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## Introduction

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*Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa: Ni Wakati* critically examines the ways in which hip hop intersects with society and politics in Africa. On one hand, it is an examination hip hop's commentary on society and politics. On the other, it reveals hip hop's influence on social and political change. Globally, hip hop artists have been important agents for social change, directly impacting shifts in behavior and attitudes toward social institutions and traditions. Social change often involves serious critique of religious institutions (women's education in Islam, corruption in the Church), cultural practices (the role of elders in the community, female genital cutting), and class structures (income inequality, the treatment of the underclass). African hip hop artists are integral to these critiques, which are increasingly occurring on both a local and global level. Through hip hop, music, and culture, artists engage their communities in a variety of ways, using coded language and symbols to inform, question, and challenge, and confront established social structures. Through lyrical expression, dance, and graffiti, hip hop is used to challenge social inequality and to push for social change. According to Andreanna Clay, "hip hop music often acts as a base for social protest among today's youth" (Clay 2012, "Hip Hop for the Soul: Kickin' Reality in the Local Scene," para. 6). The study contributes to conversations around hip hop and social change in both hip hop studies and African studies by presenting case studies of hip hop artists engaged in social change throughout Africa.

African hip hop artists have engaged in calls for social change throughout Africa, through their music, as well as through work with grassroots and civil society organizations. These artists have added an important presence to calls for and discussions around important political policies and challenges to oppressive social structures. The volume seeks to go beyond an examination of the sounds of hip hop, or the popularity of hip hop, and seeks to consider the active role hip hop is playing in important changes taking place on the ground in Africa. It argues that artists in Africa are using hip hop to confront social structures in a manner that shows the complexity of African culture, the entanglements between local and global movements, and the synergy of youth mobilization.



The book is inspired in part by the 2010 documentary film, *Ni Wakati*, by Kenyan filmmakers Michael Wanguhu and Russell Kenya. The film depicts the interconnected influences that have impacted hip hop in Kenya, Tanzania, and the United States. The film portrays a connection and awareness between global hip hop exchanges and ideas. More importantly, it reveals the energy that is created when conscious hip hop in America and Africa converge. The film features artist Kama of Kalamashaka, who authored the afterword for this book, as well as other East African hip hop artists. The film portrays the power of hip hop music and culture in affecting social change. This focus, as well as the works of many of the artists in the film, influenced this book project on hip hop and social change in Africa. The documentary addresses the relationship between hip hop and social change, in addition, it also provokingly narrates the struggles and importance of conscious hip hop music as the film declares itself to be about "those who are born revolutionaries passing on the torch to upcoming revolutionaries" (Wanguhu 2010). These agents of social change that are featured in the film include artists, scholars and activists from the United States and East Africa.

In an interview depicted in the film, Geronimo Ji Jaga says that, "There is no blueprint for revolutions" (Wanguhu 2010). Geronimo speaks to the unstructured nature of revolutionary change, while the film itself speaks to the important relationship between revolution and time. This relationship refers to the crucial moment in any movement when patience gives way to urgency, and the idea of "it is time" becomes the force behind the revolution. The powerful moment in which those that want change decide to consciously and collectively take a stand is rooted in an awareness that has much to do with time. With these dynamics serving as a foundation, this book centers on African hip hop around the context of "it's time" for change. Time is a very important piece of any discussion of hip hop and revolution, especially as it relates to Africa. For this study the idea of time is expressed in the title of the volume with the Swahili phrase, "ni wakati" (it is time), which aims to explain the importance of the present moment to take action.

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 revolution are ingrained in hip hop culture, wherever you find it. A rebellion against the establishment, a protest against current conditions, and participation in revolutionary change are all important aspects of hip hop culture. Hip hop culture is explained by Ginwright and Cammarota (2002), "progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities for social change" (p. 91). The interpretations of these voices are important and deserve scholarly attention. In Andreana Clay's (2012) book, *The Hip Hop Generation Fights Back*, the author argues that hip hop often plays a key role in the formation of an individual's political consciousness, which

allows that individual to mobilize around movements for social change (2012). Hip hop culture in Africa contains many of the same dynamics which are depicted by some of the contributors in this volume. The globalization of hip hop in Africa ties African hip hop to global hip hop culture, ideas of Pan Africanism, and to local cultural and political realities. African emcees operate within hip hop culture, often adopt Pan African outlooks, and represent local realities. The term "glocal" refers to cultures/worldviews that emerge as a result of the blending of local and global forces. The term is popular in studies of globalization, and the migration of peoples and cultures, including the spread of hip hop culture globally (Govers and Go 2009; Alim and Pennycook 2007; Torkington 2012; Mose 2013). According to Caroline Mose (2013) glocalization is the local (Kenyan) appropriation of global (hip hop) culture in a manner that produces a Kenyan hip hop community that is both local and global.

As a voice for the youth—often in poor, urban communities—hip hop is at times raw, emotional, and angry in its beats and in its lyrics. In addition to fomenting dissent, it often acts as a form of emotional release and it offers a cathartic experience for artists and fans that embrace the culture. According to Imani Perry:

Hip hop nourishes by offering community membership that entails a body of cultural knowledge, yet it also nourishes by offering a counter-hegemonic authority and subjectivity to the force of white supremacy in American culture in the form of the MC. (Perry 2004, "My mic sound nice: Art, community, and consciousness," para. 18)

## HIP HOP'S ROOTS

There continue to be debates regarding hip hop's roots in Africa, as well as whether or not African participation in hip hop is a continuation of those roots or African youth merely imitating American culture. While these debates should not be ignored, the place of hip hop (and other Diaspora music) in a cycle of black music, with roots in Africa has been established, first by scholars of U.S. hip hop and later by scholars of African hip hop (Rose 1994; Keyes 1996; Osumare 2001; Perry 2004; Cobb 2007; Asante, Jr., 2008; Kidula 2012; Shonekan 2012). Re-presenting all of the specific evidence presented by these scholars does not need to be outlined here. The sources cited in this text provide significant resource material to begin further research on the topic, with additional sources that can be referenced as well. These scholars have often discussed how African American, African, Caribbean, and Latin American influences converged in the development of hip hop. Indeed, the African roots of hip hop, reggae, soca, samba, jazz, and blues have been addressed by numerous scholars. Cheryl Keyes's 1996 article "Rap Music and Its African Nexus" cites several sources that trace the origins of black music



in the Diaspora to West and Central Africa. Keyes's seminal piece goes on to discuss the African origins of black music in the Diaspora.

The discussion of whether or not African emcees represent a further evolution of black music or are simply imitating American culture is important. The debate is muddled by the presence of pop artists in Africa, who often incorporate elements of hip hop in their music and perform imitations of commercialized American music. Nonetheless, there is a definite connection with the foundations of hip hop culture and its representation of the black underclass within hip hop in Africa. With hip hop workshops and summits held regularly all over Africa; youth reinforce connections with past and current developments in global hip hop. Many African youth involved in hip hop culture are familiar with the history of hip hop, and many blend local and regional sounds into their music. In *Prophets of the Hood*, Imani Perry (2004) says, "the African aesthetic origins of hip hop, as well as all black American music, allows for it to have a shared resonance among a wide range of diasporic and continental Africans" ("Hip hop's Mama: Originalism and Identity in the Music," para. 20). This Pan African view of black music recognizes the distinctive connections African's have with hip hop and its popular use as a form of social protest across Africa.

Hip hop's relationship with Africa is both historical and contemporary. It is historical in that hip hop is a product of African culture, and it is rooted in musical traditions that can be traced back to Africa and the Caribbean. For example, the traditions of call and response and rhythmic poetry are found in many African cultures and are some of the influences enslaved Africans took with them to the Americas. They would later play a role in the evolution of black music in the United States, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. In a contemporary context, Africans connect with hip hop's roots as a voice of the disenfranchised. Emerging from the world of the 1970s South Bronx, New York City, hip hop was used as a conduit for expressing the frustrations of poor black and Latino youth. There are in fact many parallels between the experiences of black and Latino youth of the 1970s and 1980s in New York and the experiences of youth in the 1980s and 1990s in many major African cities. The genre was quickly molded into what Chuck D of the hip hop group Public Enemy has called the "Black CNN" (Haaken, Wallin-Ruschman, & Patange 2012). The comment was in recognition of hip hop's reflections of youth realities in urban, inner-city America.

There is also recognition of hip hop's deep connection to "the struggle." Born in the wake of the Black Power, civil rights, and the Black Arts movements, hip hop was deeply connected to traditions of protest in the African American community. Regarding the Black Arts movement, hip hop pioneer Afrika Bambaata and conscious emcee Mos Def (aka Yasiin Bey) are quoted as referring to the Black Arts movement, which was in many ways the soundtrack of the Black Power movement, as an impor-

tant ancestor for hip hop (Smethurst, 2006). Several American and African hip hop artists have evoked the images and words of revolutionaries such as Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Fred Hampton, the Soledad Brothers, and members of the Black Panther Party. In talking about these links in his book, *It's Bigger Than Hip Hop*, M.K. Asante Jr. (2008) says, "the force that created Malcolm (X) was the same force that created hip hop" (p. 20). Asante goes on to provide a timeline of events between 1965 and 1991 that impacted hip hop. Many of these events are rooted in the struggles of black people in both the United States and Africa.

Hip hop's early foundation as a powerful tool for social protest and social commentary attracted African youth. Many were moved by hip hop's roots in the protests of the black underclass in America. African hip hop groups emerged, and many were inspired to express hip hop culture from African perspectives, thus indigenizing and localizing hip hop to be their voice for social protest.

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. Hip hop's arrival across Africa occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, during times of important social, political and economic changes in many countries. Apartheid was coming to an end in South Africa, schools were on strike in Senegal, economic liberalization was happening in Tanzania, moves toward multi-party politics were occurring in Kenya, and young boys were being turned into child soldiers in Sierra Leone. Each of these countries is studied in this volume, and in each the youth turned to hip hop, the latest expression of black culture that was spreading in popularity across Africa.

#### EARLY CALLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The 1980s and 1990s were decades in which governments in Africa initiated many economic and political changes. Governments across the continent implemented market-oriented economic reforms that led to rapid privatization and the abolishment of government-run social service programs. The policies were implemented at the behest of international financial institutions. African countries became test cases for future failed structural adjustment programs (SAPs). In Giordano Sivini's work *Resistance to Modernization in Africa* (2007), the author details poorly conceived development plans that were implemented by international financial institutions in Africa with little regard to local populations. These SAPs resulted in the destruction of "the modern institutional system that was laboriously constructed during the sixties and seventies" (Sivini 2007, 10). The results were increased rates of unemployment, increased urbanization due to unemployment, increased wealth and income gaps,



and lowered social indicators across the continent (Lugalla 1997; Konda-Agyemang 2000; Sivini 2007; Masabo 2012).

Rising poverty across Africa created increased migratory flows to both urban areas and destinations outside Africa. The 1980s saw marked increases in rural to urban migration flows (Bouare 2006). These rates of urbanization were especially high in countries like Cameroon, Gabon, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa (Bouare 2006). Many of these countries currently have urbanization levels of over 50 percent. The youth in Africa were among the most impacted by these SAPs; many flooded into towns looking for employment and found crowded cities, poverty, crime, and few resources. Other young people migrated out of Africa. Many turned to Europe, but the 1980s also saw jumps in African migration to the United States, with many African migrants landing in New York City and Washington, DC (Clark 2009). These two decades of change coincided with, and influenced, the arrival of hip hop throughout much of Africa (Ntarangwi 2010; Fenn 2012; Schulz 2012). Indeed, it would be the economic and political turmoil of the 1980s that would aid the spread and popularity of hip hop. As young people moved to the cities, and as the youth in these cities sought an outlet for the frustrations caused by poverty, many turned to hip hop.

Meanwhile, the migrants that left Africa would influence the trajectory of hip hop in Africa by sending hip hop cassette tapes and magazines home where urban youth would absorb and study the new sounds and trends. Eric Charry's introduction to his 2012 edited volume *Hip Hop Africa* details how African migrants in Europe and the United States were largely responsible for spreading hip hop in their home countries. Many of these migrants would also return home and help shape local hip hop scenes.

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. Hip hop music and culture, however, became indigenized and politicized in Africa. In some countries, like South Africa, it contributed to the actual mobilization of youth around certain social and political issues. Through this politicization of the youth, many young Africans were involved in the social and political changes occurring in Africa. Local hip hop communities were relating to, and influenced by, the hard-hitting political messages of American groups like Public Enemy, Eric B. & Rakim, and Boogie Down Productions. At the same time, American hip hop groups like Stetsasonic, Afrika Bambaataa & the Zulu Nation, and X-Clan frequently utilized African imagery and symbols in their music. There was even a South African chapter of the Zulu Nation established in Mitchells Plain, a colored community in Cape Town, South Africa (Watkins 2000). Much of this resonated with youth across Africa.

Early hip hop groups addressed the social, political and economic realities on the ground, often linking them to broader discussions of power, race, and economics. Many were artists who had a degree of political education around the implications of the economic (and political) changes happening in Africa at the time. Many were also aware of broader connections across Africa and the Diaspora. Prophets of Da City (POC), Black Noise, and others challenged apartheid in South Africa throughout the late 1980s until apartheid's end. Hip hop's South African origins are with the Coloured communities of the Cape Flats area of Cape Town. In these communities hip hop artists (emcees, b-boys, and graffiti artists) confronted apartheid through their lyrics, dance, and through subversive messages spray painted on walls (Watkins 2000). POC saw and supported a link between hip hop and black consciousness (Brown 2003). Between 1990 and 1997 POC released six albums containing songs that were critical of both apartheid and the post-apartheid government. Their 1991 song "Ons Stem" (our voice), off of the album *Boomstyle*, targeted the apartheid government in South Africa. With their 1993 album *Age of Truth*, POC recorded political tracks such as "United We Stand," "Power to Da People," "Remember Where You Came From," "African Very African," and "Township Dwella." In Senegal the group Positive Black Soul (PBS) released five albums between 1994 and 1997: *Boul Falé*, *Salaam*, *Daw Thiow*, *Wakh Feign*, and *New York-Paris-Dakar*. PBS also emerged with politically charged tracks, espousing a decidedly Pan African identity on tracks like "Respect the Nubians" in 1992. Throughout the 1990s, PBS criticized the neoliberal policies that led to the school closures, unemployment, and poor housing. In the tradition of famed Senegalese filmmaker Ousman Sembene, PBS creatively used their art and culture to target corrupt post-colonial leaders who were more businessmen than leaders, with songs like "Le bourreau est noir" (the executioner is black) and "Président d'Afrique" (president of Africa) in 1995.

Many hip hop artists in Africa had not yet released full-length albums by the 1990s, making the number of albums actually released by POC and PBS during that period substantial. In Kenya, Kalamashaka released the politically charged song "Tafsiri Hii" (translate this) in 1997. Their first album *Ni Wakati* was released later, in 2001. "Tafsiri Hii" depicts conditions in the Dandora slums where members of Kalamashaka come from. Kalamashaka established themselves as a politically conscious group early on. Member Kama has noted the group being influenced by both the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya as well as the Black Power movement in the United States (Ferrari 2007). In Tanzania, a group of solo emcees united to form Kwanza Unit. Coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, the group became more politicized with each of their three albums released between 1994 and 1999: *Kwanza Unit*, *Tropical Techniques*, and *Kwanzanians*. Kwanza Unit's song "Msafiri" (traveler) off of their 1999 album *Kwanzanians* addressed many of the social concerns the



group felt were facing Tanzania. Other countries in Africa saw the emergence of politicized hip hop songs in the early years of the 2000s. Two important examples include Malawi's Real Elements song "Afrikan Star" released in 2001 and Angola's Das Primeiro's song "Liberdade" in 2002.

This first generation of emcees in Africa often set the tone for future artists coming to the scene. Their confrontations of social and political systems inspired future emcees to do the same. The first-generation of emcees in Africa also tested governments' responses to challenges to their authority, facing resistance and censorship. The next generation of emcees brought even stronger calls for social change and challenges to the establishment.

### RENEWED PUSHES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The 2000s have witnessed renewed activism in Africa in reaction to government repression, the continuation of failed neoliberal economic policies, and the resulting increases in poverty. With advances in both technology and communication, activists and hip hop artists are able to communicate across the continent. Artists are seeing the connections between their own social and economic conditions to those in other African countries. The trend is reminiscent of the 1950s when Africans studying abroad would realize the connections between the struggles across the continent and in the Diaspora when meeting fellow African and Caribbean students in London, Paris, and Lisbon. As a result of these recent connections African hip hop artists have begun to express a stronger global black identity, expressed in their music, through collaborations with other African hip hop artists, and in the veneration through music of African leaders from across Africa.

In Madagascar several hip hop artists have adopted "Makoa" identities (Boyer-Rossol this volume). "Makoa" is an "Afro-Malagasy" ethnic identity linked to the descendants of enslaved East Africans who were brought to Madagascar in the 1700s and 1800s (Schrive and Gueunier 1992; Boyer-Rossol 2014). Klara Boyer-Rossol's piece on Malagasy hip hop detailed artists adopting a black identity and embracing the attached social stigmas due to perceived connections with broader African and Diaspora communities. In Mali and Burkina Faso several artists, namely Smocky, Faso Kombat, Baloukou, and Les Escrocs, have sung about African unity and Pan Africanism (Künzler 2011). In the song "Tenk You" the Ghanaian hip hop group Fokn Bois recognizes African and African American leaders and activists in lyrics that mention Harriett Tubman, Nat Turner, Marcus Garvey, Steve Biko, Patrice Lumumba, and others. The song is part of the soundtrack for the group's 2010 film *Coz ov Moni*. Senegalese hip hop pioneer and activist Didier Awadi's 2010 album *Présidents d'Afrique* was dedicated to past African leaders. On the album,

Awadi uses the words of leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Thomas Sankara in an attempt to both signal a need to reform current social systems in Africa and as an acknowledgment of a passing of the torch from one generation to the next. Songs on the album feature duets with artists from all over Africa and the Diaspora. Songs include "Amandla" (Xhosa and Zulu: power), "The Roots," "Freedom," "We Must Unite," "Uhuru" (Swahili for "freedom"), and "Racisme."

Midway through the 2000s Africa experienced increases in strikes, protests, marches, and rebellions all over the continent, from the Arab Spring in North Africa, to South African workers' strikes, to Senegal's political protests. These demonstrations have been organized in the wake of severe poverty, housing inadequacies, and cuts in public services due to neoliberal economic policies that African governments continue to implement (Manji 2012). There have also been responses to social injustices like violence against women, conflict, and attacks on minority populations, such as albinos in East and Central Africa. In Tunisia, El Général and his song "Rayyes Lebled" ("The President") are credited with playing a key role in the 2011 Tunisian revolution (Mangialardi 2013). The song took aim at the corruption, poverty, and police brutality in the country (Mangialardi 2013). In Burkina Faso and Senegal protests flared up in 2011, in part among youth frustrated by local conditions (Ekine 2012). In Burkina Faso hip hop artists have joined the voices of protestors in speaking up on education, health care, and the increased migrations out of Burkina Faso across the Sahara (Künzler 2011). Artists like Smocky and Faso Kombat have championed change and have often invoked the words of Thomas Sankara in criticisms of the current regime. In Senegal popular protests helped unseat President Abdoulaye Wade in 2012. Hip hop artists, forming the coalition Yen a'Marre, took to the streets and the microphone to participate in important changes in that country. Some of these Senegalese artists later joined with Gambian artists to release the song and video "Against Impunity," aimed at Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh. Jammeh's regime has been heavily criticized for its authoritarianism, corruption, poverty, and repression of free speech (Saine 2008). The song and video went viral in 2012 as one of the more high-profile public criticisms of the president.

Female hip hop artists have been outspoken on a number of social issues. Though they represent a minority in hip hop, their presence adds different voices and perspectives to discussions on social change. Senegal's Sister Fa has dedicated much of her career and music to fighting female genital cutting (FGC) in Senegal. Through her music and activism she has been able to get several groups in southern Senegal to take steps in abolishing the practice, including her village Thionck Essyl (Fa 2012). In Zimbabwe, female hip hop artist Black Bird is a young activist and artist heavily involved in that country's hip hop community. In 2011 she released the song "Prayer for Somalia" as part of a fundraising campaign



for Somalia, a country that has seen continued instability since the 1990s. She has also been outspoken about women's issues and politics in Zimbabwe. Other female emcees in Africa have also confronted these issues in their music. Tanzanian emcee Rah P teamed up with Kenyan emcee Nazizi for the 2008 empowerment track "Wakilisha Madame" ("Represent Madame"). Uganda's Keko released "Go Green" and "Alwoo" ("Cry for Help") in 2011. The former addressed climate change, and the latter discussed domestic violence. In South Africa there exist a substantial number of female emcees, including members of the pioneering hip hop group Godessa. Godessa, from the beginning, dealt with social issues impacting South Africa. Today at least a dozen female emcees call South Africa home.

Marginalized communities throughout Africa have also seen increased representation in hip hop. Albino hip hop artists Albino Flani of Tanzania and N'Kashh of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been responsible for being among the first to rap about the discrimination against albino populations in Africa. N'Kashh released the album *Ame Seule* ("Lonely Soul") to bring attention to the problem of violence and discrimination against albinos.

Hip hop had a transformative effect on young Africans, creating a generation that identifies with local and global hip hop cultures. This includes African influences on hip hop culture, including dance, graffiti, graphic design, fashion, filmmaking, journalism, and television programming. By tracing the progression, this volume provides further examinations of social change in Africa through the lens of hip hop music and culture. The book explores the transformative impact that hip hop has had on African youth, who have in turn emerged to push for social change on the continent. Hip hop music has done more than serve as a soundtrack to social change; it has also galvanized youth participation and amplified youth voices. Hip hop artists are also participating in social movements and pushing social change. These artists and youth are using hip hop culture as a space within which they inform, discuss, and develop challenges to societal institutions, expectations, and mores.

### NI WAKATI (IT IS TIME)

Traditionally in Africa, the drum call lets the villagers know that "it is time" for various activities and events. In many ways that drum call is also now being sounded by hip hop artists. "Ni wakati" is an idea that is easily translated throughout the African continent, with a message that has resurfaced with hip hop artists. In 2001 Kalamashaka, based in the ghetto estate of Dandora in Nairobi and led by Kamau Ngigi (featured in this study) released their first album in 2001 titled *Ni Wakati*. The album features a speech by Malcolm X in which he praises the Mau Mau fighters

for their *uhuru* (freedom) fight and Kenya's eventual independence in 1963 (2001). For some artists, going back to the past to remember moments in history have helped groups address their present-day situation. In Kenya artists engage in the heroism of the Mau Mau revolution using their songs to reinterpret the unfinished *uhuru* messages as it relates to the fight of their forefathers. There are many hip hop artists that are using the stage and studios to voice their political and social musical messages to educate and remind the masses of past and present challenges in Africa. Interestingly, they would also use hip hop to connect generations of contestation and seek broader alliances for their movement for social change. Hip hop music, revolutionary music, and the flows of social movements can take on many different forms, but they all play a role in signaling a time for Africa's reawakening.

African hip hop artists are questioning "how to go to the next level of the struggle" (Richard Mawasi (Guru Gang), personal communication, October 2013). This analysis and reflection reveal the convoluted nature of liberation. The human rights, independence, and decolonization goals of the 1960s and 1970s have not been fully realized in Africa with many questioning the existing economic disparities and landlessness making hip hop appealing for many of the urban, poor, young, and unemployed listeners who want change. Conscious hip hop artists are offering an outlet, using their political and social musical messages to educate, uplift, unite masses, and solidify actions. Over the years, hip hop artists around the world have given scholars a great deal to consider on how revolutions, which are challenges to existing political and social structures, are made and remade through art, music, and creative mobilization of the youth. There is no one pattern for this struggle for social justice; the only constant, ironically, is variability, diversity, and complexity. 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 commitments for change. This energy and spirit should not be minimized.

Hip hop and social change is also being enhanced through globalization, which is allowing faster and more frequent modes of communication. Technology allows the "it is time" message to spread faster. Social exchanges between artists and their fans are rapid, as improved technology has changed the frequency and level of interactions, encouraging the fusion of movements and ideas. For example, the use of videos to complement CDs allows artists to broaden, extend, and refine their conversations. And of course, cell phones allow for faster and more integrated communication, helping to further link the world. The social media technology like Facebook, the Internet, and YouTube are sources of interaction between artists, fans, and other interested parties, allowing for more exchanges and collaborations. Technology is helping foster this type of



exchange as old speeches of historical heroes come alive on the tracks of hip hop artists. For example, the embracement of the revolutionary words of Malcolm X by Kalamashaka says a great deal about the artist messages and urgency of their music. Through technology the hip hop artists in Africa can generate a revolutionary pulse and vibration that can go across time and space in a manner that can quickly keep listeners engaged, informed, and motivated. Time, as associated with hip hop and social change in Africa, matters.

This study of hip hop and social change in Africa is a snapshot of different revolutionary relationships that have merged and fused together at very specific moments in time in Africa. The relationships, as we will see in this volume, consist of different dynamic variables and interactions that include forces like: time, circumstance, the hip hop message, communication mode, the goal/desires, location, involved parties, youth culture, and consciousness. The revolution and spirit for change continues; it is now hip hop that is the vehicle for dissemination. It is imperative that political and social messages are not compromised due to economic forces that often entice artists to reshape their messages around destructive ideas. This encourages an apathetic population that does not challenge social inequalities, instead of one that is empowered and willing to push for change. Although this study has focused on hip hop and social change in Africa, there is a connection to a much larger black liberation struggle that deserves attention beyond this study. Hip hop for social change studies in Africa and the African diaspora offers a fresh way to explore the continuity and present-day challenges of liberation, an effort that is still underway. The collaborative analysis of artist messages can help provide a new pulse to the ongoing struggle while also reminding us of the urgency associated with revolutionary change.

### VOLUME OUTLINE

This book brings together academics, artists, and activists from a variety of backgrounds to examine the use of hip hop as a tool and force for social change in Africa. Its multidisciplinary approach includes perspectives from areas like African studies, education, English, history, international relations, and political science.

The book is broken down into three sections. The first section is "Social Ills": Coming from Behind the Microphone to Effect Reform in Africa. "Social Ills" is the popular song by one of South Africa's first all-female rap crews, Godessa. While many hip hop artists in Africa have looked to the past to articulate calls for social change, many have also focused on the work of social movements active on the ground today. Some artists have joined these movements and have taken to the streets, facing arrest and police harassment. This section is about artists who stepped out from

behind the microphone and participated in citizen protests and acts of civil disobedience. In Kenya hip hop artists have participated in social and political change in Kenya for years. Their adaptation of the Mau Mau philosophy has translated into a movement that extends beyond music. Since 2010, protests in North Africa and, to a lesser extent, Senegal have made headlines. In these areas hip hop artists have led protests and consequently suffered from government-sponsored violence including arrests and torture.

Caroline Mose's chapter examines Kenyan hip hop's remembrance of African independence movements, especially the Mau Mau freedom struggle. She examines the group Kalamashaka's song "Angalia Saa" ("Check the Time") and its treatment of pre- and post-independent violence committed against Kenyans, especially women, in their opposition to social and political conditions in Kenya. Recent years have seen increased interest in the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya. Outside of Kenya the Mau Mau struggle has long been an inspiration to Diasporic communities, especially Rastafarian communities, which adopted the hair locking style of the Mau Mau freedom fighters (Kuumba and Ajanaku 1998; Dash 2006). Mose's piece, "Hip Hop Halisi: Continuities of Heroism on the African Political Landscape," focuses on how African colonial and postcolonial figures are held up as heroes within Kenyan hip hop. Using the group Ukoo Flani Mau Mau (UFMM) as an example, Mose's piece argues that in their recalling of these past and current African heroes, UFMM position themselves as the inheritors of the torch that these leaders have passed on. Mose's piece also examines the ideas of "keeping it real" and "underground" in hip hop, and juxtaposes these concepts with the trajectory of UFMM's position in Kenyan hip hop. Finally Mose gives attention to the treatment of women within conscious hip hop. Mose describes the constrictions placed on women nominated for hero status, and the dichotomy of the urban whore and the saint who preserves African traditions.

In Senegal the group *Y'en A Marre* (Enough is Enough) was formed in part by hip hop artists calling for change. Sheba Lo's chapter, "Building Our Nation: Senegalese Hip Hop Artists as Agents of Social and Political Change," looks at the social movement that emerged out of the Senegalese community during the country's last presidential election, particularly the *Y'en A Marre* movement, which was led by hip hop artists. Lo discusses the political role of hip hop artists that helped affect the outcome of the presidential election. The realized political power of these artists became evident with the 2000 presidential elections and helped turn the artists into active participants in Senegal's political process. Lo also looks at the role of hip hop artists in addressing controversies with the country's Islamic schools, the annual floods that devastate communities in Dakar, and the hip hop news program *Journal Rappe*. Lo also takes a brief look at the diversity within Senegalese hip hop and how the



push for a more sexualized, commercialized version of hip hop is impacting Dakar.

Amentahru Wahlrab's piece, "Speaking Truth to Power: Hip-Hop and the African Awakening," expands on the 2011 Pambazuka Press book *African Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions*. *African Awakening* was a look at the social movements occurring in Africa in since 2010, with a focus on North Africa. The book provides insight into the causes, factors, and influences that have gone into the increased mass mobilization across Africa, especially the Arab Spring. Wahlrab's chapter examines the often overlooked role hip hop has played in the Arab Spring in North Africa. In recognizing the link North Africa has with both Africa and the Middle East, Wahlrab shows the influence of hip hop and activism in the Middle East, especially among Palestinians, on activities in North Africa. Wahlrab argues that North African hip hop has been a voice for the oppressed in North Africa. Those that have stood up to tear down existing regimes have been influenced by hip hop music and lyrics. Wahlrab indeed argues that hip hop in North Africa has helped propel social change in the region.

The first section ends with the essay "Malian Hip Hop: Social Engagement through Music" by hip hop artist and social activist Amkoullel L'enfant Peulh. Amkoullel's essay takes us through the evolution of conscious hip hop in Mali. Amkoullel discusses the idea the claiming of both Malian and hip hop identities by Malian hip hop heads (individuals who identify as active members and participants of hip hop culture). This has contributed to the role of hip hop artists as community leaders calling for social change. In the country that is home to the legendary Timbuktu, there has been significant social upheaval. Amkoullel shows how hip hop artists have used their local cultures and identities to ignite cross-generational conversation on social change.

The second section is "The Dusty Foot Philosopher": Hip Hop Voices on Social Change in Africa. "The Dusty Foot Philosopher" was the title track from the critically acclaimed album by Somali emcee K'Naan. This section examines African hip hop's commentary on social change in Africa. The section speaks to hip hop's response to past and current social change, as well as its role in that change. Out of Africa's liberation struggles emerged a number of figures that stand tall in the minds of Africa's hip hop generation. Many African hip hop artists have employed the words and images of Africa's past liberation leaders in their music. Many artists today use the words and images of those past leaders as they engage in social commentary regarding current social and political issues in their countries. Kenyan and South African artists have been vocal in condemning state-sponsored violence that has occurred in those countries. In South Africa, known by many as the protest capital of the world, hip hop artists have a history of social activism that dates back to apartheid-era. More recently, in 2013, Kenyan hip hop artists took to social

media after the violent attack at the Westgate shopping mall. Many used their voices to both condemn the attacks, as well as hold the government accountable for its handling of tragedy. In Senegal artists have spoken out about the failure of the government to alleviate poverty. And in Tanzania female emcees have challenged gender roles and stereotypes imposed on them by both hip hop and Tanzanian culture.

The section starts with the essay "How Hip Hop Impacts Social Change in Africa" by Tanzanian emcee and writer Malle Marxist. As a young writer and artist Malle's essay reflects on the traditions of social consciousness in hip hop in Tanzania, a foundation that was laid by early emcees. Malle further elaborates on the impact of hip hop on social consciousness and in the lives of the youth in Tanzania.

Mich Nyawalo's chapter, "Redefining the Struggle: Remembering the Mau Mau through Hip Hop Music," takes on the memory of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. Nyawalo argues that through hip hop the personae of Mau Mau fighters are remembered. In addition, this remembrance informs contemporary discussions of the Mau Mau. Nyawalo's chapter compares the freedom songs produced during the Mau Mau movement with the hip hop songs produced by Kalamashaka, founders of the Ufoo Flani Mau Mau collective. Nyawalo also deals with the pan-ethnic appeal of hip hop in a country where music tastes is divided along ethnic lines.

Shaheen Ariefdien and Rico Chapman's chapter, "Hip Hop, Youth Activism and the Dilemma of Colored Identity in South Africa," presents research on anti-apartheid and post-apartheid struggles through the lens of hip hop. This chapter looks at the influence of black consciousness and Pan Africanism on youth activism in South African hip hop, details the influence of hip hop on anti-apartheid activists, and finally addresses the complex question of racial identity within South African hip hop. The chapter's primary focus is on the activists and their involvement in anti-apartheid and post-apartheid social movements.

Asligul Bertkay's chapter, "Beyond Y'en a Marre: Pikine's Hip Hop Youth Say 'Enough is Enough' and Pave the Way for Continuous Social Change," also focuses on the activism of Senegalese hip hop artists. Rather than focusing on Y'en A Marre, Bertkay looks at social engagement among hip hop artists who were outside of the Y'en A Marre movement. Bertkay looks at the conditions in the poor suburbs of Dakar that gave rise to these artists/activists and how they used their music to bring about social change. Both Lo and Bertkay's chapters highlight different aspects of one of the most politically charged hip hop scenes in the world.

Msia Kibona Clark's chapter, "Gender Representations among Tanzanian Female Emcees," examines the cultural politics of women's access to hip hop in Tanzania. The chapter examines how aspects of both hip hop culture and Tanzanian culture act to determine women's access to hip hop through gendered stereotypes, unequal power distribution, and con-



trols over women's bodies. The chapter reveals the ways in which female emcees are challenging these barriers and directing conversations on gender in their country. The chapter examines the music and images of these female emcees to get a picture of the types of confrontations of gender constructs and identities that are occurring in Tanzanian hip hop.

This section ends with the essay "Hip Hop and Social Change in Uganda" by emcee, poet, and activist Slim MC. Slim MC reflects more on the importance of a holistic embrace of hip hop culture. The essay places emphasis on hip hop as not just music but as a culture with foundational elements. Slim MC reflects what it means to be hip hop and what that has meant for Ugandan emcees.

The third section is "'Adjuma': Hip Hop's Transformation of the Urban Space in Africa." "Adjuma" ("hustle") is a single released by Ghanaian emcee M3nsa. This section looks into current trends in socially conscious hip hop in Africa, including threats to conscious hip hop and the youth identities that have emerged under the influence of hip hop. The social and political potentials of hip hop have been detailed, and this section reveals some important trends in the music. In some cases conscious hip hop in Africa is under threat from more commercialized pop music that is largely apolitical but tends to dominate the radio. The resilience of hip hop culture in Africa has led to the solidification of African hip hop identities. These identities are simultaneously connected to global and local hip hop cultures. It has also led to creative uses in hip hop, specifically in addressing and dealing with conflict and violence. Hip hop is often blamed for encouraging violence, but it is also used to cope with violence, and to heal post-conflict societies.

This section begins with the chapter "Tanzanian MCs vs. Social Discourse" by graffiti artist and activist Mejah Mbuya of Wachata Crew. The personal essay details Mejah's path toward conscious hip hop. Mejah's essay reveals how conscious hip hop in the United States helped expose him to critical social movements, such as Black Nationalism and the occupation of Palestine. Mejah further explains how present conscious emcees in Tanzania have spoken out on social and political issues in that country.

In "From the Great Island to the African Continent through the Western World: Itineraries of a 'Return to the Origins' through Hip Hop Music in Madagascar (2000–2011)," Klara Boyer-Rossol looks at approximately ten years of hip hop in Madagascar. One of the first major publications on Malagasy hip hop, the chapter looks at the important trends that have taken place in the hip hop scene in Madagascar. The chapter examines how Malagasy artists have connected with global black identities through hip hop and how the music has highlighted racial distinctions in the country. The chapter also discusses the important events and turning points in Malagasy hip hop, as it seeks linkages with hip hop communities outside of Madagascar.

John Idriss Lahai's chapter, "The Musicoscapes of a Country in Transition: Cultural Identity, Youth Agency, the Emergent Hip Hop Culture, and the Quest for Sociopolitical Change in Sierra Leone," examines youth interactions with hip hop today, more than ten years after the end of the civil war. Much has been written regarding the use of hip hop during the civil war in Sierra Leone (Beah 2007; Utas and Jörgel 2008; Prestholdt 2009). In his chapter, Lahai examines how Sierra Leonean youth today are using hip hop to have post-war discussions on social and political changes in the country. Lahai contends that the youth in Sierra Leone are pushing social consciousness in their music and are using hip hop music and culture to argue for progressive social change. In addition, Lahai looks at the rift that emerged in Sierra Leonean hip hop between those that returned to Sierra Leone from abroad and those that stayed in the country throughout the war.

Katharina Greven's piece, "Hip Hop and Sheng in Nairobi: Creating Identity Markers and Expressing a Lifestyle," addresses the new social identities emerging in Kenya in the wake of hip hop's growth there. Katharina specifically focuses on the importance of the further evolution of Sheng, a Kenyan dialect that incorporates English, Swahili, and local languages. Katharina's chapter examines the impact Sheng has had on shifts in the way young Kenyans identify, and its implication for changes in social identity in Kenya. Katharina uses the music of Kenyan hip hop artist Abbas Kubaff to reveal the connection between Sheng and shifts in social identity.

The afterword for this volume is titled "Reflections on *Ni Wakati*: Hip Hop and Revolution," by Kenyan hip hop pioneer Kamau Ngigi (aka Kama) from the groups Kalamashaka and Ukoo Flani Mau Mau (UFMM). The writing is a personal essay detailing Ngigi's journey into conscious hip hop and depicts the importance of the U.S. hip hop scene on himself and other young Kenyans. Ngigi also examines the domestic and international politics that influenced the politicization of both Kalamashaka and UFMM. Given the influence of the work of Kalamashaka on this project, this afterword also serves to bring the book full circle by ending with important reflections of the journey of an African emcee whose career and life have been dedicated to influencing social change.

## CONCLUSION

*Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa: Ni Wakati* takes an important look at what hip hop has had to say and how it has contributed to social change in Africa. The book examines hip hop's role in the remembrance of anti-colonial struggles and leaders. These remembrances contribute to the dialogue over the relevance of those past struggles and the ideologies of those past leaders on contemporary African society and politics. The



book also addresses hip hop's response to contemporary social change in Africa. The authors have examined hip hop's voice in African social issues, voices that resonate with the youth especially but also voices that have influenced change on the ground.

The main theme that permeates through the chapters is the power of hip hop for social change. Beyond a discussion on the sounds or contours of hip hop in Africa, the book looks at the real impacts hip hop is having, or can have, on social change in Africa. In 2010 and 2011 Pambazuka Press released two important books on social change in Africa. The first was *African Women Writing Resistance: An Anthology of Contemporary Voices*, which was an anthology of poetry, essays, fiction, and interviews. The book was an important piece on African women authors and activists affecting change in Africa through their words, through their poetry, through their stories. This way of using storytelling and poetry to affect social change is at the foundation of what conscious hip hop does in Africa. The second book, *African Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions*, looks at the uprisings that have occurred all over Africa in the past few years. The book addresses how neoliberal economic policies and corruption have driven people on the continent, as well as globally, to push back. Hip hop is a part of this "African awakening." Hip hop has indeed provided the soundtrack for these "emerging revolutions." In addition, African hip hop artists have also used their influence to change policies, run for political office, lead protests, and to inform. These chapters speak to aspects of those influences of hip hop in various countries in Africa, and reveal that African hip hop has built upon the genre's foundations of observation and commentary, with the ultimate goal of actual social change.

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## I

## "Social Ills": Coming from Behind the Microphone to Effect Reform in Africa