

Spring 2014

“Bëggel sa réew :” Negotiating Contestation and Citizenship Through Hip Hop Production in Guédiawaye, Dakar

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“Bëggel sa réew¹” Negotiating Contestation and Citizenship Through Hip Hop Production in Guédiawaye, Dakar

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Africa, Senegal, Dakar and Guédiawaye

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Senegal: National Identity and the Arts,
SIT Study Abroad, Spring 2014

¹ Wolof; “Love your homeland,” the title of a song by Senegalese rap group Pat Ghetto.
Translated by Pape Aly Gueye aka Paco.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to recognize the work, advice, time, and overall encouragement of several groups and individuals that made my research possible: Gabi Bâ, my project advisor, balafon and voice teacher, and guide in my musical, ethnomusicological, and spiritual activities in Dakar; Paco, Sarenzo, Malal, and all the staff and members of Guédiawaye Hip Hop Center and Association, who welcomed me as part of the crew; Souleye Diallo, Bouna Fall, and Papis, who offered a wealth of sage advice and lent a helping hand at precisely the right moments; Mame Bineta Fall, who give me significant help with transcribing and translating rap texts in Wolof; Fatou Kandji and all others who provided me with the linguistic tools to initiate strong first impressions with those I met during fieldwork; the staff and librarians at WARC; Iana, Shai, Mariana, and Rachel, my partners in ISP mayhem; and all the members of Kër Seck that helped me feel more than welcome and comfortable during even the lightest days of work.

Abstract

Hip hop cultural production has flourished in Senegal since the early-1980s, especially in Dakar, the administrative and economic capital, since the early 1980s as both a medium of engagement with “global” flows of musical influence and a localized platform for socio-political and contestation and organization. In the past ten years, high-profile rap and hip hop personalities based in communities centered in the *banlieues* (the disfavored, often impoverished neighborhoods surrounding Dakar) have begun to realize formal structures of professionalization and education in the elements of “urban culture.” This paper focuses on research done at Guédiawaye Hip Hop Center and Association, an organization that presents an alternative to local youth’s inability to participate in formal schooling systems. In addition, the center is host to events in surrounding communities that promote values of citizenship in common with the New Type of Senegalese (NTS), an agenda put forth by the Senegalese collective of rappers and journalists Y’en a Marre. Through the rap texts and commentary of hip hop actors and musicians based at G Hip Hop, the broader city of Guédiawaye, and Dakar proper, I examine the intersections of hip hop with the ideals of local and transnational musical practices, as well as narrative links with NTS on environmental and socio-cultural levels.

Keywords: Music, Cultural Anthropology

Introduction

Hip hop cultural production has flourished in Senegal, especially in the administrative and economic capital of Dakar, as both a medium of engagement with “global” flows of musical influence and a highly localized platform for socio-political and civic contestation and organization. Rap performers often navigate “real” and “imagined” interconnectedness with local “traditional” styles of musical expression, as well as with earlier and concurrent expressive practices in various locations throughout the “Black Atlantic.” Though its development is often traced to the quarters of downtown Dakar beginning in the early 1980s, Senegalese hip hop performance has since extended to other major cities in the country, and also to the international stage. In the past ten past years, high-profile rap and hip hop personalities based in communities centered in the *banlieues* (the disfavored, often impoverished neighborhoods surrounding or absorbed by the city) have begun to realize formal structures of professionalization and education in the core elements of “urban culture,” including rap-text writing, DJing, graffiti, and breakdance.

This paper focuses on the texts and perspectives of rappers, musicians, and students associated primarily with Guédiawaye Hip Hop Center and Association (G Hip Hop), established in 2010, which functions as an alternative to local youth’s abandonment of, or inability to participate in, formal schooling systems. Not only does G Hip Hop offer vocational training for community members interested in developing professional and expressive skills based in hip hop culture and rap music, but also hosts initiatives to develop values of citizenship that align with or advance the agenda of the New Type of Senegalese (NTS), popularly voiced by the Senegalese collective of rappers and journalists, Y’en a Marre. Through the rap texts and commentary of hip hop actors and musicians based at G Hip Hop, the broader city of Guédiawaye, and Dakar

proper, I examine the intersections of individual and collective expressions of hip hop in Senegal with both the ideals of local and transnational musical practices. Furthermore, I argue that the goals of G Hip Hop as a center in forming community networks through citizenship, and by extension NTS, are reinforced and reconfigured in ways that reflect personal attitudes toward environmental and socio-cultural concerns.

Methodologies

Role of the Researcher

I began my research with the intention to investigate questions regarding the role of hip hop production and performance in the education and training of youth in Dakar in formal and informal settings, specifically within a comparative framework. As a result, I first approached Gabi Bâ, a professional musician, ethnomusicologist, and educator, as he was an ideal candidate for my advisor. In addition to having extensive experience as a music researcher and teacher while at the same time pursuing research in hip hop as a means of social change and its relations to older musical styles in Senegal, I anticipated that he would be able to give me appropriate advice for my own studies. With him, I began to design a small apprenticeship, which would include rigorous training in *balafon*² and vocal practices and performance values from “traditional” musical repertoires, and observations of his classes at the International School of Dakar (Mermoz-Sacré Coeur, Dakar) and the École Élémentaire Reine Fabiola (Mermoz, Dakar). At the same time, I contacted and met with Pape Aly Gueye (hereafter referred to as Paco), the secretary-general at the Centre/Association Guédiawaye Hip Hop (hereafter referred to as G Hip Hop), in the municipality of Guédiawaye, Dakar, more specifically located in the

² A musical instrument often attributed to musicians from the Balant and Mandinka ethnic-linguistic groups, whose members are primarily located across the region of West Africa. It is often characterized as an idiophone (a struck percussion instrument with solid keys).

neighborhood of Wakhinane Nimzath. Paco provided me with preliminary information about the organization and with contacts of the instructors there. These initial communications allowed me to enter my project period with two primary sites and populations in mind: Guédiawaye and the participants in hip hop culture there, and Gabi's sphere of students and performers. However, due to shifts I made in my research focuses, I spent much of my time in the "field" at G Hip Hop rather than with Gabi and his students.

During the "field" portion of my research period (April 12-May 2), I engaged in several site visits of varying length, location, and importance to my overall goals for my project. I made ten visits to G Hip Hop, whose open and visible spatial organization allowed me to find individuals I had organized meetings with easily, and also allowed me opportunities to interact with members of the center that I had not planned to discuss my research with, but began to build a rapport of trust and comfort with them that allowed me to become more of a part of the fabric of the center. For example, I was able to build relationships with students at the center that, although not formal "informants", gave me advice about navigating Guédiawaye and were instrumental in helping me arrange future interviews. Though I was not a consistent "student" there, I made point to register as a member at G Hip Hop on my last visit to the site during my data-collection period, due to my fairly regular presence at there, my new connections, and the lines of communication I hope to keep open with those I met.

Beyond my research in Guédiawaye or with musicians or professionals based there, I made several visits to Keur Meïssa, otherwise known as "La Maison de la Diversité Culturelle"³, located in Liberté Six Extension, Dakar, where I had my *balafon* and voice lessons with Gabi.

³ French; "The House of Cultural Diversity."

I conducted most of my secondary research during sessions at the SIT site in Point E and at the West African Research Center (WARC) in Fann. These locations provided me with several material and intellectual resources necessary for the completion of my project.

Data Collection

During my research period, I conducted fourteen formal interviews in French with seventeen individuals, all of whom were either fluent or near fluent French. Among these, two were organized as group interviews, which was conducive due to the particular participants' relationships as members of the same rap group. These interviews took place on the premises of G Hip Hop, in surrounding neighborhoods in Guédiawaye, at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Fann, Dakar, and at the Baobab Center, SICAP Baobab, Dakar. Having almost all interviews in the same general location allowed me to develop a positive rapport with those around me, even people I did not interact with for the purposes of my research. The interviews I conducted outside of Guédiawaye were planned as such because of practical issues such as time and proximity to the interviewees' living space.

Among the individuals I interviewed, six were members of the G Hip Hop staff who are also professional hip hop performers (rappers, DJs, beat-makers); one member of the G Hip Hop staff that is not a professional rap performer but identifies as a "hip hop activist"; 6 members of G Hip Hop that are either students or aspiring rap performers; professional rap performers based in Guédiawaye that are not based at G Hip Hop but associated themselves with the center; and one musician/researcher/educator outside of G Hip Hop that is currently working on recording and festival projects that incorporate the aesthetics and ideals of Senegalese hip hop with local "traditional" musics. Though somewhat limited in terms of general field of occupation, this

variety in professional demographics offered me a chance to both become more familiar with the structure of G Hip Hop and the particular roles of interviewees. I recorded all interviews but one with a TASCAM DR-40 handheld audio recorder, along with written notes.

While at G Hip Hop, I engaged in a number of “informal” sessions of participation and observation: two sessions of participant-observation and one session of observation workshops lead by DJ Leuz, the DJing instructor at the center, and a period of observation in an *écriture* (French; writing) workshop with Djily Baghdad, a local rap performer and member of Y en a Marre. I documented these occasions with written notes as opposed to audio or other electronic equipment, as I did not wish to interrupt the flow of the workshops if I arrived late.

After returning from deeper “field” situations, I transcribed select passages of my interviews allowed me to revisit the ideas of my cultural and musical informants in a very direct manner. In addition to transcription, I asked informants to give verbal or written translations of their raps or speech in Wolof during interviews and lessons. They often provided me with spoken and written texts originally delivered in Wolof, Mandinka, and Peul translated into French, several of which I have translated from French into English and included in this paper. Mame Bineta Fall, one of my language professors at SIT, subsequently translated portions of the texts, including ones that had been explained during interviews. This multi-phase process of translation allowed me to read and analyze rap texts and other speech more effectively, though certainly imperfectly, from multiple interpretative perspectives.

For my lessons with Gabi, I participated in six two-hour sessions at Keur Meïssa, during which I learned the text and balafon accompaniment to one song and the balafon accompaniment alone to three others. Three of these songs were pieces either learned or composed by my teacher during his own research as an ethnomusicologist. Under Gabi’s coaching I practiced these pieces

through repetition with the goal of memorization of the musical phenomena and my teacher's encouragement for me to internalize the "spiritual" phenomena embodied by several of the pieces. During these sessions, I was encouraged and also inspired to ask Gabi clarifying questions about either the pieces we were focusing on, his own experiences learning the same songs, or elements that shaped the performance of the pieces in context. I documented all lessons with a TASCAM DR-40 handheld audio recorder, along with written notes I took between periods of rehearsal. The recordings allowed me to return to the songs outside of lessons and to practice independently through singing along and become more familiar with the rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic material. At the end of my apprenticeship, I gave a brief performance at Keur Meïssa with Gabi and two French musicians, Annie Ploquin and Myriam, who are trained in the Western art-music canon.

As supplements to my direct communications with cultural informants, I attended three "urban culture" events that were crucial to my understanding of how hip hop- and rap-centered performance in Dakar is meaningful in multiple settings. These performances included a lengthy "underground" concert presented at G Hip Hop that featured younger local acts and more established rap groups, and two performances at the Institut Français in downtown Dakar, one of which featured artists I had already met and engaged with as part of my research. I also engaged in a limited number of sessions of focused listening to particular recordings by Senegalese and American rap performers, either as recommendations by informants or suggestions from the discographies in the work of more advanced researchers who had done fieldwork with hip hop and rap performers in Dakar.

During my secondary research, I was able to locate material book sources, online scholarly and newspaper articles, and audio-visual sources that were invaluable to developing background

knowledge and familiarity with previous research on urban cultural production, training, and education in Senegal, the United States, and in other regions of the world.

Challenges and Limitations

One of the most common challenges I faced during research was determining the availability of individuals I wished to formally interview due to their particular positions in the structure of G Hip Hop or as outspoken performers and participants in the Guédiawaye rap and hip hop community. Also, negotiating the fixedness of meetings for interviews and other research activities quickly became something I had to come to terms with, as attitudes towards punctuality initially differed greatly between my informants and me. The commute to and from Guédiawaye, in terms of both time and reliability of transportation, contributed greatly to this issue, as it somewhat limited my ability to arrive at G Hip Hop within a period that would allow me to engage in all, or even most, activities I discussed or arranged with particular individuals or groups. For example, I was occasionally invited to days at the “street conferences” organized by G Hip Hop, but found that, due to both elements of my schedule that were fixed beforehand and the postponement and rescheduling of many events, I was not available to attend most of them.

My opportunities to engage in observation and participant-observation at G Hip Hop were constrained by the fact that formal workshops at the center had only started at the beginning of the week of my research: class periods had not been solidified for fixed days and times and they sometimes did not occur despite advance planning, which limited my attendance at such occasions.

The atmospheres of particular interview locations presented me with another set of challenges. At G Hip Hop, it was occasionally difficult to conduct interviews due to aspects of

the highly interactive environment there, such as activity and discussion in close quarters and the volume of the music playing from loudspeakers on the premises. During interviews in other locations such as Baay Laye and the UCAD campus, I felt it was difficult for my informants and I to communicate at times, due to factors such as the busyness of the location (e.g., next to a fairly busy street or in a somewhat crowded dormitory) and the number of people present that wished to exchange greetings during the interview process. Such activity sometimes complicated make out particular passages from recordings of interviews, which, though initially frustrating, was something I learned to come to terms with as a facet of the field in which I was attempting to immerse myself.

I consider one of the greatest limitations of my research to be the seemingly inequitable demographic among participants along gender lines. Over my entire research period, my interview pool featured only two women versus fifteen men. I posit that this uneven participant pool could be a result of my position as a white male conducting research in a predominantly patriarchal socio-cultural framework, coupled with an initially low level of reflection on such a gendered differential throughout much of my research period. In retrospect, I find such a bias present in my own methods of recruitment, tending toward whom I already knew to be quite present as rap performers in Dakar, namely males between 18 and 40 years of age). On a smaller scale, the current locations and availability of women rap producers and performers contributed to this demographic. For example, Paco informed me that some better-known women rappers based in Guédiawaye or another of the Dakar *banlieues* were working in Western Europe during the entirety of my research and I would not necessarily have been able to reach them.

During my apprenticeship with Gabi, I was not able to practice the *balafon* patterns for the songs we were working on outside the scheduled sessions, which limited my direct engagement

with the instrument between lessons. In addition, I felt that much of the instrumental and vocal material we focused on, despite its broader historical and cultural significance, was largely unrelated to my primary research questions, thus in-depth discussion of my experiences and interactions during our one-on-one sessions is fairly limited in this paper.

The transcription and translation of particular texts, with or without written assistance by individuals I interviewed or by Mame Bineta, presented me with issues of interpretation across languages and other systems of meaning considered culturally specific. Furthermore, due to both scheduling constraints and my budget, I was not able to spend significant time engaging in supplemental language training during the independent study period, which limited my ability to independently translate most texts from the language or languages in which they were performed directly to English without first going through French as an intermediary.

Though I could have done more secondary research in the library at G Hip Hop, I was often engaged in interviews and participant-observation while on the premises and thus could not take full advantage of the material resources it offered. In addition, background information on the creation of the center came almost exclusively from interviews with staff and members, which may have favored particular biases in terms of attitudes toward entities involved in the funding of facilities and past and current projects. Seeking the perspectives of more individuals that were not necessarily attached to the organization might have provided me with a more balanced view of formal structures for hip hop production and how urban listeners engage with local rap recordings and performances.

Historical, Cultural, and Theoretical Context

The “Birth” of Hip Hop

In order to understand the ways of expression, value and transmission of current hip hop production and performance in Dakar, one must first consider the “birth” of the musical and cultural form within its “own complex history of upheaval and social change” (Appert 2012:53). Common narratives of hip hop’s chronology place it as developing in the Bronx, New York, as a “form of expression for disillusioned minority youth coping with U.S. postindustrial urbanity” in the 1970s and early 1980s. Such a movement, or set of movements, is positioned as descending from structures of enslavement, rebellion, and migration that involved primarily African American, Caribbean, and other Afro-diasporic communities (Appert 2012:53). Young musicians began to repurpose the “older” technology of turntables (record players), in order to isolate or “sample” passages of pre-existing material, particularly from American soul and disco recordings, a cornerstone of the “global” hip hop aesthetic (Herson 2011:29). By the 1980s and early-1990s, artists in the movement became increasingly engaged in the critique of local realities and national systems of power and oppression, considered as “musical remnants of the civil rights struggle” (Appert 2012:26).

With the input of several early actors, hip hop was initially idealized as consisting of at least four “elements”: rapping or “MCing”, DJing, graffiti writing, and breakdancing, and an all-compassing category known as “connaissance” or “knowledge” (Camara, personal interview). This platform for subversive expression, attributed largely to marginalized youth voices in American cities into mainstream consciousness, saw its influence mobilizing artists elsewhere, most notably on the opposite side of the Atlantic.

Rise of the Dakar Hip Hop Scene

Recent scholarship places the beginnings of hip hop in Dakar, and Senegal in general, in 1984, with the growing interest in and practice of breakdancing, taking after the “dance craze from New York City” (Herson 2011:27). However, participation in hip hop cultural production began to shift, as many dancers transitioned to writing rap texts in the 1990s (Camara, personal interview). Due to an “année blanche”⁴ in 1988, many high school and university students, primarily young men, suddenly had a wealth of free time on their hands (Gueye, personal interview; Herson 2011:28). Around this time, youth living primarily in neighborhoods such as the SICAP quarters, were some of the first to gain access to rap and hip hop media from the U.S. and France in the forms of cassettes and VHS tapes brought home by relatives and friends from abroad. In 1989, government-supported and private radio stations became “liberalized” and thus more accessible across socio-economic gaps, and occasionally featured segments of exclusively early American rap (Herson 2012:29). This increase in public availability of rap led to the formation of hip hop crews on a mass scale, currently estimated at 5000 (Appert 12:49).

The earliest rap performers in Dakar often reproduced English-language texts, choosing to imitate the flow (verbal cadence) and words of widely popular “old-school” hip hop songs from the U.S. (*Democracy in Dakar*). Fans and participants have expressed entering into hip hop through American groups such as Public Enemy, KRS-One, and Dead Prez (Camara, personal interview). Following the 1991 release of “Sama yaay”⁵ by Mbacké Dioum, considered “le premier track...hip hop au Sénégal”⁶, groups such as Positive Black Soul (PBS), comprised of members DJ Awadi and Duggy-Tee, are credited with bringing “rap into the public sphere in

⁴ According to Diouf (1996), an *année blanche* (French; “blank/invalid year”) refers to “an academic year that has not officially been completed...owing to strikes and the resulting insufficiency of completed school hours” (226).

⁵ Wolof; “My mother.”

⁶ French; “the first hip hop recording released in Senegal.”

Senegal as well as to international audiences” (Camara, personal interview; Appert 2012:44). Though “founding” groups in Senegalese rap often performed in French and did not often touch on pressing social or political issues through the early-1990s, subsequent collectives such as Rap’Adio and Wa BMG 44 began to present songs with predominantly Wolof lyrics and more “conscious” themes associated with the “hardcore” style, allowing a much broader demographic, including youth and those with limited formal education, to participate in the movement. By the mid- to late-1990s, the sonic and visual presence of rap and hip hop previously centered in quarters considered part of “Dakar proper” or “downtown” began to extend significantly to the *banlieues*, surrounding neighborhoods, often impoverished, that were and are shaped by the detrimental effects of “urban sprawl, overpopulation, and poorly planned communities” (Appert 2012:46; Herson 2011:27). The advent of such a change in performance and spatial trends in Dakar thereafter marked Senegalese hip hop or “Rap Galsen”⁷ as a body of musical, textual, and personal forces that reach populations in areas or socio-economic positions that are recognized as marginal.

The turn of the 21st century marked an escalation in audible and visible engagement of Senegalese rappers, especially those based in Dakar, in important political occasions. The 2000 elections featured rappers’ mobilization of young voters to support candidate Abdoulaye Wade, an event that marked the first change of political party since national independence in 1960 (Appert 2012:52). This outcome “promut le mouvement rap au rang d’actor de la vie politique et sociale de première importance...”⁸ (Moulard-Kouka 2008:11). In early 2011, however, growing discontent with the new President’s ability to remedy high unemployment and frequent power outages prompted the formation of Y’en a Marre (French; “fed up”), a collective of rappers and

⁷ An inversion of “Sene-gal” to create “Galsen” (Appert 2012:44).

⁸ French; “promoted the hip hop movement to the rank of political and social actor of the highest importance.”

journalists with the goal of becoming more directly involved with countering the negative effects of Wade's administration from a grass-roots level. Just as important was the agenda to instill in the public the concept of the *Nouvelle type de Sénégalais*⁹ (NTS), ideals for a citizen who not only is registered to vote but also takes care of one's neighborhood through cleaning up garbage and promoting the well being of the community (Appert 2012:102). The group's founder's devised plans of action centered around "urban guerrilla poetry," the recital of short poems with the goal of spontaneity, which Gueye further describes in the following:

[Y'en a Marre] produced violent lyrics and distributed them to artist members whose mission was to use stereos and play the songs in public areas. They also improvised concerts across major cities in order to awaken the masses. When Wade's government banned peaceful demonstrations, rap musicians hopped on buses singing and distributing flyers. The texts served as hideouts from the riot police and constituted "unruly" places beyond Wade's reach..." (2013:27).

The relative unpredictability and emotional impact of these demonstrations gave Y'en a Marre a platform from which to spread political and musical discourse that would create significant opposition to the current administration while simultaneously raising widespread awareness of the public's civic responsibilities. When Wade voiced his intentions to run for a third term, his young angered opponents staged M23, a movement in protest of his candidacy on June 23, 2011, during which several members of Y'en a Marre "faced imprisonment and harassment at the hands of the state" (Appert 2012:52). Despite the current low profile of Y'en a Marre, its members are still active in a variety of projects, not the least of which is the development of G Hip Hop.

Aside from Y'en a Marre, the advent of the *Journal Télévisé Rappé* (JTR), a hip hop-based news media program begun in the spring of 2013 by "old-school" rappers Xuman and Keyti, presents another step in the ways hip hop has entered mainstream public consciousness.

⁹ French; "New Type of Senegalese." I will use the English translation and the acronym throughout this paper.

According to Hackel (2013), this medium has “further legitimized the hip-hop movement, Internet technology, music, critical journalism, and tenacity as a vehicle for Senegalese empowerment and advancement” (38). Aside from its draw as a perspective of local and international current events that features commentary in both French and Wolof, the JTR also potentially functions as a resource of relevant information and entertainment Senegalese abroad (Hackel 2013:35).

Due to the preferences of transcontinental audiences, not all hip hop performers in Senegal are able to reap the benefits of the globalized music industry. “rap ragga soul” style exemplified by groups such as Daara J often “address international or Pan-African themes,” which diverges significantly from the principal goals of artists that follow the model of Bat’haillons Blin-D or other “hardcore” acts (Herson 2011:33). Such contrasts within the Senegalese hip hop scene can determine the overseas success of particular performers such as PBS who, favoring English and French in their texts (both considered languages of international communication), are more likely to reach a wider audience outside of Senegal. This reality continues to limit the incomes of hardcore rappers in Dakar, whose recordings do not often reach beyond national or regional markets due to minimal exports to “countries with money” (Herson 2011:33).

Local Influences and Interconnections

In current ethnomusicological research and public discourse, there are several perspectives that emphasize connections between hip hop production and other localized expressive forms, most prominently *griot*¹⁰ practices in West Africa. Appert considers both categories as “invented” in that “they comprise discursively codified sets of cultural practices that are invoked

¹⁰ Refers to members of hereditary socio-occupational groups in several cultural groups throughout West Africa that historically specialize as praise-singers, musicians, genealogists, historians, and social commentators (Appert 2012:24).

as history and that are distinguished from the evolving, flexible manifestations of these same cultural practices in the present” (2012:12). Such a distinction can be attributed in part to colonialism, where the French introduced and reproduced the word *griot* as a universal term, despite the prevalence of local ethnonyms (e.g., *gëwël*, in reference to Wolof *griots*). By the same token, “hip hop culture”, though an extremely dynamic body of practices and philosophies, continues to be framed in academic and mainstream settings by the original four elements.

Much of the discourse surrounding relationships between *griot* practices and rap specifically in Senegal stems for perceived associations to *taasu*, a predominant speech genre among Wolof griots described by Appert both as “the rhythmic chanting of topical rhymes or social commentary over the steady beat of a large, multi-layered sabar drum ensemble” and as “the often lewd a capella chanting of female *gëwël* over clapped accompaniment” (2012:90). For example, certain rappers, especially those who perform internationally, suggest *taasu* as the possible foundation of contemporary hip hop performance in both the U.S. and in Senegal, highlighting similar ideals in the cadence of speech delivered over a variety of rhythmic material (Appert 2012:90). However, others critique such a proposition as “false” and identify themselves specifically as hip hoppers. Despite these contrasting narratives, it is clear that highlighting or rejecting such mythologized genealogies helps define how Senegalese rappers view their roles as musicians and social actors.

To a lesser extent, certain musicians have drawn parallels between contemporary Senegalese and “global” rap aesthetics and a musical-poetic genre called *raas*, the songs of which are attributed by Sow and Angell to nomadic populations from the Peul ethnic-linguistic group living and moving throughout Senegal and often function as entertainment (1993:61). Texts that comprise *raas* focus on themes of “praise, parody, and humor”, accompanied by the *hoddu*

(plucked lute) and are historically sung only by males, but of all “castes” (Sow and Angell 1993:62, 75). Gabi Bâ, my advisor and a working music researcher, has spent time studying *raas* texts and melodies in Fuuta Toro (a northern region of Senegal), where he began to learn and analyze particular songs that have been performed since the 18th and 19th centuries (Bâ, personal interview). Here, he began to recognize similarities between the abilities of certain texts to critique and contest elements of society such as religious devotion, and the verbal and otherwise sonic power to which much rap music produced in Senegal lays claim. However, an analysis of *raas*'s influence on creative and expressive decisions by hip hoppers on a larger scale has not yet been attempted, so perspectives on “real” or “imagined” links between these modes of performance are fairly limited.

Africulturban Association

Prior to the founding of G Hip Hop, there was already a precedent for institutions promoting “urban culture” in the Dakar *banlieues* in the form of Africulturban Association. Located in the Léopold Sédar Senghor Cultural Complex in Pikine, a municipality bordering Guédiawaye, Africulturban was established in 2006 by Bobacar Niang, aka Matador, a rap and slam-poet performer from the suburb of Thiaroye, who was led to realize such a project due to “the difficulties faced in Dakarois suburbs, the existence of a large, socially conscious hip-hop movement, and the lack of formal infrastructures for young urban actors” (Slajda 2012:13). The primary initiatives of the institution include Festa2H, a multi-sited festival highlighting performers and artists from several countries and regions, funded largely by entites abroad (Slajda 2012:18). In addition, Hip Hop Academy, Africulturban’s umbrella structure for professional and educational development, works not only to develop local “urban culture” in

terms of creativity, but also to establish “hip-hop as a professional, economically viable industry” (Slajda 2012:19). Such motivation to educate aspiring hip hop practitioners in an increasingly professional setting carries over as a significant element of G Hip Hop’s mission.

Theoretical Context

In this section, I will briefly elaborate on two texts that either reflect the analytical goals of my research or have contributed significant insight to topics I will explore in this paper. The first work, Catherine Appert’s dissertation, *Modernity, Remixed: Music as Memory in Rap Galsen* (2012), based on extensive fieldwork in Dakar. This work provides an in-depth exploration of historical, political, and musical conversations and significations among the practices and perspectives of rap performers based in Dakar and Senegal, pre-existing systems of hip hop cultural production in the United States, and “traditional” and popular musics local to Senegal. Appert presents her analysis within a framework of intertextuality, “a process through which two (or more) texts derive meaning from their interdependent relationship to each other” (2012:14). The texts in question are the musical, verbal, and narrative practices of young Senegalese hip hop performers who alternately associate with and reject particular “myths” that link their own expression with that of others in the Afro-diasporic network theorized by Berliner as the “Black Atlantic.” Appert implements a “hip hop aesthetic of layering” in order to present the stories and invented meanings that rappers create for themselves, deny outright, or struggle to reconcile.

Through an investigation of transatlantic flows of people and musical-cultural capital, Appert situates Senegalese hip hop as a site of “aural palimpsest,” as “different forms of global connection are overlaid” (2012:58-59). Such flows result in an almost infinite variety of personal connections to various “traditional” and “globalized” forms of performance, especially as perceptions of what is tradition and modernity shift depending on such factors and generational

differences, religious affiliations, and experiences of the effects of French colonialism and enslavement.

The entire breadth of topics discussed in this work, including a reflection on how researchers should approach ethnography of urban popular music, goes far beyond the thrust of my project. However, Appert's particular approach to contextualizing West African *griot* practice, *mbalax* (an urban Senegalese popular music), and early American hip hop cultural production offers a useful way to pursue research involving "international" and "underground" hip hop actors without artificially fixing their experiences to a single place and trajectory.

Another highly important resource for understanding the implications of Senegalese hip hop performance beyond my localized study is Maramé Gueye's article entitled "Urban Guerrilla Poetry" (2013), is a small-scale study that examines three songs composed and performed by members of Y'en a Marre from 2011 to 2012. Through this analysis, the researcher unpacks the lyrics of the songs "Faux! Pas Forcé"¹¹, "Daas Fanaanal"¹², and "Doggali"¹³, described as "manifestos that employ a culturally grounded oral narrative" (Gueye 2013:23). Gueye provides a model for approaching a small number of Senegalese rap texts while retaining their performative force by including commentary by the creators of the songs, the chronology of relevant events during the election period that were concurrent with the song's releases, and reflections on broader cultural values. Through this investigation, she reveals how Y'en a Marre's agenda is embedded in the words they use, in addition to other poetic features that potentially elucidate or enhance their meanings.

One of the principal ideas presented here is the assertion that "African hip hop can create social change beyond the aesthetic space of enunciation" (Gueye 2013:23). This claim that

¹¹ French; "Don't! Push" or "Fake! Forced step" (Gueye 2013:23).

¹² Wolof; "Sharpening one's weapon the night before" (Gueye 2013:23).

¹³ Wolof; "Finishing up a killing" (Gueye 2013:23).

situates Gueye as not only speaking for the power of a few texts in very specific socio-political occasions, but argues for such a perspective to include the broader scene of hip hop actors on the continent or in diaspora that can utilize their own songs for similar kinds of projects.

Furthermore, her embrace of Karin Barber's conception of texts, whether spoken, written, sounded, or shown, as "social facts," as well as "commentaries upon, and interpretations of, social facts" (Gueye 2013:23; quoted from Barber 2007:5). With this thrust in mind, Gueye dissects each song's lyrical content as calls to action as well as well-positioned forms of reaction, all within Y'en a Marre's own concept of "urban guerrilla poetry."

Throughout, Gueye engages Y'en a Marre's "violent narratives" with the group's dual mission of ousting Wade and "creating a New Type of Senegalese (NTS)" at the forefront (2013:24). She presents NTS through the eyes of the collective as "a citizen who claims his or her rights but also understands his or her civic duty" (Gueye 2013:28). Such a citizen would be registered to vote and would spend considerable time reflecting on whom to support as candidates. However, due to the narrow historical focus of the article, Gueye's definition of NTS does not extend much further than described above. Since she privileges the opinions of Y'en a Marre over those of other activists musicians participating in the movement, we cannot fully appreciate how the "social facts" that comprise the group's agenda are commented on and interpreted by non-members. One element of my analysis of the texts shared with me during my field research is to examine how the songs of rappers in Guédiawaye relate to their personal experiences with and idealizations of NTS values.

Overview of G Hip Hop

Guédiawaye Hip Hop Center and Association¹⁴ is located in the *foyer* (French; “gathering place”) of Wakhinane Nimzath, an area of the neighborhood where community members, students, and Guédiawaye municipal figures often meet to discuss issues of importance (M. Talla, personal interview). Currently, the center is administrated and overseen by the following individuals:

Malal Talla (aka Fou Malade): President

Malick Sarr (aka Sarenzo): Vice president

Pape Aly Gueye (aka Paco): Director-at-large/Secretary general

David Kete: Treasurer

Mame Bousso Mbaye: Project manager/Assistant

Raoul Mendy: Organization manager

Fatou Kiné Diop: Communications manager

Dominique Goudiaby: Security

Pape Mamadou Camara: Manager of professional training and activities (“L’équipe”).

According to a number of staff members at G Hip Hop, discussions for the planning of a hip hop-based center in Guédiawaye began after the reconciliation of a feud between local rap groups Bat’haillons Blin-D, of which Malal is a member, and B.One.X., of which Sarenzo is a member (M. Talla, personal interview). In 2010, the two collectives, along with several other local hip hop actors, gathered to discuss ideas concerning the mission of such an association and the processes for eliciting monetary and material support. Initially, the nascent organization set out to raise funds for the costs of recording studios, an initiative that was intended to support the careers of aspiring performers (M. Talla, personal interview). The leaders of the project also wished to put in place an association that would be modeled the professionalization and education strategies put forth by Africulturban Association (Gueye, personal interview). Outside funding, construction efforts, and other materials for the completion of the current site were

¹⁴ Staff members at G Hip Hop have formally referred to the organization as both “un centre” (French; “center”) and “une association” (French; “association”), so I have included both here.

provided by the Ministère de la Culture, the Ministère de la Formation Professionnelle, l'Office National pour la Formation Professionnelle, le Centre Polyvalent d'Animation et de Formation, EIFFAGE Sénégal, and the U.S. Embassy (Gueye, personal interview; M. Talla, personal interview).

The current facilities at G Hip Hop include the administrative office, the *salle de formation* (French; “training room”) a performance stage, a combined library and *salle d'exposition* (French; “showroom”), a recording studio, and an on-site restaurant (Gueye, personal interview). The library’s collection contains several books, magazines, and pamphlets in French and English, focusing mainly on the history of and precedents to hip hop, radical politics, and fictional works by Senegalese authors. Audio and video recordings of local rap performers, as well as graffiti pieces by local visual artists, are on display for sale and access by members and visitors alike. Most of the center’s exterior walls feature graffiti murals created by local graffiti collective Misérables Crew (Camara, personal interview). Among these images are portraits celebrated West African revolutionary figures, as well as expressions, phrases, and proverbs drawn from Wolof, French, and English that reflect the goals and motivations of the organization.

The center’s primary activity consists of free-of-charge workshops, a structure that officially began in April 2014. Courses are currently offered in the following “urban culture” domains: DJing (taught by DJ Leuz), beat-making (taught by Ismaïla Talla), *écriture* (taught by Djily Baghdad), graffiti, and breakdance. Upon registration at G Hip Hop, students may pursue one sole course of training (ten hours a week for three months), after which they receive a *diplôme de formation professionnelle*, a certificate of vocational qualification officially recognized by the state (Gueye, personal interview).

Beyond the structures of training that G Hip Hop offers and continues to develop, the administration has collaboration with students and other members to launch a long-term project, Foire Civico-Hip Hop, currently funded by the European Union through the Programme d'Appui aux Acteurs Non Étatiques du Sénégal¹⁵, whose mission, according to Malal Talla aka Fou Malade, current President of G Hip Hop, is as follows: “appuyer les actions qui visent à développer une population responsabilisée et civique¹⁶” (Gueye, personal interview; Drame 2014; adminRTZ 2014). The project’s fundamental thrust is to demonstrate the potential for hip hop cultural production as a “levier de la citoyenneté¹⁷” (Gueye, personal interview). According to Mame Bousso Mbaye, manager of the project, the culminating fair is expected to span eight days in December 2014, and is projected to include such activities as the “animation des quartiers par le rap, la danse, le djing...disposition de corbeilles dans les arbres par les populations pour accueillir les déchets¹⁸” (Drame 2014). In remaining months before the fair, G Hip Hop plans to realize smaller projects in the surrounding community. One such event was the first phase of “Represent Wakhinane: *N̄o ko moom*¹⁹,” held during March 1-2, 2014, which included a series of activities and demonstrations intend to engage community members in sessions of “nettoyage” (French; “cleaning”) and short performances by local rap artists (Camara 2014; Drame 2014).

In addition to the established workshops and the Foire/Caravane Civico-Hip-Hop events, the center produces bi-weekly concerts located on the premises, almost exclusively on Saturday

¹⁵ French; “Program of Support for Non-Static Actors in Senegal.”

¹⁶ French; “to support actions that seek to develop a responsible civic population.”

¹⁷ French; “lever for citizenship.”

¹⁸ French; “animation of surrounding neighborhoods with rap, dance, and DJing events...attachment of garbage cans to trees for waste disposal.”

¹⁹ Wolof; “It concerns us.”

nights, which feature both local performers from the banlieues that consider themselves “underground” and also more established groups on a national level.

Findings and Analysis

In carrying out my research, I attempted to investigate the following: how informants conceive of Senegalese hip hop in relation to other local or non-local musical styles, how hip hop as a form of education and training benefits the youth demographic in Dakar and Guédiawaye, and how the actors of and structures put forth by G Hip Hop engage in this discourse. In this section, I will present excerpts from rap texts shared by informants, accompanied by commentary and other contextual information drawn from interviews, and my own analytical points. The “incompleteness” of these texts as full songs results in part from the relative lack of specificity of questions I used to ask for such information, and from constraints on the part of either interviewees or myself.

In the first subsection, I will explore how informants situate rap and hip hop in Senegal vis-à-vis other forms of culturally or personally significant local and transnational musical styles. In the second subsection, I will discuss how anecdotes, values, and themes explained by informants and presented in their songs help to shape a particular model for the New Type of Senegalese (NTS), a concept of local and national citizenship. All transcriptions and translations in English are my own. All other translations are my own except where noted. All French translations of texts in Wolof are included in the appendix except where noted.

Signifying “Rap sénégalais”

During interviews, I attempted to gather perspectives on how rappers and other musicians conceive of relationships between hip hop production in Senegal and other modes of

performance. However, questions I asked regarding said relationships often came across as unclear, despite reformulations on the spot. Despite this challenge in communication, I found that a few of my informants did draw meaningful connections between rap performance and verbal exchanges among Senegalese *lutteurs* (French; wrestlers). Fou Malade claimed that one of the *lutteurs*' "façon de parler"²⁰, referred to as *bakku*, resembles an American and now Senegalese category of hip hop expression known as "ego-tripping," whereby rappers challenge an invisible opponent, often another rapper, with a series of self-aggrandizing statements (M. Talla, personal interview). During the one concert that I attended at G Hip Hop during my research, Ismaïla Talla, the rapper whose group was the last to perform, ended with a performance that featured a parody of Senegalese *lutteurs*, with an instrumental track seemingly drawn from sabar percussion rhythms that are almost always present at *lutte* matches. When asked about the song during our second interview, Ismaïla confirmed this speculation while also alluding to similarities among verbal practices of rappers and *lutte* competitors, even giving an example of "ego-tripping" that might be heard from a *lutteur* at a match: "Yekini bi niy coow, daan naa ko benn yoon"²¹ (I. Talla, personal interview). After words, he elaborated on the utterance, saying "c'est une façon de...faire gloire à soi-même quoi. Ça existe, ça fait partie de la tradition africaine"²² (I. Talla, personal interview).

In addition to connections made between verbal characteristics exhibited by rappers on a "global" scale and *lutteurs* on a local scale, two of my informants expressed familiarity and varying degrees of alignment with *taasu* and *raas*, both local "traditional" verbal genres situated

²⁰ French; "way of speaking."

²¹ Wolof; "The famous Yekini, I took him down once." Transcribed in Wolof by Mame Bineta Fall and translated into French by Ismaïla Talla and Mame Bineta Fall. French translation not included in Appendix B. To clarify Ismaïla did not use the term *bakku* as Fou Malade had, though their descriptions of the phenomenon were similar.

²² French; "It's a way to...glorify oneself. It's part of the African tradition."

within Senegal. Fou Malade explained that he had heard “*taasu wolof, taasu peul, taasu mandingue,*” and often utilized beats derived from “*rythmes traditionaux*” to accompany his original texts (Talla, personal interview).

During my second-to-last *balafon* lesson, Gabi introduced me to a composition of his entitled “*Jigeen naa gën*” (Wolof/Bambara; “*Women mother source*”). This piece is accompanied by a *balafon* pattern that functions as a foundational beat or “*sample*” in the American, and now Senegalese, rap aesthetic. While explaining his initial impressions of rap, whether produced locally or not, he said “[Le rap] m’a envoyé vers le raas chez les Peuls, m’a envoyé vers le taasu chez les Wolof²³” (Bâ, personal interview). Furthermore, he refers to this composition as an example of “*rap traditionnel*” (French; “*traditional rap*”), a style of composition and performance he explains as an imagined continuation of the ideals of both *taasu* and *raas* in terms of “*traditional*” instrumental accompaniment and socially conscious subject matter.

“*Jigeen naa gën*”²⁴ by Gabi Bâ (Wolof/Bambara and English; transcribed into Wolof alphabet from Gabi Bâ’s initial transcription in French phonetics):

<i>Jigeen naa gën</i> <i>Maa nel jigeeen naa gën</i>	<i>Woman mother source</i> <i>I said woman mother source</i>
<i>Jigeeen bu mel ni Datté Yala</i> <i>Jigeeen naa gën</i>	<i>Woman that resembles Datté Yalla in spirit</i> <i>Woman mother source</i>
<i>Jiguen bu mel ni Yaa Ashanté WA</i> <i>Jigeeen naa gën</i>	<i>Woman that resembles Yaa Ashanté Wa in spirit</i> <i>Woman mother source</i>
<i>Jiguen bu mel ni Citoé Diatta</i> <i>Jigeeen naa gën</i>	<i>Woman that resembles Citoé Diatta in spirit</i> <i>Woman mother source</i>
<i>Jigeeen, jigeeen yi jiiité Afrik</i> <i>Jigeeen, jigeeen yi jiiité Asie</i>	<i>Women, the women who take charge in Africa</i> <i>Women, the women who take charge in Asie</i>
<i>Jigeeen, jigeeen yi jiiité Europe</i> <i>Jigeeen, jigeeen yi jiiité Amerik</i>	<i>Women, the women who take charge in Europe</i> <i>Women, the women who take charge in America</i>

²³ French; “Rap reminded me of *raas* among the Peul, reminded me of *taasu* among the Wolof.”

²⁴ According to Gabi, *naa* is a Bambara equivalent for “*mama*” or “*mother*.”

“Jigeen naa gën” pays homage to Gabi’s own mother and female relatives through the use of metaphor and simile vis-à-vis women of great historical importance in the Western Sahel region, and to women in contemporary societies around the world that are motivated to be leaders. Gabi emphasized that Datté Yala, Yaa Ashanté WA, and Citoé Diatta were women who held positions of military and civil power of authority in various regions of West Africa (Bâ, Lesson 5).²⁵ They have been mythologized as figures of “contestation,” one of the major connections he makes between his inspiration for composing the piece and those of contemporary rappers that seek to engage with political, social, historical, or otherwise cultural issues. In addition, this context of homage is reinforced by Gueye’s (2013) discussion of verbal tropes in the song “Faux! Pas Forcé” by Y’en a Marre, a denouncement of the constitutional amendments President Abdoulaye Wade intended to submit to the Assemblée Nationale. The researcher argues that patterns of lyrical repetition found in the text are adapted from Wolof *griot* (*gëwël*) praise songs: “[Repetition] is used in panegyric forms where a praise singer wants to bear witness and acknowledge the presence or deeds of the addressee” (Gueye 2013:29). According to her analysis, several repetitions of the word “jigeen,” as well as the line “Jigeen naa gën,” potentially index high respect for the woman or women being praised or described.

Gabi’s engagement of hip-hop ideals in instrumental accompaniment and textual characteristics loosely attributed to *taasu* and *raas* reflects a mode of creativity, even experimentation, that obscures the position of rap as “appropriated” from or “indigenous” to Senegal and Senegalese musicians. However, the emphasis on contestation in both “Jigeen naa gën” and “Faux! Pas Forcé” seems to have helped solidify motivation for composing within a rap generic framework that has been reworked and critiqued countless times since at least the late-

²⁵ For example, Gabi explained to me that Datté Yala, a woman living in Dagana in the Waalo Empire (part of present-day Senegal) around the 19th century, was instrumental as the head of a group of women engaging in combat with forces from what is now Mauritania (Bâ, Lesson 5).

1980s in Senegal. In addition, the lyrics of the song call attention to figures that are located outside of Senegal, even outside Africa, contrary to much “hardcore” rap produced by Senegalese performers (Herson 2011:33). Whether “Jigeen naa gën” relates more to Rap Galsen or to an “international hip hop” aesthetic, the perceived and expressed thrust of the song presents an interpretation of the genre that potentially reworks the contexts in which musicians based in Dakar perform rap texts that comment on acts and sentiments of subversion.

Aside from discussions surrounding localized relationships between rap and other musical styles, there was an expressed impact from performers in American hip hop and pop. Big Mama, the only women rapper currently participating in the *écriture* course of study at G Hip Hop²⁶, described her primary influences such: “Le plus souvent c’est les artistes à l’extérieur qui m’inspirent...Nikki Minaj...Beyonce...je les aiment bien²⁷” (Big Mama, personal interview). When asked about how they have influenced her, Big Mama expressed that “Elles n’ont pas peur de tout...Je les voient comme les femmes fortes²⁸” (Big Mama, personal interview). This perspective comes across in parts of “Soldier Girl,” the rap she shared with me:

“Soldier Girl (excerpt 1)” by Big Mama

*I’m a big soldier girl, I’m a bigger soldier girl
You say you big soldier girl I’m a bigger soldier girl
I’m called a hustla hustla [...] hustla hustla
Like a wrestla wrestla only hustla hustla*

The inspiration from American artists Big Mama described can be seen in the use of exclusively English-language lyrics in this verse, as well as the use of the signifier “hustla,” which has

²⁶ Despite this demographic, I observed a significant number of younger female students participating in the breakdance workshops.

²⁷ French; “Most often it is artists from the outside that inspire me...Nikki Minaj...Beyonce...I like them a lot.”

²⁸ French; “They aren’t scared of anything...I view them as strong women.”

been adapted as a by a number of other Senegalese women rappers, such as Toussa, who's use of "gangsta" symbolic language, popularly attributed to African American masculine rap performers, allows for artistic license, rather than negative critique of Senegalese or African American women hip-hop performers (Neff 2013:25). However, the appearance of the term "wrestla" potentially alludes to the lutteurs that, in Senegalese popular culture, represent a highly visible form of masculinity. The challenge and self-comparison to force of such figures carries over into the second verse from "Soldier Girl" that Big Mama shared.

"Soldier Girl (excerpt 2)" by Big Mama (Wolof and French; Original text transcribed by Mame Bineta Fall)

<i>Laaj ko samay poing</i> <i>Sama mbir la, amul coin</i> <i>Dama pare duma kuy agg terre</i> <i>Dama koy ñakante ak goor ñi</i> <i>Duma des ginaaw</i> <i>Teewul dama saf girl</i> <i>Foo lamb daj ginaaw</i> <i>Ba ci kanam</i>	<i>Ask them for my fists</i> <i>That's my business, there are no corners</i> <i>I'm ready, I won't touch the ground</i> <i>I match myself against men</i> <i>And I won't be behind</i> <i>Doesn't prevent me from being a true girl</i> <i>A girl in every sense of the word</i> <i>See you later</i>
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Here, Big Mama alludes to her strength, which is equal to or greater than men's, while asserting that that such a characteristic does not prevent from embodying girl- or womanhood "in every sense of the word," contests Appert's assertion that "in terms of lyrical content, imagery, and gendered participation, the freedom of expression that hip hop provides youth is thus one that is still largely limited by local cultural and religious norms" (2012:109). Though only one example of such a challenge, Big Mama's performance of "Soldier Girl" challenges dominant local ideas of binary gender roles while, simultaneously (if implicitly) referencing her American musical and personal influences in her choice of linguistic code and terminology.

G Hip Hop, Citizenship, and the New Type of Senegalese

Though the first examples of texts and perspectives on Senegalese hip hop displayed here begin to demonstrate certain manifestations of contestation and challenge local societal norms, it was with several other artists located at our around G Hip Hop, who presented texts that engage even more closely with the mission of the center, as well as the philosophy of the New Type of Senegalese (NTS). According to Gueye, Fou Malade, member of Y'en a Marre and President of G Hip Hop, defines NTS as “a citizen who claims his/her rights and is aware of his/her civic responsibilities” (2013:24). Djily Baghdad, another member, offered an example in regard to the implementation of NTS, drawing on the organization of Y'en a Marre's public demonstrations: “Dans toutes nos manifestations, on dit, ‘après la manifestation, on veut que le lieu soit plus propre qu'on l'avait trouvé avant. Après la manif, il y avait beaucoup de jeunes Y'en a Marre qui ont des sacs-poubelles. Ils nettoient²⁹” (Djily Baghdad, personal interview). Such actions present, as well as encourage, the idea of a young citizen that is mindful of their environment and is willing to take the steps necessary to care for it. In addition, Djily elaborated on Y'en a Marre's “concerts pédagogiques” (French; “pedagogical concerts”), consisting of intermittent rap performances and speeches by community members who wish to comment on “des problèmes des localités³⁰” (Djily Baghdad, personal interview). Such projects mirror G Hip Hop's *dox ndaje* (Wolof; “street conferences”), days of garbage collecting, music, talks on literacy, and otherwise community engagement in Wakhinane Nimzath. This likeness further situates the association as a bastion for the development of youth citizenship in Guédiawaye, specifically among youth.

²⁹ French; “In all our demonstrations, we say, ‘after the demonstration, we want the place to be cleaner than we found it.’ After the demonstration, there were many young members of Y'en a Marre with garbage bags. They clean.”

³⁰ French; “local problems.”

Paco, the Director-at-Large of G Hip Hop, as well as member of the rap crew Pat Ghetto, presents a case for the organization as a proponent of the kind environmental citizenship described by Djily through his perspective on the role of rap in civic society as “un outil d’émancipation, d’éducation, et aussi un levier pour le changement social³¹” (Gueye, personal interview). When I asked him to describe the motivations for youth growing up in the banlieues to begin participating in rap and hip hop, Paco explained, “Étant des jeunes du ghetto, des jeunes des banlieues, on qualifiait cela de quelque chose, en faite, d’indécent³²” (Gueye, personal interview). In order to denounce this stigma, community members, especially youth, began to express themselves through hip hop, already positioned as a medium of contestation in an American context. In addition, such critique might lead rappers and other participants in hip hop in the banlieues to join G Hip Hop where, through educational and civil engagement, members attempt to “sortir une bonne image [de les banlieues dakaroises]³³” and counter stereotypes held by many Senegalese living in downtown Dakar and in other cities in the country (Sarr and Mendy, personal interview). In terms of Paco’s own musical participation in this endeavor, his group Pat Ghetto has written and produced “Bëggel sa réew” (Wolof; “Love your homeland), a track from their forthcoming album that demonstrates the sense of unity and responsibility that G Hip Hop enacts through its *dox ndaje* and implicit promotion of NTS, emphasizing quasi-patriotic language in order to comment on the benefits, even necessity, of community-building, all within in a rap-music framework.

“Bëggel sa réew (excerpt)” by Pat Ghetto (Wolof and English; original text transcribed by Mame Bineta Fall)

³¹ French: “a tool for emancipation, education, and also a lever for social change.”

³² French; “Being youth from the ghetto, from the suburbs: one considers this something indecent.”

³³ French; “to promote a good image [of the banlieues].”

<p><i>Li nepp bokk nanu ko samm Bu nu ko defee nu am jamm Teggi jeego am ndamm Reew mi siggi ci bepp fann Li menta ñakk nu fexe am ko Ndaw yi bayyi waliyaani</i></p> <p><i>Bëggel sa réew fonkal sa réew, Nu jox la li nga moom Waaye, bëggoo sa réew, fonkoo sa réew, Kenn du la jox li nga moom Fonkal sa réew Nu jox la li nga moom Waaye gëmoo sa réew, fonkoo sa réew, Kenn du la jox li nga moom</i></p>	<p><i>Let's try to keep the good of the community If we do it, we will have peace We will make advances that will let us triumph Peace will rear itself in every aspect of life Let's try to have at least the bare minimum So our children can stop searching elsewhere</i></p> <p><i>Love your homeland, respect your homeland And you will receive your rights But if you don't love or respect your homeland No one will give you what belongs to you Respect your homeland and you will receive your rights But if you don't believe in or respect it No one will give you what's yours</i></p>
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Though references to one's country or "homeland" (réew) and what approximately translates as one's "rights," Paco and his co-rapper Damel allude to the more political facets of citizenship, which represent the more familiar aspects of NTS such as the responsibility to vote and accountability of government officials. However, due to Paco's emphasis on the importance of dox ndaje and nettoyage as pillars of G Hip Hop's presence in Guédiawaye, the "love" that Pat Ghetto commands its audience to express seems to include environmental elements of civic participation as well, and almost functions as an anthem for both the association and future generations of conscious rappers located in the banlieues and elsewhere in Senegal.

Beyond "Bëggel sa réew," there are younger groups I encountered at G Hip Hop that take a different approach to targeting perceived social ills from the overtly political agendas voiced in many Senegalese rap texts, especially those by Y'en a Marre. Stanky Muzik, a four-member rap collective based in Guédiawaye, identified one of their principal group philosophies as a Wolof

phrase, “gëmunu leen,” translated by member Mbeuss as “on ne vous croit pas³⁴”, in reference to “les politiques” (French; politicians) (Stanky Muzik, personal interview). Formed in 2012, the collective describes its aesthetic as “la musique qui pue³⁵”, further elaborated on by founding member Niklass as such: “Personne ne veut sentir quelque chose qui pue [...] parler des choses que les gens parlent en douce³⁶” (Stanky Muzik, personal interview). From this point of view, Stanky Muzik may not align themselves with the political agenda of Y’en a Marre, but offer a set of voices that contest the silencing of youth in Guédiawaye and elsewhere in the banlieues, which advances the brand of citizenship promoted by G Hip Hop.

Adia Faye aka Jah Rhymes, a female rapper based in Gounass, Guédiawaye and friend of several staff and other members of G Hip Hop, offered commentary on both the organization and how she fits her musical perspective into the fabric of her community. When she began as a performer in 2011, Jah Rhymes noted a near absence of female performers in the movement: “Pour moi, c’était interdit pour les filles de faire le hip hop parce que je voyais pas de filles. Il y avait Sista Fa...elle a sortie un album. Après, elle est allée en Europe, en France et tout. Ben, sinon, je voyais pas de filles, jusqu’à maintenant³⁷” (Faye, personal interview). When asked about the benefits of the training and education in hip hop production put forth by G Hip Hop, Jah Rhymes explained,

Pour les jeunes, surtout les jeunes de la banlieue... très tôt on ne veut aller à l’école [...] et on voit beaucoup de jeunes qui s’intéressent au hip hop et tout, venir dans un centre comme G Hip Hop apprendre, même si c’est pas pour devenir rappeur [...] tu es dans la banlieue, il y a de...de n’importe quoi dans la

³⁴ French; “We don’t believe (in) you.”

³⁵ French; “Music that stinks.”

³⁶ French; “No one wants to smell something that stinks [...] speak about things that others whisper about.”

³⁷ French; “To me, it was forbidden for girls to do hip hop because I didn’t see any girls. There was Sista Fa...she released an album. After, she went to Europe, to France and all. In any case, I haven’t seen any girls, until now.”

banlieue. Mais venez dans les centres comme G Hip Hop pour...apprendre ta culture. On t'éduque³⁸ (Faye, personal interview).

Jah Rhymes presents here an extremely important contextualization for the mission of G Hip Hop here, making references to the realities of youth leaving school at an early age for a variety of reasons, including insufficient finances, lack of motivation, and even juvenile imprisonment. According to Paco and other members of the association staff, they stressed countless times one of their defining purposes, “une alternative à l'échec scolaire³⁹” (Gueye, personal interview). This sentiment, echoed in Jah Rhymes' assertion that G Hip Hop can educate youth in their own culture, specifically hip hop culture, positions the center as not only a place of learning but one that is well-equipped to reinsert individuals into society with both a set of creative and marketable skills and a consciousness shaped by regular engagement in projects such as Represent Wakhinane that work to raise awareness of local issues through service, graffiti art, and street-corner concerts.

When I invited her to describe the themes she wrote most about in her work, Jah Rhymes stated, “Moi je suis féministe alors...le plus souvent je parle aux filles⁴⁰”, a position she embraces in complex ways in “Hey gël” (Wolof/English: “Hey Girl), her second single, from which she shared a verse (Faye, personal interview).

“Hey gël (excerpt)” by Jah Rhymes (Wolof and English; original text transcribed by Mame Bineta Fall)

³⁸ French; “Among the youth, especially in the suburb...early on one no longer wants to go to school [...] and we see many youth who're interested in hip hop, come to a center like G Hip Hop to learn, even if it's not to become a rapper [...] you're in the suburbs, there's...whatever in the suburbs. But come to the centers like G Hip Hop in order to learn your culture. We'll teach you.”

³⁹ French; “an alternative to academic failure.”

⁴⁰ French; “I'm a feminist so...most often I speak to girls.”

<i>Gël yi gëmunu lenn, all time moom lay degg Gël yi gëmunu lenn, ñeexa time, ñeexa dëgg Tuuma yi sunu kaw, lu ci ëpp doon dëgg Fok nga taamu ñi ngay andal, te rañee li nga bëgg</i>	<i>Girls don't believe in anything, that's all I hear Girls don't believe in anything, they're sexually loose What we are reproached for is true most of the time We must choose friends wisely and know what we want</i>
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In an explanation of this text during our interview, she said, “Les gars ne respectent pas les filles qui sont dans le hip hop⁴¹,” as young female enthusiasts, even if not pursuing rap or one of the other elements as a practice. This comment acknowledges and critiques the marginalization of female hip hop participants on both local and global levels, a powerful statement that potentially contests male prevalence in many prominent hip hop scenes around the world. However, Jah Rhymes seems to direct much of her critique towards girls who are targeted rather than the male performers who disrespect them. In further explaining the verse, she said, “Il y a les filles qui sont toujours derrière des gars, de trainer de gauche à droite⁴²,” expressing dissatisfaction for the way she perceives the engagement of young women with male hip hop actors.

Jah Rhymes’ particular configuration of feminism demonstrates a form of didacticism that seems to be present in a text shared with me by Ismaïla Talla a professional rapper, university law student, and current instructor in beat-making at G Hip Hop. In the rap he shared with me, entitled « Xale » (Wolof; “child”), he comments extensively on the roles of parents in the education of their children.⁴³ Not only do the lyrics present an assertive position on how youth can be damaged by family problems ample following the first verse as performed in the recording studio at G Hip Hop, featured a passage from Bob Marley’s composition “Babylon System” where the Marley exclaims, “Tell the children the truth.” Such a choice for

⁴¹ French; “Guys don’t respect girls who are into hip hop.”

⁴² French; “There are girls always following guys left and right.”

⁴³ The original Wolof text, as well as English and French translations, are included in the appendix.

accompaniment to the rap not only reflects the NTS value of “knowing one’s rights and responsibilities,” but also providing them with what Ismaïla situates as a culturally appropriate education across generations.

Though their commentaries do not necessarily consider the audience’s reception or expressed need of such advice, Jah Rhymes and Ismaïla’s texts reinforce the goals of G Hip Hop and the local performers that associate with it intend to provide verbally transmitted models of behavior for youth located in the banlieues, but reference the ideals of NTS as discussed by Djily Baghdad and other members of Y’en a Marre.

Conclusion

As much as ethnographic research seeks to arrive at the “essence” of certain aspects of cultural production, such an approach to Senegalese hip hop proves more difficult. A multifaceted, multivalent set of styles and significations that performers situate within several levels of “local” and “global” meaning, this expression of genre as a vehicle of contestation for youth and other marginalized populations presents several viewpoints to represent in opposition and in connection to one another. Through my consideration of numerous texts and perspectives of members of G Hip Hop and other musicians, I have attempted to examine the agenda of the New Type of Senegalese initially promoted by socio-political and musical collective Y’en a Marre, assumed and advanced by the center in community-based ventures of “investissement humain” and in the words of local rappers. Though Y’en a Marre’s primary goals for NTS were to imbue Senegalese citizens with consciousness of their rights and responsibilities and mobilize the youth or effectively disenfranchised vote, my engagement with hip hop actors in Guédiawaye and my advisor and teacher Gabi Bâ have demonstrated that rap performance as a form of critique also exploits environmental and socio-cultural conditions of individual and, ultimately,

communal importance. Furthermore, as G Hip Hop gains members and clout as a deeply invested community center dedicated to transforming neighborhoods through technical training in hip hop performance and gestures of civic responsibility, it develops the potential to influence behaviors and musical practices that comprise a burgeoning national citizenship.

Recommendations for Further Research

Though I was able to gather and consider a range of information and perspectives regarding hip hop production, citizenship, and education primarily in the context of Guédiawaye and Dakar, I would encourage future researchers in music and/or social science disciplines to investigate similar topics and questions in other cities and regions in Senegal such as Thiès, Saint-Louis, or Kaolack, where there are burgeoning hip hop communities. I would also encourage further study of how women rappers and students of hip hop across the world embrace particular aspects of citizenship and/or negotiate gendered expectations through texts and verbal performance, as there seem to be significant gaps in literature on and public consideration of these questions, especially in non-American contexts.

Appendix: Selected Transcriptions and Intermediary Translations of Rap Texts

“Jigeen naa gën” by Gabi Bâ, French translation (Translated by Gabi Bâ):

Femme mama source

Je dis que femme mama source

Femme qui ressemble à Datté Yalla

Femme mama source

Femme qui ressemble à Yaa Ashanté WA

Femme mama source

Femme qui ressemble à Citoé Diatta

Femme mama source

Femme, les femmes qui veulent prendre le pouvoir en Afrique

Femme, les femmes qui veulent prendre le pouvoir en Asie

Femme, les femmes qui veulent prendre le pouvoir en Europe

Femme, les femmes qui veulent prendre le pouvoir en Amériq

“Soldier Girl (excerpt 2)”, French translation (Translated by Big Mama and Mame Bineta Fall)

Demande-lui mes points

Ce sont mes affaires, il n’y a pas de coins

Je suis prête, je ne toucherai pas le sol

Je me mesure aux hommes

Et je ne serai pas derrière

En plus ça ne m’empêche pas d’être une vraie fille

Une fille au sens plein du terme

“Bëggel sa réew (excerpt)” by Pat Ghetto, French translation (Translated by Paco and Mame Bineta Fall)

Essayons de sauvegarder les biens de la communauté

Si nous le faisons, nous aurons la paix

Nous ferons des avancées qui mèneront à la victoire

Le paix s’élèvera dans tous les domaines

Essayons d’avoir le stricte nécessaire

Pour que nos enfants arrêtent de tout chercher ailleurs

Aime ta patrie

*Respecte ta patrie , et tu recevras ce qui t'appartient
 Mais si tu n'aime pas ta patrie, tu ne respecte pas ta patrie
 Personne ne te donnera ce qui est à toi.
 Respecte ta patrie et tu recevras ce qui t'appartient
 Mais si tu ne crois pas en ton pays, tu ne respecte pas ton pays,
 Personne ne te donnera ce qui est à toi.*

“Hey gël” by Jah Rhymes, French translation (Translated by Jah Rhymes and Mame Bineta Fall)

*Les filles ne croient en rien, c'est ce que j'entends tout le temps
 Les filles ne croient en rien, elles sont faciles à baiser
 C'est ce que les gens nous reprochent, la plupart du temps c'est vrai
 Il faut qu'on choisisse nos fréquentations et que nous sachons ce que nous voulons*

<p><i>Nit ba muy gone nga ka wara yar ci dëgg bañ ko gëdd Du lepp li mu bëgg nga topp ko ci meme bu dul dëgg Ci wax bu sedd, woo ko ni sa xarit , di ko yedd</i></p>	<p><i>When they're young a person must be well-raised in the truth and must not be bullied One must not accept everything they desire if it's not truthful Speak to them calmly, treat them like a friend, give them advice</i></p>
<p><i>Faiblessu waajur day feeñ ci doom Nanga bayyi xel ci moom mel ni ku deñc koom Def ci jom Aka bari nu mu jota romb Jikko ju bon day taal boroom</i></p>	<p><i>The parents' weakness appears in the child Pay attention to them like you do with your money Act with perseverance That not many have Bad behavior harms those who exhibit it</i></p>
<p><i>Nii seen doom di naan Nii seen doom di toq Nii seen doom bar lañuy fanaan ba fajar ñu jog Di fass ak fecci sëy Baña wax ci di xëy Problemu famiy fées te sa dooma ci féey Sa orgueil bi nga def ci moom Doon nit ku rey , ñakk jom</i></p>	<p><i>Some have a child who is a drunk Others have a child who is a drug user Others have a child that spends every night in bars Others still that marry and get divorced And refuse to work So family problems appear In which your son will swim In whom you have instilled your pride And he has become vain and without shame</i></p>
<p><i>Lu mu gis abbLu mu gis lebb Fu nekk la koy yobbu Ku ko gis mën ko kepp</i></p>	<p><i>They who borrow everything they see Can bring their child anywhere Everyone can take advantage of them</i></p>

“Xale (excerpt)” by Ismaïla Talla (Wolof and English; original text transcribed by Mame Bineta Fall)

“Xale (excerpt)” by Ismaïla Talla, French translation (Translated by Ismaïla Talla and Mame Bineta Fall)

C'est quand elle est très jeune qu'une personne doit être bien élevée dans la vérité et elle ne doit pas être brimée.

Et on ne doit pas accepter tout ce qu'elle désire si ce n'est pas dans la vérité

Parle lui calmement, traite le en ami, donne lui des conseils

La faiblesse des parents apparait chez l'enfant

Prête attention à lui comme on le ferait pour garder ses économies

Agis avec la persévérance

Que beaucoup n'ont pas

Le mauvais comportement enflamme la personne qui le fait

Pour certains leur enfant est un ivrogne

Pour d'autres leur enfant est un drogué

Pour d'autres leur enfant passe toute les nuits dans les bars

D'autres encore se marient et divorcent

Et refusent de travailler

Alors les problèmes familiaux apparaissent

Dans les quels ton fils va nager

A qui tu as inculqué de l'orgueil

Et il est devenu un vaniteux et sans vergogne

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