freedom without opportunity is a devil's gift", and those of Nelson Mandela (1997) that political freedom cannot be achieved without a basket of opportunities, the story of Kwaito is one in which the performers rose for absolute obscurity to the heights of fame and from poverty to prosperity. It is the story of a youth that lived to fulfil its mission by at least attempting to escape the trappings of the township where youth is both, highly visible and yet so invisible, excluded and marginalised.

Through Kwaito, youth were able to forge an economic path that saw them succeeding in their fight for economic redistribution, at least on their own terms, when the political elite failed to include them. They fought for recognition and visibility on their own terms and succeeded in creating a highly prosperous cultural economy that is still felt even in deep Soweto.

The Kwaito revolution had a huge socio-economic impact on the youth who, when they realised the state was unresponsive to their demands, could at least wrap themselves in song'. By unlocking their creative potential full of vigour, energy and creativity, the youth developed a new economy, a creative economy that involved a whole range of creative skills. These young people who had been experimenting with sound and recording in their bedroom studios, soon graduated from that into music production and eventually created their own labels.

These young Kwaitopreneurs shook the established record companies such as Gallo Record Company, the oldest independent record label that was founded in 1926 and owns 75% of all recordings ever made in South Africa. These and other major record labels such as Sony, BMG, EMI, and Universal that had returned to the country after divesting from South Africa, had established themselves as the leading creative companies in the music sector and had the barriers of entry were high for new players to enter the industry... They boasted an array of amazing active artists, catalogues and archive recordings dating as far back as the early recordings of the 1930s. These record companies not only represented and signed big artists in South Africa, they also represented other overseas labels and sub-labels such as Arista, Capitol Records, CBS, and Blue Note, particularly from the United States. These record companies could not be bothered by some sounds emerging from township youth, when they represented big artists such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Mahotella Queens, Lucky Dube and even Michael Jackson, Teddy Pendergrass or Donny Hathaway and Aretha Franklin.

This post-apartheid, post-struggle, post-liberation youth and the so-called 'born frees' were about to re-imagine a new creative world born from the township and nowhere else; a world where there was no need to struggle anymore but to create and dance. Full of zeal and excitement as the world awaited, this township youth went on to create their own record labels such as M'du Music, Ghetto Ruff, Kalawa Jazmee, Bulldogs, 999 Music and later TS Records. These township-owned, black-owned, and youth-owned record labels played a significant role in breaking through the economic barriers that had hampered South African artists of previous generations. The presence of independent companies was a hallmark of Kwaito's evolution, signifying the growing presence of black-owned record labels and theirresultant impact on economic empowerment within the music industry. These labels identified, signed, and recorded artists that would forever change both the cultural consumption patterns and the creative economic landscape in South Africa.

South Africa, and eventually neighbouring countries, were soon mesmerised by the music and songs of Zola, Mandoza, Trompies, Brown Dash, TKZee, Mzambiya, Msawawa, Boom Shaka, Spikiri, Mshoza, Mzekezeke. Artists such as Arthur Mafokate soon established sustainable independent record labels such as 999 Music which produced and released prominent artists such as Aba Shante, New School, Purity, Speedy, Makhendlas, Scamtho, Iyaya, Ishamel, Mshoza, Zombo, and Stitch. Thus 999 became one of the most established and recognised music labels in the country and it still exists after over a decade and a half.

The Kwaito recording labels, such as Kalawa, 999 Music, Mdu Music, Ghetto Ruff, TS Records and Afrotainment went on to become some of the country's biggest independent labels, with major Kwaito artists selling well above platinum. These Kwaito labels, according to Boloka (2003), "represented a new form of ownership" (p. 105) and managed to create employment opportunities for young black producers, engineers and legal practitioners in the music industry. It gave regular young people a sense of dignity, pride and a certain degree of financial independence.

Soon, the major record labels, including Gallo Record Company, wanted a share of the profits of these labels and would begin to offer them attractive deals, ranging from distribution, licensing and joint venture propositions and to offer them big sign-on fees with huge marketing andadvertising budgets. Some of the artists, such as Zola or Zola 7 (as he was popularly known),built illustrious careers in showbusiness, both as performing and recording artists, as well as television personalities and actors in local films.

And so, The Kwaitopreneurs were born.

## From Apolitical to Political

Most of the Kwaito artists, having been eclipsed by new genres such as Afro-soul and commercial hip-hop, soon felt that unless they aligned themselves with the ruling party they might find themselves relegated to a defunct genre

or junk status. By seeking to gain visibility at political rallies, and in the process not wanting to be forgotten as yesterday's genre, Kwaito displayed a lack of knowledge of the social process responsible for its current condition. Kwaito not only accepted the character of merchandise, it actually became publicly displayed as a commodity of a political process.

To avoid a terrible death, Kwaito artists have jumped at every invitation by the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) election organisers, for mass mobilisation at political rallies leading to elections. This has been a peculiar contradiction to this genre's apolitical stance. It has become a regular occurrence that these artists are summoned to Luthuli House (ANC Headquarters) to be briefed about their role leading up to the elections, positioned as being in defence of the national democratic revolution (NDR). This must be reflected in the election campaign music CDs dominated by the showering of epithets in praise of the ruling party and its leadership.

Writing in the Independent Online, ("Zuma's dance moves out of step with reality") on June 21, 2011, Jabulani Sikhakhane warns that President Jacob Zuma "will soon discover, if he has not already done so, that it is far easier to keep up with Chomee's dance moves than to deal decisively with the issues that irk the young people of this country..."

Julius Malema, president of a breakaway party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and once the biggest fan of Chomee (a Kwaito artist), the first choice artist at ANC rallies uses- criticised her during the 2014 National General Elections... (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n6XH2TcE0k) for her sexually suggestive moves and her shallowness and sees her as nothing other than an entertainer that reveals – in a teasing manner – her sexual prowess to the excitement of the ruling elite.

Whilst prominent Kwaito artists have become a key feature in the local and national general elections, campaigning for the ANC, and performing to packed stadia at mass rallies, the genre's lyrical content has remained

apolitical in its message. Save for the moment when the artist is called on stage and grabs the microphone to shout "viva ANC viva" and "scela amafleit lapho" (can I have whistling from the crowd) before rushing to break into their popular songs (their comfort zone) and soon to be joined by the ANC stalwarts who are guided carefully through the dance moves - much to the applause of the unsuspecting supporters of the movement.

# CHAPTER 8. JIVE OR DEFIANCE? THE HIP-HOP NARRATIVE IN JOHANNESBURG

> The ghetto is ferment, paradox, conflict, and dilemma. Yet within its pervasive pathology exists a surprising human resilience.
>
> (Kenneth B. Clark, 1965)

Unlike Kwaito, which was born out of the townships at the dawn of South Africa's democracy in the early 1990s, and "dominated the popular music scene after the apartheid government surrendered its authority" (Watkins, 2012,p. 58), hip-hop only found resonance in the townships in the early 2000s, with the exception of Cape Town. At the height of the tension between Kwaito (in the townships) and hip-hop (in the suburbs), the first generation of rappers emulated American styles, even rapping hip-hop songs laced with strong American hip-hop beats.

As Rose (1996) argues, "Rap's cultural politics lie in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception" (p. 236). When hip hop retreated back to the townships, as Kwaito began to show signs of losing its cultural grip, the battle for space and dominance was no longer focused only on what hip-hop had to say, but more on where and how it was expressed, and how those who received it reacted to it.

The withdrawal of hip-hop from the suburbs would see the re-localisation of hip-hop's cultural inflections – the abandonment of rap, wrapped in American musical styles, to a more vernacularised and indigenised hip-hop expression. As Kwaito was seen losing its grip on the cultural spaces in the townships, hip-hop spared no one. Hip-hop spread like wildfire and soon became the urban sound and lifestyle of youths wanting to discover and express themselves. It took to the streets, the desolated parks, around-the-corner open spaces, community centres and any space big enough to accommodate the youths ready to unleash their toxic rhymes and hip-hop punch lines.

Unlike Cape Town, where hip-hop in the 1980s emerged as the alternative voice for the youth (particularly those living in the coloured townships) to express their social discontent and offer political commentary regarding their daily lived experience, the spread of hip-hop elsewhere in South Africa, particularly in Johannesburg in the early 2000s, did not necessarily assume a socio-political discourse, at least not as a conscious trajectory.

Clark & Koster (2014) argue that elsewhere in Africa the rise of hip-hop was due to its engagement with social, political and economic realities, which was directly linked to a broader discourse on power, race and economies (p. xv). The same cannot be said about the hip-hop narratives that came out of Johannesburg and the surrounding neighbourhoods where the word on the street was abuzz with overblown bragging tales of who has got the flow, the "street cred", and who could sustain a 16-bar verse to a cheering crowd. Clark & Koster argue that the hip-hop expressions in Africa, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, occurred during important social, political and economic changes on the continent, which were tied to different cultural, social, and political realities on the ground. In South Africa, hip-hop gained prominence at the time of the dismantling of apartheid; in Tanzania hip-hop emerged at the time when economic liberalization was taking place. Hip-hop emerged whilst Senegal was battling with learners who had embarked on school boycotts, whilst the move towards multi-party politics in Kenya was taking place and whilst the civil war in Sierra Leone was turning young boys into child soldiers.

## Spittin' Bars: The Rise of the Hip-Hop Sessions in Joburg

When hip-hop finally came of age in South Africa it stopped being the preserve of the kids living in the suburbs who could speak better English than those in the township. The venarcularisation of hip-hop would soon spread to the townships and would soon find resonance at the hip-hop sessions that were fast sprawling across Johannesburg, as was the case in Soweto. These sessions, held mainly on Sundays, soon became a platform for those brave enough to show off their rapping skills in front of an unforgiving and

sometimes very judgemental crowd. In search of space and belonging, the youth in the townships and surrounding communities soon established their own community networks, the hip-hop sessions, devoid of any colour bar or ethnocentric orientation. The sessions were a far cry from the 1956 strategy by the apartheid state which separated township dwellings according to a particular ethnic group as part of the State's strategy to organise black Africans into groupings that would later form the building blocks of the so-called independent homelands.

For instance, when black Africans were forcibly moved from what was then known as Sophiatown, to the outskirts of Johannesburg and settled in what became known as South Western Townships (abbreviated to Soweto) they were organised and separated according to ethnic groupings. The Sotho and Tswana speaking Africans were settled in the townships of Naledi, Mapetla, Tladi, Moletsane and Phiri. The Zulu and Xhosa-speakers were accommodated in Dhlamini, Senaoane, Zola, Zondi, Jabulani, Emndeni and White City, whilst Tshiawelo was established for Tsonga- and Venda-speaking residents.

In trying to find a space for social interaction and most probably because of the absence of other amenities in black townships, the youth found a home in open dumping grounds, cleaned them up and made them their own. Youths would be seen in hip-hop paraphernalia occupying open spaces where identity was socially constructed with no with no cultural borders or racial segregation. Illustrating Akrofi's assertion (2007) on how music defies all attempts at social engineering and political repression (p. iv), the hip-hop sessions rejected the state-erected cultural barriers and segregated identities and instead these sessions constructed new social identities, thus backing the argument by Shepherd (1991) that the significance of music is socially located and must be understood as forming part of the socially constructed reality of the groups or societies producing and consuming the music in question (p. 57). A new social reality began to emerge and the barriers that excluded

people based on their race, class and cultural differences were deconstructed through these hip-hop sessions. Consequently, the presence of young people from the suburbs, attending hip-hop sessions in the townships, became a regular phenomenon on Sundays.

Through hip-hop, and by hosting these sessions in the apartheid-constructed townships, the youth was re-imagining the corridors of freedom and was dismantling the cultural and social barriers that had been falsely constructed under the pretence of separate development. Those coming from the suburbs saw their every Sunday pilgrimage to hip-hop sessions in the township as enculturation and a quest to understand and define themselves through the narratives of the harsh realities of the townships as told by their peers. The youth from the suburbs were no longer learning the historical harsh realities of ghetto life from stories narrated to them around the dinner tables by their parents who now were divorced from this life as they had moved up the economic ladder and left the township. Instead, they were provided with a telescopic view through which they could peep into township lives and bear witness to justice denied, if not freedom delayed.

It was at these sessions that a new life was being crafted and articulated. By invading and occupying open spaces the youth created what Rose (1994) calls "a contemporary stage for the theatre of the powerless" or what Fraser (1992) calls "subaltern counter-publics" (p.82) which occur when "socially disenfranchised collectives formulate alternative discursive arenas founded upon oppositional counter discourses". Dyson (2007) describes them as "a space for cultural resistance" (p. 76).

Worth noting is that most of the hip-hop sessions in Soweto had some form of attachment to the historical events of the respective townships that were now hosting such sessions. The destruction of Sophiatown and the forced removals of Africans in 1956 to a far away and newly-established township

gave birth to the townships where these sessions would take place five decades later.

In was in 1904 that the British-controlled city authorities removed black South African and Indian residents out of Brickfields to an "evacuation camp" at Klipspruit municipal sewage farm outside the Johannesburg municipal boundary, following a reported outbreak of plague (Rakodi, 1997). By 1918 two further townships had been established in the east and the west of Johannesburg.

Townships to the south west of Johannesburg followed, starting with Pimville in 1934 (a renamed part of Klipspruit) and 70 years later Pimville would host its first hip-hop sessions named "1808" after its post code. Dube Township (named after John Langalibalele Dube – the first president of the ANC) wa established in 1948 and would also host its first hip-hop session, Splash Jam in 2004, 76 years after the establishment of the township. Both "Black Sunday" and "Slaghuis" took place in Diepkloof – a township established in 1959 to accommodate forced removals of Africans from Alexandra Township. Meadowlands Township, established in 1956 after the forced removals from Sophiatown, chose the name "Dungeon Shack" for its hip-hop session.

The creation of Meadowlands was the ultimate showpiece of the apartheid regime in their determination apartheid regime/government in their determination to create white South Africa on the other side and Black South Africa on the opposite side. Forced removals of more than 60,000 people shaped the future struggle for liberation. Emerging from a culturally vibrant renaissance of African music and jazz, it was not difficult for the cry of the dispossessed to compose a song which would become the anthem for emancipation in the country and be heard and felt all over the world. It was called "Meadowlands", a track that pitted Blacks against Whites as is evident in the lyrics below:

*Otla utlwa makgowa arei*
*Are yeng ko Meadowlands*

*Meadowland Meadowlands*
*Meadowlands sithando sam*
*you'll hear the whites say*
*Let's move to Meadowlands*
*Meadowlands Meadowlands*
*Meadowlands, my love*
*Otlwa utlwa botsotsi bare*
*Ons dak ni ons pola hier*
*Pola hier pola hier*
*Pola hier sithando sam*
*You'll hear the tsotsis say*
*We're not moving, we're staying here*
*Stay here, stay here Stay here, my love*

**Research in Soweto**

Soweto, as the epitome of what could be called the socio-economic system of inclusion and simultaneous exclusion could not have been a better site for my research. The sessions represented both the poor from deep Soweto and those from the affluent neighbourhoods of Pimville and Diepkloof. The different power and social structures between these different areas of residence have become an important source of subcultural differences within the township where one part is what could be called the "invincible dark ghetto" (Clark, 1965) with its jives and defiance. This dark ghetto has learned to feed off itself and has learned to survive, whilst at the same time it has become so stigmatized that it stops just short of being outcast.

At these sessions, the youth created their own subcultural expressions and their own social network, refusing to retreat and let the mainstream and dominant culture absorb them into submission. Instead they transformed the filthy and under serviced public spaces into their own cultural amphitheatres. These sessions became the social and cultural magnet for those wanting inspiration and to experience the soulfulness of the forgotten dark and invisible ghetto.

Therefore, the hip-hop sessions provided a platform for expressions of the prevailing socio-economic conditions, and helped to craft the story line and

the narrative for most young people trying to make their mark through hip-hop and rap music. It also became a platform from which young hip-hop aspirants could test their artistic brilliance and verbal flow and test if they had resonance with the audience. The sessions could make or break you; they were not a place for the faint-hearted and definitely not for the fake or whack emcees. They were a place for a re-awakened cultural and creative consciousness that throughout the long years had been buried in the doldrums of human history by a racially oppressive regime. They were a place where young rappers emerged out of the informal settlements, skwatta kamps, the suburbs, the townships and were ready to share their carefully crafted rhymes and hook lines with an audience eager to listen and to discard you at the same time.

**Black Sunday" in Diepkloof**

Black Sunday was the first hip-hop event I got to experience a hip-hop session in Soweto. Unfortunately it was the last time it hosted a session, because it ceased to exist immediately after that.

It is here where I had taken delegates and guest artists who had attended the 1st African Hip-Hop Summit and Concert that had finished the previous day on October 8, 2005. On Sunday, October 9, the session was the home to UN-Habitat, to artists such as Didier Awadi (the father of African hip-hop) from Positive Black Soul in Senegal, K'naan (the most prominent hip-hop artist ever to emerge from Somali, and who later did the 2010 World Cup Song for Coca Cola), Bhubesi, Emmanael Jal (former child soldier from South Sudan) and "Gidigidi Majimaji" (the group that released the big song in Africa, "unbogwable" and which was used to oust Daniel Arap Moi's party from rule. Other local artists such as Zuluboy, Proverb, Tumi, Sufidan, attended the hip-hop sessions and registered their concerns about the lack of progress in the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals better known as MDGs.

Black Sunday was co-founded in 2003 by Hempza Mawawa, a youth activist, graphic designer, hip-hop producer, co-founder and owner of Made in Soweto

and of the Native Hut Foundation and Black Sunday Arts Academy. "Black Sunday" became a flag ship of hip-hop sessions in Soweto and boasted a more socially and politically conscious following, making the sessions the hot bed of Raptivists eager to challenge the status quo.

Black Sunday provided a certain degree of intellectual stimulus and would be visited by spoken-word poets and rappers who had studied Saul Williams, Amiri Baraka, Maya Angeleou, Lauryn Hill, Mos Def, Dead Prez, Immortal Technique, Sista Souljah, Queen Latifah, and Nas, just to mention a few. These aspiring rappers were serious about their craft and they understood the inextricable link between the Soweto Uprising of June 1976 and the fight for emancipatioin. They had two choices to make: if they chose to act, what values and whose ideas would inform their action and if they chose not to act whose values and ideas would be imposed upon them? They adopted and enacted the philosophical message by Frantz Fanon: "Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it" (206).

**Slaghuis in Diepkloof**

Slaghuis (just across another section of Diepkloof in Zone 4) also started in 2003, after breaking up with Black Sunday and was an alternative for those who preferred a much grittier and no-holds-barred kind of hip-hop showcase where the use of language could go as far as the tongue could spit. I did most of my ethnographic work at at this hip-hop session, and hosted over four sessions during the two-year period of my research.

The appropriately named Slaghuis hip-hop session was a stark contrast to its neighbour. Slaghuis (an Afrikaans word for 'the butcher shop' where beef gets sliced) lived up to its name: this was a session where rappers had an imaginary enemy, which they "had beef with" and were ready to slice and chop with their sharp lyrics. It was a true slaughter house and the young rappers came here armed only with punch lines so venomous they could spit rhymes for minutes on end and were ready to jump on stage if they were lucky enough to be selected.

Here, at Slaghuis, there was no pre-selection to test your capabilities as a rapper; simply signing and putting your name on a piece of paper that the protector carried and from which he made selections, guaranteed a short or long stint on stage, depending how well you would be received by a crowd eager to unleash insults should you be "whack".

A prolonged performance on stage by those lucky to have been picked up from the register would be quickly met by an impatient umpire who did not hesitate to ushered you out of the stage. As if this was not enough, the merciless crowd seemed to enjoy the unceremonious extraction of the unlucky ones off the stage as they booed with a barrage of invectives before they even finished 16 bars. What one thought was going to be a killer performance with verse and punch lines meant to earn respect from the audience turned out to be the straw that broke the carmel's back as the ringmaster whisks you away from the stage.. But these young and aspiring rappers would soldier on and come back again and again until the crowd warmed to them.

Slaghuis was started by Enzo and G Quest (the always half-drunk ring master who had a talent for keeping the crowds entertained). This was where aspiring artists were able to express themselves without censorship. This is the session that allowed the township to show its flavour and gave a platform to young "cats" who did not feel alienated by the fact they could not afford the clothes that would make them representative of the hip-hop culture, such as Air Jordans, or Fubu. Slaghuis was not a place for "cheese boys" – or those rappers from the affluent areas of Soweto or from the suburbs. This hip-hop session rejected affluence and embraced rappers from the streets with scars of poverty and hunger tattooed all over them, but whose desire to spit rhymes on stage would make them walk the length and breadth of Joburg to Soweto so that they could be heard.

Slaghuis allowed aspiring rappers like one character "Father Kak" (Father Shit) to find expression without being censored. Father Kak was an interesting character: the most despised, loathed and platform-denied rap enthusiast who at every session would force his way onto the register of rappers wanting to ply their trade and test whether the crowd would accept him or not. Unfortunately, at every moment given to him as a last ditch effort to just get rid of him, "Father Kak" would enter the stage and within ten seconds of his first verse or what he thought was a killer verse, would be booed off stage by a disparaging crowd. Yet he would come back again and again.

Slaghuis also allowed rappers with physical disabilities to get on stage even if it meant crawling onto it. "Circuit Cable", a disabled aspiring rapper from somewhere in Soweto, rolled his wheelchair from the early hours of Sunday morning to make sure he made it by the afternoon when the hip-hop session began. Not eager to register his name to get on stage he, however, was always ready to break into a flow if the mike cable was long enough to reach him on the grass where he would park his wheelchair. "Circuit Cable", when the moment arose, would always break into his one and only verse, which surely had been rehearsed and rehashed over and over again – a true lyrical recycling disguised as free styling:

*I go by the name of 'Circuit Cable'*
*Making sure that Cats get disabled*
*They fuck around but they know that they enabled*
*I come back and I'm the cat that killed abled*
*Shit is so fucked up*
*Yes I am still around*
*That's I am chilling with my niggas from Battleground*
*Yes, bringing thunder sounds*
*Fuck what they heard*
*Hip-hop is the shit and you know that you heard it,*

The ability to put down, or slice into pieces, an imaginary opponent by boasting about who you are, your lyrical skills, accompanied by an avalanche

of insults and disses, sustained the rapper on stage from removal by a not-so-patient audience who were more interested in the rapper's punch lines.

This is what made Slaghuis stand the test of time because it brought the real hip-hop from the street onto a stage meant for the streets by allowing emcees who came with the sole purpose of impressing the audience with their skilful inventive rapping style.

Hundreds of rappers flocked to Slaghuis even from the coloured townships where they had learned the art of surviving in the street. To them Slaghuis was just one small street compared to the real life on the streets of coloured townships in Johannesburg that are riddled with drugs and crime. A war of words thrown at an imaginary opponent was nothing compared to the sound of gunshots fired day in and day out as gangs battle for territory. The aspiring coloured rappers came from neighbourhoods where everyday gun-wielding gangs fight for territory as their bullets miss and fly across the streets into living rooms and pierce straight into the hearts of unsuspecting mothers breast feeding a future life yet to be lived. In comparison Slaghuis was a walk in the park.

These and other narratives hit the right note for the Slaghuis audience coming from the townships of Soweto where the dominant storyline was about spinning *amagusheshe* (325 BMW popular in the townships), making a quick buck or dieing trying. Their narratives covered girlfriends dumping their boyfriends for failing to flash money to buy them designer clothes so that their women end up with soccer players or television personalities. The narrative is further developed to portray a dilemma where young men are failing to feed their families or are losing their women to the men who shower them with expensive gifts, thus leaving them with no option but to go rob a bank, get arrested, or die trying.

Many came to showcase their flow and punch lines but few survived. Amongst the few who survived the butcher at Slaghuis, at the hands of the

drunkenringmaster, G Quest, was F-eezy whose narrative was shared and understood by those who came from Soweto and the surrounding informal settlements as reflected in one of his choruses from a track "Sphila Dangerous" (EMI/Native, 2007):

*There is no rest eKasi*
*Ku Rough*
*Sphila Dangerous*
*Laph' amadoda aphila ngengazi njengama animal*
*Corner to Corner kugcwel' amataks*
*Mawungenangqondo clever kuduma amabaks*
*Ku tough unyoko uzoba umfelokazi*

Basically he is saying there is no time to rest in the townships; it's every man for himself, even if it means blood spilt; every corner is full of hustlers and only those who are street wise will survive – otherwise it's mourning for those who do not crack it.

F-eezy's punch lines and dissing rhymes were so full of beef one could cut them with a butcher's knife. In the track below, F-eezy displays his brilliance in the appropriation of dissing rhymes, targeted at those rappers who think they can beat him at this game:

*Uhlal' ugate crusher awukaz' uthol' invitation*
*Ama rhymes akho awana effect njenge rustation*
*Ngizok' connectela ama joystics*
*Ngidlalel' endlebeni zakho nge play station*
*Ngenz' ama tricks esiswini sika mama wakho ube i-abortion*
*Uzof' umangele njenge striker esingazi i-position*
*Uth' uz'bhekile kodwa is'piri sakini asina reflection*
*u-claim ukudl' abantwana nge 4-5 engen' erection*
*nalab' o-claim angobo abak'gayi ne attention*
*bayak' bheka ulibele ufukuza ushayana ne deflection*
*ngiphush' i-passion umntanakho ngimudla opposite direction*
*ngimtshel'ukuthi faka lenja i-sign ye subtraction*
*angiseloz' ezikhulumayo woza ubephethe something*
*for the sake of your protection*

F-eezy's verse above is a simple display of braggadocio and bragging about his lyrical acrobatics meant only to silence or threaten anyone brave enough

to get on stage after him. The verse really tells the rapper before or after him that he is untouchable and anyone who dares challenge him will be knocked down and will not know what has hit him. The language is heavy, laced with explicit lyrics and gangster metaphors.

F-eezy would later release an album called *Gate Khahlela,* meaning "'kick the gates open," and had the album cover show him in front of his mother's shack: an artist from the informal settlements determined to grab the microphone and tell his story.

These and many other stories tell the tale of the dark ghetto and the dilemmas of class conflict: a township with shack dwellings squashed in between beautiful mansions against a backdrop of piles of garbage alongside the roads that once were dusty and gravel roads that doubled as tarmac for army vehicles protecting white power.

The stories are reflective of the in-your-face ugliness of the dirt of uncollected garbage, the filth of sewage pipes that have burst open creating streams where children swim, mistaking it for fresh water, with some getting swallowed inside the drainage system left uncovered. These are the stories of neglect and the social dynamic of a ghetto whose society is afflicted with drugs, unemployment, crime, and of a youth whose will to live is tested by the lack of options.

Therefore, it was no coincidence that Slaghuis would provide a platform for artists who hit the right note with the audience, propelling their careers beyond their imagination. One such artist was Pro Kid (Linda Mkhize) who popularised Kasi (township) Rap and allowed artists who were not fluent in English like those rappers from the suburbs, to actually craft their stories in the township language that only Kwaito had been able to articulate. Pro Kid was the street; his rap spoke the right language and was understood even by kids yet to speak their first word of English. Pro Kid gave inspiration to more

rappers who would later follow in his footsteps, such as F-eezy, an extremely talented and skilful emcee with punch lines and rhymes for days.

Appealing to the youth not to lose hope and succumb to acts of desperation, Pro Kid would say, in his seminal track "Ungaphel' Umoya Son"

*Ungapheli umoya son*
*Noma bak'bamba ngendliziyo*
*Useb'nzimeni uyakguzuka ngenxa yesimo*
*Ngithi ungapheli umoya son*
*If you the type that's hard to find*
*Redefined sebak' ringa blind*
*You shouldn't mind*
*Ungapheli umoya son*
*Shayela phantsi s'keep persist*
*Watch you wrist*
*Better yet you better pump up your fist*
*Ungapheli umoya son... ungapheli umoya son*
*Ungapheli umoya son... ungapheli umoya son*

The above chorus by Pro Kid is reflective of a city that, despite its challenges, continues to exhume that vibrancy and cheerful energy of a community whose members have become born hustlers and have created an informal economy where traders have sprung up at each and every corner of human activity. Pro Kid tells the youth of Soweto never to lose hope and to keep on pushing with their heads up and a never-say-die attitude, regardless of the individual circumstances.

So, when Pro Kid continues with his last chorus to say:

*Eh this one is 'specially dedicated to you out there suffering*
*Fede niks kau, noma ublomile daar ekhoneni*
*Us'phushel' ama-orange us'bayis' iphepha*
*Kguzuka sbali one day kuzoba grand*
*Uyazi zonke lezinto ziyajika*
*Fede niks it's your boy Pro, you know*
*Letting you know that ah sisonke*

it was this narrative that found resonance amongst a lot of young people who came to Slaghuis. They felt that someone was telling their story on their behalf and the story was real. Slaghuis spoke to them.

It was at Slaghuis where some of the most successful rappers were discovered, such as Pro-Kid, 989, Zulu Mob, F-eezy and a few others. Pro-Kid would become one of the most respected rappers and his debut album, *Heads and Tales,* became a collector's item but never won any awards. His visible success was an endorsement deal with "Fish Eagle" whiskey, adorning billboards countrywide which depicted him as someone who "has arrived", a successful and powerful boardroom executive who appreciates his whiskey.

**1808 in Pimville**

Parts of Pimville are a stark contrast to most of the rest of Soweto. This section accommodates the emerging black middle class who ooze affluence and want to be in tune with and conform to the rules of the dominant narrative. It is home to the emerging black middle class and boasts beautiful houses, the roads are good, and playgrounds and schools are in mint condition, but it was not spared by a defiant youth culture tired of the so-called "daddy politics" and determined not to succumb to the expectations of their parents that were contrary to their own expectations.

I In 2006, 1808 started and was hosted inside the council facilities of the recreation centre where, unlike the open sites at other sessions, you entered through a security gate to witness yet another culturally vibrant event. 1808 turned its hip-hop session into a community upliftment movement where revelers were charged at the gate – not in monetary terms but for items varying from clothes to books which then were donated to nearby Kliptown's destitute communities.

1808 attracted a different crowd, the cheese boys and cheese girls of the upmarket townships, and it also hosted a different breed of hip-hop artists and DJs such as C-live, Reason, Morafe, Zuluboy, Siya Shezi, Proverb, and

others as well as the new young rapper Red Button, who was actually discovered at the 1808 session by Pro Kid. The session was later transformed and expanded to include differentiated services such as 1808 Days Media, a company that has 1808 Sessions (events), the 1808 Foundation (a charity) and a graphic design service. It has a strategic ambition to become a profitable entity – true to the character of Pimville's black diamonds and a shift away from being a hip-hop platform for youth simply wanting to express themselves.

**Graveside in Dobsonville**

Graveside, hosted in Dobsonville on the West Rand, faced the graveyard: a common site of week-end burials and served as a reminder that one had to work hard to have one's name engraved on the tombstone to say "here lies the greatest rapper of all times whose voices cried 'freedom child' except that no one bothered to listen".

Graveside was F-eezy's playground. This is where he conquered and smashed young rappers without any remorse or reservations, and would later be paraded as the West Rand's hip-hop export to Slaghuis, sent to butcher emcees from other sessions.

**Dungeon Shack in Meadowlands**

Meadowlands became the host for Dungeon Shack hip-hop session with its restless ambition of wanting to earn the same prestige as enjoyed by Slaghuis and Black Sunday.

**Splash Jam in Orlando West**

It isy no coincidence that a hip-hop session would be founded exactly 30 years after the Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976, which marked the turning point of the South African struggle for liberation. Just like the student uprising on 1976, Splash Jam was a site where music was the weapon for young people to articulate their vision for the new South Africa. Founded at the corner of Mji and Motlana Streets in Orlando West, Splash Jam took place on the first Sunday of each month, and it became a platform for youth wishing to

express themselves in the best way they could. To establish this site for artistic expression the founders of Splash Jam had destroyed a house which had been become a den for drug binges and sometimes a place where women were dragged inside and raped. The site was turned into a car wash with an adjacent tuck shop and also a platform for artists to sell their CDs, t-shirts and hip-hop relics and became a scheme fthat enabled self-reliance in youth seeking to establish themselves in showbusiness.

Taking turns, these sessions hosted Sunday afternoon gatherings of youth from Soweto and the surrounding townships where aspiring rappers would come to ply their craft hoping to be endorsed by their peers and wanting to be discovered as the next 'illiest' or 'dopiest' emcee.

As Greg (2008) would observe in his article, "Any Given Sunday: Underground Hip-Hop in South Africa":

> The Soweto hip-hop jam sessions as a collective movement work; they are the only platform where upcoming rappers and hip-hoppers can test their talent, while grooming a unique blend of local hip-hop. What doesn't work about any of the sessions is the cloud of dagga and alcohol abuse that hangs over them, eliciting shameful stares from older passers-by. But then again, I guess it wouldn't be sex, drugs and hip-hop, would it now? These are the places where record executives in search of raw, real talent, should park their SUVs and pull out the business cards.

## And So They Were Born

If it had not been for these hip-hop sessions, which took turns to host each session, rappers like Pro Kid, 985, Pitch Black Afro, Zulu Mob, Proverb, Zubz, Zuluboy (who carved his niche at Inqaba hip-hop sessions in Durban), F-eezy, and many others would still be carrying their rucksacks with rhymes, punch lines and gimmicks full of hope. These sessions provided young rappers with

a platform to be noticed by their own peers and to get baptized and endorsed by the streets before they went out there and faced the world.

The sessions gave the hip-hop generation and emerging rappers street credibility and shaped their language, and the social construction of urban space gave them great confidence and the courage to articulate thesocio-political and economic posture of the invisible ghetto. The invisibility of the ghetto, as opposed to its invincibility, arises out of the continued unintended denial by society of the existence of these community networks and the corresponding narrative behind them.

As a participant observer at the hip-hop session my investigation focussed on the lyrical presence of what James Scott calls the hidden transcript of resistance and what Porter (2005), referring to rap music, calls a radical postmodernism or Ebert (1996) describes as a "dichotomy of ludic and resistance postmodernism".

It was at these hip-hop sessions that the cultural and political impact of hip-hop could be felt and seen. On the surface it might appear that the youth were simply having fun and entertaining themselves. However, could it be that the underlying message was the comfort in being united for a common purpose to be heard and noticed as active citizens striving for a an equitable social contract? It is therefore imperative that the underlying messages that permeated the spirit of these regular Sunday gatherings or social encounters are properly understood so as to distil and distinguish what is simple entertainment from socio-political commentary.

## Betraying or Fulfilling its Mission? Joburg's Hip-Hop Narrative

Unlike Cape Town's hip-hop where reality rap dominates the hip-hop narrative, Johannesburg has been the site of an over-commercialised hip-hop narrative with dominant themes of power, fame and money. The absence of a socio-politically-conscious rap music scene in Johannesburg is a contradiction

in terms because of the city's association with the musical poetics of a revolutionary identity from the Sophiatown era in pursuit of the struggle for the cultural liberation of African people, blacks in particular. Johannesburg is supposed to be in the forefront of the creative resistance industry because of its position as the economic and cultural capital and because it is the epitome of an uneven society, reflected through high levels of unemployment, poverty and social inequality.

In what is supposed to be a politically-charged city, where hip-hop should be taking the lead in being the voice of the marginalised, rap music has instead assumed the role of servicing the cultural aesthetics of capital, thus posing no significant threat to the status quo. Krims (2000) argues, "whatever symbolic challenges rap music might hold for capital do not seem to be perceived by the broader culture as seriously threatening" (p.1).

Whereas there still could be certain aspects or segments of the hip-hop culture which speak to what Lawson (2005) calls "the unfinished business of social justice but in a post-civil rights voice" (p. 172), there are no audible voices in Johannesburg where that discourse to be heard. In the main, the youth in Johannesburg are caught in a celebratory mood of what I call freedom to jive and party just for the sake of it.

Pennycook (2007) argues that elsewhere around the world popular culture has been used to mobilize audiences for political protests because of its ease of travel and because it is "a potent site of protest itself" (p. 83). However, Johannesburg hip-hop has failed to capitalise on its dominant position and has failed to use its pole position to take a lead as acivic agency in addressing pressing issues affecting the youth, especially against the backdrop of rampant corruption, the slow speed of service delivery and high levels of unemployment. A new protest movement, which emerged in the last two years in the form of #FeeMustFall campaign, did more to bring to the fore issues that have been simmering for years concerning the socio-economic status of youth in South Africa and their inability to access quality education.

The absence of an audible voice from the hip-hop fraternity brings doubt as to what exactly the dominant narrative is for youth under siege as portrayed through hip-hop? Even in instances where a few song(s) have been penned sporadically by one or two rappers, students have not seen them as instruments for mobilisation. Instead new songs were composed by the students, such as "Nobody Wants to us Together", "Nkosi Sikelela", "Dali Mpofu Khawubabuze", that took the revolutionary character of the struggle songs sung by the mass democratic movement during the 1980s. Even in instances where two artists, HHP featuring Blaqfalconbird & Blasto and Gigi Lamayne, released Fees Must Fall songs, such as "Pasopa" and "Fees Will Fall", they lacked the revolutionary impact of those composed by the students themselves. What appears to be a collective unconsciousness amongst rap musicians in Johannesburg brings up the question of what exactly it is that they should be highlighting for society to take notice.

Charry (2012) also argued that rap music in South Africa has become obsessed with emulating the same material culture as reflected in what had become mainstream American hip-hop (73). Hip-hop has moved further and further away from what are the foundational elements of rap music, at least from an African and diasporic perspective. The ever-present capital and the influence of both the media and influential record labels in Johannesburg mean that socially and politically conscious rappers stand no chance against commercial rap that soon gained privileged status among young urbanites.

Dominating the mainstream hip-hop narrative on radio and television in Johannesburg and by design in the rest of the country, have been songs popularly referred to as "turn-up" music - a reference to party music that demands audiences to get loose and get wild. The new hip-hop narrative pays scant regard to the prevailing socio-economic circumstances and the day-to-day struggles of the youth as they navigate their lives in a country where unemployment is endemic and education is inaccessible to many. Contrary to popular expectations of what should be the central role of hip-hop in

Johannesburg, the emerging sound, flow and the lyrics contained in most of the recent hip-hop songs have been more about demanding that audiences dance and celebrate nothingness.

This is perpetuated by what Horkheimer and Adorno argue is the subjugation of the working class through a mass culture whose main intention is to "distract the working class consumers" from the realities on the ground (quoted in Pennycook, 2007, p. 79). Pennycook (2007) argues, "the lyrics of rap are far more central than they are in many other forms of popular culture" (p. 10), because of what he terms "immense verbal and mental dexterity". There is no better time and place than the economic hub of Africa (Johannesburg) for hip-hop lyrical content to drive socio-political and economic emancipation.

Unfortunately, an emerging and audible narrative of commercialised hip-hop, in search of money, power and fame, has replaced what were once unadulterated sites for political expression that fostered pride and a strong identitification with the collective marginality of youth. The search for fame and the culture of "get rich or die trying" (as popularised by 50 Cent) has shaped how rap music and the hip-hop culture is appropriated in Johannesburg. The hip-hop narrative in Johannesburg is far from being a genuine testimony of the lived experiences in the township but has become more about idealised prosperity. The images of rap music and the hip-hop culture reflect the lavish world of a successful rapper that has beaten the odds, at least in the imaginary world. This is a far cry from the reality on the ground where young people still face a bleak future because of rising unemployment and limited opportunities available even to those with a college degree. This is a shift from how hip-hop was introduced to young South Africans as a discursive form of resistance, particularly in Cape Town.

This trajectory and the changing landscape of hip-hop and its consumption patterns speaks to what Schulz (2012) calls "specific economic locations of

those who perform rap, as well as to the specific dilemma those who consume hip-hop" (p. 143). The dilemmas of poverty and limited opportunities, coupled with the over-commercialisation of popular culture by media and the corporate world have narrowed the options that youth in the metropolis have and most probably forcedg them to abandon the use of hip-hop as a tool to challenge a system that does not respond to their socio-economic circumstances. Instead, rappers, as Schulz argues, "draw on consumption objects and images that circulate along transnational commercial structures and have a decidedly global outlook" (p. 143). It is therefore not surprising that hip-hop is fast selling its soul to commercial consumerism and ultimately has gone pop or maybe what I call "hip-pop". However, the resultant effect of this cultural and political shift of hip-hop is not isolated to Johannesburg. Elsewhere around the world, with a few exceptions, "underground hip hoppers are in conflict with hip hoppers who they believe have sold out, and they contest the legitimacy of a music industry that has always been associated with repression and exclusion" (Watkins, 2012, p. 68).

Whilst hip-hop is fast commercialising everywhere in Africa, the urgent concern among the young African hip-hop generation, as noted by Charry (2012), has been "how to embrace, shape and use hip-hop so that it can function as an authentic expression of their identity" (p. 285). In recent years rappers have had to reconstruct their articulation and the choice of language they use to reflect and express their lived experiences in the manner that would be understood and find affinity with the local audiences. While initially rap music was a genre and culture embraced and articulated by those with a mastery of English it has now become authenticated by adoption and expression through vernacular voices. Even Clark and Koster (2014) have noted "The first generation of hip hop artists in Africa relied heavily on imitation. Many artists did remakes of American hip-hop songs and rapped over popular American hip-hop beats. Many artists would rap in English even if few of their countrymen spoke English fluently" (p. xiv). South African hip-hop was also not spared this language dilemma, with the exception of Cape

Town where "Afrikaaps" (a localised version of Afrikaans spoken by Coloureds in the Cape Flats) was appropriated as the medium through which rap songs were delivered. The heighted level of rap music and street consciousness and the indigenisation of hip-hop in South Africa, in recent years, have also led to the transformation of Black vernacular voices in Johannesburg. The mainstream hip-hop that has always followed commercialised American trends has forced the rapper in Joburg to respond to the inevitable, which is making hip-hop culture and rap music in their own style that is localised whilst making their music commercially appealing to their audiences.

As Charry (2012) also observed rappers by the late 2000s rap artists in Africa were vernaculirising a foreign art form into a locally meaningful genre through localising the sounds, words, and meanings began to dominate most of the songs released. In South Africa, the choice of language, as Watkins (2012) highlighted, seemed to have become a key indicator of differing authenticities through which rappers imbued music "with a sense of multiplicity and of ownership in diverse contexts" (p. 66). Johannesburg hip-hop expressions have seen the multiple uses of localised languages in the appropriation of the dominant narrative, which unfortunately is still ignores the real issues facing youth.

The prevalence of the two musical genre systems of rap music in Johannesburg speaks to the possessive individualist nature of a city that is built on the quest for the accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of individual success. Even though there are still pockets of hip-hop resistant to the dominant order, party rap has engulfed Johannesburg hip-hop beyond what could be Not to be left out, hard-hitting and conscious emcees such as Tumi Molekane have begun to gravitate towards party rap with the song "Visa", featuring Busiswa from the album *The Return of the King* (2016) and that of Proverb's "Nothing New" from his 2016 album *The Read Tape* whilst still maintaining their signature style.

## Jiving in Defiance? The Meaning of Hip-Hop in Johannesburg

The apolitical nature of the Johannesburg rapper and the collective unconsciousness of the dominant hip-hop narrative must be understood against the prevailing themes that influence the production and distribution of hip-hop in the city. Such themes must be understood against what the youth sees as the missing link between what youth expect from government and what the youth has resolved to accomplish on their own. It must be understood against whether the youth's battle with themes such as hope and despair, success and failure, prosperity and poverty can still be in the hands of the state or whether the youth have opted to take this fight into their own hands, using the tool they understand, which is hip-hop and its commercial exploitation so as to reverse what they perceive as the inverse of what was supposed to be freedom in all its facets.

Whether it is deliberate defiance or the absence of a collective consciousness in tackling socio-economic and political challenges as experienced by the youth on a daily basis, the Johannesburg rap music scene and hip-hop has re-versioned itself from its original revolutionary character to a more commercialised identity designed to respond to the commercial demands and consumption patterns of the audience it seeks to address. Whether hip-hop has given the middle finger to government for its alleged failure to deliver on the social contract or not, what is clearly visible is how hip-hop in Johannesburg has given its own meaning to the society that it serves. The youth's interpretation and understanding of the meaning of music in contemporary society is not obsessed with a narrative that seeks to address itself to dominant group; instead it takes a position that music does not depend on the existence of what Shepherd (1991) calls "physical external referents", because as he argues "music is its own meaning" (p. 83). In his argument of the social-relatedness of music, Shepherd argues,

> Music is consummatory because of the social meaning immanent in the individual consciousnesses and musical events of a society and, conversely, because social meaning can only arise and continue to exist through symbolic mediations in a consciousness" (p. 83).

The social relatedness of music and the meaning of society within the music has been creatively articulated by hip-hop to the extent that the genre, because of its pop nature and instant gratification for those who follow it, has managed to permeate every sphere of society, be it commercial or social, whilst grabbing the attention of the dominant group that, over the years, has ignored this genre and its influence on contemporary society. The sociality of hip-hop and its ability to articulate social meanings through its performativity enables it to locate itself within the dynamic structuring of social life.

Rap music in Johannesburg has experienced a sonic organisation of the genre – both in the delivery style as well as the beat itself – leading to the creation of what seems to be a deliberate localised hip-hop identity. In recent years there seems to have been a focus on localised cultural engagement in the appropriation of rap music – both in the production/articulation as well as the consumption with rap music ultimately assuming its own urban or township identity.

To understand how hip-hop and its influence changed the character of rap music and its purpose, in Johannesburg particularly, requires a close analysis of Adam Krims' internal structuration of the genre system. Krims (2000) argues that musical representation in rap music is not necessarily embedded in the sounds but is "mediated by sounds and their socially situated interpretations" (p. 80). The rap genre system allows for the location of the dominant narratives and circulating stories whilst facilitating the understanding of hip-hop representation in the present.

The interpretation and analysis of the hip-hop narrative and the style in which it is presented requires a shift away from analysing music as what Krims (2000) refers to as '' as an objective property of music" and instead advocates for treating "style" as a "matter of social discussion, behaviour, and negotiation" (p. 46) thus making style discursive. In this regard the genre system of rap and its musical poetics then becomes a necessary step in grasping representation in rap music in order to understand the social influence on musical style. This suggests that musical style and its corresponding message refers to something outside of itself. The stylistic changes of the genre system of rap as experienced in the last few years speak to what Shepherd (1991) argues is the "social influence on musical style" (p. 66) thus making music a response to the socio-economic and political changes as they occur in contemporary society.

Krims argues that for the system to be described it must service two purposes: (i) it must lay a framework for musical poetics in the formation of identities; (ii) it must outline some important parameters within which the poetics may function (p. 55). These parameters must speak to: (1) the style of the musical tracks; (2) the style of MCing (or "flow); and (3) the topics commonly dealt with (i.e. the semantic aspects of the lyrics).

For the purpose of the study and against the dominant narrative and what appears to be the popular voices of hip-hop in Johannesburg, I have opted to focus on two music genre systems as described by Krims (2000); (i) party rap – which he describes as designed to move a crowd and which makes them dance, focusing on celebration, pleasure, and humour; (ii) mack or pimp rap- which is depicted through a man whose confidence, prolificness, and (claimed) success with woman mark him as a "player".

In the songs that I have analysed in this chapter, I have attempted to cover the parameters as outlined by Krims' genre system of rap music. In my analysis of the songs I have also attempted to show "how music is socially

located and understood as forming part of the socially constructed reality of the groups or societies responsible for producing and consuming the music in question" (Shepherd, 1991, p. 57).

It is the explosion of commercialised hip-hop that has seen audiences literally shaping their own response to music through new dance styles and moves thus challenging and re-inscribing its cultural force and significance. In response, hip-hop and its musical poetics has taken a different shape and form where rap music has adopted the same posture as that of house or dance music with the emergence of hip-hop sub-genres like trap (see explanation below) as a showstopper for new dance styles. The Johannesburg partygoers are now enjoying this hip-hop genre style, which is fast turning into its own representation.

Trap music now dominates most of the hip-hop beats of the songs released in the last three years, a sound which incorporates an extensive use of multi-layered hard-lined and melodic synthesizers; crisp, grimy and rhythmic snares; deep 808 sub-bass kick drums or heavy sub-bass lines; double-time, triple-time and similarly divided hi-hats; and a cinematic and symphonic utilization of string, brass and keyboard instruments creating an overall dark, harsh, grim and bleak atmosphere for the listener.

In the last few years, young rappers have taken centre stage and have eclipsed the more established emcees that have been in the industry for a long time. Whilst the emergence of these young emcees might not be predicting the changing of the guard, a new hip-hop landscape has thrown the game wide open for new rappers to enter the widely contested terrain.

Trap music's dominant characteristics are its threatening, discouraging, gritty and aggressive, if not quarrelsome, lyrical content portraying themes that bear testimony to life in the streets, poverty, violence, and harsh experiences in urban surroundings. Joburg rappers have taken trap music and fused it with

their localised styles; employing the various linguistic acrobatics at their disposal by flaunting their understanding of the street language in order to achieve the artistic and commercial ends they seek.

## Transcultural Flows and Vernacular Voices of the Popular

Talib Kweli said, "Hip-hop is a folk music that speaks directly to the people in the language that they are on the street corner speaking" (Keys, 2002, p. 227). As the new hip-hop musical style and narrative began to signify a cultural shift from what was once an American genre system of rap, South African hip-hop, particularly in Johannesburg, has been transformed into a localised musical style thus widening its appeal to a broad array of young people. What was "initially a genre of the educated elite" (Charry, 2012, p. 304) has expanded its spheres and is now relatively accessible to urban youth. This will become evident in the further analysis of how hip-hop has dominated radio and television in the last few years.

As would be expected with the introduction of any new genre style, party rap is fast turning into its own representation and "signalling its own narrative of authenticity" (Krims, 2000, p. 57). Some of the songs analysed below speak more to what Krims calls the "relative stability and repeatability of party-rap flow" (p. 57) demanding dance and sing-along, which he argues have proven to produce successful singles and opportunities for cross-over.

The emergence of the new vernacular voices who have inflected American hip-hop to suit their local conditions has given birth to a new storyteller; a storyteller that Fanon (1963) says gives free reign to his imagination and innovatively creates a work of art where the creative urge in the songs re-imagines new national realities (p. 241).

Ricky Rick released a single, "Boss Zonke", in 2014 under Makhado Agency that had a simple "sing-songy" and catchy chorus and bridge and the song

conformed to the more commercial and dance-oriented beat and appealed to a more cross over audience.

The clever use of a catchy sing-along chorus of child-like girl voices created the effect of a nostalgic nursery rhyme often played by young children at kindergarten. The song opened a new world to hip-hop as it soon extended itself to simple games played by children in the street, rhythmically clapping whilst reciting, what soon could become a nursery rhyme or what Austin (1962) calls "etiolations" (language use considered not serious).

The song, "Boss Zonke", was made popular by how the chorus quickly strikes a chord with the audience in the way in which language is made effective by repetitions and the recitation of the chorus (Derrida, 1982 and Bourdieu, 1982) on the power of words, but more importantly how, according to Austin (1962) the right words are uttered by the right people (female voices) and in the right circumstances (party and dance mood) – all of this having the right effect:

*Boss zonke, boss nonke*
*Akanandaba, unehaba*
*KwaMashu naseMlazi*
*Umswenko bayamazi*

*[Prebridge] x2*
*Elokshini, usabani usemasabhabsini?*
*Usabani usemasabhabsini?*
*Usabani usemasabhabsini?*
*Bathi pop mabhodlela, pop champagne*

The contradictory usage or reference of both 'elokshini' (the township) and 'usemasabhabsini' (in the suburbs) shows the connection between the two worlds where hip-hop finds its expression: the so-called black townships and the formerly whites-only residential areas, the surburbs.
These transcultural flows are, according toPennycook (2007), giving new parameters to otherwise locally or nationally diverse identities (p. 7).

The mixture of both Zulu and English, even the Anglicised word *'mabhodlela'* for 'bottles' in one phrase *'Bathi pop mabhodlela, pop champagne'* is indicative of what Alastair Pennycook calls "global Englishes and transcultural flows" where English has become localized and vernacularized to serve local purposes. The appropriation of language in hip-hop bears testimony to the fact that music "transcends language, neighbourhoods, cities, and national boundaries" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 10).

The transmodality of the hip-hop language is its strength and, because it's a culture born from the streets, it allows itself to be transgressive in breaking the rules of language use. Pennycook call this the new "contact zone" (2007), where, as Mary Louise Pratt (1992), argues, "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (p. 6). Switching between languages, as Williams (2010) argues, "has the potential to both widen the group's audiences, as well as to maintaining group identity" (p. 86).

Welch's (1999) notion of interculturality and the multicurality of hip-hop expressions is quite evident in Johannesburg, where the use of local lingo is a consequence of the hybridization of cultures. Hip-hop emcees in Johannesburg have mastered the art of transculturation (Pratt, 1992; Kramsch, 1990) and Jacquemet's transidiomatic practices (2005) where the presence of multilingual talk has become an integral part of the hip-hop language.

In the song "Dlala Ka Yona", K.O. showcases his multicultural presence in a multi-ethnic environment that allows him to interact using different languages and communicative codes or "multilingual talk" (Jacquemet, 2005):

thina sizophumula k'sasa
mangab'uyaphakama uzoy'thol'uses'mokolweni
thina siy'lez'ey'hamba negoni ephoketheni
shiy'umuntu wakho yedwa lov'use-problemini

sorry I'm going in
phol'uzom'thol'ek'seni wan'rata
k'ya otlatsa ake yetsa so
hase ke de shapa le banyana
ba ?? qho

In the above verse, K.O. has transcended Zulu, English and Sotho and showcases what Pennycook (2007) terms the "process of borrowing, bending and blending languages into new modes of expression" (p. 47).

In the verse below L-Tido shows his skill in the appropriation of various langues found in Johannesburg, which is a way of challenging the space of colonial encounters or what Pratt (1992) calls transculturation as a phenomenon of the contact zone (p. 138). His skilfully use of multiple languages to grap the attention multicultural audiences is evident in the verse below:

I'm usually on the ground for the checks and guap
So ke bona mabebeza riding past my block
Drop my game like, can I get your Math or not
'Cause I can take you to the moon like and Astronaut
And I know my way in town nana woz'o blom' e kas' lam
Show a couple' things ye ko fake vrostan
Akso bone ngwan' o so
Ong ntlatsang

In this song, L-Tido negotiates between English, Sotho, Zulu, and some tsotsi taal (township slang) to inadvertently prove the plurality of hip-hop and its vast and localised language vocabulary thus transgressing the boundaries enacted by the apartheid regime, which separated various ethnic groups according to language.

As Pennycook (2007) argues,

> hip-hop as transgressive cultural form opens the space to think differently, opens the space for different, transgressive applied

> linguistics that is then able to reflect on the relations between popular culture, pleasure, difference and language in ways that its rationalised aesthetic has not been able to do (p. 56).

Pennycook (2007) argues "transcultural and transidiomatic practices point to the ways in which those apparently on the receiving end of cultural and linguistic domination select, appropriate, refashion and return new cultural and linguistic forms through complex interactive cultural groups" (p. 47).

Williams (2010) argues that code switching between languages, especially the use of English tends "to assert such notions as opposition and vengeance" and "to express political dissent" as a way of rebelling against a system that seeks to oppress them (p.20). K.O. shows this rebellion against the apartheid system in his song "Caracara when he raps:

*You can take me out of the ghetto*
*but you can't take the ghetto outta me*
*(phum'ubatshele)*

This is an obvious defiance of the apartheid regime that confined Blacks to the township and now K.O. flips the script by alleging that the system has created an unintended monster out of him and no matter how the system tries to flush it out that is not going to happen. Just as the Egyptian Arabic rappers have appropriated English in their rap (Terkourafi, 2010, p. 84), some rappers in Johannesburg have also used English in their compositions, not to accommodate the language but to use it in order to express political dissent.

In applying Kahf's (2007) framework in analysing the hip-hop genre through three dimensions: rhetorical, socio-political, and emotional-experiential, it become clear the extent to which Johannesburg rappers have localized rap music and hip-hop culture in terms of the themes in their songs and how they appropriate language.

Unfortunately, Johannesburg hip-hop is more obsessed with the skilful use of the language, where performance through language is the underlying capacity to deliver carefully crafted punch lines, hooks and other diatribes, than with the message behind the song.

Below, Anatii proves what Bourdieu (1982) argues: that performative power (in this case, the success of a song on radio) will always depend on performance utterances by those that have the institutional power to speak.

The success of a song in mainstream radio in Johannesburg depends on the gullibility of the listener and the rhetoric of the song. Unless the song is about who can party most and who has money, girls, booze and other material possessions, as evident in the song "The Saga" by Anatii feat. AKA and Casper Nyovest (Yal ENT, 2015), those songs have no place on radio and television.

Unfortunately, and unlike Cape Town hip-hop that continues to fight against social and economic exclusion, the Johannesburg emcee is the direct opposite. The Johannesburg emcee is obsessed with the celebration of their success, freedom to party, material wealth, amongst other things. All of these newly found freedoms were previously denied to them before democracy. Now, hip-hop is a means of affirming their success, as evident in the verse by Casper Nyovest ("The Saga" by Anatii, feat. AKA and Casper Nyovest), these rappers

*I go shoutout to ninjas....*
*But shoutout to Fistaz*
*He just bought a 6, just bought a 650i*
*And now shout out to me*
*'Cause I just bought a 6*
*Just bought a 650i*
*And I'm buying a Benz*
*I want a C, I want a C63*
*Man, I wish I could tell ya*
*The real reason why I want a C63*

The dominant narrative of most of the rap songs, which in the main is about money-flauntig, have now become the dominant soundtrack, particularly in Johannesburg, in their chase for commercial.

It is not to the reading of the textual meaning of these songs that one needs to look to understand the dominant discourse in Johannesburg hip-hop, but more the take-up (consumption) and reaction to the songs by mass media and the general audiences.

The Sunday newspapers on April 10, 2016, ran three interesting, yet unrelated pieces on music. In the City Press, a piece on one of the most influential rappers, Kwesta, appeared on page five covering the success of his hit single "Ingudu" which reached one million viewers on YouTube. Ntombizodwa Makhoba, the newspaper journalist who wrote the article, opens with the line; "You probably once fondly drank a beer straight from a 750ml bottle called *"ingudu"* in townships all over the country. Now, popular rapper Senzo "Kwesta" Vilakazi has saluted the habit and turned it into a hit song".

On page 11 of the Sunday World, Alette Schoon, a lecturer at Rhodes University, gives an interesting perspective of the other side of hip-hop, in the Eastern Cape, and far from the madding crowd. Unlike the article by Makhoba on Kwesta, which in the main reflects on rap's big catch phrase of 'let's get stupid' (Reynolds, 2009), Schoon changes tune and offers the buzzword – "intellect" – as she goes to "A town where hip-hop heals broken youth". In her article she discovers artists who promote black consciousness through song and where the politics of hip-hop is about "recognising humanity in a space of deep dehumanisation".

In one newspaper, a story is carried about a song that reaches one million YouTube views for celebrating a 750ml beer drunk straight from its bottle, whereas in the other newspaper a story is told of artists like 2Chainz, XNasty, and Azlan, who are rendering a narrative about "overcoming persistent

symbolic boundaries by celebrating the humanity of ordinary township residents" whose quest is to claim the right to re-imagine their own future. There was not a single viewer of this on YouTube, as nobody cares except about the freedom to dance.

It is quite accidental then that Bongani Mahlangu, in his article in the same Sunday World (page12) pens an article, "Searching for the missing chord," and argues that local artists are sorely missing in any commentary about pressing issues. Mahlangu might not be totally incorrect when he says; "One is tempted to conclude that the reason local politicians consider arts just as frivolous entertainment pastime is due to artists failing to assert themselves on issues that matter the most". I guess Kwesta's "Ingudu" will not change Mahlangu's views but it will definitely attract the masses to a political rally, unlike the songs of 2Chainz, XNasty and Azlan as covered by Alette Schoon above.

As Pennycook (2207) argues, "The right words being uttered by the right people in the right circumstances, and the whole having the right effect" (p. 64) is the social magic of performatives. The capability of words to elicit a response from audiences places language use at the centre of performativity. Language and the The use of language and words makes them function as some kind of social action, which according to Austin, makes language and its performative aspect able to achieve different effects, thus causing people to act and causing multiple reactions, (Pennycook, 2007, p.65).

Mahlangu is disappointed with the lack of a narrative that reimagines the future and this lack is also evident in the lost opportunity of the Johannesburg hip-hop emcee to realise what people, when invested with power, can achieve with the microphone in their hand. In the absence of political or nuclear power, scholars such as James Scott, argue that hip-hop and rap music is a "weapon of the weak", with the possibility to refashion identities and put language on display as a form of social action.

If identities are formed in the linguistic performances (Pennycook, 2007), then language, its usage in performativity, not only shapes ideology or discourse, but also has an effect on the audiences who receive and react to it.

Unlike yesterday's emcee, like Public Enemy, who trail blazed the style of righteous rap, artists like L-Tido with his song "'Dlala Ka Yona" see language performativity as a form of social action whose main effect is a well-endowed young woman who responds to an instructive, rhythmic and melodic command of the speech act by shaking her booty.

*(Chorus)*
*Muhle lomntwana, man*
*She kinda look like Beyonce*
*The way o pakile ka teng*
*Baby girl, you're the one*
*She asked me to buy her a drink I just nodded and told her...*
*Ain't spending no money till you back that ass up ke bone*
*Nna nka dlala ka...*
*Dlala ka...*

The slang "*dlala ka yona*" meaning 'play with it or shake your ass' elicits a dance of gyrating and butt-shaking moves – thus contributes to a post structural discourse on what words make people do and what words do to people. The success of this speech act and the popularity of the song (as would be seen later) depend on the contex in which the song is performed and the right words being uttered by the right people (L-Tido) in the right circumstances (party mood), and the whole having the right effect (sexual connotation). The performative response to the song and the response to the song demands new ways of thinking about language performance as what Pennycook (2007) call "the socially embedded and culturally embodied use of language" (p. 63).

L-Tido uses this line to depict what Krims (2000) calls "a mack man confidence, prolificness and assumed success with women marks him as a player" (p. 62).

*She asked me to buy her a drink I just nodded and told her...*
*Ain't spending no money till you back that ass up ke bone*

This rap genre, mack rap, has always had prominence in hip-hop, with artists such as Big Daddy Kane, Ice-T, LL Cool J, The Notorious B.I.G, Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs, and has always been signified by visual images flaunting wealth and the bodies of scantily dressed or half-naked women. As a matter of fact, LL Cool J stands for 'Ladies Love Cool J'.

The songs by Emtee, Nasty C, K.O., and other emerging artists dominating the rap music space, all clearly demonstrate what Androutsopolous and Scholtz (2006) refer to as "speech acts" which are found in hip-hop expressions. Androutsopolous and Scholtz have identified seven such speech acts, which include self-referential speech, 'istener-directed speech, boasting, dissing, place and time reference, identification and representation (Terkourafi, 2010, p. 74).

It is these speech acts that have found resonance in young audiences who are not particularly interested in changing the world, except to exclaim in appreciation on how these rappers appropriate the local language or slang with the what Alim (2004) calls the National Hip-Hop Language conventions.

Evident in K.O.'s song "Caracara" is how these speech acts are cleverly woven into what one would call "shallow lyrics yet entertaining rhetoric":

| Speech Act | Verse/Chorus |
|---|---|
| *Place and Time Reference* | Ubumnand'ab'phel'elokishini |
| | Ubumnand'ab'phel'elokishini noma nini |

This speech act clearly articulates the wonderful life in the township, which, according to K.O., is is 24 hours seved days of the week of absolute fun and pleasurable entertainment. The accompanying video leaves no confusion as to what these young people wake to up to every morning. Images of beautiful

girls chilling outside only to be noticed whilst the boys showoff with their expensive possessions, including expensive wheels with music blowing out for everyone to come out and have a glimpse.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Self-referential speech* | *Mina uk'jaiva ngak'qala ngingaka*<br>*ngaze ngaba ngaka bheka manje*<br>*seng'ngaka* |

In the music video, the dance has elements of braggadocio carefully executed with rhythmic choreography skilfully telling a tale of young people born to jive.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Boasting Speech* | *Ngiblome neziphalaphala*<br>*Phakathi kwe Caracara* |

As Pennycook (2007, p. 105) argues, "hip-hop culture is localised by the situated use of conventions that are known throughout global hip-hop communities, as well as through the transmittal of local traditions and verbal expressions". Similarly, in the boasting speech act the song by K.O. would not be complete without reference to a company of beautiful girls. He paints a picture of chilling with beautiful girls inside his caravella – which he refers to in the local lingo as "caracara". This is also supported by the video, which is full of girls with Brazilian hair, depicting the straight hair common amongst African American females.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Dissing Speech* | *kleva yeah you know the deal*<br>*thina sizophumula k'sasa*<br>*mangab'uyaphakama*<br>*uzoy'thol'uses'mokolweni*<br>*thina siy'lez'ey'hamba negoni ephoketheni*<br>*shiy'umuntu wakho yedwa lov'use-*<br>*problemini*<br>*sorry I'm going in*<br>*phol'uzom'thol'ek'seni wan'rata* |
| *Listener-directed speech* | *You can take me out of the ghetto*<br>*but you can't take the ghetto outta me* |

It's not clear to whom the above statement is directed but the reference in the song to himself as being a "pantsula for life" – a reference to a township

hustler – accompanied by subtle Kwaito nuances in the music and chants (especially in the Chorus) – could be that K.O. is referring to his own success of still being connected to the township even though he no longer lives in the hood.

A *Place and Time Reference* speech act is also found in Anatii's song, "Saga" as Casper boasts about his whereabouts:

*I might call all my niggas and decide that we gonna fly out to Cape Town*
*What you know about Bantry Bay?*

Casper is quick to show the financial inadequacy of the other rappers by highlighting how he can afford to move between two cities as and when he feels like, as to him there is not a financial constraint. The geographical distance between himself (in Cape Town) and the peers he might leave behind in Johannesburg is in no way a simple 1, 400 km distance, but is merely meant to reflect the financial gap between himself and his peers in Johannesburg. This financial distance allows him to travel to places his peers only dream about visiting.

Through the *Listener-Directed* speech act, coupled with the *Dissing* speech act, Casper, in the same verse, identifies an affluent part of Cape Town, Bantry Bay (see above) and creates a socio-economic distance between him and his peers and begins to disrespect them.

*Dissing & Listener-Directed speech*: Huh, huh ya'll niggas is simple
*Ya'll niggas is average*
*Oh man ya'll niggas is normal*
*I'm outchea with Dimplez*
*Anatii and Milkshake*
*That's why your bitch wanna follow*

Evident in the above speech act is also the appropriation of American rap language that completely disregards the rules for the Queen's English (proper English). Casper adopts what Tricia Rose (1994) argues is a black culture that prioritizes black voices and adopts a particular form of expression that is

resistant to dominant white culture (p. 2). His lines: "Ya'll niggas is average" and "I'm outchea with Dimplez" – breaking all the rules of the English language – is testimony to the fact that the language of hip-hop, as Pennycook (2207) argues, "forms something of a subcultural code itself" (p. 2). Pennycook argues that it is these versions of English that are spreading as part of the global culture of hip-hop, thus requiring a relook at how English and English language pedagogy, in a global context, is applied.

.Pennycook (2007) argues, "English is bound up with transcultural flows, a language of imagined communities and refashioning identities" (p. 7). Therefore, appropriation of English as a tool for reworking local identity all over the world has significant cultural and linguistic implications. Language use in terms of mixed modes of semiotic diffusion (*transmodality*), and translingual meaning as an act of interpretation across boundaries of understanding (*translation*) allows hip-hop to "transgress what is possible and permissible" (p. 36).

The shallowness of the lyrical content is overshadowed by the manipulation and re-appropriation of linguistic resources, which are employed to showcase the varied multi-ethnic language styles in a cosmopolitan city like Johannesburg. These songs are not about the expression of social concerns or the reflection of social realities but more about style-shifting, code-mixing and code-switching (Alim, 2009, p. 5), with a particular focus on the linguistic aspect of the genre, showcasing the use of the street vocabulary, whether it's the lexical choices (Cutler, 2009; Mitchell, 2001b), rhythmic patterns and prosody (O'Hanlon, 2006; Fagyal, 2007), or language choice and code-switching (Higgins, 2009; Sarkar and Allen, 2007).

## Growth of rap in the local market/contex

### Hip-hop on the South African airwaves

The dominance of local hip-hop on radio vis-à-vis other genres on the airwaves, in the recent years, shows how there is a shift from international rap music and a wide acceptance of home-brewed hip-hop.

It is the songs above that have enjoyed massive airplay. These songs are a massive shift from the hip-hop narrative of the 1980s crafted by Prophets of Da City, Black Noise, and later by Zubz, Proverb and Tumi and the Volume. What sells and what gets people jiving is not music about the revolution but about the beneficiaries and benefactors of the revolution.

The analysis of how local hip-hop has grown in the last four years, as depicted in the pie chart below, indicates a genre that is dominating the cultural music and entertainment scene – bar the narrative.

*The following charts are analysed from figures from Entertainment Monitoring Africa*

Fig. 1: SA Top 100 Charts: Hip-Hop versus Other Genres (2012)

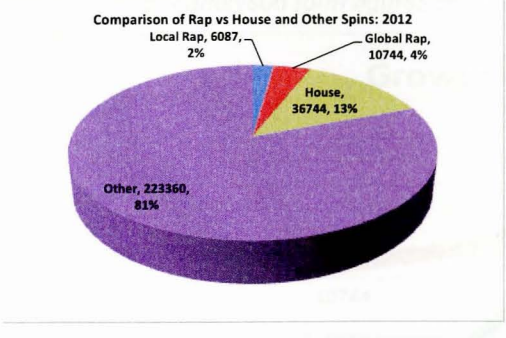



Fig. 2: SA Top 100 Charts: Hip-Hop versus Other Genres (2013)

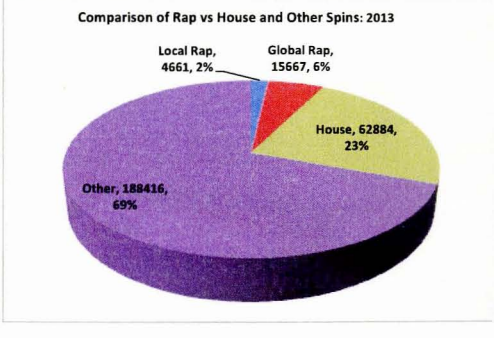



Fig. 3: SA Top 100 Charts: Hip-Hop versus Other Genres (2014)

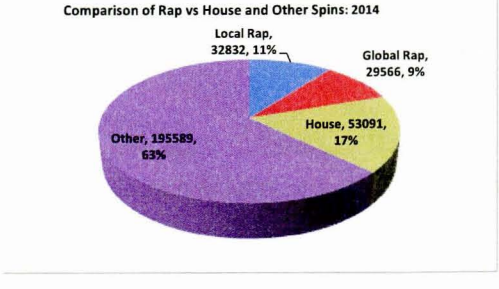



Fig. 4: SA Top 100 Charts: Hip-Hop versus Other Genres (2015)

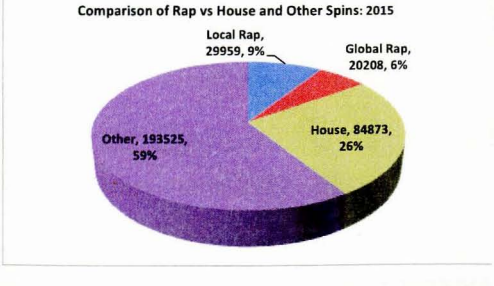



*Figure 2.* Music genres in Top 100 Songs playlists 2012 - 2015

The above shows that, of the Top 100 Songs that dominated the playlist charts in South Africa (local and international songs), hip-hop only occupied 2% of the playlist with only 6,087 spins in 2012. Whilst the situation remained unchanged in 2013, local hip-hop suddenly jumped to 11% (32, 832 spins) in 2014 but dropped to 9% in 2015 with 29, 959 spins across stations, and has maintained an average position of 7% of the total on the charts compared to 6% for hip-hop internationally.

An interesting observation is how other pop music (mainly international songs) has dropped from 81% in 2012 to only 59% on the Top 100 Charts by 2015, which is a 15.4% drop over the past four years, compared to a 392% growth of local hip-hop over the same period.

Global rap (hip-hop), which had enjoyed massive dominance on the South African playlist charts over the years, has since been overtaken by local rap, as seen in the graph below.

*The following is analysed form figures from Entertainment Monitoring Africa*

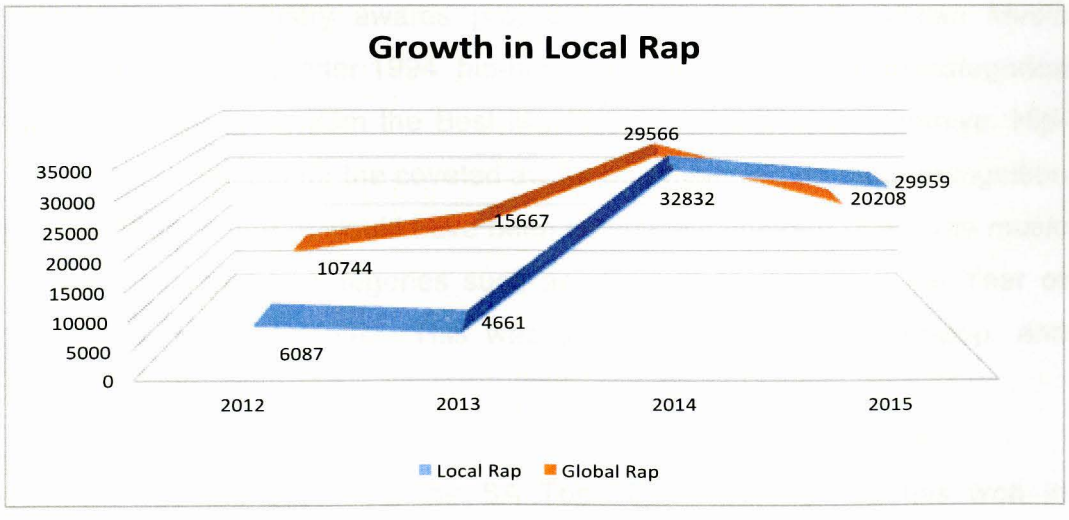



*Figure 3.* Growth in local and global rap in South African playlist charts 2012 - 2015

On the local charts, house music has always maintained a massive dominance on the airwaves, however, local hip-hop has shown a steady growth rate. If one considers that local hip-hop enjoyed a negligible 6, 087

total spins in 2012, compared to 36, 744 spins of house music, by 2013 local hip-hop was enjoying an impressive 32,832 spins of the top 100 songs played in South Africa, thus representing an 11% share.

Below is the rate of increase of local rap compared to house music.

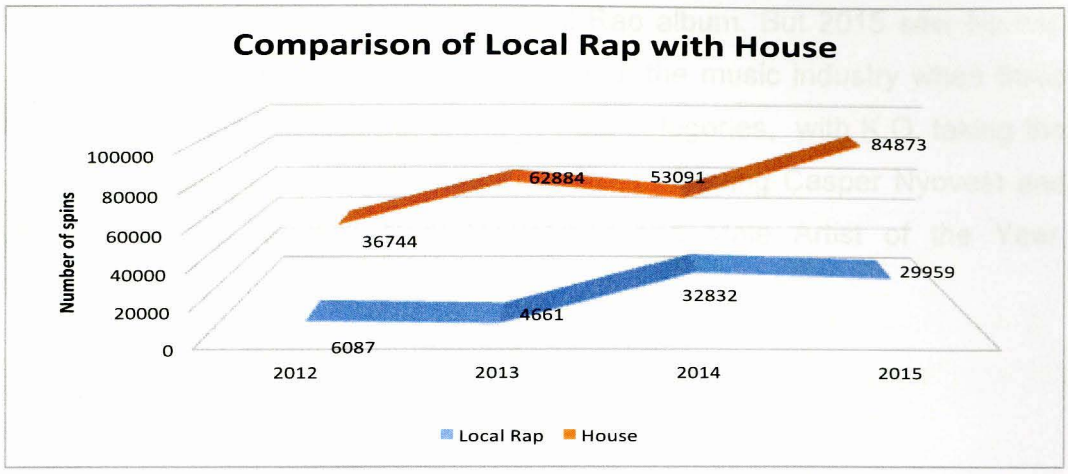



*Figure 4.* Number of Spins of Local Rap and House on South African playlists 2012 – 2015
Source: Entertainment Monitoring Africa

The rise of local hip-hop (commercial) against other local genres is also evident in the industry awards program. When the South African Music Awards were started after 1994, hip-hop was one of many awards categories and was no different from the Best Maskandi, or the Best Scathamiya. Hip-hop artists competed for the coveted award and expected no other recognition outside of the genre. It would have been completely unheard of for rap music to be considered in categories such as Best Male, Album of the Year or Song/Record of the Year. This was the preserve of jazz, afro-pop, and Kwaito.

Just as was the case with the SA Top 100 Chart, hip-hop has won in categories outside of the genre. Hip-hop has also earned awards in the competition for the top four most highly contested categories such as Best Newcomer, Album of the Year, Best Male Artist, Song/Record of the Year, which previously would have been scooped by other genres.

The table below shows how hip-hop has moved from winning just in its category to record its first major award in the history of SA music awards when AKA scooped Male Artist of the Year in 2013. The year 2013 and 2015 sawe the biggest accolades for hip-hop when Khuli Chana, in 2013, walked away with three awards, which included Album of the Year and Male Artist of the Year and in his genre category, Best Rap album. But 2015 saw hip-hop registering its biggest presence and arrival in the music industry when three hip-hop artists shared four out of the five big categories, with K.O. taking the Best Rap Album and Song/Record of the Year, leaving Casper Nyovest and AKA to walk away with Best Newcomer and Male Artist of the Year, respectively.

Table 2: Top Winners at South African Music Awards 2012 - 2015

| South Africa Music Awards Winner Top Category Winners (2012 - 2015) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2012 | | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | |
| Category | *Artist* | *Genre* | *Artist* | *Genre* | *Artist* | *Genre* | *Artist* | *Genre* |
| ***Best Rap*** | AKA | Hip-Hop | Khuli Chana | Hip-Hop | iFani | Hip-Hop | K.O. | Hip-Hop |
| ***Best Newcomer*** | Zahara | Pop | Toya Delazy | Pop | Naima Kay | Pop | Casper Nyovest | Hip-Hop |
| ***Album of the Year*** | Zahara | Pop | Khuli Chana | Hip-Hop | Mafikizolo | Pop | Beatenberg | Pop |
| ***Male Artist of the Year*** | AKA | Hip-Hop | Khuli Chana | Hip-Hop | Kabomo | Pop | AKA | Hip-Hop |
| ***Song/Record of the Year*** | Mi Casa | Pop | Sifiso Ncwan | Gospel | Mafikizolo | Pop | K.O. | Hip-Hop |

Source: Analysed from RISA SAMA Winners

Hip-hop shows now dominate radio programming in the country and can be found on almost all the radio stations. Below are just a few shows that have gained prominence amongst the listeners and that play nothing other than turn up and trap music.

Table 3:Radio Stations Playing Hip-Hop

| **Radio Station** | **City** | **Radio Show** |
|---|---|---|
| Bush Radio | Cape Town | Head Warmaz |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yfm | Johannesburg | The Hip-Hop Floor |
| TruFm | Bisho | Ground Zero |
| 5fm | Johannesburg | The Stir Up |
| UkhoziFm | Durban | Namba Namba |
| UJfm | Johannesburg | 16 Bars Reloaded |
| VenRap | Polokwane | VenRap |
| Good Hope Fm | Cape Town | The Ready D Show |
| Alex Fm | Johannesburg | The Mixtape |

**The missing chord: hip-hop, mass culture and cultural hegemony**

Much as this is good news for South African music, the music enjoying prominence is nothing other than a depiction of what one could call the "departed narrative" or what Mahlangu calls "the missing chord" missing chord' because it does not speak to the pressing issues today.

In his article "Search for the missing chord" (Sunday World, 10 April 2016) Mahlangu argues contends,

> Whilst the public has generally exercised its freedom of speech and expression on political and social matters, many Mzansi artists have to a large degree been silent. Artistic works have largely been mute on and have mostly avoided weighing in on the not-so-easy broader socio-political developments, possibly to avoid the mad irritation and wrath of South African officialdom. (p. 12)

One of the most prominent and legendary figures in the cultural scene whose songs were once banned from the airwaves, Sipho Hotstix Mabuse, has expressed the same frustration about the absence of liberatory yet entertaining narrative and argues,

> South African musicians have become docile. These days is about who is going to give us the next gig. We mostly become reliant on

> government and the SABC's largesse. We are careful not to upset them. This is despite the fact that we survived and continued to speak our minds when we were harassed and banned during apartheid (Sipho Mabuse interview).

Amongst the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality, and now the call for free education, the state of hip-hop in Johannesburg is anything but libertory and entertaining. Instead the hip-hop dominating the airwaves is that which has continued to promote passive consumption and submissive acceptance of the status quo.

Mahlangu further argues that a majority of artists have been silent on the *Fees Must Fall* and *Outsourcing Must Fall* Campaigns and even on Marikana, Xenophobia, and Racism. In fact, Mahlangu argues that the South African performing arts have done exceptionally well in fulfilling its entertainment role over the past two decades, whereas the "chord" for a liberatory and conscious narrative is seriously missing.

Adorno (1975) argues, "the total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment.... where mass culture becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness" (p. 18). Adorno argues that this mass culture has a direct impact on the working class as it serves to distract the working class consumers from the realities of oppression. In this instance, as Horkheimer and Adorno argued in their book, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment (*1944/1986*),* mass culture is part of the ideological superstructure that maintains the hegemony of the dominant classes.

Juxtaposing Horkheimer and Adorno's observation with the South African cultural discourse, the dominant class is the ruling class and the ruling class emerges out of the historically oppressed masses. Because the ruling class is tied to the mass democratic and liberation movement, the carriers of mass culture and celebrants of the liberation are the historically marginalised class.

It therefore suits the ruling class that the masses are in a party mode and therefore the delusionary pleasures best serve the interest of the ruling class.

Whilst the rise of popular music, and hip-hop in particular, that is superficial, highly commercialised, shallowin lyrical content and only designed to attract a young audience, tends to suit the ruling class because of its political acquiescence, the reality is that young people have a created a world outside of the confines of the socio-economic and political realm and have dictated the narrative including the consumption patterns thus commercialising hip-hop to suit their individual demands.

**Growth in local live hip-hop**

It is not only through airplay that hip-hop has seen a surge in its growth, but it has also enjoyed a lion's share of the live performance circuit, as well as of digital sales. Although there has been no analysis of hip-hop's contribution to the growth of live music, as shown in the table below, there has been a marked increase increase in the number of live hip-hop shows around the country. Hip-hop is easy to program and to curate at venues such as clubs clubs, block parties, concerts, festivals because of the minimum technical requirements, which until recently did not require any live band. It is not uncommon that in almost every major road intersection in major cities and towns there are banners or posters of hip-hop events with no less than ten hip-hop acts performing.

Rappers are refashioning their own identity and no longer rely on a call from unscrupulous promoters of a concert that comes once a year. Through these regular contact zones of staged hip-hop concerts and parties, rappers have gained some measure of control over their lives as performing artists. The rise of hip-hop contact zones, through block parties and club gigs as well as hip-hop concerts that have become local street-based manifestations, have disrupted the traditional festivals and concerts.

The projected growth of live music revenue from R1.2 billion in 2016 to R1.5 billion by 2019 shows how live music and popular music genres are enjoying massive growth, which is projected to grow by 7.9% by 2019. Similarly, hip-hop's growth in digital sales, compared to physical sales, has in the main been as a result of young consumers' preference for digital downloads because of the ease of access and the introduction of smart phones. In the first two weeks of 2017, local hip-hop constituted 38% of the top 50 hip-hop songs downloaded via iTunes. The table below also shows digital sales have risen from a mere R83 million in 2010 to R249 million by 2016 and is expected to reach R309 million by 2019, which is a 9.3% growth, compared to a 19% decline to be experienced in the same period.

Table 4:

*The South African music market revenues, 2010-2019*

*The South African music market will rise at a CAGR of 1.3% in the next five years*

**Music revenues, 2010–2019 (R millions)**

| | Historical data | | | | | Forecast data | | | | | CAGR % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2014-19 |
| Physical | 1 430 | 1 263 | 1 139 | 953 | 769 | 639 | 536 | 450 | 376 | 302 | -17.0% |
| Digital | 83 | 87 | 86 | 152 | 199 | 236 | 249 | 268 | 289 | 309 | 9.3% |
| Downloads | 11 | 12 | 15 | 85 | 126 | 152 | 149 | 147 | 144 | 141 | 2.4% |
| Mobile | 42 | 50 | 48 | 45 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 43 | -0.4% |
| Streaming | 30 | 25 | 23 | 22 | 29 | 40 | 57 | 78 | 102 | 125 | 33.7% |
| Total recorded music | 1 513 | 1 350 | 1 225 | 1 105 | 968 | 875 | 785 | 718 | 665 | 611 | -8.8% |
| Live music ticket sales | 616 | 665 | 712 | 758 | 811 | 869 | 936 | 1 011 | 1 097 | 1 183 | 7.8% |
| Live music sponsorship | 186 | 197 | 204 | 219 | 235 | 254 | 274 | 298 | 324 | 350 | 8.3% |
| Total live music | 802 | 862 | 916 | 977 | 1 046 | 1 123 | 1 210 | 1 309 | 1 421 | 1 533 | 7.9% |

These transgressive acts and new hip-hop encounters, by subordinated and marginalised groups, have re-invented and refashioned, (for their own consumption), what were historically performance platforms created for them by music promoter.

These concerts and parties have become all year round hip-hop encounters and contact zones, focussing semantically on celebration and pleasure. The selection of the acts is those artists or rappers whose musical ethos is consistent with the goal of getting the crowd moving, getting heads nodding and bodies dancing.

It is the popular cultural sites, such as Pop Bottles, STR CRD, Authentic Sundays and Maftown Heights (see below) where the repeatability of party rap flows and sing-along hooks have become the dominant and audible beat to groove and grind.

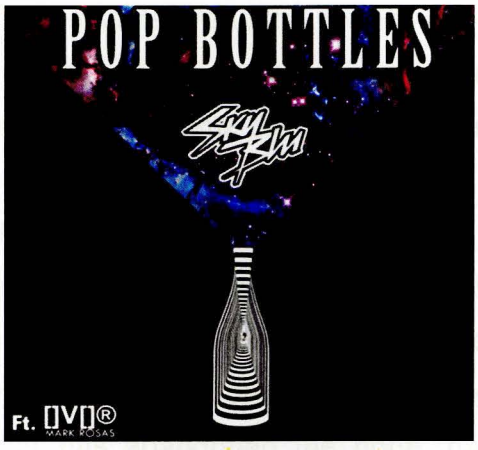
The sites of pleasure highlighted below are but a few of the groove and jive vibes that have gripped the country whilst the rest of the masses are still waiting for the promised freedoms.

## POP BOTTLES

These intimate Sunday afternoon Hip-Hop Experiences take place across South Africa, the events start at midday, allowing for a relaxing afternoon of socialising and networking before moving into a lively nightlife experience.

## STR CRD

STR.CRD is Africa's #1 street culture brand that manifests itself through authentic engagement via trade shows and relevant content. STR.CRD has grown to earn the undoubtable title of the number one urban street culture event on the continent.







## AUTHENTIC SUNDAYS

Authentic Sundays: is one of Johannesburg's biggest events and is easily Soweto's biggest event that takes place on a chosen Sunday of each month, thus making it the biggest upmarket event that brings the youth of Johannesburg together in Soweto's upmarket outlets.

## MAFTOWN HEIGHTS

**Known as one of SA's key hip hop calendar events and one of the premier hip hop festivals on the continent, Maftown Heights offers a line-up of an eclectic blend of the best hip hop haS to offer, and features artists pioneering Motswako in Africa as well as leaders in the South African music industry across the genres of hip hop and Kwaito..**







*Figure 5.* Descriptions of hip-hop events and sites

The ruling class would not have wished for a better form of music that lifts people into a whirlwind of pleasure where they forget about their sorrows and the causes for such. So, as the government faces a myriad of socio-economic problems and service delivery protests, the party rap dampens the anger and so they choose to dance. Instead of leaving the transgressive pleasures of popular culture at the gate of freedom, the ruling class would rather have hip-hop enthusiasts jive to the sounds of post-liberation pleasures than have hip-hop challenge the socio-economic exclusion of the very same masses who fashion and consume this popular culture.

As Mahlangu (2016) argues, "By all means, let the people dance and be entertained but equally let the people be empowered with a bigger and influential voice that is biased to interest that broadly benefit all who live in this country" (p. 12). Contrary to Mahlangu's assertion, the Johannesburg hip-hopper has abandoned the hope that through their voice government will react and most probably deliver on the aspirations as articulated in the social contract (The Freedom Charter). Instead, as this chapter has articulated, through hip-hop, young people have created their own corridors of freedom and have re-written their perception of the freedom project in South Africa. In fighting for their economic emancipation, the youth have opted to abandon the struggle to engage government directly in their demands for a meaningful social contract, but instead have used hip-hop to react to and shape their socio-economic conditions.

The fact is youth have opted, in their overt delinquent nature and acting out of frustration, not to engage using the avenues ordinarily available through a normal political procurement process that may not be responsive to their needs. Caught in the paradox of a youth unable to resolve their personal conflicts with societally acceptable norms they have become scornful of the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the larger society. Winning meaningful self-esteem will only be realised through other creative means, such as penning a

16-bar verse and hoping that someone is listening and willing to act in response.

As they have observed that the system cannot deliver all their aspirations they have begun to carve a future through creating new cultural avenues by invading the public spaces. As Watkins (2012) argues, "Performance enables hip-hoppers to negotiate a sense of authenticity on their own terms...they resist, question and construct meanings in a landscape that requires vigilance and innovation" (p. 73).

Fortunately for the Johannesburg hip-hopper, it is the youth that has listened and responded to a music genre that binds their collective consciousness of the need to survive against all odds and that has shown their appreciation by either buying the music or attending concerts in their numbers as was witnessed in Casper Nyovest 'Feel Up the Dome' and 'Feel Up Orlando Stadium' concerts.

Hip-hop in Johannesburg has unshackled itself from a socio-economic aspiration that could only be realised through political intervention. Instead, hip-hop and the hip-hop generation has shown a middle finger to the state, and, as Watkins (2012) argues, their "struggle is local, personal, economic, and artistic" (p. 73)

# CHAPTER 9. HIP-HOP AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN CAPE TOWN

*"When virtually nothing else could, hip-hop created a voice and a vehicle for the young and the dispossessed, giving them both hope and inspiration."* - S. Craig Watkins

## Class, Language and Identity Crisis

Today's post liberation agenda and hip-hop activism find different expressions as they partake in the South African socio-economic and political discourse. Hip-hop activism across the country has not been united in one common narrative, let alone become a cultural movement of strength and possibility. When closely observed, hip-hop tends to find a different posture/stance according to the geographic location in which it originates. This is particularly so of Cape Town vis-à-vis Johannesburg.

The Cape Town hip-hop scene has challenged and disrupted the dominant images of hip-hop's success arising out consumerism and individualism that is prevalent in the Johannesburg rap game and elsewhere in the country. Cape Town's hip-hop emcees' refusal to have their songs commodified and to be (w)rapped with all that glitters and is gold-plated is what makes that city's rap music expression and the hip-hop culture distinctly different from that of the rest of the country.

Worth noting is that Cape Town suffers from what one could call the triple challenges of race, class and multiple identities especially amongst the so-called 'Coloured' people, who in recent years have been pushing to be recognised as the 'First' people in South Africa because of their indigenous identity as Khoi and San descendants. Leading rap activists, such as Emile YX of Black Noise and Heal the Hood, consider "first peoples as the foremothers and fathers of all humanity" (Ariefdien and Chapman, 2014, p. 104) and that black-centred hip-hop discourse is the route to ridding them of the stigma of substance abuse, crime and other denigrating forms of racial

classification associated with the coloured community and, instead, to instilling a sense of self-esteem, identity and pride. Complicating the identity crisis of Coloured people isthe fact that they are still squashed between two ends of the socio-political spectrum: not black enough and not white enough.

The Coloured question has to be understood through Hurst's (1972) analysis of class-consciousness: that people, especially the working class, tend to perceive the differences in their life chances first in group and then in individual terms and see their positions as structurally rather than personally determined. They also view their class as politically controlled by the higher classes (p. 658-670).

Hurst's argument supports how Coloureds view their socio-political standing within South African society. Coloureds still feel a sense of social exclusion and marginalisation because of years of deliberate racial divisions created by the legacy of apartheid, which placed them above black Africans and below whites but without any clear and realisable benefits of such classification.

Discarding shades of blackness or whiteness and adopting an identity that truly reflects their origins is not a fad but rather a political position that seeks to restore their dignity so that they can share in the freedoms of what is called the rainbow nation. To the coloured people, or at least those who have opted not to identify with that classification, the ultimate freedom is the attainment of a status recognizing them as the indigenous of first people inhabitants of modern day South Africa.

The dominant hip-hop narrative in Cape Town, in its fight for Khoi-San community recognition, finds resonance in what Kepe et al (2016) who argue that for freedom to be meaningful, redistributive justice should unfold in at least three areas: realisation of basic liberties, fairness in access to opportunity and economic redress that should favour the previously disadvantaged (p. 8). Interpreted differently, Amartya Sen (quoted in Kepe, et

al. 2016), argues, "in the absence of fair and achievable conditions for people to meet their own needs in life, there is no freedom to talk about" (p. 6). Simply put, until the Khoi-San national question is not fully addressed in the new democratic dispensation, and to them the colours of the rainbow nation are incomplete untisl such time that the issue of the first people are addressed.

**The right to have rights: the Khoi-San dilemma**

The Khoi-San dilemma can be interpreted through what Kepe, et al, (2016) see as "the interplay between 'visibility and invisibility' in struggles for inclusive citizenship" (p. 11). Kepe, et al, see the freedom as inclusive of citizenship where the marginalised (previously excluded) and invisible (at least in the eyes of the dominant) become visible, are recognized and are beneficiaries of redistribution (p. 12). Von Lieres (2016) argues, "citizenship speaks primarily to marginalised communities' on-going and unmet demands for freedom, justice and inclusion" (p. 208)

It is because of the absence of redistributive justice, at least in the eyes of the most critical hip-hop community, that new forms of struggle for such justice are being waged outside the nexus of state and society. Hip-hop in Cape Town has always claimed the role of spokesperson for the marginalised although in the absence of a listening ear. The the hip-hop narrative has been audible, at least as it pertains to the so-called coloured community who are consistently engaged with the issue of identity and the continued effort to unchain themselves from apartheid's racial classification. This dilemma of being visible (in the eyes of the subordinate groups) and yet so "conveniently" invisible (in the eyes of the powerful), so as to deny the Khoi-San access to redistributive justice, has found expression in the hip-hop discourse.

This increased desire on the part of the Khoi-San to reject their racial classification as Coloured and toadopt their indigenous Khoi-San heritage, is

best reflected in the sentiments expressed by the Chairperson of the Centre on Raising Awareness of the Khoi-San People, Cecil le Fleur:

> We need to re-introduce the pride of who we are. We want to penetrate the coloured community. There's so much gangsterism because people want to belong. They want to fit in and be part of something. They call themselves 'Coloured" but they don't know where they originate. The Western lifestyle was pushed on them throughout the colonial period. They can't see how important it is to see their roots. We need to unite our people. We need to show them where they belong. *(Rhodes Journalism Review,* September 2001*).*

Not only have the Khoi-San demanded recognition and re-classification, and in fact the separation of the Khoi-San to Khoi and San, they have taken to the courts to demand recognition as the original inhabitants of South Africa and that land taken from them on the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652 be handed back to them. With the Land Restitution Act of 1994 not making provision for therestitution of land lost by the Khoi-San people before the cut-off date of 1913, because their land was dispossessed during the colonial era, the land question remains a sore point in this community. Denying the Khoi-San the right to claim for land restitution is a serious blow to a community who already argue for recognition as the original inhabitants of the land they no longer own.

A series of articles published over the years, and more recently in the past year, has seen how the Khoi-San are intensifying the struggles over language, recognition as well as ownership of the land. No less than ten articles appeared or were covered in the print and electronic media in South Africa discussing the growing discontent of the Khoi-San on the lack of progress in addressing the issues of land, beneficiation, language, as well as their recognition as first people of the country (see **Appendix A**).

Giving recognition to the Khoi and the San as the first people presents obvious challenges for the democratic government, as it would confirm that all the proceeds from the exploitation of the land belong to the Khoi and the San people. Compounding the problem is that recognizing the Khoi and the San as the first people contradicts the tenets under which this country is founded which discard, amongst other discriminatory practices, racial division, ethnicity and Bantustan tendencies. Recognising the Khoi and the San as the first people would, according to government and the ruling party (the African National Congress), perpetuate the first, second and third class citizen classification.

So, when !Xam Koranna from the country's indigenous people of the Korana says "This is Khoi land... If I have to die (to get it back), I have to die. My blood can be spilled so my children and grandchildren can see and continue this fight for another 500 years" (Petersen, 2015) it can be expected that the Cape Town rapper would craft similar messages and use them on creative and cultural platforms that are not catered for in formal political spaces. When the government responds with alternative solutions to the Khoi-San question such as simply recognising them as traditional leaders without dealing with the aboriginal and land question, the Khoi-San community expresses disgust both in political and cultural spaces. It is these "notions of difference and social boundaries" (Martin Stokes, 1994, p.3), presented to the marginalised people as alternatives to their demands, that the Raptivists in Cape Town reject as a continued denial of their (those of Khoi-San descent) innate rights and a misappropriation of what is due to them.

True to what Martin Stokes (1994) argues, "music does not simply provide a marker in a pre-structured social space, but the means by which this space can be transformed" (p. 4). The Cape Town rapper has used various forms of cultural expression to articulate their rejection of what is being presented to them as alternatives.

**Hip-Khoi and the San**

As McQuillar (2007) says, "it is important to note that the very existence of hip-hop culture is conscious as it gives a voice to the most marginalised segments of our population who would otherwise have none and speaks true to the fact that necessity is the mother of invention" (p. 3). The hip-hop narrative in Cape Town is one that has consistently fought for social change in an uneven society with deep-seated economic inequality. Just as one cannot understand Marx or Engels if separated from their theory, one cannot separate the Cape Coloured question from the songs that the hip-hop artists from the Cape Flats and surroundings have composed over the years. Most of the songs have been scribbled down as a response to real day-to-day struggles which Togliatti (1979) argues inexorably push people to "investigate relations between the classes and reveal to them their economic and political substance" (p.150).

In "Khoisan Revivalism" Ariefdien et al (2014) argue, "the aim is to address the inequalities of the past and present that have denied first nation people their right to land and self-determination" (p. 103) and the hip-hop narrative and discourse is considered by most politically-conscious Cape Town emcees as the conduit to achieve this ideal, through hip-hop's fifth element – Knowledge of Self. In response to this socio-political dilemma the hip-hop generation in Cape Town has been in a constant and sustained fight as they confront their socio-economic and political realities, but, more importantly, their own identity and social positioning within a socio-economic environment that seeks to exclude them.

This is the context under which hip-hop in Cape Town negotiates and appropriates its existence. Stuck in a community with limited resources and lack of prospects for a better life and the absence of family support structures, most of the youth have turned to drugs, gangsterism and drug-related killings. Left to fend for themselves, they turn against each other for territorial control of their illicit trade.

## Voices behind the Mic: When Hip-Hop had a Conscience

Hip-hop in Cape Town traces its roots back to its fight for identity and the politics of legitimacy amongst the dispossessed majority. During the struggle for liberation hip-hop was not recognized as an instrument through which to mobilise the marginalised black majority. Regardless of its hard-hitting socio-political expression, it actually did not enjoy any status; it was not perceived as having a mass following. Only in Cape Town did hip-hop find some sort of resonance mainly because of the Coloured community's problems of social and political alienation, drugs, gangsterism, crime, poverty and unemployment. As Ariefdien et al (2014) argue,

> hip-hop provided young people who have experienced various levels of alienation, trauma, and/or systematic abuse, a vehicle to find voice, express the self, and develop a set of artistic practices as a system of coping with the brutal day-to-day reality of capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. (p. 99).

The Cape Flats and the so-called coloured townships in and around Cape Town had become the creative source of hip-hop in the late 1980s from which hip-hop voices emerged and spoke on behalf of the marginalised groups who otherwise had no voice.

### (a) Prophets of Da City

In the 1980s a hip-hop crew was born out of a youth whose identity had been the subject of ridicule: a coloured community that was raised from the ashes of the slave trade and colonial domination. Prophets of Da City (POC) was not born out of a political vacuum but emerged at a time when the apartheid regime was determined to maintain a system that had been rejected by humanity. In actual fact, the group was born into politics, which was evident in their music with strong political connotations and was rejected by most record labels that preferred music with more of a party vibe. Prophets of Da City was the first group to record and release a hip-hop track "Our World" in 1990, two years after the group was formed in 1988.

Prophets of Da City was a pioneer of politically-conscious rap in South Africa and went on to release a number of albums, whose themes were the questioning of the political establishment. Awareness of the plague afflicting the coloured community led to the group embarking on a massive anti-drug awareness campaign including a tour of Namibia covering 65 schools.

Their global popularity would see the group touring Europe and America, including an invitation by Quincy Jones and Caiphus Semenya to perform at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland and Visions of Africa in Denmark, to mention a few. The highlight of their career was an invitation (as the only performers) to Nelson Mandela's inauguration as the first democratic president.

Even though the group no longer exists today, Prophets of Da City's legacy is still the obvious reference for hip-hop's counter-hegemonic struggles and the fight for a strong black identity. Their relentless fight to take children off the streets and to shield them from drugs and gangsterism is evident from the extract of the interview below, which was conducted by Chiepie for The Argus Big Noise on 1 February 1997

*Big Noise: Talking about hip-hop generally, American rap is strongly aligned with "gangstaz" and gangsterism...*

*Ready D: Mainstream media always concentrates on hip-hop being about guns and women shaking their asses. That's not hip-hop, that's the watered down hip POP version. There's a deeper, more spiritual side to hip-hop. You have to remember; gangsterism was around in South Africa long before hip-hop. Definitely hip-hop has taken people off the street and given them something positive to focus on. We have the street-jams and the do-for-self concerts; we're showing kids how to make a living; there's information passed around. Hip-hop encourages people to educate themselves. We need doctors and lawyers, it's a bigger picture than POC, it's bigger than hip-hop. If we can*

*create a lucrative industry, we can start ploughing money back into the ghetto, build our own recreation centres. We can build our own parks and our own discos, so the kids don't have to come through to Angels in town. We can create a safer environment for our kids. It might not happen in our lifetime, but there are people who will carry on and accomplish it.*

Daniel Künzler (2011) argues that since the disappearance of Prophets of Da City from the hip-hop scene,

> the counter-hegemonic discourse of earlier rappers has lost its hegemony and representations of identity have become more varied and individualised. As social advancement became a more pressing concern, the relationship between rap music and commodification has become more pluri-dimensional.

**(b) Emile YX?: Healing the Hood of Wounded Souls**

One of those so-called coloured people who clearly refuses to be branded coloured is Emile YX?, who continues to fight against the socio-economic and political exclusion of the Khoi-San people. As a founder and a lead emcee of the group Black Noise, Emile YX? has been quite vociferous about his claim that, unlike those suffering from a "blood cloth mentality" (see Jitsvinger below), he and the many other coloured people of Cape Town are of Khoi-San descent.

In the documentary, *Drugs and Gangs: the gritty and inspiring life of Zane Fredrics*, a rehabilitated drug addict, former gangster and ex-convict tells a story of recovery from addiction and a life of death in this moving account of how youth in coloured townships in Cape Town succumb to drugs and gangsterism, as reflected in the testimony that can be accessed at this address:https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Drugs+and+Gangs%2C+the+gritty. The documentary is an open and honest account of an adult who started using drugs at the age of 12. It tells a story of young children growing up in a drug-infested neighbourhood, believing that this was the

coolest thing to do. Every kid wanted to be a drug runner and staying in class was for the sissies.

> *I started with drugs at the age of 12. I was introduced to drugs while bunking school. Drugs was open thing in our community. Always the same thing, drugs and alcohol. On school I used to check my timetable. Just to see which class I can bunk. We used to run to the drug houses. Or we used to run the bunking spot. But basically you had to buy drugs to get. They target the young. Youngsters fall for that thing. Because they want to fit in. They want to be part of the group. You don't want to be part of the outsider. Because when you the outsider when problems start arising. You not with the clicks that sell drugs and go to parties. And you start getting picked on. And because people picking on you and so on. You decide that you want to be part of the group. That is how they start….*

The above is a common story of a typical young coloured person growing up in the townships in Cape Town. A story of how communities are involved in a never-ending battle to take their children off the streets, shelter them from the drugs and gangsterism that have ravaged poor families as they try to navigate their lives on a daily basis.

Asante (2008, p. 207) argues, "Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have, should have acted, the indifference from those who knew better; the silence from those who had a voice; and the indifference when the stakes were highest, that made it possible for slavery, oppression and exploitation to thrive". The hip-hop generation has taken upon themselves to write and rap about the struggles of the marginalised group wherever they are. It is the work of raptivist like Emile YX? that best represents the words of Emory Douglas, a Black Panther activist, who once said, "In order to create accurate images of awareness we must participate in the changing of society and understand the political nature of art, because there is no such thing as art for art's sake (Asante, 2007, p. 207).

The work of Emile YX? responds to what Clark (1965) who already observed that "large numbers of other ghetto youth, however, are caught in the paradox

of the ghetto unable to resolve their personal conflicts either in positive and socially acceptable forms of adjustment or in direct and assertive antisocial behaviour." (p.14). Clark argued that this ghetto youth is aware of the values and standards of the larger society, but they know that they are not personally equipped to meet its demands. They have neither succumbed totally to pathology nor have they been able to emerge from it.

These and other stories prompted Emile YX? to start a community organisation to help youth to deal with the problems of drugs, crime and other social ills affecting the coloured areas in Cape Town, particularly the Cape Flats. Refusing to do art for art's sake and to be indifferent to the blight of youth in coloured communities, this former teacher turned activist, turned to hip-hop when no one was prepared to listen and formed Heal the Hood, a project that started as an informal-community based volunteer organisation in 1998, by the youth for the youth.

Emile YX, realising the choice between obliteration and restoration and between life and death, started the Heal the Hood project as a vehicle for vulnerable youth to choose both restoration and life. Realising the challenges facing young and vulnerable coloured kids in the battleground of the Cape Flats, Heal the Hood took on the need to challenge, confront, and resist the systematic annihilation of dreams and applied the arts to fight the ferocious destruction of a community infested by drugs, gangsterism and death from stray bullets fired by trigger-happy drug warlords and kingpins. The kids, who would normally have been roaming the streets and been used as runners by drug lords, were taken off the street and immersed in creative arts and other life orientation programs – death lost. (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY_RIsa7EfE).

In my research I have followed Emile YX?'s work since I invited him to the 1st African Hip-Hop Summit and Concert in 2005. Since then I have maintained contact with him and his organisation and also helped raise funds for Heal the

Hood so that he could continue having an impact and changing the lives of young people in Cape Town who are caught in a cycle of drugs and gangsterism.

Spending considerable time in Cape Town with Heal the Hood I was apprised of how this organisation used the five elements of hip-hop to challenge, confront, fight, tussle, wrestle, grapple and stand up against the scourge that over the years has been ravaging the coloured community.

Explaining how he left the teaching profession and decided to focus on the arts to reach out to young people, Emile YX explains:

> We used all the five elements of hip-hop, break dancing, emceeing, Djing, graffiti and primarily knowledge of oneself as a tool to encourage youth to unshackle themselves away from a gang culture and substance abuse that threated the coloured community, and taught these young people a sense of love for self through knowing oneself

In August 2014 I attended, as part of my field research, the third time to attend the African Hip-hop Indaba (a summit) as well as the Hip-Hop Battle Competition – a dance competition involving dance styles such as breaking (B-boys) or break-dance, nu school, krumping, popping, which has been extended to include Kwaito and house dance. It takes place at a 5000-capacity venue, Good Hope Centre, Cape Town, and young people come from the Cape Flats and surrounding townships and include those who emerge from regional competition to compete for the top spot in the various categories.

This is probably the only day that parents from the communities constantly under siege are happy to leave their kids in the safe hands of hip-hop, knowing that no stray bullet could pierce through the walls of Good Hope Centre and take a life yet unlived. Young and old kids participate in fierce

competition for the top spot in their category, whether it is beat boxing, break dancing or other forms of creative expression within the hip-hop culture. They come in groups and as individuals with their distinct gear and group identity and names.

When I talked to some of the contesting groups and asked why they were not at the shopping mall, watching movies or playing with their friends, the leader, Moniba, who is the coordinator of a group called Scarlet, said the only friends and family she and her group know is Scarlet. Upon probing why that is the case, she said:

> *"Scarlet family brings us to together*
> *And they krump for peace*
> *We are taking back our streets" – Moniba: Youth Coordinator*

I then asked one of the members of the group, a child of about six years old:

***Question**: What dance were you doing?*
***Scarlet**: Krump*
***Question**: Why do you do it?*
***Scarlet**: Because it keeps me off the street and from doing drugs*
***Quesiton**: How long have you been doing it?*
***Scarlet**: A year and a half*

And the Youth Coordinator (YC) shoots another question:
*YC: What's your family's name?*
*Scarlet: Scarlet Family*
*YC: Why does the Fam do krump?*
*Scarlet: The Fam krump for peace*

Evident from above testimony by the Scarlet Family dance crew, is that hip-hop has definitely kept these young people off the streets for one and a half years and one can only hope that they will resist the temptation of life in the streets and stay away from it forever.

During one of my interviews with Emile YX (August 2014), he spoke of the success stories of Heal the Hood and attributes such achievements to the hip-

hop dancers who have put in more time on their own and the children who attend special classes and says:

> a great deal of these young kids have been attending the workshops we have been conducting over the years and we have seen some of them grow up in front of our eyes and moved on to achieve greater success. Constant attendance has helped them to access other footage, which is downloaded and shared through underground networks and as soon as they have sight of what is going on in the hip-hop world, these things spread like wild fire in these communities. Having gotten the opportunity to travel internationally their own networks and contacts have since spread globally

Sharing examples of international success, Emile YX makes reference to a dance crew called Ubuntu Boys who went to Germany and met a French organiser of the Humanitarian Cup that was hosted for a while between Cape Town and France. From these encounters young dancers were selected to go to compete at dance competitions in France. Another success story is that of Angelo van Wyk (a former member of Black Noise), who was part of the Heal the Hood project. Angelo became a teacher and was employed by the Western Cape government to teach dance at schools throughout the peninsula and now runs the MOD Dance Section of the Department of Education

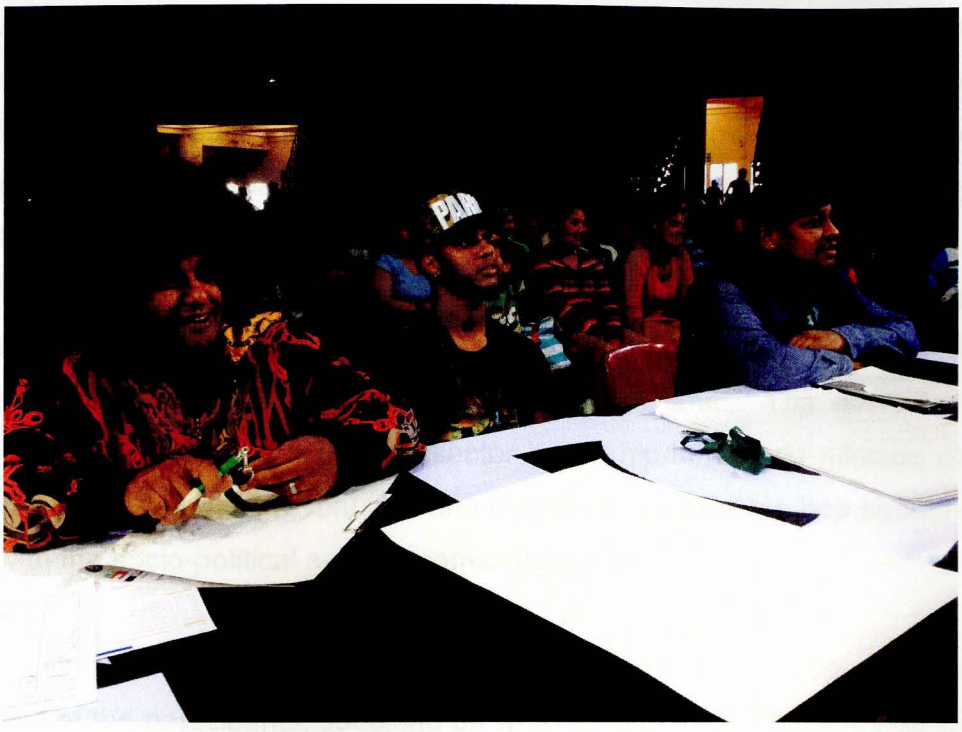


*Figure 6.* Emile YX judging at the 2014 Hip-Hop Indaba in Cape Town

Emile YX states that since the Heal the Hood project started in 1997 it has raised funds for 175 hip-hoppers to attend international events and in those events South Africa has won first[t] and second place at the Red Bull BC 1 Africa. Other former Heal the Hood graduates like Duane Lawrence and his brother ran the Humanitarian Games and now make a living from corporate gigs using hip-hop dance.

These and other stories are what puts the Cape Town hip-hop environment in a league of its own. It is founded on the lived, day-to-day experiences by a community that still battles with issues of identity, acceptance, affirmation and the will to survive against all odds.

The hip-hop movement in Cape Town has not only taken rap music, hip-hop culture, break dance and b-boy to workshops at art centres; it has also developed an academic component/aspect thus stimulating intellectual and literary discourse around the understanding of youth behaviour and youth culture

A day before the African Hip-hop Indaba, Emile YX? was hosting a two-day seminar at the Centre for Performing Arts at the University of the Western Cape. The collaboration between the civil community and academia is proving that in Cape Town hip-hop is more than just an entertainment platform for youth wanting to showcase their rhymes, punch lines and rap flow. Instead hip-hop has now become a performative art form that demands a socio-political and theoretical interrogation of its utterances and expression in order to understand its society at a given point in time. The gathering of the performing arts and education sector in the hip-hop world allowed divergent views on the past, present and future society and how hip-hop should engage with the socio-political and economic discourse.

An interesting discussion is captured below from the monologue presented by one of the participants, speaking on what he terms "revolutionary gangsterism and tries to articulate positive aspects and historical reasons for the existence of gangsterism in their time. The view he expresses is that gangsters existed in the past to protect communities from the apartheid regime and to fight for the liberation of the oppressed people. He refutes modern day gangsterism that has robbed the people of a peaceful existence in their communities because of drugs, thuggery and the killing of people. He laments the fact that the hip-hop discussion did not look at how the culture of gangsterism could be used to protect communities.

These and other stories are what define Cape Town hip-hop and the survival and triumph of the human spirit against all odds and illustrate how hip-hop activism has managed to keep the youth away from the streets. These individuals and cultural practitioners who engage with and make use of hip-hop to try and find meaning, do it not for themselves but do it out of a need to safeguard their children and community. This is but one of the many platforms in Cape Town where hip-hop has been used an instrument to rebuild communities that are under siege and keep youth away from the streets and from violence.

The remarkable work done by the hip-hop community and leading Raptivists, like Emile YX? in Cape Town, in fighting the blight of drugs and gangsterism, is commendable and says a lot about the level of social consciousness amongst Cape Town rappers. Unlike in most parts of the country, a youngster in Cape Town who decides to "pic up the mic" and rap is in most cases inspired by real life experiences. The microphone becomes a loud hailer and a weapon of survival in the belief that the words coming out of it will be a yell for help.

Most of the kids that Emile YX? have rescued from the streets are youngsters who become grown ups early in their lives when their fathers and elder brothers become victims of a system gone wrong. With no option, some of the young children have resorted to being 'runners' for the drug king pins – just to put bread on the table and buy those expensive sneakers and American hip-hop apparel. They themselves become victims of gangsters ordered to prematurely take the lives of their peers in exchange for having their names engraved in the hall of fame of gangsterism and drug peddling.

The story of such real life encounters in the Cape Flats is best articulated in the hip-hop song below written by a young boy in memory of 20 victims who died due to gang violence in the last two years in a small community called Ocean View. The song is appropriately titled "Ocean View Wounded". This was performed at an event where Emily YX? was a judge. Only two verses out of three are shared below:.

***Rest In Peace – R.I.P.***
***Ocean View Wounded***
***By Brandon Gogo from Ocean View***

*Chorus*
*Yor! I sing a song for all the broken hearts, who lost their loved ones*
*And find death at funerals, you live everyday but you only die once*
*Wipe away their tears, cause I know they in a better place*

*Verse 1*

*Rest in Peace, better dreams for my brother* ***Wade*** *hay*
*Yor! … Die memory sal altyd saam met my bly*
*Yor! the memory will always stay with me*
*Van Standaard 6 to 7, was djy my school-mate*
*From Standard 6 to 7, you were my class-mate*
*We were lovers not fighters, coz we avoid the fake*
*Wipe away the sad and have a happy soul*
***Michael*** *died so young, his memory will never grow old*
*He is in a better place, that's what I behold*
*I wrote this song dear uncle* ***Milton Van Wyk***
*I will never forget you, want ek wiet nou nog hoe djy lyk*
*I will never forget you, because still know how you look*
*Jy sal altyd part van ie family bly*
*You will always be a part of my family*
*R.I.P. I Love You, die memory bly (The memory will stay)*
*Hoekom dan hy, daais altyd die vraag*
*Why him, that's always the question*
*The man above het elke antwoord, vir elke vraag*
*The man above has an answer to every question*
*Ek vat my hande en sit 'n gebed bymekaar*
*I use my hands and put together a prayer*
*Lord protect me and guide vir my ma virrie jaar*
*Lord protect and guide me for the year*
*I saw her with her halo, sy word nie gestraf*
*I saw her with her halo, she will not be condemned/ punished*
*Toe val die trane van* ***Gideon*** *in sy ma se graf*
*Then tears fell from Gideons eye into his mothers grave*
*Die nagmerie is virby, it's a better dream*
*The nightmare is over, it's a better dream*
*R.I.P.* ***Mary*** *… we shall meet again*

*Verse 2*
*Salute* ***Bonnie****, I will always remember you*
*The blood will never fade away want jy was true my broe*
*The blood will never fade away because you were true my brother*
*Die memory sal altyd flow binne in jou bru'sse se bloed*
*The Memory will always flow in your close friends blood*
*They will never forget you, self ek oek broe*
*They will never forget you and neither will I*
*R.I.P. for those who are gone in these days*
*Die uur glas raak min, for the days of our lives*
*The sand in the hour glass is running out, for the days of our lives*
*Sorry for the loss, but I believe they are found*
*In the after life they are kings, hallowed in the crown*
*Die is vir daai laities wat 'n mamma en pappa verloor het*
*This is for those kids who lost a mother and father*
*Broken hearts can be fixed, sit vir God voor dit*
*Broken hearts can be fixed, put it in the Hands of the Father*

*I'm still praying for their light and their salvation*
*Wipe away your tears, cause I know they in a better place*

Whilst Emile YX? has dedicated most of his life to healing the hood of wounded souls, he also has had to deal with his own cultural identity. In the extract from the rap song "Who Am I" by Emile YX?, it is clear that the Coloured question and racial identity is very much contested terrain in the Western Cape and most probably other parts of the country. In the song Emile YX?, opens with a chorus and asks a direct question about his ( as a so-called Coloured) origin and racial identity

*Who Am I? Our family is actually from Germany you know*
*Who Am I? Jare wiet jy, jys nes a darkie. Who Am I, These Africans are so wild, they've got no culture. Who Am I?*
*Jys ma net nog n coloured ou*

The first verse below addresses the many shades that make up the so-called coloured. But Emile YX? clearly rejects being called Coloured and raps. "Your current definition of me is unacceptable...".

***First Verse***
*I am Slave and Colonial*
*Ancestry undetectable*
*Your current definition of me*
*Is unacceptable*
*Coloured is a miserable attempt*
*To define me*
*Look at me and tell me exactly what see*
*At first glance at me, An Arab you see*
*But you're, that's only a spec of who I truly be*
*Dark Skinned, so I'm of African Ancestry*
*Global family tree*
*I'm everyone and everyone's me*
*A touch of Indian, a pinch of Malaysian, African, Khoi-khoi*
*European and Asian*
*I agree to be, all I can be*
*No stereotypical box to classify me. Humanity exists thanks to the African Ancestry, One global Mulatto family tree. Mulatto also doesn't fully define me,*
*I'm indefinite and therefore truly free*
*I once was lost, but now I am found, I have the flag and it will not touch the ground*

The song above defiantly rejects the coloured classification of the so many people of the Cape who inhabit the land; and Emile YX? is definitely one of them.

**(c) Jitsvinger: Fighting Blood Cloth Mentality**

Within the dominant discourse and narrative carried by the Cape Town emcee, what is evident is that the dialogical nature of hip-hop has a subject (a community) that it engages with and tries to save. At the same time, through both public and hidden transcripts, Cape Town hip-hop also addresses itself to a system that alienates the so-called Coloured people. It mobilises those of Khoi and San descent, who are conveniently described as Coloured people by the system that seeks to oppress them, mentally as well, to carry out acts of subversion by first rejecting this racial classification. It does not merely address itself to the unjust system and hope thst those enforcinh it will listen and act; instead, it appeals to the victims of an unjust system to be conscious and act against it.

A proud descendent of the Nama, Jitsvinger, has located his cultural identity and his fight to legitimise the Afrikaaps dialogue, as the ultimate battle to retain whatever is left of the cultural linguistics of his endangered community. Jitsvinger, a hard hitting rapper/poet and Raptivist prefers to be referred as an "Afrikalture poet" and brands the so-called coloureds who still refuse to identify themselves as Khoi-San as suffering from a "Blood Cloth Mentality".

His concern is how best to articulate his views of the poverty-stricken community of descendants of the Khoi and the San – now reduced to just people of colour or just coloureds - which he acknowledges have become part of his community. Through his music and message Jitsvinger has taken up the fight against what he calls the "blood cloth mentality" – where people, knowing full well the problems and the circumstances under which they live, still refuse talk about their problems or actively engage in finding solutions.

As a socially-conscious rapper in Cape Town, Jitsvinger has continued to carry the mantle and to keep the original hip-hop message alive. As a descendent of the KhoiKhoi from the Nama, Jitsvinger has had to deal with issues his around own identity, culture and language and his counter-cultural hegemonic struggles. His struggle for language and identity has to be juxtaposed with the will to survive cultural extinction, which stretches back to the time of colonial settlement in the 17th century. Watkins (2012) argues, "The choice of language in rap music seems to have become a key indicator of differing authenticities. Language imbues the music with a sense of multiplicity and of ownership of diverse contexts; hip-hoppers use language to reflect their roots, their social standing, and their multiplicity" (p. 65).

Just like the Hawaiian rap group, Sudden Rush, who, according to Akindes (2001), "use hip-hop as a liberatory discourse for Hawaiians seeking economic self-determination in the form of sovereignty" (p. 95), Cape Town Coloured rappers (or Khoi-San) similarly have applied hip-hop as a counter-hegemonic transcript to confront what they perceive as colonial domination in the land of their birth. Just like McPherson (2005) refers to 'political-oriented rap which he argues speaks to black life conditions of adversity (p. 173) as a soundtrack to the hip-hop generation's disaffection over being left out of the American dream (p.182), the Cape Coloured rapper feels he or she is a victim of the same political exclusion and alienation. But Jitsvinger appeals to the victims of social and economic exclusion to keep on keeping on.

## Localising the Global and Keepin' It Real

Like any rappers around the world, the Cape Town hip-hop movement has also progressed through three phases of hip-hop developmen: which Lull (1995) calls "transculturation", "hybridization" and "indigenization". From rapping purely in American language style, to fusing both the American cultural form and the local one, and to localisation of imported cultural forms, Cape Town rappers have used not only the language (Afrikaans) but have used it as a form of social action.

In a series of transgressive acts designed to disrupt popular culture and cultural hegemony, the indigenisation of hip-hop by local acts can be seen in the incorporation of aspects of Khoi-San cultural life. For instance, hip-hop dance moves that are incorporated into the hip-hop performance have tended to emulate the daily life of the Khoi-San, either as food gatherers or hunters in the bush. The hip-hop dance movements emulating a hunter with a bow and arrow tip-toeing as if to shoot an animal, whilst rapping in Afrikaans as an act of identity that not only foregrounds the language into being but also symbolises the rapper's desire to be reconnected with their past – their Khoi-San ancestry.

As a show of cultural resistance to forced identity, a group of rappers and poet emcees, adopting a musical poetics to assert their revolutionary identity, staged a hip-hop musical, *Afrikaaps* – a cultural discourse that fights the "feeling of lost authenticity" by tracing (through song and musical poetics) the Creole roots of the Afrikaans language to slaves in the Cape. The discourse in this hip-hop musical was enacted to resolve and assert this community's own cultural identity in opposition to a dominant culture that that over the years has denied them their true identity.

Clifford, (1988) argues that the struggle for identity and recognition by any marginalised group of people is a process where, "the roots of tradition are cut and retied, collective symbols appropriated from external influences" (p. 15). As a consequence the struggle for cultural identity then demands that the disgruntled or marginalised group of people be left with no option but to express a "need to stage authenticity in opposition to external, often dominated by alternatives" (p. 12).

Race, class and identity have been at the centre of hip-hop discourse, which manifests itself through the "blackening" of youth culture (Raphael-Hernandez, 2004, p. 6). It is common cause that black culture versus the

dominant culture is the cultural and racial divide that draws the line between what is considered Black to that which is White.

Simeziane in (Terkourafi, 2010), asks the question, "What exactly is the glue that holds hip-hop communities together? Is it race, or does race merely serve as convenient shorthand, a metaphor for the various locally relevant identities hip-hop artists wish to project and problematize?" (p. 101).

Hip-hop arose out of the socio-economic conditions facing youth, but also with the politics of the locale that surround it. Because hip-hop's inception dealt with the politics of race and class in America, hip-hop artist's elsewhere, upon adopting this American cultural expression, have become more sensitised to issues of race relations and their economic and political manifestation. Therefore, the glocalisation of hip-hop has meant that rappers have used this art form to address the politics of race, economic and political discrimination in their localised environment (Omoniyi, 2009; Roth-Gordon, 2009; Pennycook and Mitchell, 2009).

For hip-hop, thinking and talking about social inequalities in a localised environment, anywhere in the world, race becomes the basic metaphor around which discrimination and alienation is addressed. The common thread between the development of hip-hop in America and the rest of the world is its link to the shared socioeconomic background of marginalised communities.

Like the Khoi-San activists, the Cape Town rapper has, over the years, also been engaged in the cultural struggle to subvert any social influence that has sought to instil a Eurocentric identity as an attempt to deny them their identity and Khoi-San lineage.

So, the staging of authenticity in opposition to external influences and forced identity, is what the song and its musical poetics addresses as the Coloured community's resistance to what they believe is a forged identity. Their claim to

the Khoi-San identity is a tie to a distant but not forgotten past. It is as an attempt to continue to appropriate and refashion what has been the accepted normal – the Coloured – to the not so Coloured but so original.

One of the songs performed in the musical, *Afrikaaps*, "Kom Khoi-San" (see below), unpacks a contemporary and contested cultural identity and addresses the historically unresolved yet politically contested question of land which the song claims belongs to the Khoi and the San people.

This song demonstrates how marginalised cultural practices can be deployed to reinforce and/or challenge the dominant discourse that seeks to enforce acceptance of the status quo.

***KOM KHOI SAN (*extract)***
*(Feat. Emile YX?, Jethro, Janine, Jitsvinger, and others)* taken from the musical **Afrikaaps**

| 'Afrikaaps' | English |
|---|---|
| Kykie verstaan die San behoort aanie land | *Look, understand the San belongs to the land* |
| Ma die land kannie gekoop word 'ie, so hou jou blerrie rand | *But the land cannot be purchased so keep your damn rand* |
| Gaan vra die Xhosa en Zulu, wie was eerste hie | *Go and ask the Xhosa and Zulu, who was here first* |
| En die naam Xhosa ennie clicks het die Khoe vir hulle gegie | *The Khoi and San gave them the name Xhosa and the clicks* |
| In Khoe mean Xhosa "Angry looking man" | *In Khoe, Xhosa means "Angry looking man"* |
| Elke click in isiXhosa is oorspronklik vannie San | *Every click in isiXhosa originally comes from the San* |
| Boesman en Hottentot is gebruik om te beledig | *Bushman and Hotnott was used to dehumanise* |
| Maar oorals staan die rotskuns nog stewig | *But, everywhere the rock art stand strong* |
| Vir duisende jare, nie eens "Rockgrip" kan so maakie | *For thousands of year, not even "Rockgrip" paints can do this* |
| The "Gods Must Be Crazy", ma rie San issie vaakie | *The "Gods might be crazy" but the San is not asleep.* |
| Wie's jou dom darkie, Afrikaans kom van ie kaap hie | *Who is your dumb darkie, Afrikaans come from the Cape* |
| Nou word elke dag, tweede nuwe jaar gemaak hie | *Now everyday is a 2nd New Year. Not only a party, nor apart here* |
| Nie net vir 'n party, of apaart hie | *The people will return themselves to the* |
| Die menses sal hulself trug aan die | *land* |

| | |
|---|---|
| land gie<br>Hie's elke sogenoemde ras is gemix ou bra<br>Ma daais oek o'right, os is amal van Afrika ... | *Evey sol-called pure race is mixed my brother*<br>*But that's also OK, we are all from Africa* |

| Afrikaaps | Translation |
|---|---|
| Die taal is gekoop in ons slaap<br>Nou vat ons n stap met Afrikaaps<br>Om dit terug te vat<br>Vra ma net die kat (Bliksemstraal)<br>Want met passie en emosie<br>Is die taal van vol<br>Die klinkers laat die tonge rol<br>Die rhythm van die ghoema<br>Het die plek op hol<br>Dit bring Kretoa en Autshaumoa terug in nie kol<br>Want ons dans al in die rondte soos n dikkop tol.<br>Virrie Kaart en transport vir "n legal bewys x 2 ..... | *The language is stolen in its sleep, now we take a walk with Afrikaaps in an attempt to return it. Just ask that cat, because the language is filled with emotion and passion. The consonants make the tongues roll. The rhythm and the Ghoema drive the place crazy. It brings Kratoa and Autchaumoa back into focus. We're dancing in a circle like a fat head top. For the card and transport as legal proof x 2.* |

| Afrikaaps | Translation |
|---|---|
| Ek is n Khoi, n San<br>Stap saam die maan – met wild in my hand<br>En n dans- wat jou sit in n trans<br>My voorgeslag kon reen maak,<br>Stories vertel – was woelag!<br>Tog fashionable – het krale gemaak en gedra<br>Was multi coloured, universal...<br>Geguide, deur die sterre en die maan<br>Tekens gelos op klippe en op land<br>Medisyne gekry –natuurlik-uit die aarde<br>Eers goed saam geliewe<br>Met verskille, maar tesame –<br>Proud van hul taal, ja<br>Toe kom skepe van Batavia –<br>Nou's alles mixed tesame!! | *I am a Khoi and a San*<br>*Walk along with the Moon and wildlife in my hand and a dance that will put you in a trance. My ancestors could make rain. Tell stories that were amazing. Yet fashionable, made beads and clothes we wore. We were muli-coloured, universal. Guided by the stars and moom. We left signs on stones and on the land. We got natural medicine from the earth. We first lived together in harmony, with differences, but in unity. Proud of their language, but then ships arrived from Batavia. Now everything is mixed up here.* |

Whilst one of the verses (translated) reminds the Khoi-San people what the life of the first people was like before Europeans came to these shores, the chorus relentlessly and unashamedly goes on and on:

Kom khoi san kry terug jou land
Colourdes kom van khoi san verstand x 4
Kom khoi san kry terug jou land
Colourdes kom van khoi san verstand x 4

***(Translation):*** *Come Khoi and San, get back your land. Coloureds come from Khoi & San understanding. X 2*

This song bares the long-held argument that the Khoi and the San are the first people of South Africa and lays claim to being the basis of an indigenous language and lays claim to the land.

The song is delivered with great intensity and takes a political slant with Emile YX? leading it joined by a multiplicity of voices with stamping feet fashioning a drill or a protest march to freedom as if to scare the enemy.

Subsequently, the song breaks into rap with a musical accompaniment dominated by the piano played by Kyle Shepard who displays a style similar to that of Cape Town's Dollar Brand with a distinguishable revolutionary tempo – a sound that reflects the sufferings of the forced removals of the people of District Six or that of the defiance campaigns of the 1960s.

Central to the tune is the unequivocal association with the Khoi-San as well as the claim to the language Afrikaans and its link with the Cape, hence Afrikaaps. This represents the liberation of Afrikaans as a language from the negative stigma still associated with it.

The song's performativity is centred around language and identity but more importantly it is artistically rendered by a diverse array of Cape Town's best-known cultural revolutionaries and activists which includes

the spectacular vernacular rapper, poet and guitarist Jitsvinger, the hip-hop legend and cultural activist Emile YX?, the very conscious soulful songstress Blaq Pearl, B-boy rapper extraordinaire Bliksemstraal, award winning dancer, singer and entertainer Monox aka Moenier Adams and Jethro Louw "plakkerskamp" poet, Khoisan activist, traditional instrumentalist and storyteller.

Pennycook (2007) argues, "what ties performance is not a competence that lies with each individual but a wide array of social, cultural and discursive forces" (p. 62). It is in its intended attack on the establishment that Afrikaaps appropriates the very same language that has been associated with the oppression of the marginalised groups and uses its performance power to produce a new identity through its performativity.

Reclaiming and re-appropriating Afrikaans as a language for all who speak it is to dislodge it from its association as the language of the oppressor or the preserve of the Afrikaner people who ruled under apartheid. *Afrikaaps* is performed to draw attention to the language, *Afrikaans*, as social action through which "the marginalised detach themselves from the ideologies of the powerful, retain a measure of critical thinking, and gain some measure of control over their life in an oppressive situation" (Canagrajah, 2000, p. 122).

In a separate text sent by Emile YX? on 15 January 2015, he argues the authenticity of Afrikaans as stolen from the indigenous and mixed languages of the "Afrikaaps".. He argues that:

> Afrikaaps is the story of the language's roots as a tussentall with Bushman, Malaysian, Slave, African, Indonesian, French, Nguni,Portuguese and Dutch influence in Cape Town, from being written in Phonetic Arabic, to being taught in Muslim schools in the Cape to it being stolen by those needing to create a folk to the first so-called pure Afrikaans dictionary and Bible making the original version seem like a kombuistall, just because they wanted to sound more Dutch to 1976 freeing from their version of Afrikaans, but not Cape Flats youth speaking the

original version but having to learn and study in this foretin version, now sold as the pure version, instead of stolen potjiekos version it started out as.

"Afrikaap"s, as a platform through which performativity is realised, opens up ways to understand how languages, identities and futures are refashioned. Just like Pennycook (2007) argues "the notion of performativity opens up many possibilities for questioning prior notions of identity...." (p. 77). The language choice that these rappers have made, stems from their "linguistic practices and environment" allowing them to "employ the linguistic varieties they have at their disposal" in order to achieve their artistic and political ends (Sara Simeziane, extract in Marina Terkourafi, 2010, p. 96). Afrikaaps' musical poetics and its revolutionary identity remains a weapon of the weak in Cape Town, in its fight against "blood cloth mentality" amongst the many so-called Coloured people in Cape Town.

**From the Cape Flats to the Cape Farms: Hip-Hop Goes Farming**

The fight for socio-political inclusion as well for identity by the so-called Cape Coloureds has not been divorced from the issue of economic inclusion, especially of the most marginalised of this racial grouping. The fight for economic emancipation has escalated outside of the racially segregated Coloured townships to the outskirts of Cape Town. Some hip-hop artists have taken their narrative out of the Cape Flats and straight into the farms where the forgotten people are left in the hands of the farmers who exploit them. Faced with a multitude of problems arising out of, amongst others, poverty, unemployment, lack of service delivery and most of all what most now perceive as slave wages paid by farmers, some hip-hop artists have resorted to in-your face music videos and songs resembling an all out war against unacceptable social conditions and an economic system that seems to exclude them.

The largely rural population of the coloured people who have no basic education labouron farms, or feel totally alienated from socio-economic and political discourse. Their means of survival is employment as farm workers,

working for meagre wages without any protection from exploitation. Collin's notion (2006, p. 4) of 'invisibility yet hypervisibility', applies to the Coloured community which feels a deep sense of rejection or of being ignored because it is so visible but also so susceptible to economic suppression and political manipulation.

The "coloured question" in Cape Town has occupied the political establishment since colonial times. However, the farm protests that took place in 2013 and well into 2014, spearheaded by Coloured farm workers, put the plight of the Coloured community into the local and global spotlight. Webb (2016) argues, "In the absence of institutional forms of representation, marginalised workers and poor communities engage with employers and the state at multiple sites and at varying scales" (p. 220). Fortunately, for the Cape farm workers, their struggle for equitable economic distribution did not evade the forever-watchful, sharp eye of the Cape Town hip-hop community.

As would be typical amongst the hip-hop community and leading Raptivists in and around Cape Town, the plight of the farm workers became the obvious cause to fight. Soon, an explosive music video would hit the social media networks and get the attention of the print and electronic media and even of academia -much to the surprise of many:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmgpDostEqk).

A song of the same music video, titled "Larney Jou Poes" took on Cape Town farmers and was recently released on YouTube by a Cape Flats underground hip-hop crew, Dookoom, led by Isaac Mutant. (Dookoom is an Afrikaans word loosely translated to mean "a cursed person". The song and the video is in response to the current political situation involving farm workers in Cape Town, whose condition has become completely unbearable).

The song was inspired by a brief spell at Ashton by Isaac Mutant, where he had first-hand experience of the treatment of farm workers during their protest

in the Boland. It was then that Isaac Mutant decided to publicly express his views and obvious frustration with the lack of progress regarding agricultural reforms and particularly the conditions of employment of farm workers.

The video zooms directly to Isaac Mutant, who breaks into a clear and unequivocal message which becomes a chorus throughout the song:

*"Farmer Abrahams had many farms*
*And many farms had Farmer Abrahams*
*I work one of them and so would you*
*So let's go burn 'em down."*

The video starts with a hill shot view of the farmer's extravagant house and the workers compound, as if the would-be attackers have been viewing the house with binoculars from the top of the hill. Suddenly the camera zooms into the yard and shows chickens eating what could be considered as the remnants of the farmer's delicious meal from the previous evening. The sheep are also seen walking on barren land and are caught looking straight in the direction of what seems to be irate farm workers carrying pitchforks, knobkerries, spades, tyres ready to burn the farmer Abrahams.

Dookoom's video was released against the backdrop of what had been rising and serious political tension on the Western Cape wine farms, which led to a strike in De Doorns in August 2012, which stopped in December only to resume again in January 2013. The strike left three farm workers dead at the hands of the police and private security. The strike, which had been brewing for a long time, was considered to be organic and led by the workers themselves but was also seen by many as fuelled by the miner's strike and the killings in Marikana.

The song and the video, as would be expected, sparked a lot of interest and discussion both online and elsewhere. One interesting comment or write up was by Eliza Day on the online blog, The Fuss, which aims to explore, exhibit and examine the South African cultural landscape. It had this to say:

> For me, I'll tell you what is cool about this song and about DOOKOOM in general over and above their obvious talent. They aren't pussies.Bret Easton Ellis pointed out recently, my generation, the one succeeding his own, is indeed Generation Wuss. We're all too afraid to even have a cultural opinion for fear of losing likes on our Facebook page. We don't love, we don't hate, we just don't care to make enough of a move to cause the eruptions that kicked off the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Generation Y? Generation Whine, more like. Isaac Mutant hasn't got the time or comprehension for pussies or poese. He's keeping it relevant. Keeping it real. He comes from another time, place and space.

Interviewed by Grethe Koen of the City Press newspaper, via Skype, on 22 October 2014, the band was unequivocal about their intentions with the song. Denying any intention to incite violence, one of the band members, Huma Waste, said:

> There's a difference between expressing anger and inciting violence. Let's focus on why people are angry. Social injustice. Surely treating workers worse than animals is an incitement to violence?.
> We want people to feel uncomfortable, like we're bringing it to your doorstep. Our anger is coming to your home. It's not a threat of violence; it's an expression of frustration at the legacy of the system.

In addition the frontman, Isaac Mutant (2014) said: We're burning our logo on to the land because we want to reclaim it. We're definitely not burning any farms.

Commentary was heard from across the political spectrum and civil society, including academics. One of the leading scholars on youth culture, particularly music (hip-hop) and film, Associate Professor Adam Haupt at the

the University of Cape Town, Film and Media Studies, commenting in a piece written for the City Press (12 October 2014), said:

> Dookoom is speaking back to discourses that frame white, Afrikaans people on farms as victims despite the fact that racialised class inequalities continue to marginalise the black majority. The video does not end with the killing of the farmer, the rape of his wife or the farmhouse being burnt down – as per the right wing narrative on 'white genocide. Instead, the defiant farm workers scorch the side of a hill with a message: 'Dookoom' spelt back to front. The powerful mystical Cape figure of the doekoem is invoked to signify the workers' revolt. It speaks back to videos like Bok van Blerk's De La Rey, which erases black subjects from the South African War, and to Van Blerk's racist depictions of black men in Tyd Om Te Trek? which visualises a farm attack.
>
> Isaac Mutant may provoke allegations of hate speech or incitement to violence, but the fact is that little has improved since the farm protests ended. Larney Jou Poes inserts the rural black subject into public discourse beyond the limited terms set by Van Blerk, Roodt or Hofmeyr.

With this song and the video, Isaac Mutant and the group Dookoom, have in effect done what Siegmeister calls the fusing of workers' music into instruments of democracy.

Isaac Mutant and many artists of his calibre are defying what mainstream culture, using media, continues to promote the profiling of the merchandisable clean emcee. These never-say-die attitudes by these hard-core rappers, who still slip through the barbed wire trappings of commercial rap, continue to spread the gospel of keeping it real by writing lyrics inspired by the very same

reason that got them to pick up the pen and write in the first: the reason why they took to rap to voice their frustrations.

As the voice of the voiceless and marginalised, hip-hop has been the life and blood of Coloured youth since the 1980s and has remained untainted by the trappings of commercialisation and consumerism. Artists like Dookoom and Jitsvinger are continuing the work done by groups like Prophets of Da City, Emile YX? and Black Noise. A remarkable contribution by Cape Town emcees is their contribution to the country's hip-hop narrative of a youth whose only desire and vision is to survive a world that is harsh to those who enter it innocently and unsuspectingly

Again, Ariefdien and Abrahams (2006) testify to how hip-hop has helped the hip-hop activist in Cape Town to design and develop youth programs, when they say;

> We see hip-hop as the resilience of the human spirit, that process of transforming yourself and your environment. Our challenge is to use hip-hop as a means to provide young people with a meaningful platform for expression. Our challenge is also about young people being comfortable and loud about their confronting 'conventional wisdom' and critically questioning accepted norms in a changing South Africa (in Chang, 2006, p. 267).

# CHAPTER 10: HIP-HOP CONSUMERISM: THE RISE OF BLING

*"Popular music not only accepts the characteristics of merchandise, it actually is merchandised as a commodity of the market". (Theodor Adorno, 1941)*

*Hip-hop*
*Got turned into hit pop*
*As soon as his album was number one on the pop chart (3rd Base)*

So, what is the deal here?

> ***Ring Announcer**: In this corner, wearing sheen Black skin crafted by the Most High and manufactured from struggle, standing tall with the weight of his/her people upon her/his broad shoulders, with the ability to solve problems and do the right thing – **The Real Black***
>
> *(Crowd boos)*
>
> ***The Ring Announcer**: And, in this corner, wearing blackface crafted in the most high-rise board rooms by grey suits at white corporations, standing down and being a weight on her/his people, with the ability to kill niggas for fun, pimp a bitch, shuck, jive and make lies the truth – **The Reel Black***
>
> *(Crowd erupts in cheers)*

In the anecdote above, Asante (2008) depicts what he argues is "The popular commercialism of hip hop, which has resulted in a split from those its supposed to represent, is not new" (p. 11). He articulates what one would call the pursuit of coolness where blackness, draped in corporate paraphernalia, is stripped of reality as it plays itself out in the imaginative world.

The winner is ***The 'Reel' Black*** whose rhymes shout corporate epithets and find resonance where "under capitalism the profit motive is transferred into a

commodity, marketable and interchangeable like an industrial product" (Myer, and Kleck, 2008*)* and, he is what Umberto calls 'the authentic fake' (quoted in Asante, 2008, p.12) and takes home the winners gold.

The loser is ***The 'Real' Black*** whose rhymes and lyrics are shaped by the scars of hardship which, according to Perry (2006), "constitute an anti-establishment aesthetic of the casual, an anti-objectified aesthetic of the abstract" (p. 123), who, unfortunately, suffers a devastating defeat.

**So, It's a '(w)rap': hip-hop has gone corporate**

With the rise of hip-hop consumerism Collin (2006) argues that what had been the long-held belief of "self-definition (cultural); self-determination (political) and self-reliance (economic)" (p. 10) has unfortunately been replaced by the new slogan "get rich or die trying". The flight from the ghetto to a better life is now the new anthem of most rappers who dream of a life full of glitz and glamour and where the market place is the final arbiter of who escapes or who remains trapped in the ghetto.

Their dreams were drenched in gold. They were armed with lyrics laced with rhymes that tap danced to the beat that would forever change their rhythm so that they could turn their backs on the very ghetto that gave them the narrative. The one thing on their minds was "lets get outa here before someone gets popped". But not every youth manages to escape their social conditions; instead some remain trapped in a never-ending cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Out of these hard choices emerge contradictory ideologies: either of keeping it real or of succumbing to commercial exploitation by the corporate world and organised capital. Instead of hip-hop using its social capital and its privileged position to influence society it has been used by mass media for commercial exploitation where brands have become the victor and hip-hop consumerism the benefactor: a choice between ultimate starvation and survival.

Articulating his views on the forever-existing contradiction between the arts and its use in corporate advertising, Bob Dylan (1985 album liner notes) lamented. "You know things go better with Coke because Aretha Franklin told you so...The corporate world, when they figured out what (rock and roll) was and how to use it, they snuffed the breath out of it and killed it" (Columbia Records)

What appears to have been a counterculture and a rebel youth movement has become the very same medium that corporate decision-makers use to sell anything from watches to whisky and fast cars. Hip-hop is is fast becoming the presenter of dreams of an ideal life worth living, at least by those who remain trapped in the ghetto. The co-option of hip-hop, through creating a bond between advertising and counter-culture (hip-hop consumerism), has turned hip-hop into a platform of faddist materialism. Instead of being the mouthpiece of youth demanding a fair share of the social contract, hip-hop and its obsessive culture of material consumption, has become integrally involved in sharing the loot arising out of intensified efforts by corporates to empty the pockets of the vulnerable and gullible. Frank (1974) describes the co-opting of hip through "hip consumerism" as "a cultural perpetual motion machine in which disgust with the falseness, shoddiness, and everyday oppressions of consumer society could be enlisted to drive the every-accelerating wheels of consumption" (p. 26).

Frank makes three important observations about the co-option of counter-culture:

(i) that the corporate world has figured out that counterculture is really not an enemy to be undermined or a threat to consumer culture but is a hopeful sign, a symbolic ally in their own struggles;

(ii) that the counterculture's simultaneous craving for authenticity and suspicion of tradition seemed to make it an ideal vehicle for a vast sea-change in consuming habits; and

(iii) that the counterculture has long since outlived the enthusiasm of its original participants and become a more or less permanent part of the corporate scene, a symbolic and musical language for the endless cycles of rebellion and transgression.

Through his co-optation theory Frank (1998) argues that there is faith in the revolutionary potential of authentic counterculture combined with the notion that business mimics and mass-produces fake counterculture in order to cash in on a particular demographic and to subvert the great threat that 'real' counterculture represents.

Until such time the industry stops treating culture and the creative industry as a commodity to be consumed as a entertainment, corporations will continue to continue to control as a producer of capitalist principles. In the culture industry, hip-hop has become the conduit to the market place for the capitalist economy helping it to thrive and influence the consumption patterns of the vulnerable who are celebrity struck and would quickly find affinity and associate with a product endorsed by their heroes or role models. This is a stark contrast to being validated by the hood when hip-hop, as a matter of principle, declined to yield to the demands of the market. But hip-hop has not only accepted the characteristics of merchandise but is actually merchandised as a commodity of the market.

And, as Perry (2006) argued, hip-hop has become fraught with dilemmas and inundated with the crises of urbanity, consumerism, and late capitalism leading to its commodification and commercialisation, which has now forever altered the art form and at times has challenged its integrity (p. 3). Succumbing to the profit-driven demands of the market, hip-hop has stopped serving its primary objective of being the challenger of the dominant capitalist economy. Instead, hip-hop has been turned into a commodity, "marketable and interchangeable like an industrial product" (Jhally, 1989, p. 73) and where, as Marx says, culture shifts from being a vital functioning part of social

structure to "real subsumption", with culture becoming an investment to produce profits.

The above is true for hip-hop where it has followed the logic of capital and become the conduit to the mass market. As Negus (2004) writes, "a self-conscious business activity the hip-hop generation influences the cultural industry, cultural marketplace, and consumer trends." (p. 526).

A professor of English at Berkeley, Scott Saul, commenting on how hip-hop lost its groove, argues, "it (hip) moved from a form of African-American and bohemian dissent to become the very language of the advertising world, which took hip's promise of authenticity, liberation, and rebellion and attached it to the act of enjoying whatever was on sale at the moment" (quoted in Asante, 2008, p. 12).

Corporations can no longer be bothered by whether they are selling the actual experience or simply a brand promise because, as Klein (2008) argues, false consciousness allows consumers to perceive the personality of a product or service that results from branding as natural and indisputable, preventing consumers from closer examination of marketing practices (p. 8).

The prophetic voice of Adorno could not have foreseen the extent to which music would succumb to the demands of production for a market. Adorno argues as early as the 1930s that "music would be deprived of its social support, alienated and emptied of its contents under capitalist society". As a result he further argued, "It (music) no longer serves the immediate needs, but obeys in company with all other products the laws of the market place operating on abstract goods. Music subordinates its use value, whenever there is any left, to the compulsion of exchange" (quoted in Etzkorn, 1973, p. 19)

## Blingin' and proud

What seemingly was an authentic cause by those who used the music to highlight life in the ghetto and inner cities, has now been taken away from its intended message by the same people thus leaving only the mere appearance or the aesthetics of it behind.

Most rappers aren't apologetic about their love for pricey designer clothes and accessories. After all, hip-hop and high fashion go hand in hand—both are oftentimes aspirational—and nowadays, these impeccably dressed musicians are just as likely to name-drop high street fashion brands.

Evidence of a bond between hip-hop and the corporate advertising world was seen as early as the mid 1980s. After reaching gold status in record sales with their self-titled album in 1984, Run-D.M.C released a track "My Adidas" – a totally unsolicited product endorsement – which consequently landed the group an endorsement deal with Adidas. In the same year Kurtis Blow was featured as a performer in a Sprite commercial and the lines between hip-hop and the corporate world became blurred, setting the stage for what would become of hip-hop in the corporate and advertising world.

As rappers dreams were drenched in gold, dropping verses about making enough money and making out with the most beautiful and sexiest gal in the back of the jeep, it was the corporate world that gave them endorsement deals for the same vehicles and, in turn, the same artists shot videos parading on the beautiful back of the Jeep.

When aspiring rappers wrote songs laced with lyrics filled with dreams about getting out of the hood, driving a Bugatti and wearing a Rolex watch, it was the corporate world that responded with endorsement dealsfor luxury vehicles, expensive watches and everything bling.

Soon, venomous lyrics of rebellion, liberation, and the fight against the system that sought to oppress them were replaced with verses advancing hip-hop consumerism. The commercial fantasies of a youth drenched in gold became

so common that the lyrics of rebellion were almost invisible in music, print and electronic media as hip-hop became co-opted by corporate business.

Every time rappers rap about life's aspirations and an assemblence of everything beautiful under the sun, the corporate world runs smiling to the bank. If hip-hop was or still is an articulation of a hope for a better life as youths try to escape poverty, there is no better analysis than the lyrics that express this desire.

Knowingly or not, rappers have saved corporations millions in revenue which could have been spent on advertising their goods and services, by inadvertently lacing into their lyrics brands and products that could only have been seen on TV or heard on radio before.

To navigate and exploit the market place, the rapper doubles up by using the ghetto as the reference from which the narrative is sourced and told as a way of signifying his authenticity and uses his hip-hop artist-persona to address his material conditions.

Hess (2005) attributes this shift of hip-hop's seemingly conflicting concerns of "authenticity and marketability" or "double consciousness" to as a way to stay relevant in highly competitive commercial space. The artists work to produce marketable music for mainstream listeners (p. 298), whilst trying to balance and maintain a certain level of authenticity to a place of cultural origin which Gilroy (1993) says forces the artist to "mediate individual creativity with social dynamics" (p. 73).

## Brands and braggadocio in rap lyrics

Hip-hop music is more popular and marketable to the mainstream now than ever before. For many of the hip-hop figures, endorsement deals are not only a way to make large sums of money but also aid in the promotion of their own music and brand.

Supporting this view is Basu (2004) who argues, "black youth do not see a contradiction in their efforts to 'get paid' and simultaneously contest the institutional practices that severely limit their prospects for social and economic mobility". In fact Basu points out that "participation in commercial culture by black youth is not a sign of surrender to the recuperative powers of capitalism but is instead a crucial element in their attempt to counter some of its most crippling effect" (p. 570)

Furthermore, Osumare (2007) argues, "Hip-hop's expressive music, dance, graffiti art, and general style are co-opted within all arenas of today's advertising" (p.4). Media and advertising companies are now dominated by advertisements that sell and promote products and brands from coca cola to jeep, using hip-hop celebrities. Osumare further points out that television commercials sell products from chewing gum, to sodas and automobiles, with hip-hop-inflected music, style, and language, often with the companies' own hip-hop celebrity. Wyclef Jean and Ludacris for Pepsi, Busta Rhymes for Mountain Dew, Missy Elliot for the Gap, Jay-Z for Heineken, Snoop Dogg playing golf with Lee Iacocca for Chrysler, and cool, spoken-word hip-hop poetry animation for Wintergreen Gum.

What has now reached the highest magnitude has been brewing for a long time and as Chang (2005) argued, by the late 1980s even mass marketers, in their ambition to fight for brand dominance, had begun to realise that hip-hop as an urban lifestyle was the gate to "urban youth of colour (sic) and until then an ignored niche were a more brand conscious, indeed brand-leading, demographic than they had ever realized" (p. 417). Chang quotes the fact that media and advertising agency budgets were skyrocketing and companies like Adidas, Nike and Pepsi began to search for new markets and found them in the hip-hop generation.

Ghostface Killah (member of the Wu -Tang Clan) is considered to be one of the most formidable emotional stream-of-consciousness storytellers with narratives containing cryptic slang (hidden transcripts) and is also notorious for his Mafioso lifestyle. However, in an outright display of brand loyalty there is no doubt about his love for Dove soap as depicted below in his rap lyrics.

In the song, "New God Flow", Ghostface has the lyrics: "*Six hundred Cuban cigar in the big tub/ Medallion on, Dove soap on the fresh cut/ With soap suds on the Mac-11*

And as reflected in one of his twitter postings in November 2010, below:




*Figure 10.* November 2010 Twitter post

What is more interesting is the conversation that ensues on twitter exactly two years later as depicted below:




*Figure 8.* Coversation in reponse

Tan above, whose twitter handle is @tann_time, can't help but notice how Ghostface Killah has outrightly, yet unsolicited, endorsed Dove soap. During the twitter exchange, Ghostface admits that he "can't even get free soap from them" – a realisation of the impact of his tweet.

On the other hand, another rapper, Petey Pable is happy with his endorsement as evident in one of his songs "Freak-A-Leek", where he raps "*I drink it and they paying me for it*" in reference to Seagram's gin, the brand he endorsed.

If Young Jeezy's lyrics below were anything to go by, they surely would have landed every man in a tight corner as every woman would be demanding a Chanel bag, as reflected in the song fantasizing about a woman with a Chanel bag:

*Everytime you see me on grind: stay on that working shit/ All I ever want's a bad bitch in a Chanel bag/ Street niggas want her cause they know she got Chanel swag* (Young Jeezy – #Supafreak)

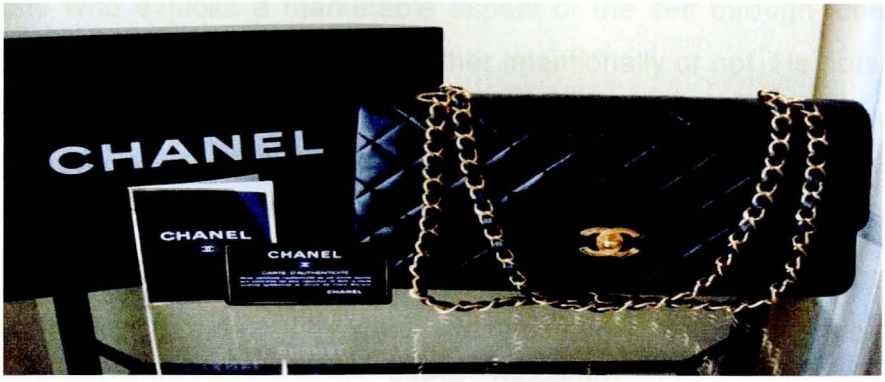



*Figure 11.* Chanel products Young Jeezy raps about

Here, Jay-Z is obviously quite ecstatic and feeling very satisfied with his achievements and how he has left the 'hood' for a better life in the suburbs as best expressed in, "What More Can I Say" by Jay-Z

*Young, Hova the God, nigga. Blasphemy/ I'm at the Trump International: ask for me/ I ain't never scared. I'm everywhere, you ain't never there*

Jay-Z, ready to declare his "retirement", asks everyone "What More Can I Say." After multiple platinum albums, a minority stake in Brooklyn Nets, and impacting rap and pop culture like no other, he really has nothing else to say to prove his worth to people. Pound for pound he is the best. And if anyone disagrees, they can definitely come to Jay-Z and ask for him.

As the rapper shares his/her experience of life in the streets to legitimise the storyline whilst taking the narrative to the market for the public to hear, the corporate world listens carefully for any possible exploitation of the story by their brand, as heard below in Dr. Dre's "Keep Their Heads Ringing":

*Still, niggaz run up and try to kill at will/ But get popped like a pimple, so call me Clearasil/ I wipe niggaz off the face of the Earth since birth/ I been a bad nigga, now let me tell you what I'm worth*

Dr. Dre presents a persona that is rooted in the ghetto but at the same time one who exploits a marketable aspect of the self through identifying with a product or brand, Clearasil, whether intentionally or not. He puts his stamp on his craft, proclaiming himself as the real nigga in the hood, and dares anyone to come take his throne from him.

These and other big hip-hop dreams are the real reasons why corporations no longer feel threatened by what was once considered a culture of thuggery and gangsterism, because the same "gangsters" are cashing in on what the corporate world is distributing.

The American Brandstand, a report published by Agenda Inc., a San Francisco-based marketing firm, revealed that in 2005 rappers rapped frequently about rolling in fast cars, that Mercedes received 100 mentions, while Nike came in second with 63 mentions and former number one,

Cadillac, took third place with 62. The report tallies which products were most name-dropped in the 106 songs that reached the Billboard Top 20. Other Auto brands that earned mention in the top ten were Bentley, Rolls Royce and Chevrolet, as well as fashion, labels, beverages and weapons.

The brand, which made the biggest gain in ranking that year, was the pistol-maker Beretta that debuted at number. 13 with 24 mentions. In the report, Rapper 50 Cent was the most "brand-dropping rapper" of the year, with 17 product mentions in seven songs, including Bentley, Cristal, Lamborghini, Mercedes and Nike. It was unclear how many of the product mentions were paid placements, because revealing such a deal would undermine both the rapper and the brand's credibility, according to advertising industry analysts quoted in AdAge.

Looking at the Top 10 most mentioned brands in 2005, one would be convinced that these rappers dreamt of driving down *Hip-Hop Avenue* with a bottle of Hennessey and an AK-47 hidden inside a Louis Vuitton bag. Below is the list of the brands most mentioned in the lyrics of rap songs in 2005 as published by the American Brandstand.

It is clear from the list below that hip-hop has become the unsolicited and un-commissioned signifier and stamp of authentication of brands to the delight of the owners of those brands or products.

1. *Mercedes-Benz*
2. *Nike*
3. *Cadillac*
4. *Bentley*
5. *Rolls-Royce*
6. *Hennessy*
7. *Chevrolet*
8. *Louis Vuitton*
9. *AK-47*

The above list shows how the rappers are getting advertising or endorsement deals from business and says more about where urban music is moving than where the products or brands being endorsed are shifting to. The genre that for a long time had been an outcast and that fell outside the pop mainstream has become an obvious choice for the corporate world.

In the article "In Perfect Harmony: Popular Music and Cola Advertising", Bethany Klein singles out Pepsi and how in 1990, with rap growing in popularity the company became one of the first advertisers to reach out to hip-hop and endorsed Young MC in an advert "Cool Cans". The choice of the word 'cool' is obvious since Pepsi was targeting youth between the ages of 12 to 24 to most of whomrap represents the concept of cool.

The growing bond between hip-hop and advertising is visible in all hip-hop magazines (Vibe, The Source, XXL) where corporate brands and products such as those from the automobile industry, clothing, telecommunications or mobile operators, including shoe and jewellery manufacturers hae become a permanent feature.

However, paging through Car Magazine" March/April 2008, the front-page bears a photo of American rapper, 50 Cent, leaning against a Pontiac G8. At the 2007 SEMA Show, Pontiac and 50 Cents introduced his new, special edition 2008 Pontiac G8. The same magazines shows nine celebrity rappers who have endorsed car manufacturers such as General Motors, Ford, Lincoln, and Chrysler and they range from Jay-Z, Mary J Blige, P Diddy to Snoop Dogg. More interesting was the selection of five favourite cars by an unknown Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) rapper. His selection of (from number one to number five ) 2008 Cadillac Escalade, 2008 Ferrari F430 Spider, 2008 Bentley Continental GT, 2008 Mercedes Benz S550, and 2008 Chevy Avalanche proves the argument that Corporate America looks to the hip-hop urban lifestyle as the endorser of their products and brands.

The discovery of hip-hop by the corporate advertising world has now moved an urban and rebellious counter-culture from relative obscurity to accidental prosperity.

## From relative obscurity to hip-hopreneurs

In gun-totting and drug-infested neighbourhoods, where gangs fight for control of territory to ply their trade as their only means of survival, to adapt or to die hustling are the only two options.

Those that managed to escape the trappings of gangs and violence and who used hip-hop to tell their story, the corporate world embraced them and soon found a conduit to the mass consumer market. The rapper in turn made it to Forbes Magazine

They soon drive expensive cars, have fancy homes and do not need a loan. They're moneymaking machines, because rap is in their genes, living lives mostly seen in dreams. Men and women alike can rank, as long as they've got money in the bank.

Draped in chains and the latest hi-tops, these cool dudes on the Top Five Richest Rappers list are known to turn superfast lyrics into superfast cash. These rapper-kings, Sean Combs, Dr Dre and Jay-Z, have taken the hip-hop game to another level and built an empire that whatever its worth, is definitely not worth 50 cents!

The names on this list illustrate this point as the ludicrously high numbers below show!

In May 2014, Forbes Magazine published The Forbes Top Five: Hip-Hop's Wealthiest Artists.

**Sean "Diddy" Combs** leads the pack with an estimated fortune of $700 million, an increase of $120 million over his net worth in 2013. The change

comes largely from the addition of Revolt TV—the new, music-focused, multi-platform channel of which he iss the majority owner—to his already-hefty portfolio.

Determined to make sure that his showbusiness empire is built to last, Sean Combs is not anytime soon about to rest, as evident in this statement: "Right now my focus is Revolt and making it the number one, most-trusted, most credible worldwide brand for music,"

**Dr. Dre** ranks second with $550 million. He leapfrogged to this position, thanks to a large stake in Beats By Dr. Dre, which he cofounded with Interscope chief, Jimmy Iovine, in 2008 which now two-thirds of the premium headphone market with reported annual sales in excess of $1 billion and with no signs of slowing down. Private equity firm, Carlyle, invested $500 million for a minority stake last year, pushing Beats' value past $1 billion and likely closer to $2 billion.

**Jay Z** follows in third place with an estimated $520 million fortune that continues to grow at a healthy rate too. Jay-Z has made multiple nine-figure deals in the past which included the $204 million sale of Rocawear in 2007 coupled with an additional $150 million pact with Live Nation in 2008. But much of his recent growth comes from Roc Nation, his record label and management firm that recently added a sports agency.

In fourth position is **Bryan "Birdman" Williams**, who shares his net worth of more than $300 with his brother Ronald "Slim" Williams. The two brothers cofounded Cash Money Records two decades ago, a company they have grown to include a roster that boasts Drake, Nicki Minaj and Lil Wayne. Birdman has also diversified with Cash Money Content, GT Vodka and the YMCMB clothing line.

Finishing the top five is **50 Cent**, who owes most of his fortune to his $100 million haul from the sale of Vitamin water in 2007. Now he's trying to increasehis fortune with companies like SMS Audio and

SK Energy Beverages. In the meantime, he'll reboot his music career by taking his G-Unit Records independent and releasing a new album *Animal Ambition* in June 2014.

The above is a true testimony of how the exploitation of hip-hop by the mass culture industry has been turned around by the hip-hop generation themselves to suit their own economic aspirations. This speaks to the slogan coined by 50 Cents which was turned into a movie *get rich or die trying* and represents the hip-hop generation's dream to move out of the ghetto and pursue a life full of prosperity and financial success.

From the above analysis it is clear that hip-hop has benefited both the rapper and the corporate world. The fight for the consumer and the wallets of those with disposable income has seen beverage companies, food chains, clothing lines, shoe manufacturers, car manufacturers, jewellery and cosmetic companies luring world-renowned rappers to endorse their brands and products. This is evident in Rose's (1994) observation that "commercial marketing of rap music represents a complex and contradictory aspect of the nature of popular expression in a corporation-dominated information society" (p. 17).

Noting the successes of these accidental benefactors of the hip-hop world, Asante (2008) argues that hip-hop has been transformed into an urban playground where it is devoid of its original source (the ghetto) and of what it purports to address because those that exploit it pretend as if the socio-political and urban conditions that gave rise to it simply do not exist. And, as said by a rapper he quotes; "They want (Black artists) to 'shuck and jive', but they don't want us to tell the real story because they're connected to it" (p. 14).

## Rapping in Rands: Who is raking it in SA?

As would have been expected anywhere else in the world, corporations pay close attention to the emerging trends necessary to bring their products and services to the consumer. Multi-national corporations are nott really concerned about being good corporate citizens in the territories where they operate but rather in ensuring a positive bottom line.

The hip-hop culture in South Africa has followed the same trend as seen in America. When Hennessy became the coolest whiskey in America, South Africa also started throwing parties sponsored by Hennessy and the hip-hop artists started shooting videos where Hennessy was the beverage of choice. Hennessy launched its Hennessy Artistry programme in 2010 with Teargas being the first hip-hop group to be associated with the brand. Similar to the Hennessy Artistry parties in America, where top and celebrity rappers showed off the Privilege VSOP Cognac, Hennessy Paradis Rare Cognac, Hennessy Black Cognac, and Hennessy VS Cognac, South African rappers followed suit. Every club that had the flair and the patronage befitting of Hennessy status would become hosts of the Hennessy Artistry Club Tour as it criss-crossed the continent, touring in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa, just to mention a few. Some of the continent's top hip-hop artists such as Nigeria's own 2Face, Wizkid, descended on South Africa soil in November 2014 – courtesy of Hennessey Artistry.

Suddenly hip-hop had become drunk with the obsession of clinching that brand endorsement and soon Pro Kid (the kid who came from the Soweto hip-hop sessions) became the brand ambassador and the face for Fish Eagle Whiskey, showing himself as a confident black middle class man or a black diamond who knows his whiskey

JR's song "Show Dem" (MakeThe Circle Beega), a campaign song used by Vodacom during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, was probably the first song to indicate that hip-hop had eclipsed Kwaito as an urban and definite youth sound. JR's song also eclipsed every song in the run up to the World Cup.

When everyone else was writing lyrics that spoke about 'Africa this and Africa that' in the hope that the song would resonate with the spirit of the tournament and the fact it was the first time Africa was hosting such an event, JR went straight for a club banger and captured what would be the mood for the tournament – celebrations, carnival, sex and block parties, and everyone danced to the tune, as they made the circle bigger. Hip-hop had arrived in the boardrooms of the corporates with big marketing budgets and everyone wrote songs hoping to be noticed by the advertising agents looking for songs that resonated with their clients' brands.

A string of hip-hop artists would soon follow with one form of endorsement or another, with limited financial benefit to South Africa. Since then product placements have been associated with the following hip-hop artists:

- **Proverb** endorsing *Volvo* and *Energizer*
- **Reason** aligned with *Sprite*
- **Da L.E.S** and **DJ Dimplez** endorsing *Ciroc*
- **AKA** endorsing *Axe* deodorant
- **HHP** became the brand ambassador for *Stimorol* chewing gum and *Status* deodorant
- **Khuli Chana** ended the year 2014 by scooping an endorsement and product ambassador deal with *KFC* (Kentucky Fried Chicken)

Figures, indicating financial compensation, could not be determined from the sources because of the confidentiality agreements entered between the respective parties, but *sahiphopmag* published SA Top 10 Richest Rappers in South Africa:

Topping the list is Die Antwoord with a net worth of R56 million and annual revenue of R8 million, and they are followed by Casper Nyovest at said to be worth R3.2 million and to have signed the biggest deal with MTN in 2015. His most publicised success was the "Fill Up the Dome Concert" with an estimated 20, 000 people who came to watch his show. At number three and four respectively are AKA worth R4.8 million and Khuli Chana worth R2.5 million. K.O completes the top five and is co-owner of one of the most

successful independent label, Cashtime Family. The rest that complete the top ten richest rappers in South Africa are JR, HHP, Da Les, Jack Parrow and Tumi, who has been in the music scene since the 2000s, is considered one of the most talented lyricists and owns Motif Records with top acts such as Reason and Ricky Rick.

One of the most underrated but successful rappers turned entrepreneur is the former member of Skwatta Kamp, Siyabonga 'Slikour' Metane, who went from recording a song 'Blacks Are Foolz' to become one of the most celebrated hip-hopreneurs in the country. Today Slikour owns one of the most successful local brands that is distributed in 40 stores nationally as well as a fleet of taxis.

When Skwatta Kamp collapsed, Slikour joined one of the biggest sponsorship agencies, Openfield, where he later became a partner and director. The success of his private ventures has seen him branching into other business initiatives such as his current flagship, Onlife Networks (www.slikouronlife.co.za). This is his first online channel (if not the first black-owned online platform) with between 60, 000 to 80, 000 unique visitors. It has become the preferred online music retail store for South African hip-hop musicians who are breaking into the industry or the established rappers who want to test their singles before releasing them through iTunes.

The success of Slikour's Onlife Networks has attracted more corporates brands such as Captain Morgan, Heineken, Hansa, Sprite, Nik Naks, since his venture came into existence just under 12 months ago. When asked about his business venture, Slikour (interview with Slikour conducted in 2015) says:

> The future is more niche online channels that cater for the market's specific interests and mine is more focussed on music and the urban youth market. It also important to note that I am probably the first urban artist in our generation who officially crossed over to corporate

> as an employee and a partner without a formal degree and just what I learned from understanding the market while selling my music.

Slikour's extreme makeover is a far cry from the times of Skwatta Kamp and the release of their second album with Gallo Records. On the day of the release the record executives discovered that on his "thank you notes" Slikour had written "fuck Gallo". Much to the dismay of the company that had launched the group and Slikour, who became the first hip-hop artist in South Africa to sell over 50, 000 units, this was to be moment that defined the future of the group with Gallo and would eventually lead to the group leaving the record company.

But, Slikour is very clear about his role in the music industry and in the hip-hop scene and articulates eloquently when he says:

> The heart of a true hip-hopper is a heart of an activist. So in an industry that has so much faults you end up working to provide solutions for generations that come after you. By defaults, this makes you an entrepreneur cause you fixing business and economic challenges in the industry. This goes beyond music but everything else that leverages of music to find its relevance. Therefore I'm less a businessperson but more an activist that's commercially rewarded for a sincere cause (interview with Slikour in 2015).

An activist that is commercially rewarded for a sincere cause is a bit of a misnomer. Having led a delegation of rappers to meet with the Mayor of the City of Johannesburg just before the National General Elections, Slikour had a clear answer as to why an "eminent persons group" of rappers had to be dispatched to engage the Mayor. He argues,

> We wanted to show the Mayor the importance of engaging with the market and that a community of young South African youths find solace

> in the art form. We were telling him that until you start speaking to this specific youth you would not evolve. And it's been proven cause they never moved further with building a relationship with the art form.

The silencing of hip-hop by corporate bodies through product and brand endorsement is what Adorno calls a music that accepts *Warencharakter* in that it accepts the demands of the market (Etzkorn, 1973, p. 20). The reference by Slikour of youth as a "market", unintended as it may have been, suggests that there has been a shift from youth being perceived as important socio-political beings or interest groups to being considered merely a consumer of products and brands.

# CHAPTER 11: A FEW 'GATVOL' EMCEES SPITTING VENOMOUS RHYMES

*Mr president, this is for the people who you're tryna fool/*
*This is for the people so it's time to school/*
*This is for the cronies who admire you: you wanna see a chicken run?*
*I'll drown you in your firepool/*
*(Vice V)*

*Freedom without opportunity is a devil's gift*
*(Noam Chomsky*

## A democracy waiting to exhale?

There has been growing concern that the inequalities still prevalent in the post-apartheid South Africa are, according to Natrass and Seekings, both a matter of inheritance and the wrong policy choices under the new democratic dispensation which they argue is a result of "the post-apartheid 'distribution regime' that still shows features of its late-apartheid predecessor, which unfortunately has produced similar results and consequences" (cited in Habib, 2013, pp. 16-17). The consequence has, unfortunately, been rising unemployment, poverty and visible socio-economic inequality between the rich and poor.

The dilemma of South African society is its duality because of how apartheid established what Habib (2013) identifies as "two sectors in South African society; one white privileged, the other black and disadvantaged" (p. 91). More than two decades since the dismantling of apartheid the ANC government has not succeeded in bridging the racial divide, let alone making a serious dent in eradicating poverty and bringing about social equality. The government's attempt to address inequality by expanding livelihood opportunities for the marginalised, whilst capping further enrichment of the elite, has not produced any meaningful results, at least in the eyes of the marginalised the youth. Kepe et al (2016) argue that for the post-apartheid government to transform what was a racialised socio-political apartheid

constract this "would require a significant undoing, a fundamental rupturing of its cultural, economic and social practices". Kepe et al (ibid) further argue that the absence of "fair and achievable conditions of people to meet their own needs in life" basically means no freedom at all (p. 6).

The alleged discrepancies between the promises of the new democratic dispensation and the realities on the ground that manifest themselves in poverty and inequality is what prompted some of the hip-hop emcees to put their observations into song. It is this "struggle between society and state over distribution of political and economic public goods" (von Lieres, 2016, p. 206) that the hip-hop generation are engaging in. They engage in public discourse to question the viability of the social pact between them as active citizens and the state.

Hip-hop, according to Ntarangwi (2009), has come "to embody a specific public function by occupying specific spaces in the communities where public discourse has been the preserve of elected public officials." (p. 11). Hip-hop's emergence as the voice of the marginalised has succeeded in "circumventing traditional gate-keeping structures" (Clark and Koster, 2014, p. 72) and now the youth have a voice that expresses and asserts its position on political, economic and social processes, which in their opinion are not designed to suit their specific needs.

How true can these sentiments be when the liberation movement that is now the governing party is close to the suffering of the previously disadvantaged and the oppressed? Ahmed (2014) argue that it was not feasible that during the struggle for freedom people could have doubted what democracy would bring and articulately puts it, "throughout that tumultuous time, people never lost that hope, since the ideal of freedom held the tacit promise of a different life for the people in this country" (p. 1).

However, Letta Mbulu, a veteran artist and activist who was exiled to the United States during the struggle against apartheid, did not share the same sentiments and as early as 1994 she had cast doubt on the new domains of freedom. She released a song "Not Yet Uhuru" in 1994 singing that she could not see any difference nor whether there were democratic gains arising out of the new dispensation. Her uncompromising lyrics, *"umhlaba wakithi/usemi ndawonye/Akuna mehluko kulelizwe/Qawula amakhandela"* could have been easily dismissed as liberation-pessimism or as anti-revolutionary, were it not for her social standing and struggle credentials within South African society. Nevertheless the sentiments expressed revealed scepticism and a concern that if this freedom bore no meaningful benefits for those who had suffered years indignity it could only be reduced to "a devil's gift" (Noam Chomsky). The song was sounding an alert to the government to start working for a democracy that functions and which must resemble everything the liberation movement stood and fought for. These prophetic lyrics have lived to haunt the African National Congress, more than two decades after freedom (uhuru) hit the shores of the country.

The South African populace have been increasingly frustrated with the lack of visible progress in the delivery of freedom's promise that should have had a meaningful impact on people's lives. If the slogans adorning public spaces, social media, and lately tall buildings, are anything to go by, they are indicative of the people's sentiments that it may not be "uhuru" after all.

The popular slogans and protests such as #ZumaMustFall, #ZuptaMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #RacismMustFall, #CorruptionMustFall are just some of the many manifestations of a democracy that, to many people, has failed to bear the fruits of freedom.

Sithole (2012) argues:

> The rise of liberation movements in Africa to oppose the evils of the oppression and segregation associated with colonialism within the last

> 100 years had given hope that the erstwhile Dark Continent was going to see the sunrise glow. Many had hoped the emergence of the liberation movements, as a leader in government, was the beginning of the restoration of the dignity of the indigenous black African people. Unfortunately it wasn't to be. Africa has continued with the dark cloud of poverty, war, and despair hovering around its skies. It was just a change of hands. There were no more colonial masters. It became our kith and kin in charge but the same old story of suffering. The income inequality gap has widened even further. (News24 Online, 17 August 2012.

Sithole argues that after the suffering of the struggle heroes, who were tortured and imprisoned with some dying whilst fighting for the liberation of their people, the same liberation movements have failed dismally in taking their people forward or they are simply clueless in understanding what to do. Whilst Sithole argues that the former liberation movement's lack of understanding of what to do to move the people forward could be admitted as a legitimate argument, not listening and therefore not understanding could be could be the real problem.

These sentiments have now been expressed by the hip-hop generation in songs, in the videos, with their baggy and over-sized clothes that defy the coolness of cool. It is with this moral high ground and revolutionary consciousness that the hip-hop generation is fighting against the same liberation and civil rights movements that supposedly delivered freedom.

A limited and ignored section of the hip-hop generation is rising up and challenging the rays of the rainbow through which this country sees its multiplicity of faces. These reality rappers, or the so-called politically conscious emcees, do not see their faces on the colours of the rainbow nation.

For instance, violent protests and marches against the lack of service

delivery, are visible, defiant actions by a frustrated citizenry that can be seen and witnessed by those in power. The defiant hip-hop dialogue, on the other hand, represents a different form of civic action. The violent protests are here funneled through verses and verses of carefully constructed lyrics that are hip-hop's appropriation – it is an audible stance that demands that one listen in order to understand.

The ANC government now faces a challenge from youth who have have taken their protest to the public to to demand a meaningful social contract, such as free education, jobs and empowerment opportunities for young people. The youth believe that they face even more difficult challenges in navigating this life that was crafted by their struggle heroes. With the number of unemployed graduates standing at the shocking figure of 600, 000 and rising college fees for those still trying to attain academic excellence, the government has a huge problem on its hands..

### Is this a devil's gift or real freedom?

The problems facing youth, particularly black youth in South Africa, reveal a skewed picture compared to their white counterparts. It is common knowledge that Black youth have a slim chance of finding a job compared to white youth. With 39% and 8.3% unemployment figures for black and white youth respectively, it is not surprising that a few hip-hop emcees are angry and frustrated with an uneven socio-economic landscape.

Compounding the problem is the historical racial segregation where the majority of the youth live in townships and will, in most cases, be ignored because they live on the margins of society. Access to quality education, decent housing, social amenities and basic services is limited compared to those living in the suburbs.

Of serious concern is that unemployment does not differentiate between Black youths with matric or tertiary qualification. StatsSA shows that the number of unemployed Black youth without matric increased from 40% in 1994 to 42% in

2014, whilst those with matric but without jobs increased from 28% in 1994 to 34% in 2014. Shocking is the 2014 figure of 14% unemployed Black youths with a tertiary qualification compared to 6% of the same group in 1994. Between 2008 and 2014 Black Africans stayed longer out of jobs compared to other race groups at approximately 61% to 71% of job seekers unemployed for more than a year. The figures are a huge contrast to thosefor the white population who constituted only 4.1% of the unemployed in 2008 and 7.3% in 2014.

Business Tech online (27 August 2015), using StatsSA published figures, also showed that Black Africans accounted for 79.3% of the working age population but only 73.0% of the employed and were over-represented among the unemployed at 85.7%. Whereas the youth constitute 19.7 million of the population, only 6.2 million were employed in the first quarter of 2015 and 3.6 million were unemployed but actively seeking employment, whilst 1.53 million youths had abandoned any hope of finding a job. In 2015, the unemployment of Black African youth had reached its highest level at 40.3% compared to 36.3% in 2008, whereas white youth unemployment was recorded at only 11.2% compared to 9.3% in 2008. The report also states that coloured youth unemployment also increased to 32.1% in 2015 from 28% in 2008. Indian youth unemployment stood at 22.6% in 2015, up from 17.4% in 2008.

Writing in the Independent Online (June 28, 2015) on "Corporate SA betraying black youth", Gugu Ndima said: "These young Africans are trapped in townships with no hope or prospects of a better life. They are victims of systematic exclusion from the mainstream economy by Corporate SA". Cohen (2010) argues "Again, it is one thing to acknowledge that young black people have a far tougher road to travel toward success than other young people; it is another thing to acknowledge the role of government policies in helping to construct the uneven terrain black youth must navigate" (p. 11). So Ndima decries any youth intervention that completely misses the point and she argues that the youth of this country

> are not looking for shelters, blankets, homes and condescending tokens of charity to ease the conscience of white-collar criminals. They seek entry into the economy, they seek education and recognition just like their white counterparts get. The black youth of our country have been relegated to mere seekers of employment.

Reacting to the published statistics that painted a grim picture for your people in South Afircа and whilst she acknowledges that government must create opportunities for young people, Ndima challenged Corporate South Africa to act its part too.

The grim situation in South Africa is further captured in the *US News and World Report* publication of July 2014 by Stephen Hayes which describes the prevailing socio-economic and political environment since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 as a ticking time bomb. The Report showed that unemployment figures for South Africa's youth are staggering. Officially, youth unemployment (ages 15-34) has gradually risen to 36 percent. Many believe that real unemployment among that population group is closer to 50 percent. Only 37 percent of the youth labor force has a high school diploma. Of those who failed to get a high school diploma, unemployment is at 47 percent, officially. A decade ago, a person with a high school diploma had a 50 percent chance of getting a job. Today, that figure is 30 percent. Census estimates are that more than 3.2 million young South Africans between the ages of 15-24 are neither employed nor engaged in education or job training. To stress again, according to South Africa's Labour Force Survey for the last quarter of 2013, two-thirds of all unemployed South Africans were under the age of 35. This is a ticking time bomb in the belly of the nation.

Confirming the same figures, the *World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risk Report 2014* stated that South Africa has the third highest unemployment rate in the world for people between the ages of 15 to 24. The report estimates

that more than 50% of young South Africans between 15 and 24 are unemployed, with only Greece and Spain having higher unemployment in this age range.

The above analysis contradicts Kasibe (2014) who visualises the new dispensation as symbolising "the promise of freedom and multiple beginnings" (p. 90). Booysen (2016), on the other hand, argues that there are still those who, feeling rejected and alienated, have taken it upon themselves to object to and challenge the prevailing socio-political order (P. 1).

This is a snapshot of the socio-economic and political context and what the hip-hop generation has had to contend with.

The question to ask is where is the strong voice amongst the hip-hop community to register these observations? Booysen (2016) argues that active citizenship should be seen as the ability to hold government accountable in that citizens "grant authority and through their voices they change the rules, the system itself, and (as a consequence) also the nature and quality of decisions that emanate from that political system" (p. 17).

Following on Booysen's argument this chapter looks at how artists have chosen to utilise rap as a discursive tool and a voice, through which they, as active citizens, articulate not only their socio-economic and political marginalisation but the socio-economic and political climate of the country. Rappers have also chosen to employ both the *public and hidden transcripts* in unleashing their displeasure about the socio-economic circumstances and human conditions they find themselves in and have resorted to doing what they know best – putting it into song.

## Democracy Remixed as Hip-hop Fights Back

There are still die-hard rappers that are struggling to come to terms with the ruling party's (a former liberation movement) failure to fast track the transformation of a society that unshackled itself from the chains of apartheid. These artists have defied crass materialism and have, according to Watkins (2012) opted to "resist, question, and construct meaning in a landscape that requires vigilance and innovation". Watkins argues that these artists are "negotiating a sense of authenticity on their own terms" by continuing to highlight the social realities and registering their observations on what they perceive as the failure of authorities to bring about visible change (p. 12).

The hip-hop generation's frustration with the lack of progress in delivering on the aspirations of the masses or what they perceive as freedom delayed, has been audible in some of the songs released in recent years. Some of the songs speak to the growing resentment towards the state of the nation in the recent years that relates to, inter allia, (i) the overtly opulent and lavish lifestyle by those who boarded the so-called "gravy train" at the right time, (ii) the arrogantly corrupt officials deployed to the public service with a clear mandate to move South Africa forward, and (iii) lack of progress in tackling the tripple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality engulfing the nation. These failures by the state are seen, by the masses, as the betrayal of the revolution and the trust put in the post-liberatiom movement.

Also, the bold "tenderpreunism"[8] by those longing and eager to make a quick buck in exchange for delivering nothing from the contracts handed to them by corrupt officials, have not helped the ruling party's image. Instead, this has rendered marginalised communities helpless and angry. The alleged incompetence of deployed cadres to State-owned agencies, employed at huge salaries paid by tax payers, and their failure to deliver much needed services has created a lot of discontent amongst the majority of the citizens.

[8] A term used to describe those whose main business is the pursuit of government tenders and have made a fortune from the work given to them by government in the name of service delivery.

The analysis herein is of how certain hip-hop artists are playing out this frustration and how the hip-hop generation, through music, reflect on their lives in a complex and yet free society with supposedly endless opportunities. What is the impact of their political attitude and what they think about the government, their communities and their future as well the options or actions they take in reacting to their daily-lived experiences?

Whilst most hip-hop artists are riding on the wave of the newly-found sounds of trap and turn-up hip-hop beats and are enthused by top-charting American hip-hop beats, some emcees have remained loyal to the craft.

Socially and politically conscious rappers are engaged in a cold and unspoken war against 'mack' or 'party' rappers who seem to be basking under the commercial limelight and instant wealth with the help of a gullible media that goes along with anything that is hip and pop. The hard-core rappers have not abandoned the foundational elements of hip-hop which in the 1980s and early 1990s were used "to project and comment on socio-economic and political changes" and provided a "much-needed voice and public presence to many youth facing unemployment and political powerlessness" (Ntarangwi 2009: 22).

Unfortunately, because young people are, according to Lahai (2014), still "being framed and analysed only in relation to potentially disruptive socio-political behaviours" (p.199), the dominant group will always miss the message behind these voices from the margins.

When going through a number of South African hip-hop artists and songs released recently in South Africa, it can be seen that the liberatory agenda and political consciousness still finds a home but with only a few emcees who have displayed intelligence and who provide critical insights into the prevailing economic conditions and political stance in the country.

**Liberation Diaries of 'Gatvol' Emcees**
Diary One: *Hope and Despair*

In 2012, Jay Stash released a hip-hop track called "We Keep Marching" featuring Kabomo in the chorus. It is a self-explanatory song that articulates youth's relentless desire to triumph against all odds, but what was hidden in the song is the prophetic verse by Jay Stash that ultimately would find its articulation in the narrative that dominated the #FeesMustFall campaign.

*The Song:* "We Keep Marching" *by Jay Stash*

*Its sad though how life it goes*
*Its bad when it rains worse when it snows*
*Phakamel' ilife boy mayikuphazamisa*
*Differently problems*
*We all juggling*
*Now a mother dies trying to get her son tuition*
*Where we heading here?*
*Think we need a new solution?*
*Since our youth is dying to get an education*
*Let me teach you more on the track that I'm lacing*
*We get through the troubles that we facing*
*No money no clothes no food to eat*
*It's been two years same boots for my feet*
*No changing my clothes I'm marching on*
*I'm marching on hope*

It is this and many other songs, known and not known, that did not make it to the mainstream media, not because they lacked commercial success in terms of their musicality but because the message was not about sex, Rolex and fast wheels.

These artists who not have been caught up in the search for instant commercial success, compared to the dominant soundtrack and the rise of party rap which has had the full backing of mainstream media (print and electronic), have continued to pound the government with music and a narrative that articulates youth's frustration with the current order. Jay Stash's line *'Where we heading here? Do we need a new solution?'* would, as

expected, have fallen on deaf ears because the liberation diaries are dominated by triumphant tales of the celebrated liberation heroes and not by stories of poverty, alienation and inequality. Even if the song had been played by mainstream radio, chances are that the message would have fallen on deaf ears because to most people music is background noise of which only the rhythm moves them to the dance floor.

Fox and Williams (1974) refute the view by some scholars that whatever the political intent of composers and performers, their products are frequently incomprehensive and unintelligible. Instead, Fox and Williams view contemporary music, like hip-hop (in the main), as a "politically significant cultural product in the sense that it attacks the social and political order by challenging traditional values and asserting new ones". In this case, they argue that, as a political instrument, music is a cultural reflection of underlying social structures and a significant political medium. This view is supported by Dilthey who argues, "The relationship between a musical work and what it expresses to the listener and what therefore, is speaking through it, is definite, capable of comprehension and demonstration" (quoted in Etzkorn, 1973, p.).

As Dilthey argues, not only does the composer translate his fantasies into music but the composer is also influenced by the conditions under which music comes into existence. Therefore, if music and its compositional representation is an expression of an inevitable social condition and is shaped by human events, then the composer simply translates his/her observation and interpretation of what is happening in society at a point in time.

Diary Two: *On Alienation, Neglect and Anger*

Reverend Tumza reflects on the social conditions and the challenges facing the youth as they navigate their daily lives and his lyrics are truth-telling and yet showing signs of desperation. The song is a clear message that when all else fails and the struggle for survival is between the rich and the poor, the

dispossessed will use all means necessary to find possessions that will put bread on the table for their families in order for them to go to bed with full bellies.

In the following lyrics, Rev Tumza has clinically and sketchily unpacked the prevailing conditions that youth face every day.

*The Song:* "Black Man You On Your Own" by Reverend Tumza

| *Original* | *Translation* |
|---|---|
| *We go ram papa k'khala um ga ga ga*<br>*In the pursuit of Babylon*<br>*Black man you on your own*<br>*Sibulalana sodwa*<br>*Africa is divided*<br>*Yes, yilamadayimani no oyela*<br>*Platinum ne golide*<br><br>*Ba reppa ngama skinny jeans*<br>*All I see is skinny kids*<br>*Lapha ko ma TV*<br>*Africa is bleeding*<br>*Governments are looting*<br>*Ingane zethu zilambile*<br><br>*Masithi siyaphanda bathi singcolisi ilokishi*<br>*Bathathe sonke istoko sethu*<br>*Sisale singana niksi*<br>*Everyday sigijimis' ama metro police*<br>*Bas'thathela ama vegies*<br>*Bakhahlela amabhakede e-car wash*<br>*Bathi sival' istradi*<br>*Who are we gonna run to*<br>*Ngoba abelungu abaqashi*<br>*Bathi bafak' imshini*<br>*Imshini ayi strike*<br>*Bathi siyadelela*<br>*Bas'bhadala ngama peanuts*<br>*Then so setrephini*<br>*Idladla lakho icredit*<br>*Ifenisha icredit*<br>*Impahla zakho icredit*<br>*Bheka nenyama setholakala nge credit*<br>*And then they retrenching*<br>*i-package irhaf' i-credit* | *We go blusting with gun fire*<br><br>*We killing each other*<br><br>*Its because of this diamonds, oil and, platinum and gold*<br><br>*They rap in skinny jeans*<br><br>*On Television*<br><br>*Our kids go to bed hungry*<br><br>*When we try survive they say we littering the township*<br>*They take all our stock*<br>*Leaving us with nothing*<br>*Metro police chase us daily*<br>*They take our vegetables*<br>*They kick buckets at car wash*<br>*Accusing of blocking the street*<br><br>*Whites are no longer employing*<br>*They are automating*<br>*Machines don't go on strike*<br>*They say we full of nonsense*<br>*They us peanuts*<br>*They we find ourselves trapped*<br>*Your house is on credit*<br>*Your furnisher is on credit*<br>*Your clothes are on credit*<br>*Even meat you get it on credit* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *shit is depressing*<br>*ne maid seyik'shiyile*<br>*black man you on your own*<br><br>*we go ram pa pa pa*<br>*k'khala umgada gada e-freewy*<br>*bal'thathile i-vegie*<br>*manje sphanda ngama AK*<br>*ran into an FG nge 740BM*<br>*ngivuke sekonakele 7:30am*<br>*endleleni ebuyayo thina sibomb i-ATM*<br>*ufunda ngathi ephepheni*<br>*we made headlines endabeni zango 7*<br><br>*we went ram pa pa pa*<br>*ram pa pa pa*<br>*sala sinemali*<br><br>*Ram pa pa pa*<br>*We fought for this country*<br>*Ram pa pa pa*<br>*No! silwa ne poverty* | *Retrenchment pays your credit*<br>*Even your girlfriend has left you*<br><br><br><br>*Sound of gunfire on the freeway*<br>*They took our vegetables*<br>*Now only AK-47 can feed us*<br>*Ran into Fidelity Guards with BMW*<br>*Waking up things gone crazy at 7h30*<br>*We bombed an ATM on our way back*<br>*Your read the news in the papers*<br>*Making headlines at 7pm news*<br><br><br><br>*We went to made with money*<br><br><br><br>*No! We only fighting poverty* |

His creative and clever use of both English and township slang broadens the audience he is targeting. First, to Rev Tumza, the main culprit to receive this message is the government and political authorities and therefore Anglicizing certain sections of the lyrics achieves the objectives. Because, he does not speak for himself only but represents the larger section of the society, the marginalised, he mixes English with street vernacular.

The song unequivocally puts forward an unvamished picture of what the youth is going through in the townships as they struggle with the triple challenges of high unemployment, poverty and inequality. It highlights the current conditions and how the youth intends to respond in order to liberate itself from the trappings of poverty, which were also clearly articulated by Gugu Ndima in the previous section. The artist himself had to go through what Whone (1984, p. 29) calls, "the agonizing pull between irreconcilables until they resolve themselves into play."

Rev Tumza employs a marginalist approach and positions the artist right inside the heart and soul of the township, where unemployment, poverty and crime is the daily dose. His choice of the language shows his extensive township vocabulary and the linguistic construction township residents choose to use to be heard. The song is a contradiction between the real and the imaginary, or what Jean Baudrillard calls "the hyperreal" (quoted in Boyd 1997, p. 70) and blurs the line between fiction and non-fiction.

Judging from the string of bank robberies, cash-in-transit heists, car hijackings, burglaries and robberies with aggravating circumstances, the song prophesies a nation sick and tired of being sick and tired and where those living in the margins of society are increasingly helping themselves to the loot. National Crime Statistics for 2014/2015, released by National Police Commissioner, Riah Phiyega, showed that criminals are showing a less caring attitude when committing serious crimes, especially against business. The level of violence and number of armed robberies against businesses increased to 19,170 over the past tenyears, a 337% increase, which translates to 52 robberies per day. The crime statistics also showed an increase of 33% in burglaries of business premises, registering 74,358 over the past ten years or 204 burglaries per day. The crime statistics are indicative of a nation trying to survive by any means necessary and Rev. Tumza's song depicts the daily lives of those people who are resorting to crime and violence to bring bread onto the table and to feed their starving families.

If the song had been filmed as a music video, it would visually shed light on the Rev. Tumza's deepest sentiments and relay the daily struggles whilst also sharing his desire for an equal society

Diary Three: *On Revolution Betrayed and Disappointment*

The disjuncture between what Booysen (2016) calls "the lofty promises of full citizenship brought by the end of apartheid, and the realities of everyday

poverty and indignity suffered by the majority of citizens" (p. 16) have not gone unnoticed, at least not by those youths who spend time writing lyrics drawn from their daily-lived experiences in the townships.

Reason (aka Sizwe Moeketsi), a master lyricist and one of the most respected and hard hitting emcees, released a track, "Selfish Politics", a scathing attack on the government for its failure to deliver on its promises. As would be expected, the song never caught the attention of the intended audience – government officials – but commented on the state of the nation in the song below.

*The Song:* "Selfish Politics" by Reason

*They said: Vote for me, vote for us*
*Vote for a better life and for the party you trust*
*Vote for jobs, health care and poverty cuts*
*But five years from now, we'll still be voting for such*

*They promise people alotta relevant things*
*Stressin that things - will be better if veterans win*
*But then in the end, the government'll battle again*
*Coz they plannina win your votes with celebrity spins*

*(Ha!) -and that 's what breaks my heart now*
*pops fought for a freedom he ain't felt since he got out*
*Raising us now, seems harder coz he got out*
*To see cats he ran with, snatch water from dry mouths*

The song was written in 2009 at the height of the national general elections and during the time when a new political party, Congress of the People (Cope), was formed out of an ANC faction. The situation was tense. The battle for the hearts and minds of the voter was intensifying and the campagin to win the endorsement of the "born free" was at its highest.

An obscure and relatively unknown media house, Capital Magazine, noticed the song and conducted an interivew with Reason on 15 May 2011 (two years

after its release). Reason was scathing about the socio-political environment in the country as can be deciphered from his response below:

***CM**: When you wrote this, it was around the national elections in 2009. What was your frame of mind then and what made you write the song?*
***Reason**: Honestly... I was hurt. I had personally amped myself two years before, to actually participate in the elections. I wanted to vote. I didn't at first, but my pops made me understand the significance of a vote. It's about making the right choices to change things. To my demise... I had no choice. Voting had become a head count event. Votes are given to "whoever came first to fixes my tap/toilet/streets/ issues first" these days. Not, "who's fighting for my rights or understanding the relevance of making my environment a decent place to live in like you promised". They're even throwing parties for votes. I mean common!!*

***CM**: What is your feel on the youth and their stance when it comes to politics? Are we apathetic? Are we involved enough?*
***Reason**: I think we're as involved in politics, as it is with us. The reality is, the government doesn't have anything to offer us. We don't want basics. We not even planning to stay in the hood that long. We want money. WE NEED MONEY. So they won't holler at us until they find something to get us involved. Right now, history is running politics, not change. What they're doing in the meanwhile though is give you a good time. Throw the youth big ass parties in their name and let us have the fun FOR THEIR NUMBERS. That's our current relationship with the government... Entertainment.*

Reason, again tackles the issue of exercising the right to vote – the right that Solomon Mahlangu fought and died for. He, again, is unapologetic about whether he will vote or note in the following verse:

*-And then u tell me vote for ya!*
*Vote Zille, vote Lekota, vote Zuma*
*Vote coz it's what we fought for and "vote coz ahhh...*
*...If you vote for me, I'll rob and not kill 'em"*

Again, as confirmed by the interview below

***CM**: As far as I'm aware you won't be voting in the LGE (based on comments on twitter). What is your reason for this?*

***Reason**: I have nobody to vote for. If any of these candidates win, I'm unhappy either way! If anything... chances are, the guy that's gonna win, is the guy I was gonna vote for anyway. Not because I want to, but because the rest are worse.*

*So I say - Fuck the government!*
*Fuck whoever's the cause of informal settlements*
*The devil is runnin this city metro police*
*And all we gotta show for it, is ink on thumb on ya shit*

Reason continues to prophesy in this song, where the country would be in 2010:

*-Thinking I'm dumb and shit!*
*After 2010 we might be where Zimbabwe is*
*And you'll also be laughing in 'em garden chairs*
*Sippin on them cheers, drowning in ya selfish*

The above testimony by a youth whose voice represents the multitudes of the born-frees (those born after 1994) should send serious shivers down the spine of a government that portrays itself as a caring government that listens. Unfortunately for the liberated, as Habib (2013) also observes, "South Africa was meant to be a caring, modern, cosmopolitan social democracy. Of course this vision was a shallow one, and the only people who could afford to harbour it were the middle and upper-middle classes. For the vast majority, there was nothing caring or social about South Africa's democracy" (p. 7).

Diary Four: *On Disillusionment and Apathy*

When the local government elections were scheduled for 3 August 2016 party paraphernalia was displayed in every public space where there was enough people traffic and good visibility. The Electoral Elections Commission pulled out all the stops to ensure that South Africans were registered to vote.

This was not a good period for South African politics as South African citizens had been treated to the biggest shambles in parliament. Starting with the 2015 State of the Nation Address (SONA) where violent scenes broke out in full view of the South African electorate led by #PayBackTheMoney slogan-shouters, followed by the #ZUPTAMustFall slogans at the 2016 SONA, and a cry against #StateCapture in the same year, the local government election was a massive political tussle for the voter.

Still licking its wounds from the campaign that almost brought the higher education system to its knees with the #FeesMustFall student campaign, the government was appealing to the same constituency – the young people – to go out and vote. With election mobilisation slogans, such as that of the Gauteng Legislature, #MyKasiMyVote, it was very clear that the youth were targeted to come out in numbers to go out and vote.

The arrival of the Economic Freedom Fighters, targeting young people and the marginalised, as well as the Democratic Alliance advocating for change, whilst the ANC was fighting to retain its position as a revolutionary party, albeit with a tainted image, political mudslinging was not only coming from contesting parties but from young voters themselves: the hip-hop generation.

A few of the emcees were spitting venomous rhymes of loathing at a government and politicians which in their opinion could not be trusted or had failed them. An analyis of a few tracks by a few "gatvol" rappers gives an indication of the state of the nation and voter apathy in the country.

*The Song:* "Andivoti" by Sizakele 'Ndlulamthi' Gegana

The best articulation of the current state of affairs and the youth's disillusionment with the country's democractic dispensation in an unequal society and what it means to be the born-free generation, is reflected in Ndlulamthi's scathing song about political parties and their leaders.

Ndlulamthi is a Cape Town based hip-hop artist in New Cross Roads (Nyanga Township).

| **Andivote** | **I Will Not Vote** |
|---|---|
| Uba nje ndingabuyela/<br>mhla ndibon'utat'mAndela/<br>ephum'eluvalelweni isizwe simvuyela/<br>uba nje ndingacimela/<br>ndiphinde ndibon'umama uMadikizela/<br>etshov'ibhulukazi elalifuna uyomvalela/<br>uba nje ndingathintela lamapolisa mhla<br>ephum'eyokhangela/<br>uBantu BIKO abuya amkhaba<br>amosela/<br>uba nje ndingasezela esasirhogolo<br>sala petrol bomb xa azaygibisela/<br>uTerror Lekota uba nje ndingabuyisela/<br>uSabelo Pama avule indlela/<br>ngombayimbayi andinakuthanda buza<br>uvukela/<br>uba ndingabasela ulutsha ndifunze<br>ngokubukela uSarafina noCryFreedom<br>xa kisitsha izigela/<br>uba nje ndingakhusela.....olwalutsha<br>lwaluqhankqalazela ukufundiswa<br>isibhulu amasolomzi alivuthela/<br>Anpikwaz but eloncamela.....iDA<br>ayizondixokisela ngeANC ngoba<br>uKhongolose andizomvotela/ | If only I could turn the clock back<br>To the day I saw Nelson Mandela<br>Released from prison to much jubilation<br>If only I could shut my eyes and see<br>Winnie Mandela<br>Fighting with the Afrikaner destined to<br>imprison her<br>If only I could encounter the police that<br>went to search for Biko and later<br>assaulted him to death<br>If only I could inhale the smell of that<br>petrol bomb before it being thrown<br>Terro Lekota if only I could go back<br>Sabelo Pama to pave the way with<br>motar I will not hesitate<br><br>If only I could encourage the youth to<br>watch Sarafina and Cry Freedom when<br>the schools are buring<br><br>If only I could protect those learners<br>that were willing to learn Afrikaans but<br>denied by their guardians<br>The DA should stop telling me about<br>how bad the ANC is because I will not<br>vote for the ANC anyway |
| Chorus<br>ANDIVOTI hay ANDIVOTI.....ANC<br>isithengisile afele elubhacweni<br>amakroti/<br>ANDIVOTI hay ANDIVOTI.....iDA<br>iphethe eKhayelitsha kodwa uZille<br>akapotapoti/<br>ANDIVOTI hay ANDIVOTI.....yi20<br>years ye Democracy yiApartheid of<br>some sort le/<br>ANDIVOTI rha ANDIVOTI abasenzeli<br>nto kucacile ngevoti yam abashoti/ | <br>I won't Vote...No I wont Vote ANC<br>The ANC sold us out and our struggle<br>heroes died in exile<br>I won't Vote...No I wont Vote DA<br>It governs Khayelitshe but Zille has<br>never used our bucket system toilets<br>I won't Vote No I won't Vote<br>This 20 years Democracy is just<br>another Apartheid<br>I won't Vote – to hell – I wont Vote<br>They do nothing for us and my vote<br>won't make a difference |
| Lamnyala nimane niwaquma/<br>Enziwa nguZuma.....azawtyisa<br>abantwana bethu kwimigqomo | Covering disgraceful things done by<br>Zuma<br>Will have our kids eating out of |

| | |
|---|---|
| yenkunkuma/ | dustbins |
| phofu athini xa nimthuma ba aqhubeke ukurhuma/ | What do you expect him to do except continue continue with his corruption |
| ngobuzwe benu sowgqiba aphile pedwa mfumamfuma/ | With your patriotism he will continue living only living comfortably |
| Nikthanda gqithi uzigqebha iduma/ | You love hitting youselves in the head |
| Nicinga uZille uzoniphuthuma?/ | You think Zille will rescue you amid the |
| Ebugxwayibeni balo khongolose unokhela amabhuma?/ | scum of this ANC who is building shameful houses |
| Nicinga uveziinyiwo lipoma?/ | You think these houses are mansions |
| Mamela ANDILE MNGXITHAMA/ | Listyen Andile Mngxithama |
| Umntu udlala enkulu indima ekuzithwaliseni ubunzima/ | A person plays a bigger role at carrying a burden |
| Umzalabazo uyaqhubeka qha lenqwelo ihambe isima/ | The struggle continues but the wagon stops and goes |
| EFF ayisosimbululo yingqumbo kaMALEMA/ | EFF is not the solution its Malema revenge |
| OoShilowa bezenze intlekisa iCOPE ngumbutho ongenasidima/ | Shilowa have made a mockery out of COPE; and a party without dignity |
| SANCO ujikwe wayi "jentu huis" nguTat'uZwelinzima/ | SANCO has become Tat' Zwelinzima's playroom |
| Holomisa nguGqozo ehleli kohluke nje igama/ | The difference between Holomisa and Gqozo is the name only |
| UGatsha Buthelezi akafuni uphathwa ngabantu abangomama/ | Gatsha Buthelezi will not allow women to lead the party |
| MAIMANE andizobaselwa kuzenza kwakho uObama/ | I cannot be bothered by Maimane who thinks he is Obama |
| Ngoba iDA yingqokelela yemibutho ebicinezele umntu omnyama/ | The DA is made up of previous parties that oppressed black people |

Ndlulamthi wrote this song in 2014 during the national general elections, which were to elect the new National Assembly and the new provinical legislature in each province. When questioned about what inspired the song, Ndlulamthi argued that the contesting political parties were acting out of desparation in their attempt to 'buying' the people's confidence in them. Looking back 20 years since democracy and the events that have shaped the country, Ndlulamthi says:

> I found that much as I want to have my ideal leader to become president, he or she is not amongst the candidates placed forward by those political parties and neither are these parties willing to sacrifice their circles of loyalty for the sake of our people. I then thought it was

best to help by giving the insight that by not voting, it does not mean I'm keeping the current leading party in power but I am saving myself the regret and anger that might result in *coup d'etat* or civil war.

Ndlulamthi's dilemma in this narration is balancing a civic duty and the need for participation in nation-building against overwhelming feelings of betrayal and he chooses to recoil to his inner void and paranoid delirium by ambushing the very same system meant to bring about a democratic dispensation. In his feeling of being invariably doomed regardless of the choices he makes between leaders of the political parties Nflulamthi displays the vulnerability of the individual within a system designed to give guarantees.

The song is supported by moving images of what looks like a hologram, depicting a collosal image of Nelson Mandela with a power salute, followed by images of peole queueing to vote. Ndlulamthi opens his verse with a walk Mandela's hologram, stretches his fist to meet that of Mandela and the proceeds to walk against a stone wall where images of the voters are projected. He engages in an imaginary conversation with each of the people in the queue as if to warn them about the characters of each of the parties and the leaders they are about the vote for.

Diary Five: *Corruption and Enrichment*

Kepe et al (2016) write, "South Africa's post-apartheid society is still celebrated or written off in absolute terms, either as the embodiment of widespread justice or deep-seated injustice, as complete freedom or all-encompassing oppression, or as flourishing democracy or narrow authoritarianism" (p. 2). Whether this is a series of partially constructed failures and successes, really depends on which side of the political pendulum the observer is located.

Vice V has written one of the most scathing and damning attacks against a

sitting democratic president with a song and music video titled "Mr. President". His view on the state of the nation in the hands of President Jacob Zuma has received publicity and became the subject of discussion around social media circles and those close to what goes on within the hip-hop discourse.

Vice V, for Vice Versa, is the stage name of Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh, the son of a prominent South African advocate, Dali Mpofu. His views on the socio-political state of this rainbow nation cannot be ignored. Not only is Vice V a 2015 Oxford University graduate where he read for his master's degree, he has had a public argument and debate with Chancellor Lord Pattern on the relevance of Cecil John Rhodes in the 21st century. Vice V, who is now reading for his PhD, has been part of the #RhodesMustFall campaign being spearheaded at the University of Cape Town (his under-graduate alma mater) as well as at Oxford University.

Arguing on the BBC Today programme, Sizwe Mpofu is quoted as saying, "The notion that Cecil Rhodes should be glorified in a 21st Century setting in 2016 is no longer tolerable and we think his legacy should be challenged. The anaesthetization of history that's continued at Oxford up to this point should be debated and that is exactly what we are doing" (from MailOnline article by Tim Sculthorpe, 14 January 2016).

The man who thinks Oxford University is institutionally racist is not one to mince his words. His articulation of the current state of affairs describing the socio-economic and political environment in South Africa is best articulated in a video of the song "Mr. President" by an artist who goes by the stage name of Vice V and which was released by *LongTalk2Freedom:*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTvc0HI3Mjc

Vice V understands how important visualising beats and rhymes is for a message to be received by the intended audience, Keyes (2002) states: "If rap music narrates the experiences of contemporary youth culture through

aural avenues, rap music videos provide further meaning through their visual texts" (p. 210). Keyes argues, "rap music videos draw on physical and intellectual references – encoded culture – that augment the message the rap artist delivers" (ibid.)

Vice V's employment of visual images synchronised to his carefully selected text, drive home the message of a nation that has lost hope in the incumbent President. The video draws on the historical account of the President's achievement or lack thereof, juxtaposed with an open character assassination of a head of state who, to many, is not fit for office. The video documents the history of the shattered dreams of an urban youth who has so much to lose, as they are the ones to inherit the remnants of a ruined democracy.

The video cuts to President Jacob Zuma, sitting in a dark, partially-lit room, speaking to the camera in a confident and re-assuring voice.

*The Song/Video:* "Mr President" by Vice V
A face is seen listening in disbelief to what is self-praise and self- affirmation by the President and suddenly closes his eyes as if to say, "not only have I heard enough but I have seen enough".

**Pres. Zuma**: *They think they know me better*
*No, the people of this country know me better than they do*
*They know better how honest I am (pause) than they do*
*They have tried to tell people how useless this man is*
*The media, (he laughs), they have, they can't succeed*
*Because know me, you know here, people know me*

In the background, a praise singer is heard showering the President with accolades and commendations of his trials and tribulations. Suddenly the voice of Julius Malema is heard shouting; "Phansi go Jacob Zum Phansi! (and the crowd erupts into affirmation), Julius repeats "Phansi ngoMbulali Phansi" (and the crowd erupts again), Amandla!, and the crowd shouts "Awethu!"

And the rapper, Vice V, addresses the President:

*Mr. President*
*This is for the People who you trying to fool*
*This is for the People so its time to School*
*This is for the Cronies who admire You*
*You wanna see your chicken*
*Wanna drown you in your fire pool*

The above lyrics are synchronised to schizophrenic visuals depicting the state of paralysis in the country. In one visual a child – with worn out shoes and partly torn trousers walks into a mural on which is written in red "The People Shall Govern" whilst the supposed cronies of the President are seen toasting in a celebratory mood at a packed stadium of ANC supporters. Contrasting images show people in protest throwing stones and burning tyres (reminiscent of the Soweto uprisings), with a warning at the beginning of the verse:

*Mr president, this is for the people who you're tryna fool/*
*This is for the people so it's time to school/*
*This is for the cronies who admire you: you wanna see a chicken run?*
*I'll drown you in your firepool/*

The use of potent visuals is meant to shock the nation and get it to reflect on the gains or lack thereof of a nation that has so much potential. Socio-politicaly conscious rappers in America have used the same tactic of telling it like it is where music videos are synchronised with potent visual text ("Tennessee" by Arrested Development, "By the Time I Get to Arizona" by Public Enemy, "The Final Solution" by Sister Souljah). These videos document and present images of civil rights demonstrations with brutal attacks by the protectors of the status quo and resistance by courageous protestors refusing to cringe before the barrel of a gun.

As the narrative goes on the song breaks into a chorus of the President singing: "*hawuleth'Umshini Wami" (*give me my machine gun)

And the verse continues with:

*Have you heard the rumours*
*They say Zumas are criminal, criminal*
*Subliminal messaging*
*Angering the people who say your name*
*The crowd is menacing*
*The cries are deafening*
*Zuma must go*
*The shadows are lengthening*
*Fuck the Police*
*Yo we run on adrenalin*

The lyrics are synchronised with visuals of people marching through the city centre and motorists with stickers bearing "abolish eTolls" (shouting "voetsek") that cut to Bishop Tutu sobbing like a child whilst a woman is shown with tears rolling down her face as she cries for freedom gone bad.

And then the verse sums up the prevailing sentiments (shown on the visuals) and the mood in the country, accompanied by visuals of protesters throwing stones, of burning tyres, and of the white smoke of teargas meant to disperse the crowd and yet thrown back at the police, whilst the rapper asks:

*Mr president, can you see the people on the streets?*
*Bathi "phansi ngo-Zuma" to the rhythm of the beat*
*They say: "where do you run when the president's a thief?*

Whilst the police are seen hitting an armed man with shovels and blood streaming down his defenceless body, the chorus relentlessly goes:

*Mr president, can you hear the people on the streets?*
*See the hunger, the anger now they're praying for your defeat/*
*Marikana, Nkandla and spy tapes is deceit/*
*No surrender no retreat, no surrender no retreat*
*I repeat!*
*I can see the people on the streets*
*Calling for your head calling for your defeat*
*Marikana, Nkandla and Arms Deal is deceit*
*And we won't retreat, no we won't retreat!*

During the interview, sent to him via text at Oxford University this what Vice V had to say regarding his song, "Mr. President", and the current state of affairs in South Africa:

An Interview with Vice V (via online – at Oxford University)

When asked of the significance of the song, "Mr. President", Vice V stated that this was the first single released on Long Talk 2 Freedom. It is a work of hip-hop protest literature, which deals with the failed presidency of Jacob Zuma. The work remixes, and was inspired by, Tunisian rapper El-general's classic, "Rayes lebled" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29rv2N3WVTE), which became the theme song of the Tunisian revolution which brought Tunisian Prime Minister Zine El Abidine Ben Ali down in 2011.

***Question:*** *How have you straddled between black and white in South Africa?*
***Vice V:*** *I am a mixed-race South African. That means having a deep understanding of 'white' pathology, but also being confronted and affected by 'black' disenfranchisement. Part of 'black' disenfranchisement is having those who identify as 'black' locked into a system in which the only way to compete is to play by the rules of a culture that feels foreign to them. This takes place in South Africa through the domination of a certain dialect of English, a certain accent and cadence of speech that is hegemonic in elite spaces. In schools, universities, institutions of political authority, and most of the agenda-setting media, the ability to wield English in a way that conforms to a standard associated with 'whiteness' plays a central role in defining who has social power, and who does not; who should be believed and who should be doubted.*

***Question:*** *What has Hip-Hop Done for You?*
***Vice V:*** *What hip-hop did for me was to provide a platform where legitimacy and authority came from a dialect of English that placed black experience at its centre. I owned the cadence, and I could be the arbiter of who 'sounded good' applying it, and who did not. In this sense, hip-hop gave me a tool for self-actualization that embraced and affirmed a part of me the value of which I felt was largely socially neglected.*

*But listening to hip-hop and learning to rap are different things. Just as listening to hip-hop gave me a different way of seeing myself, actually rapping gave me a new way of expressing myself. It taught me a lot about rhetoric and how to hold an audience when speaking in public. About voice control and breath control.*

*After a while, however, I became disillusioned with much of hip-hop because I found the themes repetitive and the commercialization of the genre denigrating to the art form. But as I became more engrossed in academic life, I began to realize the significant limits of academic debate and traditional public reasoning. When one reads an academic text or an op-ed, one's mind is in 'defence mode'. But when one listens to a musical piece, one is in a deeply receptive state of mind. So I began to realize that as a political tool, hip-hop could be used to send important messages that often get lost in the clutter of the 'public debate'. Particularly as a way of reaching young people, it could be a way of communicating a nuanced message in a format that was immediately understandable to them, and in a cadence that they could feel affirmed by and understand.*

***Question:*** *And the Song, 'Mr President'?*
***Vice V:*** *'Mr. President' was really the first attempt at an overtly political message, and I was surprised by the effectiveness of the response. Because of a busy academic schedule, I have not been able to re-test the approach in another political area, but it is an experiment that I would like to return to in future.*

Diary Six: *On Decolonisation and Ignorance*

In his argument on decolonising education and the advancement of black consciousness that rejects symbols of European hegemony, Mpofu-Walsh (2016) advances a new theoretical framework that calls for African intellectualism that calls for imagining theory from the South. Imagining theory from the South, according to Mpofu-Walsh, means, "an inversion of the Eurocentric narrative and a critique of the global system of knowledge production" (p. 83). For this to happen Mpofu-Walsh calls for the eradication of the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, which hastens the call for the immediate scrapping and decolonisation of the system of education, instead

of transforming it, as the only meaningful route to meaningful and empowering knowledge production.

What had become a dominant public discourse of the Fallism Movement by the students between 2015 and 2016, had already been foreseen in 2012 by Slikour, a former member of Skwatta Kamp and the most vocal of the group, who has never been shy to unleash what comes into his mind. Slikour, released the most controversial song "Blacks R Foolz" (We Better Than That) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Eid6CnsaYI) since Arthur Mafokate's "Kaffir".

The central thesis of his song was to question the prevailing cultural norms of society (the Western cultural hegemony) which to him were becoming the dominant culture imposed by the new black (crass materialism and opulence). Slikour warns of the behaviour of the 'new blacks' that it should not be perceived as a natural consequence of political freedom(s) and as inevitable, but that it must be recognized as artificial and socially constructed because, as he says; "we better than that".

The song also also started a dialogue about what this freedom really meant for the people who had suffered 400 years of colonialism. It cut straight to the chase and dealt with the obvious pitfalls of this nation. The song questioned the essence of the struggle for freedom when the very same liberators are starting to fight over the very same loot they were trying to wrestle from the oppressors, let alone the sustenance of the very same western cultural hegemony that Africans have for years tried to separate/free themselves from.

To Slikour, the history of the countries that achieved liberation in the 1960s and of Zimbabwe in the 1980s should have been a great lesson for the black government in South Africa to learn from their mistakes so as not to repeat the same mistakes those countries made.

*The Song:* "Blacks R Foolz" by Slikour

*Cause blacks are fools,*
*they just wanna be fresh,*
*and they wanna be cool,*
*give them a little money*
*and they think they rule.*
*But I hope we better than that.*
*Nowadays it's all about money*
*and political favours,*
*is BEE the only way to be something?*
*That's why we don't even own nothing,*
*'cause we think of ourselves as nothing.*
*We think we progressive, but we delusional.*

In illustrating his message he carefully chose videos clips where the lyrics and the narrative are contextualised to introduce meaning that does not conflict with the story but are used to amplify the narrative. The visuals simply give cues that Cheryl Keyes (2002) says contain "encoded culture, capsules of meaning that add power and depth to the artist's message" (p. 211)

In the the video Slikour is potrayed as a teacher in a classroom of young black students and is wearing glasses that, in appearance, resemble the same type of glasses won by other icons of militant resistance to the established order, both Patrice Lumumba and the Black American civil rights movement activist, Malcolm X. The use or employment of iconic memory is essential in situating the story within a historical context of where the black race comes from.

Unfortunately both Patrice Lumumba and Malcolm X died at the hands of their own people, and in the same video Slikour is seen being taken away in handcuffs by black police after being betrayed by one of the fellow teachers

Both Lumumba and Malcolm X addressed the core question of the material conditions of capitalism at the expense of the field negroes they represented. In the same way that Slikour's song despised the new black that had forgotten

the agenda (the only black at the dinner table as Eric Myeni would say), they loathed the black that sided with the master, lived and shared the same master's ambitions and craving for material wealth (the house negroe),

Unintentionally, Slikour's historical contextualisation of what the nation must learn as black nationalist ideals is similar to KRS-One's first video "My Philosophy" where the artist amplifies the same ideals to educate black youth about implied historical and cultural heroes like Malcom X.

Fab Five Freddy, who directed 'My Philosophy' (from the album by Any Means Necessary) says: "When I did 'My Philosophy' I really wanted to take the idea Kris (KRS-One) had started on the album cover[9] and make the video a kind of visual history lesson. Everbody was talking about Marcus Garvey and Bob Marley but most kids didn't even know what they looked like" (Hampton, 1992, p. 36).

Slikour/s "Blacks R Foolz" music video, shot in a classroom setting, presents interesting visual aspects and serious political and intellectual connotations worth analysiing. Was he concerned about the intellectual capacity of the current establishment and its inability to capture the imagination of the black youth to rise to the occasion? Was he questioning the current education system and its inability to position black history in the centre of the education system?

The answer to the above question is a simple "no". Slikour chooses the classroom and the learners as his protégés simply because he believes that by planting the message in the future generations, he is preparing them for the time when the country is in their hands so they do not repeat the mistakes of their forbearers. Again we are reminded of Franz Fanon; that youth have the choice to either fulfill or betray their mission. The answer to the question is

[9] KRS-One album cover depicts the famous Malcolm X photo in which he is looking through the window with an AK-47 in his hand.

sourced through visual interpretation and the use of leaners as subjects. Slikour's character as teacher, where the future of South Africa is the hands of young people (his leaners), has similarities to Queen Latifah's music video "Ladies First" where the character is that of a black woman commander-in-charge in a boardroom, dressed in a white uniform with a black turban-like head wrap. Discarding white statues as symbols of black oppression, with statues of black fists as symbols of black empowerment, depicts heroes who fought for black liberation.

However, what becomes even more crucial and what makes Slikour so angry with the majority black government to the extent of calling blacks fools is because in his mind South Africa was the last country on the African continent to achieve freedom. In his opinion, the country should have learned from the fellow struggle heroes and liberators who had successfully overthrown coloniasm but fell into the same trap of being obsessed with personal wealth accumulation whilst the people suffered. The video and the song It addressed the core issue of the material conditions of a country that has so much potential but fails to realise it because the people entrusted with the responsibility of unleashing it are busy chasing after material goods and a fancy lifestyle. Slikour address the core problem facing this country and questions the establishment's facination with everything except improving the quality of life of a people who have long suffered indignity. The song questions the unrealised potential of a race that has so much going for it in terms of its economic potential and its endless possibilities for improving people's social and economic well-being.

The song struck a wrong chord both in the political and capital establishment who demanded that he retracted not only the song itself but his perception of blacks in South Africa. Obviously, this was "modern day censorship of music" unheard of since the days of apartheid (see Roger Lucy's story later Chapter 13), when music censorship was was part of the instruments used by the apartheid state to maintain its own cultural hegemony.

These sentiments become apparent when Slikour was interviewed by Sameer Naik of the Tonight section of the newspaper, The Star. Slikour (2012) is unequivocal about the message he was conveying in the song. He refuses to believe that blacks are incompetent or lazy and says:

> I've heard people call us fools, lazy and incompetent. I'm none of those things. I'm out here in the streets grinding, I represent the generation that's trying to leave a mark and make a difference. I'm living in a new world and I'm not waiting for a hand-out, I understand that the work I put in and how I treat people will determine whether I live or not

In his defence, Slikour argues that he wanted to tell the nation that blacks in this country are better than what the legacy of apartheid (the Verwoerdean doctrine) made the multitude of black people believe, which is that they are incapable of comprehending or unpacking and solving complex problems.

**Rapping for the Deaf: Who Is Listening?**

The above musical work supports Siegmeister's (1940) view on the relationship between music and the society through which music manifests itself. Siegmeister refutes the tendency to treat music as a mere "expression of the human spirit" which has no reference to nor draws any influence from the time, space and condition under which it is constructed. Writing in his book *Music and Society,* Siegmeister argues that there is an "irrefragable" tie between music and the conditions under which it is created and that the attempt to separate music from the life from which it draws its inspiration gives reason to distract the people from solving the puzzle in life.

These brave artists, Slikour, Reason, Rev. Tumza, Vice V, Dookoom, and a few others whose conscience has kept them grounded in the realities facing the ordinary citizen, have become a mirror that reflects the images of the desperate but hopeful multitudes of South Africans who still have confidence in this rainbow nation. These artists have opted not to cash in the 'golden

carrot' forever dangled by the corporate world and become what Christopher Norris (1989:16) calls "a facile escape-route from the problems and complexities of authentic musical experience into a realm of naïve, uncritical pleasure that merely reproduces the dominant patterns of present-day cultural consumption". Instead they have opted for what Adorno sees as the last hope for resisting such pressures and have chosen to use their art form to provide a rigorous critique and express the truths of the present day experience, and thus resist using their music as an adjunct to the process of commodification

For Rev. Tumza (Black Man You On Your Own), Reason, (Selfish Politics), Slikour (Blacks Are Foolz), and Vic V (Mr. President) to put pen to paper, and their voice to a microphone, can only happen when a deep sense of vulnerability challenges the sense of responsibility and demands that the artist must act if he is to fulfill his mission.

These rappers have chosen to blatantly relay the message in the manner they know best only because they believe rap music has the potential to serve as a rallying point, solidifying an unprecedented coalition of young people across lines of class, race, and nation.

Therefore, by putting their frustrations in a song, they are simply following the path taken by some of the most established conscious rappers, elsewhere around the world, such as Talib Kweli Greene, Mos Def aka Yasiin Bey, KRS-One, Public Enemy, Immortal Technique, Lupe Fiasco, Dead Prez, Akala (UK), Lowkey (Iraq-UK) who have made no qualms about expressing how they feel about their current conditions or the perceptions they have about those in positions of power.

Except for Vice V, Rev. Tumza, Reason, Slikour, have not necessarily established themselves or been referred to as politically-conscious emcees, except for the songs they have released. Their songs have been used here to illustrate a certain strand of hip-hop that is not in the mainstream but whose

object is to continue to challenge the establishment.

More socially-conscious rappers particularly Tumi (aka Stogie T), Zubz (Zimbabwean but South African based rapper), Zuluboy, Prophets of Da City, Black Noise, have earned respect for challenging the dominant cultural, political, philosophical, and economic consensus. They have consistently recorded and released songs that subtly or overtly inform the public of true political and social issues, which mainstream media has successfully suppressed in favour of turn-up or party rap.

In the book, *The Hidden Face of Music,* Whone (1974) says, "Audible sound is obviously an adjunct of the senses – it travels through the molecular structure of the air and we hear by the ear; but there is a deeper meaning to the sound, the key of which lies in the word itself" (p. 21)

The challenge facing the politically-conscious rappers is that of getting an audience to speak to and of being heard.

The question is: besides corporate conglomerates that were smart enough to exploit this counterculture in order to serve the interest of capital, who else is listening and for what purpose?

So, the question, "who is listening?" is a constant reminder that whilst music articulates, audio-visually, the artist's day-to-day observations of the socio-economic and political interplay, the songs have the capability to mobilise those who are severely affected by the government's failure to deliver on the social contract.

Unfortunately for politicians, the approach to solving socio-political problems seems to be following a structured method of engagement, such as imbizo (town hall meetings) and policy position formulation which must be tabled in parliament for approval before being implemented – an inherent problem of modernity. Because its seeks to find solutions to the problem through a hybrid

of scientific knowledge with socio-political interventions in order to understand social life combined with the intention of reaching a more orderly way life, it misses misses the organic narrative that emerges out of the margins of society and which is not received through structures processes of communication.

If one looks at the history of the liberation movements, one finds that after liberation there is lot of expectation from the liberated communities that the new progressive government(s) will be sensitive to the needs of those people who suffered massive indignity at the hands of the colonisers. Invariably it is expected that the same citizens will be equally disappointed if the former liberation movement fails to deliver on the expectations of the masses that entrusted them with such responsibility.

Whone (1984) says, "Music is very close to a Man's heart. It is essentially the expression of a yearning to be free of the locking of the inner powers. The act of music-making, either as a creative or performing artist, is the opening of that lock, for where would his sorrow go if he could not express it in sound" (p. 59).

The blind exclusion of the arts or mass culture in the formation of a modern state has unintended consequences as it assumes that culture and cultural productions are for mere entertainment, or simply an 'aesthetic gratification of the listeners' (Schering). It is no surprise that even in South Africa the Ministry of Arts and Culture is considered to be the most junior in the Cabinet. When a Minister is redeployed to this department, it is considered to be a demotion.

Ignoring cultural expressions at a particular time in contemporary society will be tantamount to paying scant regard to unfolding events in human history.

Whose attention is the Raptivist attempting to wrestle and tussle with? Firstly, the Raptivist, through his songs and musical compositions, simply tells a story inspired by human events in a society at a point in time. But, unfortunately no one is listening.

Fighting against the tide of corporatisation and the commodification of music, these artists have opted to carry through what Alastair Williams calls a "process of self-imposed immanent critique, but which yet succeeds in emerging with a sense of renewed creative possibility" (Norris, 1989:17). To these artists, music is what Ernst Bloch sees as a "source of redemptive hopes and aspirations" (Norris, 1989:17).

Sithole (2012) puts it clearly,

> The enemy of the liberation movements is within the movements themselves. There is no need to be extra wary of the external enemy. Putting the house in order and listening to the people will ensure the perpetual existence of these movements. They started with the people and they find their sustenance in the people. They cannot continue to suppress the demands of their people. If they continue to take the people for granted they will not be there to see Africa restore its dignity. Some other movements will have to emerge.

The writings by Reverend Tumza on his hard-hitting track "Black Man Your On Your Own", could be a truer reflection on contemporary society's reflections of their social conditions at the time.

The irony about the role of the arts as it reflects on the human condition in present day South Africa is that is that historically music has been an integral part of the country's cultural commentary and social expression. It is music that put a brake on the apartheid government's grip on a helpless majority.

# CHAPTER 12. DEFENDING OR BETRAYING WHOSE REVOLUTION?

*The real political task today, at least in so far as it is also concerned with the cultural…is to carry forward the resistance that writing offers to established thought…(Lyotard, 1988)*

*"Hip-hop today is programmed by the ruling class. It is not the voice of African, or Latino or oppressed youth. It is a puppet voice for the ruling class that tells us to act like those who are oppressing us. The schools, the media, capitalism, and colonialism are totally responsible for what hip-hop is and what it has become. But we didn't intend on that – hip-hop was a voice just like the drum, the oral tradition of our people" (Dead Prez)*

In his analysis of music as immanent critique, Christopher Norris (1989, p.187) argues

> Any discourse concerning itself with the relationship between music and politics is likely to be fraught: it might tread a thin path between the mistake of simply mapping a political interpretation onto musical experience, and the corresponding error of regarding music as an autonomous domain separate from other spheres of life.

The political meaning of any music depends on its use and, as Pratt (1990) argues, music might perform a critical and radical transformative function, which "depends significantly on the dynamic interaction between the work itself and the way it is received" (p. 5). Music's impact and accomplishment within and between communities depends on what Mattern (1998) sees as the "strategic use of political action and power and on the variable capacity of different individuals and groups to control music production, meaning, and use" (p. 23).

An interesting observation is by Stokes ((1997) who advances an argument that "music often seems to do little more than fill a silence left by something else" (p. 2) and states that it is a "form of public display which the state and other social groups have an interest in controlling for obvious purposes of self-promotion" (p. 16).

It is this control of music and its performativity that haswhat Pratt calls "the purposive and effective" dimensions of political behaviour, where the former has an "explicit intention, an instrumental usage by which one or a few people somehow influence or attempt to influence the ideas or behaviour of others" (p. 5).

The inseparability of music from other spheres of life has, as its foundation, the ability to be appropriated by individuals for different reasons than its original intention. The ability of music to solicit some kind of impulsive collective identity, which in turn provokes some form of political action, is what makes this creative expression an attractive tool to those wishing to appeal to the conscience of the public. And, as Scott (1990) argues, "nothing conveys the public transcript more as the dominant would like it to seem than the formal ceremonies they organise to celebrate and dramatize their rule" (p. 57).

The for any liberation movement is its fascination with the glorification of its historical triumphs as security or guarantee for its continued hold on political office and a feeling of indemnity from socio-political disorder. This feeling of political entitlement is informed by the indisputable role the former liberation movements played in liberating their people from colonial rule and political subjection, for which they suffered persecution.

Not wanting to be judged for their failure to expedite the promises of freedom, these former liberation movements, as the new government, are found pleading for time to bring about socio-political and economic redress. This length of time is contested, not only by the opposition parties sitting on the

bench and arguing for alternative solutions but also by the masses of the people waiting impatiently for visible change in their lives.

The liberation movements now in power, are expected to live up what was promised by their struggle credentials and their most celebrated stories of triumph in the bush wars against despots who were determined to destroy them and stop them dead them on the trail. The expectations of the subordinate groups is nothing other thanfor a meaningful life and visible change in their socio-economic circumstances, given what has already been achieved – political freedom.

The disjuncture between the accolades received by the liberation movements and what they put on the dinner table for the marginalised groups to feast upon suddenly becomes obvious, especially when the subordinate groups are not convinced about why their hopes and prospects have become a suspended revolution. These movements seem to be caught up in glorification of their historical role in rescuing their people from colonialism and oppression but have failed to convince those they purport to have liberated, these have sought alternative means of mobilizing for support.

Unfortunately it also has become common that the same liberation movements, when questioned about their post-liberation achievements since assuming power, flash a resume of their struggle credentials and call for the people to "defend the revolution".

This chapter looks at how the ANC government, a former liberation movement, is turning to the cultural and creative industries to help garner support from the disenchanted and unengaged youth, especially during the period leading to local and national government elections.

## A Vote for Democracy

The youth vote is becoming open warfare amongst the political parties. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) that has emerged under the command of a

gutsy young politician and former President of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, is painting the country red with its signature overalls and red berets and is fast gaining support amongst the youth. With its ideology of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, left wing populism and Pan-Africanism, the party models itself on African revolutionaries like Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, and, locally, Steven Bantu Biko and Robert Sobukwe. Drawing its inspiration from the broad Marxist-Leninist tradition and Fanonian schools of thought, the state, imperialism, culture and class contradictions has taken the debate on who best represents the aspirations of Black Africans in South Africa to another level.

The EFF draws its support from followers younger than 24 years, who constitute 49% of the population and is driving an anti-ANC campaign to attract members whilst blaming the ruling party for selling out black people to capitalist exploitatio. Its appeal, particularly amongst young people, is its stance on the land question with its determined promise to get the land back from the colonialists and return it to the rightful owners, whilst nationalising the mines and the banking sector.

The above presents an interesting proposition to young people who are increasingly frustrated by "daddy" politics and celebrated struggle heroes. The chaotic nature of its leader, who has a high propensity for agitating anarchy, makes the EFF an exciting platform for the youth itching to create havoc and destabilise the ruling party. Positioning itself as the champion of the poor, against the backdrop of extreme poverty and unemployment and the alleged exploitation of farm workers, and those working in the mines is enough attraction for people who feel they are yet to taste the gains of democracy.

Opportunistically playing on human tragedy, positioning itself as the champion to fight redress for the victims of the Marikana massacre, the EFF seems to be scoring massive political gains from people who now perceive Malema's party as the "home for the hopeless". The EFF is extending its reach even to

professionals who feel left out of the ANC and branded "clever blacks", whilst his daily attack on the beleaguered Zuma and his hatred for the Guptas, as well as riding the wave of protests for free education, are some of the examples of political grand-standing that have made Malema and his EFF attractive to a significant number of people

As if the woes of the ANC government are not enough, the ruling party has to contend with the Democratic Alliance (DA), under a charismatic young black leader, Musi Maimane. The DA is attracting the black vote in huge numbers with their clarion call of "One Nation with One Future" underpinned by "Freedom, Fairness and Opportunity for All". Whilst the party has been plagued by racist incidents, it has has not prevented blacks. The surprise move by one of the most respected black entrepreneurs, Herman Mashaba (founder of Black Like Me), who joined the DA as the Mayoral candidate for the City of Johannesburg, is perceived to be a big political blow to the ANC – a party that looks like losing its grip as a people's movement. If the recent march for jobs in Johannesburg is anything to go by, there is no end in sight to the throngs of people who seem to be disgruntled with Zuma's government. The DA makes a point that 774 people become jobless every single day Zuma is president and that the greatest hope of finding a job in South Africa is where the DA governs.

The above prompts a political litmus test for the African National Congress as to whether, as a former liberation movement, the people can still be confident that the ruling party is fit to deliver on the aspirations of the masses.

'With the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Front vowing to take over the Johannesburg, Tshwane and the Nelson Mandela Metropolis, the 2016 Local Governmen Elections were the toughest the ANC has ever faced since the democratic dispensation'

Table 1. *Local Govt Election Results*

| Party | 2004 | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***ANC*** | *59.4%* | *64.1%* | *61.0%* | *55.68%* |
| ***DA*** | *22.1%* | *16.2%* | *23.8%* | *24.57%* |
| ***IFP*** | *9.1%* | *7.5%* | *3.6%* | *4.73%* |
| ***NFP*** | *n/a* | *n/a* | *2.4%* | *0.01%* |
| ***COPE*** | *n/a* | *n/a* | *2.1%* | *0.47%* |
| ***EFF*** | *n/a* | *n/a* | *n/a* | *8.31%* |

Source: Wikipedia

The result of the 2016 Local Government Elections once again showed a consistent decline in ANC support, a trend that surely is a worrisome factor for the ruling party trying to convince the voters that it still has political legitimacy to carry the will of the people. Dropping to 55% of the national vote, the ANC lost of the confidence of the people it liberated from years of oppression. The biggest benefactor was the Economic Freedoms Fighters (EFF) who garnered a convincing 8% of the electoral votes after entering the local government elections for the first time. The EFF would emerge as the kingmakers to unsit the ANC in both major metropolitans, resulting in the ruling party losing key cities such as Tshwane and Johannesburg.

Writing in the Washington Post, McMurry et al (August 12, 2016) cited four (4) for reasons why the ANC lost the local government elections, two of which I would like to mentione; (i) the youth vote isn't as loyal to the ANC, (ii) racial identities and politics are changing in South Africa. Is not surprising that the youth does not identify with daddy politics, as they did not live through apartheid. What matters to them is how the rulling party has dealt with their

daily lived experiences as they try to navigate through relentless poverty, rising unemployment and persistent inequality. This would later emerge in the #FeesMustFall protests that spiralled across the country and began to unearth deeply embedded resentment for a government that seemed not to care about young people and socio-economic circumstances. Unfortunately, some of the narratives had already been expressed in a numbr of hip-hop songs that nobody took heed of.

The changing racial dynamics also proved that party demographics, whilst still showing the colour bar, voters are more concerned about bread and butter issues and show a high resentment against corruption and state looting.

When the ANC was preparing for the 2016 Local Government Elections, the party begins to share Lenin's view on the role of music in mobilizing the masses. In defence of the revolution, the ruling party reaches out to or summons local artists to Luthuli House (ANC Headquarters) whenever local and national government elections are around the corner. From the prominent to the forgotten, artists are asked to endorse the party's manifesto and to join the ANC election campaign at rallies as it criss crosses the country. These artists are asked to record a compilation album of songs singing the praises of the liberation movement's struggle stalwarts and those of the top brass.

## Defending or Betraying the Revolution?

In calling for the people to help defend the revolution, what the liberation movements fail to understand is that at some point what was rational, as Gramsci (1977) argues; "can be opposed when it is no longer rational, and no longer in conformity with its ends...." (p. 126).

When the ANC calls for the artistic community to help defend the revolution, this raises the point by Polin who argues that, historically, one of music's chief uses has been in the service of propaganda. Polin asks a critical question: "Can the artistic mind function if it is bound up with a political ideology?" (quoted in Norris, 1989, p. 231).

If Lenin's view that the role and purpose of music is to unify the masses, then it is no coincidence that the African National Congress is turning to the artists to help defend the revolution, especially when it becomes apparent that the ruling party has run out of options to justify why the revolution has remained suspended, at least in the eyes of those on the margins of society.

If music is implicated in the meaning of society, the musical narratives contained in the lyrics that give insight to prevailing public discourse. However, the ruling party is concerned with how to use the artists and musicians to mobilise people en masse at election rallies in order for the party to deliver a one-dimensional message to the voter. Instead, song and dance, accompanied by the showering of epithets of political slogans for the celebrated heroes and heroines of the liberations struggles prevails at these election campaigns and is used to entrenched their claims of privilege to power and in the midst of the rhythms they completely missed the song.

A scenario is sketched below to help understand how the link between music and politics plays out during elections for political office and the scramble for the heart and minds of the voter.

**Musician A**: The Forgotten Artist, ready to "defend" the Revolution

*His/her music career has long expired. The artist struggles to convince the public and the music consumer that he/she once was a household hit and should not be forgotten when the history of South African music is written. Radio has rejected this artist's radio single several times as not fitting the station's format.*

*Musician A* fought in the struggle for liberation in the 80s, fell out of grace after 1994 but soon lost relevance both in the public discourse as well as in the commercial space. This is the only time *Musician A* feels important and

resuscitated from the music archives when he is able to perform for an audience that ordinarily will never come to watch his/her performance. Because he/she is never a delegate to the many ANC conferences taking place at regional, provincial and national level and therefore has not kept up to date with the new compositions, *Musician A* sings old struggle songs that are far removed from the prevailing political narrative. Again, this is the only period when *Musician A* earns some form of a living as a performing artist, since no promoter books them for any shows and because they also do not enjoy any airplay; they also do not earn performance royalties from the Southern Africa Performing Rights Organisation (SAMRO).

**Musician B**: The Emerging Artist, basking under the limelight

*Relatively new in the industry, riding the wave of success, and has a song on every station's Top 30 Charts. The artist is the most sought after artist by festival promoters and corporations. The artist's music says everything but nothing. The artist has not fully come to terms with recent success nor has the ability to internalise and contextualise the socio-political environment and the responsibility suddenly entrusted to him/her.*

*Musician B* is the flavour of the moment. He/she is young and relatively new in the industry and is still busking under the limelight and the recently found fame. The idea of performing to more than 60,000 supporters at an ANC rally just intrigues him/her. *Musician B* does not care about the story line, neither has he/she been briefed about the election manifesto and the corresponding message accompanying their performance. *Musician B* is just excited about performing to multitudes of ANC supporters. The songs and dance are a far cry from those of Artist A above. The narrative in the music says nothing about why they are there or the purpose of the gathering. Worse is the gyrating dance that mimics sex, since the dancers have been hastily gathered

through friends who know a friend who can dance. There is no black power or *amandla* salute accompanying the songs because their music is composed for commercial consumption and not for the critique of the public discourse.

The two artists above, and many others, depict how over the years artists have been summoned to Luthuli House (ANC Headquarters) and invited to be part of the ANC's election campaign machinery, in defence of the revolution, that will be deployed at all the nation-wide election rallies to drum up support for a decisive win, where victory is certain.

**Stand up and be counted: hip-hop and elections**

During the 2014 General elections, not even hip-hop was spared from defending the revolution. Initially ignored as an American construct in favour of Kwaito, the ANC has since made a U-turn and called upon hip-hop artists to do something in defence of the liberation movement. This is partly because of the strong featuring of rap music on the local performance circuit and on radio and television and not so much about the lyrical content and messages contained in the songs.

The summoning of the creative industry to Luthuli House by the ANC was during a very difficult election year for the ruling party. The ANC was contesting the 2014 General Elections with its confidence a bit wounded after having only achieved 65.5% of the vote in the 2009 elections. This was a 3.8% decline from the 2004 elections where it had obtained 69.69% of the vote.

The ANC recruited some of the best rappers who had been in hip-hop a long time, including the born-in-exile Tumi Molekane, as well as Pro Kid, Bozza (former Skwatta Kamp), Mr. Selwyn, Gigi La Mayne, Solo, and L-Tido, to record an election campaign track and video.

Rap music and street consciousness were stripped naked and laid bare by a propagandist discourse and paraded as a shift from subversive transcript to that of a conformist genre in bed with daddy politics. Emotionally charged with visuals of struggle heroes and the voice of the first democratic president of the country, the late Mr. Nelson Mandela, the song was used to canvas support from young people not only to vote but to vote for the ruling party.

*Guerilla Gijima ma Sotsha wama Vulandlela*
*Selebagijima bakhomba ama comastela*
*1912 angithi?*
*Baloku basilwela angithi?*
*Amaqabane asfela angithi?*

The chorus is deliberately constructed to remind the youth of the formation of the African National Congress in 1912 and the few who put their lives first for the liberation of the many. The creative use of a political chant, popularly used in defiant campaigns and rallies in the 1980s by the mass democratic movement, is meant to remind youth of the long and hard journey to political freedom.

The veteran rapper, Mr Selwyn, breaks into a verse that relates to the youth's apathy and their reluctance to vote. The verse speaks of youth who do not see any change in their daily lives, whether they vote or not. In his verse, Mr. Selwyn shares the frustrations of the youth who feel used by the politicians as they go to the polls to vote for them and then are completely forgotten whilst the same politicians become instant businesspersons through self-enrichment schemes. These politicians soon enjoy the good life and forget about the people who voted them into power:

*Mnx! Mina angi vote*
*Ngibona mina kufana mos*
*Uyavota noma awuvoti sihla thina sisala mos*
*Mina angi vote*
*Sibonakala si votela abantu abanga ma BEE*
*Why would put yourself through that?*
*Baphili impilo emnandi thina sithule sivele sithule*

The above is supported by Election '16 published by News24 on 4 March 2014 revealing shocking numbers of people who are increasingly becoming disassociated from the election process and opting not to vote at both local and national elections. The survey revealed a marked increase from 14% of people who did not participate in the 1994 general elections to 35% in 2009 (according to the South African Institute of Race Relations). More shocking was the 44% of the youth from ages of 18 to 34 years who responded via the social media polls that they would not be voting in the 2014 national elections, stating that things would stay the same regardless of who won.

In the middle of his verse, Mr. Selwyn suddenly changes position and says:

*Awuthi ngizikhuphule*
*If I don't vote inhlupheko ngeke isuke*
*All I need is to vote*

By saying "awuthi ngizikhuphule" – township slang for "on second thought or in retrospect", Mr. Selwyn says he actually has changed his mind and realises that by not giving the ANC another mandate suffering will continue and now he has to vote.

But a clear message comes from Bozza who drops his bombshell verse that is directed at those who do not vote ANC:

*ANCiers*
*Skwatta Kamp chillers*
*Sphush' uKhongolose....*
*If you ain't with us*
*Mzabalazo killers*
*Uzothol' iTear Gas*
*Bes' uskwatta like my ninjas*
*Hey kop kop*
*Pump your fists don't stop*
*Umkhonto come mrapper top notch*
*Viva maqabane tot tot*
*Viva maqabane to the top*

The verse is delivered with corresponding images and visuals clearly depicting what would happen to those who do not vote for the ANC.

Reference to teargas is a threat to those who refuse to save the revolution and choose to betray it. Those who are not with the movement are then referred as killers of the struggle (mzabalazo killers). The video of the same song was released on 4 May 2014, three days before the National General Elections and suddenly received more than 17,000 viewers with 60 viewers giving it a thumbs up compared to 34 who did not think much about it (see video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o515ll9fEmA)

It is important to point out that in many instances the endorsement or rejection of the video on YouTube is not based on lyrical content but is always about the creative treatment of the video. The thumbs up was not 'yes' to the intention of the video but is meant to say the video is 'dope' (nice) from a creative point of view. The thumbs up and thumbs down count excluded the 45 comments of the viewers who made their critique of the video as well as their views on the artists or the use of hip-hop in the election campaign. Most of the comments were scathing on the use of political propaganda in the name of defending an ill-defined revolution. Most of the comments questioned whether these artists had been duped to be part of the campaign or chose to be part of it just to be in the spotlight, as seen below (extract from YouTube comments):

> ***Mylronlion*** *9 months ago*
> *Hmm so let me get this straight, a bunch of little known "hip-hop" artists sells out to advertise a political party, so "hip-hop" of them, and the videography portrays past struggles which is irrelevant today. All the ANC has done is to cause chronic depression every time I leave the house, see the poverty and end up facing crime multiple times. There is no freedom when one can't even leave the house without stress of being mugged in the street. Can't even trust the police, they don't do anything. I can't believe they even bothered to put this shit on youtube. Just look at the views, does the ANC expect people that vote for them to have access to the internet? Well that is a good thing, since the internet is highly educational, and the ANC wouldn't be able to secure votes if more people get some enlightenment. It doesn't really matter in the end, no political party has the best interest of the public at heart or mind, just a bunch of power hungry zealots trying to fuel their own egos, until they die, return to the universe in their molecular structure and leave absolutely nothing of true value behind.*

*Jeez even I would've been able to eradicate poverty and provide free education to every home in South Africa with the money wasted on Nkandla alone. Sorry but the ANC has little regard for human life, for education, for history, science or technology and really lack imagination, then again so does all the other parties. The government is a cancer, all you have to do is walk two blocks from the Union building to the Art museum in Sunnyside to see evidence of how our society has slipped, drug dealers, prostitutes, if the ANC hasn't picked up on that by now, then clearly they lack observation skills. I came out of poverty with no help from the ANC, i worked my ass off since childhood, went to an internet cafe, studied new technologies not available in SA at the time, created a business for myself and make R500 per hour 24/7. So don't rely on some illusionary government to make your dreams come true, rely on yourself, your imagination and practice every day to improve your skills. If you really want to vote for a government, which most of the members lack an education, go ahead, leave a bright wonderful future for new generations, because you're just another dumb fuck that can't think for themselves.*
Show less
**Reply** ·




***Prince Macrobia*** *9 months ago (edited)*
*South Africa is great country but needs to stop killings refugees, specially their targets Somalis and Ethiopians. anyway, The is great hip-hop song. the girl so dope. keep it up the good job.*

***Matthew Xiu*** *10 months ago*
*"Ba phila impilo emnandi thina sphinde vele s'thule" This makes me SO sad because honestly I believe the ANC is a great party but the CURRENT leadership has honestly been so focussed on enriching themselves. WHERE are the education policies that will change youth? WHERE is the resource distribution to rural areas & locations? WHERE is the "equity"? :( PLEASE can the ANC consider the people*



***The Zen Master*** *9 months ago*
*I don't know why the ANC is using bullshit propaganda like this. If they lose, all they will do is fraud ballots like they did the last time in order to win. Fuckers. All they are doing is destroying this country. FUCK ZUMA, AND THE ANC*

The final blow came from a posting that asked whether this was a tender or not.



**sibusiso nkutha** 9 months ago
was this a tender?

The involvement of respected hip-hop artists in the ruling party's electioneering campaigns was viewed by die-hard hip-hop lovers as the politics of the stomach.

The '*tenderpreneurship*' – the pursuit of government business - that has engulfed this country since the dawn of democracy is now devoid of any moral conscience. Money and the pursuit of happiness by those thought to be the torch bearers of our moral compass has seen a lot of people selling their souls by any means necessary. The questions, dominating social media platforms, about why hip-hop would drag itself to an electioneering campaign could only be answered by assuming that someone got paid lots of money. This has long been the state of affairs in the country where ideas are generated and sold to government or vice versa by those in search of tenders as a way of making a quick buck.

The question above is an innocent question in a situation where relatives of government members have been associated with attempts to extract money through various tenders that have become the order of the day. Companies are being registered with the registrar of companies where one entity is listed as providing services ranging from cleaning, security, fencing, events, to stationery and, most probably, videos.

## Was rap for sale?

I asked some of the rappers featured in the video what the context was in which they got involved and how they responded to the criticism made against them. One of them, Kabomo, responded.

*Kabomo Vilakazi: Soul singer, rapper, and poet*

Kabomo is a prolific writer, poet, musician, producer, and award-winning artist. The most sought after producer and songwriter, Kabomo has written and produced songs prominent locally such as those by Tshepo Tshola, Kelly Khumalo, Thiwe Mbola, Nothende, Zubz, just to mention a few.

In his response to why did he got involved with the ANC election campaign, Kabomo had this to say:

> I can only speak for myself. I did it, because I am a loyal ANC member. I campaigned for free during elections. This is not out of naivety – I am well aware of the ANC's flaws. But I am patient with them. Their fight for freedom is worth more than their current flaws. I use my artistic voice, poetically and creatively, to support any party of my choosing. In the same manner that all my other songs represent my point of view on anything. If I took criticism to heart all the time, I would not have a career.

From the response above, it could well be said that Kabomo took a professional career decision and not a political decision, and that not partaking in the election campaign could have been a career-limiting decision.

*Tumi: the master lyricist*

The rapper Tumi Molekane, born in Tanzania to exiled parents, is one of the most respected socially-conscious rappers and a master lyricist who has been reluctant to compromise his craft and what he stands for. When approached to respond to his involvement in the ANC election campaign project, Tumi had a different opinion about the criticism.

Tumi, Proverb, Zubz, Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh, Zuluboy, Reason, Rev Tumza are just some of the few rappers in Johannesburg who have been in the hip-hop business for a long time, and have earned respect and credibility for socio-politically-conscious lyrics laced with insightful commentary not just on the state of the nation, but on the state of mind in post-apartheid South Africa. They have crafted lyrics that stretch the mind beyond its limit and verbal deftness.

So, when an artist such as Tumi accepts an invitation to write an electioneering campaign song in post-apartheid South Africa, when the revolution is over, the question is which revolution is being defended?

Not taking it lying down, Tumi dared those who criticised his involvement via the Internet to come forward and criticise him to his face. Defending the stance he took, Tumi argued:

> I am not a card carrying member of the ANC. I don't have the time nor interest in party politics, I am an artist boet Sipho. I believe in my truth that can change tomorrow. That said, sometimes the goals of party and mine align and this was one of those times. Artists can be just as effective when as involved as Belafonte and Mirriam or as uninvolved as Paul Simon or Miles were.

However, it must be noted that an unchallenged revolution creates a sense of blind acceptance by those supposed to benefit from it of its often-proclaimed prestige.

Notwithstanding its obvious role and the impact that hip-hop would have made in convincing the youth to go the polls in numbers. What was unsettling was hip-hop's failure to help the political establishment to resolve the social distance between it and the youth it had alienated. An opportunity was lost for

hip-hop to align itself more with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), a body charged with getting the voters to the polls and getting young people registered to vote. By aligning themselves with the IEC, these rappers would have risen above partisan politics. Instead, the independent voice of hip-hop had become muddled with party politics and the rappers who got involved in the campaign became impervious to reason, except for one hip-hop artist, appropriately called 'Reason', who refused to defend the revolution at allany cost.

Reason's track, "Selfish Politics", went against the grain, defying his hip-hop comrades and clearly uttering what those driving the national democratic revolution (NDR) would call "anti-revolutionary" sentiments. Reason had re-iterated his feelings about voting for a government or a party that in his opinion had created a social distance between itself and the people it was supposed to liberate:

*-And then u tell me vote for ya!*
*Vote Zille, vote Lektota, vote Zuma*
*Vote coz it's what we fought for and "vote coz ahhh...*
*...If you vote for me, I'll rob and not kill 'em*

By attacking the dominant political parties in the electioneering race, Reason displays no political affinity with anyone of the parties involved, instead he simply tells them to get off his backside, and says:

*So I say - Fuck the government!*
*Fuck whoever's the cause informal settlements*
*The devil is runnin this city metro police*
*And all we gotta show for it, is ink on thumb on ya shit*

The obvious contradictions within a hip-hop generation cut out of the same cloth, viz. soico-politically-conscious hip-hop, lends itself to serious analysis.

The obvious contradictions around whether an artist should be involved in politics and party political campaigning or not is best articulated in Porter (2006), who said: "there is more to the hip-hop story than the self-consciously

political, and there is more to the political itself than can be consciously thought" (p. 65).

Succumbing to a ruling political party's request –even a party with a long list of struggle credentials – shows political gullibility and naivety by the hip-hop generation with a lot of words to express but that falls short of understanding the true meaning and intent behind them.

Such gullibility speaks to what is fast becoming the diminishing role of socio-politically-conscious and reality hip-hop against the backdrop of what has become the resounding commercial hip-hop soundtrack. Therefore, when faced with the possibility of becoming extinct because party rap has cuaght the attention of the gullible masses, the opportunity of presenting your craft to a captive audience of thousands of party political supporters surely presents an irresistible temptation to underground emcees to register their presence and make themselves heard.

How appropriate then that once in four years a national event presents itself to a group of musicians almost on the brink of extinction, who then, out of excitement, grab the opportunity to remind the fans who have long forgotten that they are still around. Porter appropriately observes "the intellectual sheen of postmodernism of resistance and the countercultural patina of hip-hop seem a bit tarnished" (in Peddie, 2006, p. 65).

These rappers' participation in the ANC election campaign could have been one last-ditch effort to save the disappearing glimmerings of resistance that hip-hop once had. How best to do that then was by associating themselves with a former resistance movement, so that, in their opinion, they become a resistant force themselves. The question to ask is what would the ruling party need help resisting? The ruling party is the governing and majority party in parliament with a mandate to implement the aspirations of the masses, the national democratic revolution. The least the participant rappers could do is to

question the ruling party on its performance in achieving a national democratic revolution. On the contrary, these rappers seemed to have achieved the exact opposite and tarnished the last remnants of resistant hip-hop.

According to sheer population numbers in South Africa the majority are the ones who should enjoy the benefits of being in power. Unlike in America, where the African Americans constitute only 13.2% of the population compared to 77.4% of the White population, Black Africans make up 79.2% of the 52 million people in South Africa. These figures tell one thing: in America, African Americans are a minority and long for the revolution to happen whereas in South Africa the revolution is in the hands of the majority and needs no defence.

It is therefore, a serious irony that the same ruling party that already has a mandate to address such challenges in turn calls upon hip-hop to help it lead the revolution whereas the culture itself has arisen out of youth's frustration with the lack of progress in delivering a national democratic revolution.

A counter argument advanced by these rappers was that their participation in the election campaign and association with the ruling party was to reinforce their determination to remain optimistic about the future and they thus perceived their involvement as some form of civic duty. However, it can be argued that the assimilation and co-option of hip-hop by the ruling class to advance the interests of politics goes against the revolutionary consciousness of the genre itself. As Chuck D said: "hip-hop lyrics are truth telling and authentic messages of the real selves of their authors", and therefore, a specially packaged message for a particular event and a particular course makes it very difficult to ascertain the real personae behind the stories and narratives adopted by the rapper on what has been specifically commissioned as a musical work.

Asante (2008, p. 113) supports this view and argues that it is the ghetto with all of its raw materials that produces the character of rap music. In South Africa it is the township, with its triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, which should craft most of the rap messages and not have them crafted at the whim of the ruling class.

Asante (2008, p. 114), quoting M1- of Dead Prez, and explaining how hip-hop is succumbing to the power of capital and the political establishment points out that:

> Hip-hop today is programmed by the ruling class. It is not the voice of African, or Latino or oppressed youth. It is a puppet voice for the ruling class that tells us to act like those who are oppressing us. The schools, the media, capitalism, and colonialism are totally responsible for what hip-hop is and what it has become. But we didn't intend on that – hip-hop was a voice a just like the drum, the oral tradition of our people.

The above points out the emerging disparities between what the carriers of the message see their role to be; either as a voice that advances the interest of capital or that which questions capital's exploitation of the voices that were meant to challenge it. This situation could be exacerbated by the current crisis of the state of rap music where, according to Asante (2008) "hip-hop's voice box of values and ideas, has drifted into the shallowest pool of poetic possibilities, or even that most of today's hip-hop betrays the attitudes and ideals that framed it in the first place" (p. 5). This last remaining hip-hop can only reminiscence abouts the times gone by where the socio-politically-conscious rapper was tantamount to a generation of rebellious students of the 1960s who, according to Arendt (2006) were "characterised by sheer courage, an astounding will to action and by a no less confidence in the possibility of change" (p. 65)

It is the rise of mainstream hip-hop that has propelled the genre to what Porter (1995) calls "the summit of the pop-cultural pyramid", and with the help of the media, thus rendering socio-politically-conscious hip-hop totally irrelevant.

The individualistic attitude of South African hip-hop artists and their quest for personal gain and recognition fuelled by the media that has glorified them and propelled them into demagogues has not helped the genre to be perceived beyond its showbusiness tag. By not recognizing the collective strength of the very same commercial and successful hip-hop artists these artists have failed to channel their creative power into avenues that could direct them to begin to utilise their popularity and social positioning for "unity-in-purpose social upliftment projects" and direct their energy into helping communities still under stress.

Also the absence of unifying campaigns similar to the ones in America, such as The Haitian Refugee Crisis, Rappers and Mumia Abu-Jamal, The Million Man March, The Million Youth March, Rock the Vote, will further diminish the relevance of socially-conscious or political hip-hop in South Africa.

There have been endless possibilities and "unfortunate" human tragedies or events where hip-hop in South Africa could have diverted itself from the commercial focus to the pursuit of a more moral and civic course. Events such as the xenophobic attacks of 2008 and the subsequent years, service delivery challenges, "the fire pool extinguisher", 16 Days of Activism Against Women Abuse, Born-Frees Must Vote, Rhodes Must Fall, Fees Must Fall, are some of the points that hip-hop could rally itself around and gain some recognition of as a broad cultural or social movement rather than avenues for quick-buck-making schemes. The #FeesMustFall Movement was a student led protest and the hip-hop voice was silent. Except for the two songs released by HHP, "Pasopa'"', and Gigi Lamayne's "Fees Will Fall", hip-hop did not present itself as a movement that is in tune with the national character of the student protest. Bynoe (2004) argues:

> The inability of insightful artists to organize a political movement underscores the contradiction of so-called Hip Hop politics. While rap music and its related Hip Hop culture may espouse political view points, the bulk of its political activism is limited to artists lending their support and talents to a particular protest record and its accompanying video or a live performance, rather than endeavours with real influence on policy. (p. x).

Bynoe (2004) argues that whereas hip-hop's impact is limited to articulating a particular reality within a specific group, the challenge for hip-hop artists or raptivists is not to just sing about social conditions but to actually mobilise society to influence policies that will give effect to reversing the social conditions. It is not recognition by the ruling party that will bring credibility to a genre that is associated with thuggery, hooliganism and drugs, but it is the work in the communities that will earn the respect of the people that have despised them in the first place. One of the reasons why gangsterism thrives in underprivileged communities is because the gangsters themselves have positioned themselves as the protector of the unprotected. They see themselves as the provider of the needy and always jump at every opportunity to provide food parcels to a bereaved family even if the bereavement comes out of their criminal actions.

A local hip-hop artist, F-eezy, has a popular saying that Abomrapper (a local lingo for rappers) listen to hip-hop and then go dancing to house music or, as McQuillar (2007) attests, "they concentrate on verbal gymnastics and a call-and-response system in order to rock the party" (p. 60), thus affirming what Eric Hoffner (1989) argues, that there is a true distinction between the purpose of men of words and that of men of action.

Malcolm X once said, "It's always very easy for us to be ready to move and ready to talk and ready to act, but unless we get down into the heart of the

*ghetto*[10] and begin to deal with the problem of jobs, schools, and the other basic questions, we are going to be unable to deal with any revolutionary perspective, or with any revolution for that matter" (quoted in Bynoe, 2004, p. viii)..[11]

Rather being used for political gains by the dominant group, hip-hop has to independently strive to foster a movement that departs from just being a cultural movement to structure what Bynoe (2004) calls, "a relevant political initiative distinct from the underlying cultural idiom" (p. xi).

The heart of the ghetto is the pulse of hip-hop culture where rap music finds its expression, wrapped in hidden or public transcripts; it is not the physical human settlement. Failure to get down into the heart of the ghetto and understand what keeps it pumping will limit hip-hop's ability to stand and deliver the aspirations of those living in the margins.

Hip-hop needs to stand up and defend the erosion of its own revolutionary character against those who are using it for their own political agenda.

[10] The *Ghetto* exists for millions of youths and it is profoundly significant social location. The UN-Habitat estimates that there are about 300 million youths living in slums and inner cities around the world.
[11] Speech by Malcolm X on December 13, 1964 at Audubon Ballroom, Harlem, New York.

# CHAPTER 13 HIP-HOP ON DEAF EARS: OR A SOURCE FOR A CIVIC PERCEPTION SURVEY?

*"Any music innovation full of danger to the whole State, ought to be prohibited" (Plato, The Republic)*

The continuous search for political affirmation and social legitimacy must also be informed by listening to what the word on the street is, and seeking for new ways of thinking and listening to what is happening on the ground. When the streets are talking the people must have spoken and their narrative is carried in song throughout the neighbourhood and only those with listening skills will know what the word on the street is.

Unfortunately not everyone wants to listen to this music because, as Shepherd (1989) argues, "the existence of music is potentially threatening to men to the extent that it insists on the social relatedness of human worlds and as a consequence implicitly demands that individuals respond" (p. 15). Green (1988) attests to this argument in that she argues that to some people "music may mean the sound of protest, rebellion or even revolution" (p. vi). Unfortunately, when music falls on deaf ears, the power and the importance of music in society is lost in translation. Because the dominant group is forever satisfied with its own performance, the voices of the other are forever ignored, especially if they are not channelled through the structured political processes of engagement. However, Foucault (1980) warns "politics must never be allowed to rest on the satisfaction of its own self-conception and on the identities it affirms as the constituents of its community" (p. 207).

Society is a complex mass of interweaving and contradictory desires, concerns and stories (de Certeau, 1989) and music has proven to be the other voice that carries aspirations and frustrations and creates sites of socio-political reflection – a great platform and source for public officials and political authorities to understand societal concerns. Supporting this assertion, Rose

(1994) argues that rap music brings together a tangle of some of the most complex social, cultural, and political issues while taking the identity of the observer or narratoer into accoun, the next step will be to untangle the web of issues behind the lyrics in order to understand cause and effect giving rise to such a discourse.

## Hidden yet audible: looking beyond the obvious

Since music is made by human beings it can only be "a manifestation of human experience – of the problems and despair, the triumphs and joys which are an integral part of living together in a particular social context" (Green, 1988, p. vii). For any society to seek to understand the meaning of music and this complex mass of interweaving and contradictory desires and aspirations– (which can be seen as expressing the mood of a nation) requires a transgressive approach to analysing the dominant discourse of a particular society and what the word on the street is. This will demand that politics must look beyond the obvious and think outside the normal, requiring what Pennycook (2007) says is the need "to transcend the boundaries of the modern" (p. 41).

The argument I advance is that there is a need to look at music and its compositional effect - the message – ***as an unsolicited civic perception survey*** from which the state can draw inferences and gauge the mood or temperature of its constituent community. Music allows society to look at itself and is where citizens find the meaning of life as expressed through melodic narratives Hence Foucault (1980) argues that criticism should be a historical investigation into the events where society has constituted itself and should try to understand why certain things happen the way they do.

Dave Rogers argues "like all great music (Dylan's) cannot be adequately described; it must be heard" (quoted in Green, 1988, p. 85). This sentiment is expressly shared by Attwood and Farmer (in Green, 1988) who argue,

> ...with every different style of music he seems to have something different to say, and that ability to keep changing and saying important things is why Dylan is recognized as great by many people... There is a great deal to be said about his music, even without his famous words. It is very powerful and demanding, and urges you to listen (p. 85).

It is this capacity of music to stimulate masses of words in its delineation of meanings that prompts Gramsci to argue "a dominant class must listen to the voices of the subordinate classes and take account of the real effects which these classes produce" (Swingewood, 1998,p. 15). It is this subordinate class, the creative class, which produces the discourse which helps to encourage an integrative process, which binds the various opposing and potentially conflictual groups and classes into a unified social whole.

Sorokin advances the notion that "human music is that which is understood by everyone who descends into himself (*in se ipsum descendit)"* and he introduces the concept of "Ideational music" and asserts that music is not about how it sounds but more about what is "hidden behind the sounds for which they are mere signs or symbols" (1937,p. 532) or what Scott (1990) calls "the hidden transcripts".

If music, according to John Shepherd, "reminds men of the fragile and atrophied nature of their control over the world" (Norris, 1989, p. 15) it should be obvious that those in power should find a positive use for music as an effective instrument to gauge the socio-political temperature of the people they lead and government should neither seek control over it nor shun it. Rather than shun music and its compositional effect, music and its lyrical content must be embraced as "unsolicited civic perception survey" in that music and the words behind it provide a performance-monitoring and measurement mechanism as to whether the state delivers on the social contract it has with its citizens. This relationship between musical

compositions and the messaging behind it could serve any government well in helping it understand whether it is still serving the interests of the society it leads or not.

Understanding and appreciating what is hidden behind the sounds demands a different attitude towards the analysis of music and requires the removal of the sensately audible in music in order to deal strictly with the message in the music – pleasant or unpleasant.

It could be argued that music, as an expression of social reality, does not lend itself to articulating the views of a particular community or a total representation of public opinion and therefore could not be utilised as a "civic perception survey". However, Ernst Meyer who sees "music as reflections of the social conditions of the time" that represent significant aspects of social reality argues that this makes the messages contained in the music "an important means for the information of consciousness...a form of the cognition of reality" (cited in Etzkorn, 1973, p. 10). If the argument is true that music stimulates consciousness and increases one's understanding of socio-political reality to which the public responds, then credence must be given to the composition and the message contained in the music itself.

**'Word Snipers': The Silencing of Roger Lucey**

It is the individual or citizens' response to the music composition and its message that threatens the state. During apartheid rule in South Africa many musicians who dared to challenge the oppressive regime through the message in their music, were met with a harsh response, were arrested or had their music censored.

Music and censorship during the struggle for liberation in South Africa was a formal government policy. The state broadcaster had fulltime employees or officials whose job was to listen to every song released for airplay inside the country – whether such songs were by local or international artists. Threatened by explosive and subversive political material contained in the

lyrics of the songs that clearly painted a picture of a dire situation, the apartheid government employed what one could call "snipers of the word", whose job was to listen to the lyrics and to erase, scratch, disfigure, and totally eliminate what was geared for public consumption, if the State considered such songs to be acts of subversion. The state and the state broadcaster had the power, over cultural consumption and cultural production and representation, to decide by whom, when and how. Imposing its cultural hegemony, the apartheid state controlled cultural production and distribution with the sole objective of manipulating what got flushed out into society.. The state, determined to ensure that it manipulated cultural production, ensured that its ideology was not only imposed but also accepted as the cultural norm, thus justifying its social, political, and economic status quo as natural.

In the book, *Shoot the Singer* by Korpe (2004), both the censor and the censored describe their experiences, and in different ways define how music has a unique capacity to build community, stimulate feeling, energize and lift people out of themselves and transcend all barriers by speaking directly to the heart. Michael Drewett (2005) published an article *Stop This Filth: The Censorship of Roger Lucey's Music in Apartheid South Africa*, which details a story and provides a critical analysis of the censorship of popular music in the country. Drewett looked at Roger Lucey who composed and performed songs that were scathing of the apartheid government. The article reveals how the apartheid state was able to apply pressure to all areas of the production, promotion and distribution of Lucey's message and thereby effectively silence him.

Born in 1954 to later become a leading South African musician, journalist, filmmaker, actor and educator, Roger Lucey's came head to head with the apartheid regime's Bureau of State Security because of his protest songs whose lyrics were a threat to the Apartheid State. This became evident during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from evidence given by Paul

Erasmus, a state security agent, who oversaw the destruction of Lucey's career after he performed a subversive song on Voice of America radio.

In *Roger, me and the scorpion: working for the South African security services during apartheid (Korpe, 2004),* Paul Erasmus's startling confession about his dirty tricks campaign against Roger Lucey revealed how it led to the artist being reduced to working as a doorman and barman at one of the venues where he had performed at the height of his career. The remorse of the former state censor is clearly evident in the testimony by Paul Erasmus below:

> It is so trite, so futile, to talk of regret, of compensation, ofreparation...to apologize (which is nigh impossible) for denying Roger such a significant part of his life. I truly believe, with the benefit of hindsight, that an artist who cannot, with freedom from persecution and prejudice, give expression to his talent is being denied the very essence of his life – his God-given creativity.
>
> I have agonized over Roger and my role in his life and so many others, and it is truly to late to say I'm sorry. No one can turn the clock back. The only measure of consolation, trite as this may seem, is that maybe, just maybe, our experiences will somehow contribute to others not repeating these injustices, making the same terrible mistakes" (Korpe, 2004, p. 80-81).

The method applied to silence these voices involved huge administrative processes and measures where certain officials worked in dark corners, far from the unsuspecting crowds, performing the duties of what one could call "audio snipers" – listening to each and every song, trying to find what James Scott refers to as "hidden transcripts" in order to make sure that no song slipped through the system and landed itself in the public space for public consumption.

This cowardly act of silencing voices from the margins occured not only through the censorship of songs as even the radio and televiosn news readers had a pre-scripted note that said: "*nazi izindaba eziphuma ePitoli; kuthiwa angizifunde njengoba zinjalo"* meaning "here is the news from head office in Pretoria that I have been instructed to read as is or unedited".

In the article, Drewett explains that South Africa was engaged in a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggle between the ruling social and cultural forms of domination and forms of resistance and struggle, where the state imposed its power and dominance over the majority of South Africans. Drewett, explains; "we define communities by the sounds they make – and the sounds they refuse". South African society during apartheid was one of contestation, in which musical messages contesting apartheid inequality were refused by supporters of the state and in particular those operating within the institutional framework of apartheid state censorship. Roger's music, like many other artists at the time, fell into the same category and unfortunately required apartheid's intervention as the songs not only captured the people's imagination, highlighted the social conditions and related human events of the time, but they also equally evoked fear and dread in those supporting state hegemony.

In ensuring control over what got played on air, the state created what Drewett calls "provincial alliances" with those in authority (broadcast officials). By so doing the state won the consent of the collaborating officials in carrying out the censorship program and thus legitimised what naturally was repressive action, which, according to Hall (1977), makes the act itself appear "legitimate and natural" (p. 338).

As a concept, hegemony firstly assists our understanding of how political society, through the use of the institutions of law, police, army and prisons, coerces society into consenting to the status quo. Secondly, and most significantly, the concept of hegemony assists our understanding of how political and civil society, through the use of institutions including education,

religion and the media, contribute to the production of meaning and values which in turn produce, direct and maintain the consent of society to the status quo.

### Silencing the expressions: Confessions of a hired state censor

Roger Lucey was not the only musician to have his music censored. A number of musicians suffered the same fate. The song "Whispers in the Deep" by Ray Phiri's Stimela, as well as "Chant of the Marching" by Sipho Hotstix Mabuse, are just two of the many songs that did not meet broadcast tests during the apartheid era. Also, Paul Erasmus was not the only person or agent hired by the state to scrutinize lyrical content and the potent music messages produced at the height of the oppressive regime's rule. There were many dedicated and loyal apartheid-era public servants who believed in the preservation of the status quo. Cecile Pracher is revealed in *Encounters with a South African censor: confrontation and reconciliation* by Ole Reitov as the former censor who carried out these acts of deciding what was allowed to be heard on radio or television for public consumption (Korpe, 2004).

More startling revelations came to the fore at a conference *1st* FREEMUSE WORLD CONFERENCE ON MUSIC AND CENSORSHIP held in Copenhagen in 1998, where, again Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse and Ray Phiri of Stimela, came face to face with Ms. Cecile Pracher, manager of the record library at South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

> Those lyrics would be passed on to the meeting once a week. In the years between 1980 and 1990 there were generally about fifteen lyrics per week. If you take into account that we only in those days had about 480 LPs or CDs that came in per year then it was a quite a substantial amount of lyrics that had to be checked and had to be voted upon. The voting system was open and my impression was that in those days virtually anything that was perceived as damaging to the state, to the SABC or to the National Party, was regarded as not acceptable and we would ban it. Being there was part of their mission in life – most people

were Brooderbond. My perception was: it was a job more than a mission (Korpe, 2004, 83).

For two days the conference revealed untold stories of the censor and the censored. Cecile Pracher died two years later.

The conference provided insights into what George Bernard Shaw, an Irish-born British playwright, described as censorship: "All censorship exists to prevent any one from challenging current conceptions and existing institutions".

## Shooting the singer: The songs that did not make the cut

A blogger 'Soul Safari: Music Treasures from Africa" blogged on "banned music from South Africa" on January 31, 2013, that he came across some interesting records which had marks depicting what could be interpreted as them having been censored. The blogger started digging more and more and shares his revelations below about specific records with clear marks of censorship.

*Information from blogger Soul Safari*



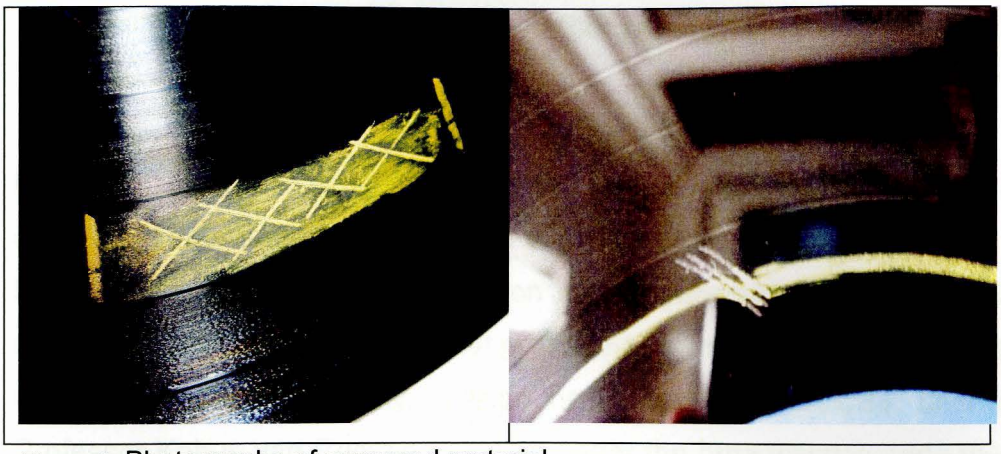


*Figure. 9.* Photographs of censored material

The last track on the top left has clealyd been scratched off on the actual record, as well as on track listing on the top right. The artist is Highway Soul and the album was Soul Special. The cruelty of the censorship machine is the actual scratching of the record itself so that it does not play at, as shown above.

The above is consistent with Pracher's confession during the conference in which she stated:

> Records weren't banned by the SABC as a record with all the cuts. It was normally one, two or three cuts – but sometimes it was eight, nine or ten. But mostly it was about three or four cuts and we had to put on stickers onto the LP's and in fact some of the LP's were scratched so that those cuts weren't played. With CD's of course that opportunity was lost.[12]

## Censorship beyond Apartheid

> Indians don't want to change, even Mandela has failed to convince them. It was better with whites we knew then it was a racial conflict / we struggle so much here in Durban, as we have been dispossessed by Indians / I have never seen Dlamini emigrating to Bombay, India. Yet, Indians, arrive everyday in Durban - they are packing the airport

[12] Extracts of the Interview with Ms Cecile Pracher: Music Censor at South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) at the 1st FREEMUSE WORLD CONFERENCE ON MUSIC AND CENSORSHIP' Copenhagen, Denmark, 22-28 Nov. 1998. Source: Freemuse Online

full. (Excerpt from the song by Mbongeni Ngema - source, IOL News, 20 June 2002).

Mbongeni Ngema's song "Amandiya" (meaning Indians) sparked a racial outcry and was a slap in the face of a rainbow nation. It was banned by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission for not subscribing to the values of a democratic, non-sexist country that promoted diversity, religious tolerance and respect for human diginity. Announcing the ban, BCCSA chairperson Professor Kobus van Rooyen said that under the broadcasting code the song constituted racial hate speech with incitement to harm. In his statement he said:

> The song as broadcast demeaned the Indian section of the population by accusing the Indians in sweeping generalisations of the oppression of Zulus, of dispossession of Zulus and that it exceeded freedom of expression allowed by the broadcasting code because it 'promoted hate in sweeping, emotive language against Indians as a race' and incited fear among Indians for their safety, the judgment said. He said South Africans were protected by constitutional rights, which could overrule the right to freedom of speech.

The ruling by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission only affected and was limited to the broadcast of the track but did not restrict Mbongeni Ngema from releasing the song in any other format, CD or electronic, including its live performance.

The pressure put on Mbongeni Ngema to retract his statement or his views about the Indians led to him meeting Mr. Nelson Mandela after which the South African Human Rights Council issued a statement saying:

> The commission has noted with interest the stated intention of Mr.

> Ngema following his meeting with Mr. Mandela to embark on a process of debate and discourse with others around the problems and barriers that exist in the path of true reconciliation and nation-building. We fully endorse such an approach and reiterate our willingness to participate in those processes. - Sapa

The song, taken literally and placed against prevailing poverty and unemployment could have sparked a repeat of the attack on the Indians by the Zulus in 1949 where one hundred and thirty seven people were killed and a thousand more injured. The attack on Indians by Zulus in January 1949 generated a great deal of debate about the relationship between the two communities. Therefore, the song by Mbongeni Ngema naturally sparked fear in the country that there could be a possible repeat of the same skirmishes and the dangerous analysis by Oscar 88 in the article above could only mean that the Zulus were preparing for battle.

Even the Guardian Newspaper (2002) in the United Kingdom jumped on the bandwagon with its headline: "Black composer rejects Mandela's call to apologise for racist lyrics". Writing from Johannesburg, the Guardian journalist, Chris McGreal stated that Ngema defended his lyrics by saying they merely reflect the views of black people. He quotes Ngema saying, "It is my role as an artist... to mirror the society and highlight the plight of the people on the ground. The leadership relies on us artists to voice out issues where there is perceived oversight," when he spoke to Zulu radio. McGreal seemed to be in agreement with the sentiments expressed in the song and testified to the fact there is a widely held belief that Indians enjoy more advantages and have access to more opportunities in KwaZulu-Natal, even though they constitute only 2% of the South African population[13].

Exactly twelve years after the release of the "AmaNdiya" track by Mbongeni

[13] Indians make up only 2% of South Africa's population but they have a high profile, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where Mahatma Gandhi once lived and which continues to have the biggest concentration of Indians.

Ngema in 2002, a hip-hop crew, AmaCde (The Comrades), again from KwaZulu-Natal, released another controversial track called "Umhlab' Uzobuya" (The land will return) attacking Indians. When Kwanele Sosibo of the Mail & Guardian interviewed one of the crew members the response could not have been clearer:

> We're inspired by the song 'AmaNdiya'; we're picking up where he [Ngema] left off, in our modern way," says Ndlovu. "Hopefully this song will set the agenda in the corridors of power. What we're saying is that you can't put us on an equal platform, empowerment-wise, with Indians; we suffered a whole lot more. Empowerment should favour us.

The interview conducted by Sosibo reveals the interesting but not surprising deep sentiments felt by the group about the socio-economic circumstances which, in their opinion, are exacerbated by the privileges enjoyed by the Indians in Durban and its surroundings. They refer to the Indians as an "old-age problem who should go back across the ocean or face action".

The hip-hop group apportioned blame for their economic and social circumstances to Nelson Mandela who failed to negotiate favourable terms for black people during Codesa (the Convention for a Democratic South Africa) a process that saw various parties getting together to negotiate a political future for South Africa after apartheid. In one of their verses the crew ask, "Where is this messiah, this man who sold us out in Codesa?", and they even go further to suggest that they are ready to take up their weapons to attack, and issue a call to people who feel the same to arm themselves and prepare to attack.

Durban has the largest Indian population on the African continent and the largest outside of India. The Indians were brought to South Africa in the late 19$^{th}$ Century as indentured labourers to work in sugar cane fields, established by the British colonial government in the 1860s. Together with black Africans, Indians have suffered varying degrees of racial oppression and many Indians played an important role in the anti-apartheid struggle and some occupied

positions of power in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the tension between the black Africans and Indians, particularly in Durban, and because of the fight over limited resources such as access to employment opportunities and state resources, has always defined the character of the inter-racial relationship between the two groups. As recently as 2013, a group calling themselves Mazibuye organised protest action to fight what they called slave wages paid by the Indian business community in the Phoenix industrial area. When their march turned violent members of the protesters were incarcerated facing charges ranging from illegal gathering to inciting public violence and malicious damage to property.

These violent skirmishes and similar protests around the country have become synonymous with a disgruntled citizenry who feel short-changed since the abolition of apartheid and the introduction of democratic reforms. Unfortunately, when a group of people are trapped in the cycle of poverty with no way of getting out, they tend to vent their frustration on equally powerless people who are also trying to survive. These events have not spared the government from being blamed and the ruling party has acknowledged such problems with the Provincial Secretary who is quoted as saying, "We know there are challenges of inequality within our society and we believe that the steps taken by the provincial and national government will help in dealing with these imbalance" (Mail & Guardian, 22 August 2014).

## Censoring for Change

The work done by state security agents such as Paul Erasmus and Cecile Pracher exemplifies the need to look at music as a necessary tool to positively interrogate the dominant narrative on the street also called the 'word' on the stree.

Although the music and its lyrical content may not necessarily be the dominant discourse of a particular society, by reflecting on specific conditions,

"it contributes actively to further development of those conditions" (Swingewood, 1998, p. 6).

It is this art that, according to Swingewood (1998) "is tied with a broad process of embracing ideas about national feelings" (p. 16) and it these national feelings told through the music that the dominant class should be embracing as unsolicited civic perception surveys. And because no single class should exist by dominating and excluding the actions of others (P. 14), these national feelings expressed through musical works are those of creative agents who continuously paint a picture of conflicting class interests and are concerned with the basic economic and social struggles of which the dominant class must take note.

It could be argued that analysing musical compositions created during the period of a government's term of office could answer research questions or serve as a survey which could form the basis for the government's understanding of the prevailing or dominant sentiment on social reality at the time. Therefore, these songs and videos produced by the creative agents as expressions of social reality present to the dominant class "an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey" and are necessary in understanding the dominant socio-political and economic narrative.

This transgressive approach tounderstanding society is a notional acceptance of the need to move from away from what is already known to undertake what is deemed irrational and yet obvious. Accepting a theoretical argument that music can be used as a civic perception survey to understand society means accepting that music can shed light on why society has come to think, speak ad act as it does. As Scott (1999) argues, "the real question before us is whether or not we take the vernacular voices of the popular and their modes of self-fashioning seriously, and if we do, how we think through their implications" (p. 215). Vernacular voices in this instance means the hidden local voices that, through music, articulate the daily-lived experience of a

community or society and not necessarily the use of indigenous language in rap music.

It is these vernacular voices that project their message through songs that have brought to the attention of the state or the world the plight of the marginalised people. Sometimes, much to the irritation of government, the state has had to act to either suppress these voices by banishing the artists or simply by banningsuch songs from public platforms. For instance, Pennycook (2006) argues, "the growth of aboriginal rock bands such as *Yothu Yindi,* in Australia in the 1980s, with their emphasis on politics and indigenous culture, was a significant factor in the development of indigenous land rights movements and white Australian awareness of indigenous concerns" (p. 83).

The study of popular culture is by nature an attempt to understand society and culture, and as Grossberg (1992) puts it, "popular culture is a significant and effective part of the material reality of history, effectively shaping the possibilities of our existence. It is the challenge – to understand what it means to live in a popular culture – that confronts contemporary cultural analysis" (quoted in Pennycook, 2006, p. 69). Grossberg further explains "popular culture is implicated in the multi-layered, fragmented collection of meanings, values, and ideas that we both inherit and construct and which largely define our taken-for-granted interpretations of the world" (Pennycook, 2006 p. 81).

Shusterman (2000), advances a similar argument and says,

> intellectualist critics typically fail to recognize the multi-layered and nuanced meanings of popular art either because they are turned off from the outset and unwilling to give these works the sympathetic attention needed to tease out such complexities, or more simply because they just can't understand the works in question (p. 49).

The rejection and denigration of popular culture is, according to Pennycook "largely premised on the continued elevation of some supposedly higher realm of disembodied intellectual experience, and the denigration of the embodied, affective, experiential domain" (p. 83). Undermining and rejecting popular culture as crass, simplistic or dull, may overlook the role of popular music as a site of political protest.

## The Social Sources of Rap Music: Understanding the Real

Hip-hop musical narrative best articulates the daily life struggles or aspirations of ordinary citizens who, if left to their own devices, will have their voices silenced and find it difficult to get themselves heard. Lawson (2005) argues that hip-hop speaks to the unfinished business of social justice (p. 172) and therefore overtly challenges the unfulfilled social contract between the hip-hop generation and the state as is evident in the songs of Vic V (Mr. President), Rev. Tumza (Black Man On Your Own), Reason (Selfish Politics), Slikour (Blacks are Foolz), M'du (Bab' uGovernment), Zuluboy (Crooks), just to mention a few.

If the argument is accepted that rap is the soundtrack representing the feelings of alienation of the hip-hop generation and their dissatisfaction with being excluded from socio-economic and political possibilities, then the debate should move away from whether hip-hop should be taken seriously and should to how society engage with it. The focus should be on the lyrical content of rap music that helps society understand the national narrative and take notice, if not action.

In Rose (1993) and Keys (1996) the dominant debate about what rap music is and what it is not, stems from the fact that in the main the general perception, sometimes perpetuated by media, tends to "villainize rap" (Krims, 200: 13) and to miss the underlying messages behind the obvious. There is more to the music, its message and its culture than what, in the main, is considered to be just black music and therefore black culture.

Understanding the causes of dissatisfaction expressed through rap music would require what Pennycook (2006) refers to as "pretextual, subtexual, and intertextual interpretation" where the meaning of the text is not the mere reading of the words but the context from which the words have been put together. For instance, Lawson (2005) argues, "some rap represents a fundamental challenge to liberal political philosophy" (p. 161), which must be understood as arising out of the feeling of frustration in the failure by the state to fulfil the social contract between itself and its beneficiaries.

There is a need to rethink rap and to move away from a discriminatory analysis around the meaning of rap and its lyrics. The meaning and purpose of rap and its corresponding message must be understood by adopting David Carson's (1997) attitude that people's reasons and accounts of certain events are emergent phenomenon and that they really exist (p. 169). If reality rap is defined by Krims (2000) as the articulation of real experiences of inner city life, then understanding and changing the social world is only possible, according to Roy Bhaskar (1989), if the structure of such events and the emerging discourse out of such are clearly identified (p. 2). Rap tries to articulate and dissect the day-to-day lived experiences of young people.

By analysing the realities and truths which hip-hop reveals and what Shusterman (2000) calls 'mutable but coercive facts and patterns of the material, sociohistorical world (p. 73), society will be able to understand why people behave in certain ways. Pennycook (2007) argues that "in order to develop an emancipatory social copractice, the world must be adequately interpreted, and this is best done by starting with the reasons and accounts of relevant actors in that world, whether or not their reasons and accounts seem rational, mentalistic, or irrational to those doing the interpreting" (p. 101).

Reciting rap lyrics and dancing to the hip-hop beat without a deeper understanding of what might seem to bemerely a song to dance to, may result

in society missing what is contained in the song, which Pardue (2004) argues "constitutes knowledge and legitimate perspective on reality" (p. 412).

The argument advanced here is that hip-hop expressions, articulating localreality, cannot be viewed outside the dominant discourse or the events leading to the construction of the message in a rap song. Identifying and understanding localised socio-economic and political experiences, articulated through a hip-hop narrative and specific linguistic representation, suggest that those responsible for responding to the needs of society must interrogate to what extent music is a liberatory discourse for those feeling socio-economic and political exclusion.

When Rev. Tumza's song articulates frustrations by small businesses who set up vendor stalls and have their goods confiscated by Metro Police, the discourse suggests a re-look by the public officials at how they accommodate those trading informally and trying to make a living in a high unemployment and high inflation environment. Failure to listen and act on the carefully constructed lyrics, influenced by the struggles of daily life, is paying scant regard to the reality of hip-hop lyrics and the social source of its composition.

The lyrics below depict a gloomy picture of the people caught in the cycle of poverty when the system erects trappings with no escape route in sight:

*Everyday sigijimis' ama metro police*
*Bas'thathela ama vegies*
*Bakhahlela amabhakede e-car wash*
*Bathi sival' istradi*
*Who are we gonna run to*
*Ngoba abelungu abaqashi*

The choice of language is meant to reach the multiplicity of the marginalised who suffer the same fate, hence the choice of vernacular mixed with English. This supports the argument by Pennycook that the politics of rap lyrics needs

to be understood not only in terms of the interpretable meaning of the lyrics but also in the varieties of language used.

Drawing closer attention to hip-hop speech as social action will show how important the language of hip-hop is when it used to share frustration with the system that has failed to deliver on the social contract. Failure to analyse and respond to the lyrics in music, in this instance hip-hop, could prove disastrous to the authorities who are supposed to be in touch with the constituent groups who elected them.

The chorus by Rev. Tumza below depicts a very dire situation when citizens decide to take up arms to achieve economic enrichment through armed robberies as a way of showing their dissatisfaction with government in not fulfilling their socio-economic promises.

*we go ram pa pa pa*
*k'khala umgada gada e-freewy*
*bal'thathile i-vegie*
*manje sphanda ngama AK*
*ran into an FG nge 740BM*
*ngivuke sekonakele 7:30am*
*endleleni ebuyayo thina sibomb i-ATM*
*ufunda ngathi ephepheni*
*we made headlines endabeni zango 7*

The above chorus speaks to McPherson's (2005) argument that "political rap is the soundtrack to the hip-hop generation's disaffection over being left out of the America dream" (p. 182). In this instance Rev. Tumza shares the frustration of the South African youth being left out to fend for themselves because of a system that has failed them.

Closing the social distance between the citizens and the state will require a different space of encounter, a transgressive approach to analysing and understanding music which Bhabba (1994) calls a "third space" or it requires the use of different communicative codes or what Jacquemet calls

"transidiomatic practice", as alternative space of cultural production. Transgressing from the norm in analysing and understanding society, using music and language-use as a yardstick to gauge the social temperature of a society, allows what Auzanneau calls "the social, musical and linguistic dimensions" (Penncook, 2006, p. 48) of understanding society.

If one accepts Robin D.G. Kelley's (1997) statement in his groundbreaking book, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional,* that hip-hop must be understood as a sonic force more than anything else (p. 38) whose thamping beat forces one to listen, the message accompanying should be inevitable unless one is dancing just to its sonic force. Krims (2000) suggests, that 'the existence of a song is culturally widespread and widely lived" (p. 41). This suggest that music is consumed in terms of songs and audiences think and talk of rap music in terms of the song's lyrical content and therefore can be used as a powerful tool to understand the prevailing sentiments and the general mood of a particular society.

Applying Gramsci's cultural theory, it is possible that the hip-hop "national narrative", as the "popular culture of everyday life", can become the "national popular" and begin to integrate the dominant class with young people. If, according to Swingewood (1998), "popular songs express a positive commitment to a social world different from that of official society then hip-hop could also form the basis of high culture involving a relationship between the ruling class and the youth".

The power of music and lyrics is evident in how Africa's most celebrated musician and king of Afro-beat, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, became an irritant to the Nigeria government. Remi Adekoya, writing in the Guardian Newspaper (August 2, 2012), bears testimony to the power of lyrics in the music and says: "Fela's lyrics were scathing denunciations of Nigeria's socio-economic reality. He focused on corruption, abuse of power, mental emancipation from colonialism and the need for Nigerians to stand up for their rights. He

complained that when a pauper is caught stealing, he is labelled a thief and promptly jailed. But when a minister pockets millions from state coffers, it's explained away with fancy-sounding words to bamboozle the uneducated, like 'mismanagement' and 'inquiry'".

Fela Kuti survived regular incarceration and beatings at the hands of the government who considered his music as subversive and revolutionary whilst his mother became a fatal victim of police brutality. Fela Kuti did not throw stones at government officials or detonate bombs in government buildings; he delved deeper into the soul of the nation and unleashed lyrics so unpalatable to the government of Nigeria that he became enemy number one. That is the power of music and the words contained in it.

Fela Kuti has long passed on but the woes of the Nigerian government continue. The issues that Fela wrote about in his music are still prevalent in Nigeria today. Writing in *African Political and Social Issues* (16 February 2016), Uzochukw Mike states: "Corruption is at the root of many of Nigeria's problem in totality and takes place in many forms and has infiltrated all political institutions and economic sectors". Simply put, would things have been different if the State had paid close attention to the narrative dominating Fela's composition?

The argument I am presenting here is that music could become an unsolicited civic perception survey and a necessary census tool for any incumbent government administration and should not be seen as something abstract or unreal. Frankfurt School theorists, such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, argue that cultural production attains status within the public sphere when its values are no longer serving the interests of those who create it, nor of a particular sector of society, but belong to a universal, humanist and emancipatory logic. The Frankfurt School theorists argue "culture thus comes to express values, hopes, and aspirations which run counter to the existing reality" (Swingewood, 1998, p. 41).

If one considers a national anthem as a solemn patriotic song officially adopted by a country as an expression of national identity, then music is a stimulus that spurs national consciousness in more ways than one.

Embracing music as an unsolicited survey of the prevailing social reality would need a shift in thinking about the social world which would require transforming socio-political relations between the creative element (the music) and the dominant class (government).

However, it must be pointed out that this notion of normalising social relations resulting in what Trotsky calls reductionism, might compromise the autonomy of the musicians and those who compose the messages to challenge the dominant culture and thus dilute what could have been an organic reaction to the social conditions.

If oppressive regimes, similar to the apartheid state, could employ permanent secret agents or public officials whose task was to listen to hundreds, if not thousands, of examples of recorded music that was meant to reach the public who were able to decode what was thought to be harmful and threatening challenges to the oppressive system, why is it that in democratic dispensations and liberated countries, governments aren't able to apply the same methods where music serves as an unsolicited civic perception survey that could help to understand the prevailing socio-political temperature?

Why is government not able to use cultural representation and cultural production, where the knowledge and the daily lived experiences of human life are recounted, as monitoring mechanisms of the socio-political climate, and then act?

Instead governments employ consultants at exorbitant fees to conduct a diagnosis of the country's problems when the diagnosis has already been

done, free of charge and unsolicited, by the artists who devote their time and energy to reflect on the country's socio-economic and political environment and the human condition.

Lyotard predicted this shift in the centres of knowledge when he argued that in a postmodern society the status of knowledge is altered and the legitimisation of knowledge is formulated in a different way. The dissemination of information in the post industrial or postmodern condition, using mass media, has made it possible to acquire, exploit and legitimise knowledge leading to what Lyotard (1986) calls "the erosion of the legislative role of the intellectual" and "the collapse of the grand narratives of emancipation" (p. 37).

If, as according to Georg Simmel music, is an intimate part of social reality (Etzkorn, 1973), and treating musical compositions and messages contained in it as representational forms, from which interpretation and conclusions can be drawn, it positions those composing the music as having provided, unsolicited, the social reality and the dominant discourse of the time (the civic survey). If this is true and if, according to Simmel, the meaning of music is implicated in the meaning of society and that those who create music are strongly integrated into society, then the musical creations are true expressions of the essence of their country.

There is a case for treating music as an unsolicited civic perception survey.

The ownership of knowledge, its legitimisation and dissemination is formulated in different ways – music is then one of the conduits through which a reservoir of knowledge is found about a day in the life of a society, its past, present or its future.

As Freemuse advocates:

> Music is a free expression of the ideas, traditions and emotions of individuals and of peoples. It may express musicians' hopes and aspirations, their joys and sorrows, their very identity as a culture. Yet these marginalist expressions may conflict with those in power. The ideas themselves may simply be unpopular or outside the current thinking or practices of a regime, but they contain the unenviable truth of a nation or even that to be celebrated. For there are those in the world over who are threatened by the very nature of a free exchange of ideas. There are those who will stop at nothing to stifle them. (cited from freemuse.org).

And to those who have opted not to listen to the voices of the slicenced Afeni Shakur[14] appears to be the only one who might be listening to what the youth is saying, judging from the following statement:

> I have heard enough of our youth to know that we ought to be holding them up and sharing with them what we know instead of standing on top of them telling them what they're not doing right. They're doing a lot right and some things wrong. We continue to fail these brilliant, very talented, very creative and courageous young people because they're not saying what our message was. But for Christ's sake... we're about to enter the 21st century. Something should be different. And they may be right about somethings Kitwana (2002, p. 3)

Foucault argues that, "changes should be examined more closely, without being reduced, in the name of continuity, in either abruptness or scope...it would be better to respect...differences, and even to try to grasp them in their specificity" (Smart, 1992, p. 24).

[14] Afeni Shakur is a former member of Black Panther and mother of the late and celebrated hip-hop artist, Tupac Shakur

# CHAPTER 14. CONCLUSION: BEYOND RHYME AND REASON

> *"The rapper is judged by a difference set of credentials – the ability to live up to his own verbal badness. To get down to the denominator, hip-hop has come to understand itself in the most literal terms"* (Willian Jelani Cobb)

## Voices that could not be silenced

Emerging from a long-held perception and belief that rap music and hip-hop culture as a lifestyle promote a culture of thuggery and gangsterism, I have attempted to advance the notion that rap music and the hip-hop culture play a much bigger role as an artistic expression. Hip-hop has, on behalf of disenfranchised and marginalised youth, persistently sent out messages of hope and despair, desire and aspirations, pleasure and power resistance and resilience. The controversy of speaking truth to power is what got hip-hop into the limelight. Highlighting life in the streets that touches on some of the most sensitive and difficult topics, such as life in the ghetto, substance abuse and addiction, prostitution, cocaine, gangsterism, violence and police brutality are just but some of the realities that marginalised youth have to contend with everyday.

When hip-hop had become so visible and yet so ignored, it managed to penetrated the socio-economic and political landscape in contemporary society to the extent that this popular culture it has become the voice, and a formidable force where the marginalised groups have become the mainstream voice that resonates far beyond what this art form could have ever imagined.

Also, as a lucrative pop culture, hip-hop has also created a commercial platform now able to rescue youth from relative obscurity. Hip-hop has given hope to many youths around the world that hip-hop is capable of creating and building communities, whilst creating its own cultural capital.

## Political bankruptcy in South African hip-hop?

The failure of hip-hop in South Africa in general, and Johannesburg in particular where it has a dominant voice, to utilise its dominant voice and position in mobilising and conscientizing communities about the challenges facing the country is a serious indictment against this popular and powerful culture that has dominated the airwaves and mainstream media. The absence of 'message rap' or 'conscience rap' which must adopt overt socio-political position against poverty, unemployment and inequality, is a serious cause for concern in a young democracy that is till struggling to close the gap between the have and have not's.

South African hip-hop, and that of Johannesburg in particular, is still a platform for the battle of punch line emcee, style, flow and who has the swag. The hip-hop socio-political expressions of the rapper in Johannesburg follow whatever is trending at the time, which is more commercial and tends to emulate that of American rap, except for a few pockets of emcees, with politically charged hip-hop narratives carried by a handful of rappers.

Even though "hip-hop culture, at least the political segment, speaks to the unfinished business of social justice (Lawson, 2005, p. 172), there is no significant or prominent hip-hop voice or movement that carries this narrative outside of its sound recordings to address the politics of the rich and poor, save for a handful of Cape Town rappers.

Instead the hip-hop that has taken over, and that instils no fear to the public authorities, is the one that has become the dominant soundtrack on the South African airwaves. It is now the hip-hop that has become the 'most lucrative musical form in the business' (Watkins, 2005). It bears no responsibility.

When one considers hip-hop's origin and purpose, it was a revolutionary cultural force that was intended to challenge the status quo. Today, there is a clear departure from the original tenets of hip-hop and rap music.

Much as hip-hop in South Africa has become the cultural expression of young people, it's failing to address the real reasons why rap music came into existence in the first place. Hip-hop in South Africa has drifted into the shallowest pool of poetic possibilities and has betrays the attitudes and ideals upon which it was formed. Instead, hip-hop has been merchandised.

However, this does not depart from my original theoretical framework that within the remaining marginal hip-hop voices its narrative can be used as an unsolicited yet resourceful civic perception survey. There is clear link between what hip-hop expresses as its narrative with the socio-economic and political conditions prevalent.

## Beyond hip-hop

However, it remains doubtful what will become of hip-hop and the hip-hop generation whose music and culture was shaped by the social and material conditions that gave birth to rap music. Hip-hop scholars like Asante admit that the future cannot be determined by what will become of the next generation as it is fast becoming apparent that hip-hop in its present form no longer represent the current generation's desire for radical change. There is a need to look at the period beyond hip-hop or what Asante (2008) sees as post hip-hop, which recognises this generation's ever emerging capabilities, discoveries and ideals. This requires a paradigm shift and on-going commitment to search for truth and a generation eager and brave enough to continue to challenge the status quo at the risk of commercial irrelevance.

Until then, hi-hop is showbiz, hip-hop is cultural, political, social and commercial.

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