

From Jamaica to the Cape Flets: Reflecting on the Manifestations of a Cape Hip Hop Culture, 1983-2015

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to reflect on the making of a Cape Town based Hip Hop culture with particular focus on the various manifestations which developed around the Cape Flats. This study investigates the importance of the numerous mediums in the development of a Hip Hop culture at the Cape from 1983 to 2015. Particular attention is given to audio-visual content such as film, music and music videos within the early formations of Hip Hop in the Cape. The audiences and performers who engaged with Hip Hop culture will be investigated. Furthermore, this study will follow the shift in the various forms of dissemination - from radio, television, to self-produced videos uploaded on digital media platforms on the internet. Finally, Cape Town based artists who addressed particular local social conditions through their self-produced videos will be examined. These videos bypassed the normal television curated playlists and thus created their own digital followings. This marked a new platform of engagement beyond the conventional radio and television networks, thus staying true to the original purpose of Hip Hop – an avenue of self-expression for marginalised communities located on the periphery.

Keywords: Hip Hop, Cape Flats, Knowledge of Self, Self-Expression

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie verhandeling is die ontwikkeling van ‘n Kaapstad-gefundeerde Hip Hop kultuur met spesifieke fokus op die verskeidenheid manifestasies wat rondom die Kaapse Vlakte ontwikkel het. Hierdie studie ondersoek die belangrikheid van die vele mediums in die ontstaan van die Hip Hop kultuur vanaf 1983 tot 2015. Veral die bydrae van die audio-visuele inhoud, byvoorbeeld film, musiek en musiekvideos binne die vroeë vorming van Hip Hop in die Kaap, sal spesifieke aandag geniet. Die gehore en deelnemers wat by die Hip Hop kultuur betrokke was, sal ondersoek word. Verder volg hierdie studie ook die verandering van die verskillende media van verspreiding, byvoorbeeld van radio tot televisie tot self-vervaardigde videos wat op digitale-media-platforms op die internet opgelaai kan word. Ten slotte, die kunstenaars in die Kaap, wat veral die plaaslike sosiale toestande deur hulle self-vervaardigde videos aangespreek het, sal verken en ondersoek word. Hierdie videos het die gewone saamgestelde televisie spellyste omseil en sodoende hul eie digitale volgelinge gevvestig. Dit het ‘n nuwe platform van betrokkenheid buite die konvensionele radio en televisie netwerk, gevvestig, en sodoende het dit getrou tot die oorspronklike doelstelling van Hip Hop gebly - werklik ‘n weg tot self-uitdrukking vir gemarginaliseerde gemeenskappe geleë op die buitewyke.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

Afrikaaps	A Cape variant of Afrikaans
aka	Also known as
AHHM	African Hip Hop Movement
ANC	African National Congress
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Beatboxer	Vocal percussion which involves mimicking drum machines, using one's mouth, lips, tongue, and voice
BRA	Bush Radio Archives
Biters	Hip Hop centered term which refers to another individual who has adapted someone else's style. It is the Hip Hop equivalent of academic plagiarism
BVK	Brasse Vannie Kaap
CASET	Cassette Education Trust
CBD	Central Business District
C.L.E.A.N	Community Learners and Educators Against Narcotics
CNA	Central News Agency
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
DJs	Disk Jockeys
Dop-Geld stelsel	Alcoholic tot payment system
DSJ	Dope Saint Jude
FAS	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
FPB	Film and Publications Board
Fracking	Environmental drilling for shale gas
Headz	Term referring to Hip Hop practitioner
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
IDP	Information Directorate Publications
KAB	Kaapse Argief Beraad
Knowledge of Self	An overarching ideological element in Hip Hop
L.O.S	League of Shadows
MC	Master of ceremony
Nunchakas	Okinawan martial arts weapon
N.W.A	Niggaz With Attitude
Parkjam	A Hip Hop event that takes place on parks around the Cape Flats
POC	Prophets of Da City
RAP	Rhythm and Poetry
Rymklets	Term used for Afrikaans rap
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
Spaza	A form of Hip Hop that originated in Black townships
SRC	Student Representative Council
T.I.K.	Terror In Kids
UDF	United Democratic Front
TKAG	Treasure Karoo Action Group
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
YAA	Youth Against Aids

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Artist and contributor to *The New Yorker*, John Donohue, has suggested that music can also be considered a form of protest. He advocates that music and politics have a long and intimate connection whereby artistic lyrics or even musical rhythms have long reflected anti-establishment sentiment. From rock, to punk, popular music, he argues, entered a period of consciousness-raising and escapism. With the increasing pressure of capitalism and the necessity to increase profits, much of the meaning has been lost and these expressions have simply become products. He adds, “This has become so common that it’s hardly remarkable, but it comes at a cost: voices of dissent and protest need to be heard. And if music becomes solely a soundtrack for selling, that’s a loss”.¹ The musical genre of Hip Hop is no exception. While more widely considered a lucrative financial endeavour in the present, it has a long, turbulent and more compelling history. A distinction therefore must be made between commercial Hip Hop and underground Hip Hop.² It is the latter which is of importance to this study.

Music as a form of protest has been extensively discussed in the northern hemisphere with some academic works not only illuminating trends in the global south, but also bridging the divide between these seemingly polarised locations.³ Debates within the historical discipline provide even

¹J. Donohue: “The Music Itself is a Form of Protest”, *The New Yorker*, 21 April 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-music-itself-is-a-form-of-protest> (accessed 20 October 2017).

²A. Haupt: *Hip Hop in the Age of Empire: Cape Flats Style* (Isandla Institute, Cape Town, 2003), p. 7.

³ See for example A. Grundlingh: "Rocking the Boat' in South Africa? Voëlvry music and Afrikaans anti-apartheid social protest in the 1980s", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37(3), 2004, pp. 483–514; B. Kitwana: *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture* (Basic Books, New York, 2002); E. Hobsbawm: *The Jazz Scene* (Faber and Faber, United Kingdom, 2014); G. Rawick: “Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self-Definition: Spirituals as a Strategy,” *Western Journal of Communication* 59(3), 1995: pp. 177-192; J. Williams: *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015); K. Dunn: *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, New York, 2015); L. Kajikawa:

greater clarity on the broader political and social conditions under which these movements developed.

Iconic historian Eric Hobsbawm published an important text on jazz as a site of social protest under the pseudonym Francis Newton in 1959. This text was later published under his name in the 1990s. This seminal work not only increased interest in locating music within socio-cultural history, it also led to rigorous historical debate and the formulation of pertinent research questions: the role of music in societies at specific socio-political moments in time; the impact this had upon artists within the profession and indeed how they had an impact upon the genre; as well as questioning whether jazz was, and continues to be, merely an expression of protest politics or quite simply the delightful combination of form, harmony and expression of emotion - devoid of any deeper political significance.⁴

Various authors have questioned the deeper contributions and motivations behind the global music genre of Hip Hop.⁵ Others have specifically discussed Hip Hop in South Africa.⁶ While these studies illuminate certain trends within the Hip Hop movement in South Africa and specifically the Cape, this dissertation (in the footsteps of Hobsbawm) seeks to further unpack the arrival,

Sounding Race in Rap Songs (University of California Press, California, 2015); R. Eyerman & A. Jamison: *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998); R. Garofalo: *Rockin the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (South End Press, London, 1999); R. Serge Denisoff: *Sing a Song of Social Significance* (Bowling Green State University Popular, Bowling Green, 1983); S. Craig Watkins: *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement* (Beacon Press, Boston, 2005); T. Rose: *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Wesleyan University Press, USA, 1994); T. Rose: *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip-Hop – And Why It Matters* (Basic Books, New York, 2008).

⁴ Refer to A. Linsenmann & T. Hindrichs: *Hobsbawm, Newton und Jazz. Zum Verhältnis von Musik und Geschichtsschreibung* (Paderborn, Schöningh, 2016).

⁵ Refer to Footnote 2. Contributors will be discussed in greater detail in the “Literature Review”.

⁶ M. Swai, S. Ariefdien, R. Warner, D.C. Martin, D. Kunzler, N.Nkonyeni, A. Haupt to name a few. Again, these works will be discussed in the next section.

development and making of Hip Hop cultures in the Cape Flats during the most notable turning-points from 1983 to 2015.⁷ In so doing, this thesis asks: how have Hip Hop artists at the Cape negotiated anti-establishment sentiment in their own environment, in what spaces did this occur and what particular consciousness-raising campaigns did they promote? This can only be investigated by appropriately unpacking the ways in which they arrived and further developed in the Cape.

Hip Hop in contemporary South Africa has fused music, fashion, dance, visual art and decolonial educational pedagogies under one expressive culture.⁸ Hip Hop defined here, constitutes four performative elements considered to be the expressive avenues of the global culture. These include Deejaying, Graffiti, Breakdance and Rap. Overlaps exist between these elements and across geographical location. The transportation of cultural practices such as self-engineered sound systems prevalent in Jamaica formed an important foundation within Hip Hop and its elements.⁹ This transnational transportation of the sound system culture and manifestation thereof can be attributed to Jamaican born DJ Kool Herc in the early 1970s and serves as an example of geo-specific cultural practices which unfolded within new contexts, subject to localized influences.¹⁰ Similarly, as Hip Hop appeared within new locations around the world, it allowed for local sounds, rhythms and practices to be incorporated within its expression. Once Hip Hop manifested within

⁷ The specific birthplace of Hip Hop at the Cape is highly contested with Mitchells Plain and Grassy Park being at the forefront of this debate. Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, the broader term Cape Flats will be referred to because of the interactive manner in which protagonists contributed to the genre.

⁸ I. Abraham: "Christian hip hop as pedagogy: a South African case study", *Journal of Belief and Values*, 36 (3), 2015, p. 285.

⁹ U. Phalafala: "Black music and pan-African solidarity in Keorapetse Kgositsile's poetry", *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 18(4), 2017, p. 313.

¹⁰ J. Chang: *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 2005), p. 7.

different parts of the world, a local essence was added to the expression of the culture. It is for this reason, that one can consider Jamaica to be the birthplace of Hip Hop.

A variety of print, visual and audio forms, mostly from the United States of America and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom, arrived at the Cape in the early 1980s. Unfortunately, in terms of conducting an academic study, these were largely bootleg merchandise and therefore formal statistical analysis becomes futile. Fortunately for the prospective local artists and soon-to-be audiences, informal networks sprouted and led to a discernible local movement. Initially these foreign imports were embraced and mimicked and eventually led to the production of local products, of greater significance for local audiences. This is not to suggest that one displaced the other, but rather reveals how the discipline had to become more relevant to local audiences, reflecting their circumstances, rather than a distant global anti-establishment movement. Rap and Breakdancing, being the cheapest option of these art forms, were the more prevalent forms of expression for the more impoverished members of the Hip Hop scene in the Cape.¹¹ They could be practiced and performed in informal spaces.¹² This allowed for greater inclusivity but unfortunately, this suggests that the greatest surviving testimony attesting to these artistic expressions are arguably debateable oral testimonies.¹³

Two groups are of interest in this study: veteran participants or artists (referred to as Hip Hop Headz) who expressed themselves in the various forms mentioned above; and their audiences, who

¹¹ M. Swai & S. Ariefdien: “Putting two heads together: A cross-generational conversation about Hip Hop in South Africa”, P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: An African Hip Hop Reader* (African World Press, New Jersey, 2011), p. 224.

¹² Some clubs did engage in Hip Hop. This is discussed in Chapter 3.

¹³ Oral testimonies are fraught with methodological concerns ranging from selective memory to embellishing of roles within social movements.

acknowledged and even mimicked the performers.¹⁴ Participants and audiences were predominantly marginalised youths,¹⁵ who found themselves on the periphery of Cape Town's urban setting especially after the forced removals era of the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶ Given the clandestine and informal nature under which both groups operated, one has to rely largely on oral testimonies of the artists. Certain observations can be made, even if one questions the power of hindsight and possible over-emphasis of personal contributions to the broader Hip Hop movement.

The origins of the Hip Hop movement in South Africa is located in Cape Town, more specifically in the Cape Flats during the 1980s. This is in the advent of a variety of oppressive apartheid laws which affected the most populous racial group in these areas, Coloureds.¹⁷ The spaces in which these interactions initially occurred is also significant, especially during periods of political and social oppression. While the apartheid state might not have been fully aware of the suggestive nature of Hip Hop as a tool of protest,¹⁸ performance spaces (such as music venues and cinemas), were rabidly policed. Nevertheless, this had little impact on the ideological influence of Hip Hop in South Africa. Associate Professor in English, Michael Dowdy echoes political theorist Hannah

¹⁴ Hip Hop Headz refers to enthusiasts who take part in Hip Hop culture within this community. S. Ariefdien and A. Haupt have both emphasised that this term was particularly fashionable during the earlier periods of the Hip Hop movement. This term aptly signifies the ideological participation within the culture compared to the mainstream terminology which refers to Hip Hoppers. This further distinguished between commercial and underground Hip Hop, mentioned in Footnote 2.

¹⁵ Hip Hop scholar, Jeff Chang suggests that generations are fictions, nothing less than a way to impose a narrative upon people which suits the needs of demographers, journalists, futurists and marketers, J. Chang: *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*, p.1. Therefore, the encompassing term "youth" will refer to all protagonist who were involved in the Hip Hop movements as a way of expressing their anti-establishment sentiments, regardless of age.

¹⁶ See for example M. Horrell: *The Group Areas Act: Its effect on Human Beings* (The South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1956).

¹⁷ The population group known as *Coloured* is a contentious racial category. Given the nature of this study, it would be apt to use this terminology as it has a direct correlation with the notion of *Knowledge of Self* (to be discussed in greater detail in this Chapter). There are also specific political and social considerations that are particular to this created racial grouping.

¹⁸ This is clarified in Chapter 2.

Arendt's premise on "collective agency" and "acting in concert", by suggesting that artists and audiences empowered themselves by creating moments of collective agency in response to unjust political practices.¹⁹

Political sociologist, Jeremy Seekings aptly describes the turbulent political conditions of the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa and the rise of civil resistance, particularly displaced individuals living in deplorable conditions. He also suggests that reformist politicians recognised that they would need the support of Coloured and Indian South Africans to curb such revolutionary spirit.²⁰ In an attempt to win favour, some concessions were made with the National Party "investing heavily in housing, infrastructural development, health facilities and schooling, as well as promising a degree of infusion within the framework of representative democracy".²¹ This did not appease all of the protagonists. Conceived in the late 1970s, cleric, politician and anti-apartheid activist Allan Boesak called for the uniting of churches, civic associations, trade unions, sports associations and student organisations under the banner of the United Democratic Front in opposition to apartheid. Interestingly, the UDF was launched in Mitchells Plain in 1983, one of the spaces considered the birthplace of Hip Hop. The youth were at the forefront of this opposition. Student Representative Councils at schools and universities played an integral role in the political awakening of students, bringing awareness to the political landscape of the country at that time. Veteran Rapper from the renowned Hip Hop group Prophets of Da City (POC), Shaheen Ariefdien, recalls that "the SRCs' role was to inform, mobilize, agitate and was also the vital link between

¹⁹ M Dowdy: "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert.'", *Popular Music and Society*, 30(1), 2007, pp. 75-90.

²⁰ J. Seekings: *The UDF. A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* (David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, 2000), p. 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*

the traditional mass movements and students (and sometimes teachers)".²² It is at this temporal juncture of political uncertainty and growing agitation that Hip Hop begins to develop at the Cape as a viable means of expressing frustration and desire for change. Therefore, Hip Hop merchandise was not simply a commercial product but rather a cultural artefact which embodied an ideological message of resistance which transcended geopolitical borders, but also developed to combat local oppressive policies.

It is here that the overarching element of importance to this study is located: the ideological blueprint, *Knowledge of Self*.²³ Initially, local audiences, with the aid of foreign imports, aligned their condition to global oppression and feeling of exclusion. This was sparked by the conditions in the Bronx, New York. Similar developments occurred amongst aboriginal youths in Australia²⁴ and the youths of Brazil.²⁵ In Brazil, Hip Hop's emergence can be attributed to American black popular culture. Spurred on by teachings of Malcolm X, the Black Soul Movement in Brazil appeared during the 1970s leading to the formation of the Black Movement in Brazil or *Movimento Negro*.²⁶ Here, Hip Hop Headz instituted a sizeable political, or rather anti-establishment, movement. Hip Hop's ability to incite change began to appear on television sets across the globe.²⁷ In a two-way process, local artists were prodded into performing about local issues. This was guided by personal circumstances and the local context in reaction to the establishment (in this

²² S. Ariefdien: "Dalah Cape Flats- Hip Hop, Resistance and Colouredness", S Essof. and D. Moshenberg (eds.) *Searching for South Africa: The New Calculus of Dignity* (UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2011), p. 11.

²³ J. Chang: *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*, p. 1.

²⁴ T. Mitchell: "Blackfellas, Rapping, Breaking and Writing: A short history of Aboriginal Hip Hop.", *Aboriginal History*, 30, 2006, p. 124.

²⁵ M. Perry: "Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space", *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(6), 2008, p. 639.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ R. Warner: "Colouring the Cape space problem: A hip hop identity of passions", P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: An African Hip Hop Reader* (African World Press, New Jersey, 2011), p. 8.

instance the state and deplorable living conditions) and as a means of escaping political and social oppression. Artists and audiences were prompted by each other to become more self-aware and subsequently raised awareness amongst those willing to listen to their message through the medium of Hip Hop.

1.1 Literature Review

There are four important artistic expressions in Hip Hop: Deejaying, Graffiti, Breakdance and Rap.²⁸ Deejaying is considered to not only be the founding element of Hip Hop, but an instrumental expression of the art form. With the decline of live bands in Jamaica by the 1950s and the rise of jukeboxes in social settings, disk jockeys (Deejays) started to play an influential role on the dance floors around Kingston, Jamaica.²⁹ This grew alongside developments in global music technology. Competitions provided a space for these budding Hip Hop artists to not only become famous but to also entertain the crowds. By 1973, the trend caught on in the South Bronx Borough of New York City thanks to the arrival of a young Jamaican immigrant.³⁰ Clive “Kool Herc” Campbell organised his first *“block-party”* on the 11th August 1973 with the help of his older sister Cindy Campbell.³¹ His new and improved style, later named “Merry go round”, included two turntables and the looping of drum patterns to popular funk songs, in particular the music of James Brown.³² And so began the establishment of Hip Hop – the fusion of black music such as funk, jazz and

²⁸ These artistic forms will be capitalised to emphasise their importance within this musical genre.

²⁹ R. Warner: “Colouring the Cape space problem: a hip hop identity of passions”, P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: An African Hip Hop Reader*, p. 8.

³⁰J. Williams: “Historicizing the Breakbeat: Hip-Hop's Origins and Authenticity”, *Lied und populäre Kultur / Song and Popular Culture*, 56, 2011, pp. 133- 167.

³¹J. Chang: *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*, p. 8.

³²J. Williams: “Historicizing the Breakbeat: Hip-Hop's Origins and Authenticity”, *Lied und populäre Kultur / Song and Popular Culture*, 56, 2011, pp. 133- 167.

soul, played over elaborate sound systems and incorporating Deejaying skills. The audiences responded with resounding vigour.

By 1976, another pioneering figure emerged. Kevin Donovan (aka Afrika Bambaataa), organised the first Hip Hop party in The Bronx Community Centre.³³ He later established the Universal Zulu Nation, an organisation created to combat gang warfare amongst the young men of the Bronx. Turntablism, the skill of being able to deejay within a Hip Hop framework, began to flourish.³⁴ By the 1980s, regional, national and international competitions began to proliferate. The deejay was now viewed as the backbone of Hip Hop. It is in this period that Hip Hop arrived at the Cape.

Graffiti is thought to have its visible origins in New York City from as early as 1965, where walls were used as canvases to mark territories by young people from Latin America.³⁵ Scholar, Tricia Rose suggests that Graffiti is an instrumental visual element of Hip Hop. She argues that these displays not only allowed protagonists to stake out their territory, but also allowed them to vent their frustration on public property.³⁶ This rather costly artistic form came with the financial burden of having to buy copious amounts of spray paint. Nevertheless, argues Jeff Chang, this visual expression allowed for immediate expression and satisfaction and was therefore a popular option in certain contexts.³⁷

³³ J. Williams: "Historicizing the Breakbeat: Hip-Hop's Origins and Authenticity", *Lied und populäre Kultur / Song and Popular Culture*, 56, 2011, pp. 133- 167.

³⁴ F. M. Miyakwa: "TurnTablature: Notion, Legitimization and the Art of the Hip Hop DJ", *American Music*, 25(1), 2007, pp. 81-105.

³⁵ J. Chang: *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*, p. 73.

³⁶ T. Rose: *Black Noise: Rap music and Black Culture in America* (Wesleyan University Press, USA, 1994), p. 121.

³⁷ J. Chang: *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*, p. 73.

It should be mentioned that due to the financial costs as well as the policing systems at the Cape during apartheid, this form of expression had not been as enticing as other forms of self-expression and when visible, was more synonymous with the broader anti-apartheid movement rather than Hip Hop which dealt with specific local issues. Graffiti artist, Nardstar, believes that graffiti art in South Africa originated during apartheid. Fellow artist, Falko suggests that the curfew during apartheid may have led to the stunted growth of Graffiti artistry in South Africa. He also adds that Graffiti was so synonymous with political dissension that if caught with a can of spray paint, the authorities might have considered the artist a guerrilla or political dissident rather than an artist. Therefore, the repercussions of being caught red-handed in South Africa, were much more severe.³⁸ Nonetheless, Sara Kloppers provides a more detailed account of Graffiti artistry in a broader South African context, firmly locating it within the formation of a local Hip Hop culture.³⁹

Two forms of Hip Hop, which are more discernible in the Cape context, are Breakdancing and Rap. These two expressions were relatively cheap for artists to explore and more accessible to prospective audiences. They could be performed in informal spaces and the latter, in particular, allowed for the lyrics to reflect local-themes, and eventually local languages and dialects. This dissertation therefore discusses these two art forms in greater detail.

³⁸ J. Nel: “Falko- Meester van muurkuns”, *Die Burger YouTube Kanaal*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMcRa9pwL1c> (accessed 12 September 2017)

³⁹ S. Kloppers: “Hip Hop Graffiti Art”, S. Nuttall & C. Michael (eds.), *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000), p. 180.

Breakdancing incorporates dance and movement, fusing different dance styles from around the world into a stylised sequence. One such fusion that *B-boys/girls*,⁴⁰ draw upon is Capoeira,⁴¹ and morphing dance with acrobatic movements, commonly referred to as "ground-works". Tricia Rose suggests: "Early break-dancers' elaborate, technologically inspired street corner dances involving head spins on concrete sidewalks, made the streets theatrically friendly and served as makeshift youth centers".⁴² Dance ciphers⁴³ on street corners or public spaces, became a performance platform that encouraged audience participation. Veteran Hip Hop artists from the Cape attest to the significance of these forms of expression. Sociologist, Greg Dimitraidis adds that Breakdancing was a space for free expression, affording young people a channel for uncensored expression through dance.⁴⁴ Jeff Chang and Patrick Neate have all focussed on the importance of Breakdancing within Hip Hop culture. Breakdancing is a result of the breaks which were explored by the Deejay's selection.

While Breakdancing cannot be explored further because of the informal manner in which it unfolded in the Cape, and therefore suggestive of the lack of any formal archival evidence, the dance moves themselves are said to have been inspired by certain imported dance films. The content and significance of these films will therefore be discussed in greater detail in this dissertation. Likewise, the lyrics of the last artistic expression, Rap, will also be investigated.

⁴⁰ Break Dancers.

⁴¹ An Afro-Brazilian fighting style with its genealogy located in Angola. It evolved into a cultural dance style and now infuses certain break-dance moves.

⁴² T. Rose: *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in America*, p. 121.

⁴³ Cipher is an impromptu jam session that takes place within the Hip Hop community which allows Hip Hop Headz to express themselves within the circle.

⁴⁴ G. Dimitraidis: "Hip Hop: From Live Performance to Mediated Narrative", *Popular Music*, 15(2), 1996, pp. 179-194.

According to Greg Dimitraidis, the global and commercial expansion of Rap (Rhythm and Poetry) can be attributed to the American group “The Sugarhill Gang” who released their single, “Rappers Delight”,⁴⁵ in 1979.⁴⁶ However, Rap is historically considered to be a combination of the griot tradition of Africa and the ability to “speak the dozens” in the African-American tradition.⁴⁷ As Uhuru Phalafala has illustrated, Rap is linked to the cultural continuum which began in Jamaican sound system cultures contributing to Deejaying in Hip Hop. In her work she points out that South African poet laureate, Keorapetse Kgositsile, traced the traditions of American Rap to African poetry, specifically through the African and Caribbean diaspora: “When Rap started in the States ... if you go back to the 1920s, they were consciously attempting to reclaim that African tradition. And today the more serious Rappers, the ones that the industry will not try to promote to shove down people’s throats all over the worlds, is still trying to do that, and when you read it on the page, it is poetry by any standard”.⁴⁸ He notes that poetry within an African context is firmly intertwined within the musicality found within the expression of Rap.⁴⁹ Phalafala also traces the role and influence of Jazz in Hip Hop pointing out that the types of expression rolls over from one generation to the next. This observation also alludes to the intricate cross-fertilisation of musical genres. It also suggests that other musical genres in South Africa share similar histories and ideological standpoints with Hip Hop.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ The Sugarhill Gang: “Rappers Delight”, SugarHill Records, 1979.

⁴⁶ G. Dimitraidis: “Hip Hop: From Live Performance to Mediated Narrative”, *Popular Music*, 15(2), 1996, pp. 179-194.

⁴⁷ E. Wild: *The Dozens: A History of Rap's Mama* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012), p. 5.

⁴⁸ U. Phalafala: “Black music and pan-African solidarity in Keorapetse Kgositsile’s poetry”, *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 18(4), 2017, pp. 313.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰ M. E. Vershbow: "The Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in South Africa's Anti-Apartheid Movement", *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 2(6), 2010, <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=265> (accessed 24 October 2017).

During this period of the 1980s, the equivalent urban cultural expression proliferating in Johannesburg was Kwaito.⁵¹ Unlike Hip Hop with quite a sizeable external influence, Kwaito fused a variety of local genres such as *bubblegum*, *mbaqanga*, township jazz and Afro-pop with the so-called Western genres of house music and rhythm and blues.⁵² It also had distinct styles of dance, fashion, language and performance.⁵³ Regrettably, the confines of this dissertation do not allow me to probe this observation further. However, it is clear that Hip Hop, like Kwaito, celebrated its African roots and served as a logical and attractive art form for those who were beginning to reject everything Western in pursuit of the Black Consciousness expounded by Steve Biko.

The first seminal work which engages with Rap as a medium of expression is David Toop's 1984 book, *Rap Attack*. It is interesting to note that this was published during the same period that Hip Hop became a definable musical genre in the Cape. Toop contextualises Hip Hop within existing cultural forms of expression. He argues that the origins of Rap can be traced back to:

[...] disco, street funk, radio DJ's, Bo Diddley, the bebop singers, Cab Calloway, Pigmeat Markham, the tap dancers and comics, the Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, Muhammad Ali, acapella and doo-wop groups, ring games, skip-rope rhymes, prison and army songs, toasts, signifying and the dozens, all the way to the griots of Nigeria and Gambia. No matter how far it penetrates into the twilight maze of Japanese video games and cool European electronics, its roots are still the deepest in all contemporary Afro-American music.⁵⁴

Tricia Rose also adds that:

⁵¹ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2010), p. 10.

⁵² T. Bosch: “‘Ek sê, heita!’: Kwaito and the construction of community”, *Communicatio: A South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 32(1), 2007, p. 90.

⁵³ S. Niaah: “A Common Space: Dancehall, Kwaito, and the Mapping of New World Music and Performance”, *The World of Music*, 52(1), 2010, p. 518.

⁵⁴ D. Toop: *Rap The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip Hop* (South End Printers, New York, 1985), p. 48.

[...] rapper's rhymes are clearly influenced by, if not a direct outgrowth of, the African-American toast tradition. The dozen-playing bravado of toasts such as the Signifying Monkey is brilliantly captured in Kool Moe Def's "How Ya Like Me Now." Furthermore, in keeping with oral forms, unique introduction of materials takes on greater significance in the live performance.⁵⁵

Rose accentuates the theatrical lens of Hip Hop, unveiling the agency it provided and continues to provide marginalised youth within the global periphery. Rose provides both an analysis of mainstream media in the United States engagement with Rap, as well as coverage of the violence and misogyny within the art-form. Gender as well as global networks of Hip Hop Headz become important points for further reflection.

The unsavoury and crude aspects of Rap are unpacked by Elijah Wild. He places particular importance on "the Dozens",⁵⁶ a performance art that laid the foundation for Rap. A direct comparison is drawn between "toasting" or "speaking the Dozens" and Rap's performative aspects. He argues that the "Dozens techniques at times included viciously funny rhymes, which are an obvious source for the aggressive comic rhyming of Rap, along with puns, extravagant exaggerations, and other forms of verbal play. But insults could also be direct, nasty, and intended simply to hurt".⁵⁷ This draws on similarities to Battle Rap, where Hip Hop Headz face off in performances, trying to outwit each other with the use of cleverly placed rhymes in order to degrade their opponent's presence, prompting responses from audiences. Here too, one reflects on the personal ambitions of individual artists, outside of any global or local anti-establishment rhetoric. It firmly reminds the reader that these are, after all, personal artistic expressions.

⁵⁵ T. Rose: *Black Noise: Rap music and Black Culture in America*, p. 230.

⁵⁶ The Dozens is a lyrical format that pegs two speakers against each other. The speaker who can "hurl" the best insults and gain approval from the audience is deemed victorious.

⁵⁷ E. Wild: *The Dozens: A History of Rap's Mama* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012), p. 5.

Mtume Ya Salaam further testifies to the performative and writing aspects of Rap. He adds:

Good art is distinguished because it possesses at least one - and usually more than one attribute such as sincerity, originality, honesty, or creativity. Good art is usually emotionally involving and/or thought-provoking. These, I believe, are attributes that almost all "good" art shares. This is true with most art forms, however. In general, unsuccessful artistic productions far outnumber successful ones.⁵⁸

This is not to suggest that Rap artists cannot make a much broader impact on his or her audience. Because of this ability to sway public awareness and incite insurrection, Erik Nielson points out that Rap artists abroad were subjected to censorship. Hip Hop, he argues, has been experiencing backlashes from law-enforcement agencies from its inception because of the space that it provided for alternative thought and subversive expression. "Even in its early days, Hip Hop drew the wary scrutiny of law enforcement. Break dancers, for example, were often hard pressed to find practice space because many potential locations were known to be under police surveillance". He continues to write that "graffiti artists, who drew the ire of city officials once their designs started popping up on trains in wealthy Manhattan neighbourhoods, found themselves the targets of "an all-out war on graffiti""⁵⁹. The entire surveillance of Hip Hop by state security agencies within the United States was due to the content of Rap music reflecting the position of marginalised people within society. Words, more so than rhythm, are therefore important. The extent to which this occurred in the South African context is certainly questioned in this dissertation.⁶⁰

The importance of the American Rap scene on the making of a Rap culture at the Cape is pointed out by Shaheen Ariefdien and associate professor in communications at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Jared Ball:

⁵⁸ M. Salaam: "The Aesthetics of Rap", *African American Review*, 29 (2), 1995, p. 4.

⁵⁹ E. Nielsen: "Can't see me: Surveillance and Rap music", *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(6), 2010, p. 1257.

⁶⁰ Findings presented in Chapter 2 would suggest that the Censorship Board was rather clueless about the effects of certain Hip Hop expressions.

A strong connection between South Africa and the United States is that it was the descendants of a people who had experienced and endured trauma after trauma after trauma. So Hip Hop provided a therapeutic outlet for young people on both sides of the Atlantic to be able to fashion identities, different kinds of identities out of this alienation. Where on the one side someone could be Grandmaster Flash as opposed to whatever the State said you should be called, or identities that are accompanied by white supremacists capitalist patriarchal ideologies. As trivial as it might seem, you are fashioning identities. There's a yearning to tap into humanity and creativity.⁶¹

Veteran Hip Hop artists, such as Ariefdien, attribute the rise of Rap in the Cape to Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's song, "The Message" released in 1982.⁶² The song's lyrics detailed the deplorable conditions of housing projects in the South Bronx of New York, conditions to which budding artists on the Flats could relate.⁶³ Coupled with this were the visual displays in the music video of young African-American men in active defiance to these conditions, relatable conditions for the young Coloured men displaced at the Cape. They could identify with the black actors. They could also identify with the heavy police presence and the ultimate arrest of the entire troop at the very end of the video clip.

As the movement grew at the Cape, so too did its influence throughout the country. For example, the Afrikaans *Rymklets* movement, saw young people from the greater part of South Africa express themselves through Rap in various dialects of the Afrikaans language. *Spaza* also appeared in black township areas of Cape Town. This form mixed various languages including English, Afrikaans, Sotho and isiZulu, and is referred to as *tsotsitaal*.⁶⁴ While significant, the focus of this

⁶¹ Jared Ball in conversation with Shaheen Ariefdien & Rico Chapman, "From South Africa to the United States: The continuity of Black Consciousness Movements (Part2)", *iMixWhatILike*, http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=12931 (accessed 27th May 2017)

⁶² S. Ariefdien, interview with author, Cape Town via Skype, March 2017.

⁶³ S. Ariefdien, interview with author, Cape Town via Skype, August 2015.

⁶⁴ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion*, p. 160.

dissertation will be restricted to Hip Hop on the Cape Flats because of the complex ideological implications attached to the genre and the importance of the context in which it develops.

Renate Meyer, Felicity Swanson and Sean Field, have stressed the importance of restricting cultural studies such as this to specific geographical spaces because cultural expressions cannot be universalised.⁶⁵ Various scholars have published accounts of Hip Hop at the Cape. Professor of Media Studies, Adam Haupt,⁶⁶ youth worker and anthropologist, Shaheen Ariefdien,⁶⁷ cultural anthropologist, Marlon Swai,⁶⁸ social linguist Quentin Williams,⁶⁹ anthropologist Remi Warner,⁷⁰ and ethnomusicologist Lee Watkins,⁷¹ have engaged with various moments within Hip Hop culture in the Cape. These accounts have been used to provide supporting evidence throughout this dissertation. Ncedisa Nkonyeni provides a detailed exploration of Hip Hop's earliest formations in the Cape.⁷² Warner also suggests that the genre proliferated at the Cape because of its geographical positioning at the intersection of "East and West". He states:

⁶⁵ "Preface", R. Meyer, F. Swanson & S. Field (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2007), p. vii.

⁶⁶ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2012).

⁶⁷ Ariefdien has written two seminal texts which will contribute to this study: "DAALAH CAPE FLATS: HIP HOP, RESISTANCE AND COLOUREDNESS" is both a memoir and engagement with Hip Hop's history in Cape Town. The other text is framed as an intergenerational conversation alongside Dr. Marlon Swai titled, "Putting two heads together: A cross-generational conversation about Hip Hop in South Africa"

⁶⁸ M. Swai and S. Ariefdien: "Putting two heads together: A cross-generational conversation about Hip Hop in South Africa", P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader* (African World Press, New Jersey, 2011).

⁶⁹ Q. Williams: "The Enregisterment of English in Rap Braggadocio: a study from English-Afrikaans bilingualism in Cape Town: The ambiguous role of English as rap spreads globally in bilingual communities ", *English Today*, 28(2), 2012, pp. 54-59.

⁷⁰ R. Warner: "Colouring the Cape space problem: a hip hop identity of passions", P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader*, pp. 119-252.

⁷¹ L. Watkins: "Simunye: we are not one: Ethnicity, difference and the Hip Hoppers of Cape Town", *Race & Class*, 43(1), 2001, pp. 29-44.

⁷² N. Nkonyeni: "Da struggle kontinues into the 21st century: Two decades of nation-conscious rap in Cape Town", R. Meyer, F. Swanson & S. Field (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2007).

Cape Town has long been a central hub of international traffic in commodities, peoples and cultures - known historically as the 'Tavern of the Seas' - its peoples, expressive cultures and famous neighborhoods (District Six for example) being distinctly imprinted with and by a cosmopolitan sensibility, as aurally and visually on display each year at the 'Coon Carnival'. Cape Town has continuing importance, as a transnational hub and entry point for cross-cultural currents.⁷³

Haupt's earliest work delineates the importance of the group, POC, especially during the political transition of the 1990s and the banning of their album, *The Age of Truth*, ironically during the period of political transition.⁷⁴ He also explains the transition to multilingual lyrics in the Hip Hop scene, thereby suggesting that the use of Afrikaans in Rap clearly gives Hip Hop at the Cape a local flavour. He further distinguishes between "commercial Hip Hop" and "underground Hip Hop", suggesting that the latter is more authentic and untethered by the influences of the commercial industry. He argues, "despite the seeming delegitimizing of hip-hop, conscious hip-hop continues to have underground appeal and is certainly employed as a tool in marginal spaces, such as Cape Town, South Africa."⁷⁵ It is here that *Knowledge of the Self* is directly linked to contested notions of Coloured identity formation and negotiation and the reclaiming of indigenous identities in a post-apartheid South Africa. *Afrikaaps*, a variant of Afrikaans particular to the Cape, for example, was legitimised when used in local Hip Hop.⁷⁶ Previously marginalised indigenous identities were also re-ignited by Rap. In 2010, for example, Cape Town based, League of Shadows, released the song entitled *KhoeSunz*. Rappers Sammy "Paddastoel" Sparks and Garlic

⁷³ R. Warner: "Colouring the Cape space problem: a hip hop identity of passions", P. Khalil Saucier, (ed.) *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader* (African World Press, New Jersey, 2011), p. 7.

⁷⁴ A. Haupt: "Rap and the articulation of resistance: An exploration of subversive cultural production during the early 90's with particular reference to Prophets of Da City", MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1995, pp. 6.

⁷⁵ A. Haupt: *Hip Hop in the Age of Empire: Cape Flats Style*, p. 7.

⁷⁶ The 2011 theatre production Afrikaaps, which featured prominent Cape Town based poets and rappers explored the roots of Afrikaans and further unpacked the historical position from the Cape. For more information regarding stage production and the documentary which was made in accordance with the production. See J. Schuster: "Afrikaans on the Cape Flats: Performing cultural linguistic identity in Afrikaaps", MA Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2016; M. Van Heerden: "AFRIKAAPS: A CELEBRATORY PROTEST AGAINST THE RACIALIZED HEGEMONY OF 'PURE' AFRIKAANS", MA Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2017.

“Knoffel Bruin” Brown embrace their own *Nama*⁷⁷ cultural heritage and spread social awareness to their audience.⁷⁸ Similar interventions were made by other important and lesser discussed groups such as Black Noise, Godessa, Parliament and Brasse Vannie Kaap (BVK)⁷⁹ who produced the track, *Kaap Van Storms* (Cape of Storms), in 1997.⁸⁰

It is through the initial findings of writer and academic, Swai, in collaboration with Ariefdien, that Mitchells Plain becomes synonymous with the South Bronx of the late 1970s and baptised the birthplace of Hip Hop at the Cape and South Africa.⁸¹ After much criticism, Swai later clarifies this tribute by stating that Hip Hop developed more rapidly and was more visible, and this, for him, makes it the birthplace of the unfolding Hip Hop culture at the Cape.⁸² Here Swai refers to the public gatherings or ciphers that would carry a Hip Hop centred focus in Mitchells Plain, commonly referred to as park-jams and the earliest known Graffiti murals. Ariefdien believes that the debate is ongoing. While Grassy Park is in close contention of this accolade, arguments have been made that the numbers were more significant in Mitchells Plain, largely because of its greater geographical space.⁸³ Mitchells Plain Rapper, Garlic Brown has added:

There is a big history of Hip Hop in Mitchells Plain, each neighbourhood was known for something. The graf-artists [graffiti artists] would come from West-Ridge, the rappers would come from Lentegeur and Beacon Valley as well as the *B-boys*. Every place would come with a different flavour adding their own distinct style to the Cape Town Hip Hop culture.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ A Southern African language which is predominantly spoke in the Northern Parts of South Africa, particularly on the border between South Africa and Namibia.

⁷⁸ This is further investigated in Chapter 4.

⁷⁹ The group's name that translates to "Brothers From The Cape" is a pioneering Afrikaans Rap group who produced 4 albums in Afrikaaps.

⁸⁰ Brasse Vannie Kaap: *Kaap Van Storms*. Ghetto Ruff Records, 1997.

⁸¹ M. Swai & S. Ariefdien: “Putting two heads together: A cross-generational conversation about Hip Hop in South Africa”, P. Khalil Saucier, (ed.) *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader*, p. 224.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 119-252.

⁸³ Shaheen Ariefdien, interview with author, 14 March 2015.

⁸⁴ Garlic Brown, interview with author, 20 February 2015.

Clearly there is little consensus. Needless to say, there appears to be a melting pot of influences emanating from these peripheral suburbs. Dennis-Constant Martin, also refers to the popularity of Rap in, *Sounding the Cape* (2013). He states that, “In Cape Town, youth wanting to bring something new into the musical landscape and, when looking for a vehicle for their concerns and aspirations, turned to Rap instead”.⁸⁵ He adds that movie theatres were spaces for live, and therefore formal, performances.⁸⁶ In the post-forced removals era at the Cape, displaced youth also frequented certain clubs such Club T’zers and later Planet Base (The Base). Contributors to this anthology, Rico Chapman and Shaheen Ariefdien also discuss aspects of Hip Hop, youth activism and the impact of political and social contexts upon Coloured identity.⁸⁷ However, the emphasis on the peculiarities of Cape Hip Hop are heavily criticised by Daniel Kunzler.⁸⁸ He suggests that Rap is a vital avenue in rediscovering broader African identities (not just South African or Capetonian), and he questions the importance given to certain Cape Town Rappers, such as veteran group, Prophets of Da City (POC). He further argues that focussing on the Black Consciousness element of Rap is obsolete for the new generation of South African Hip Hop millennials. One could argue, in the footsteps of historian Eric Hobsbawm, context had a direct impact on the making of a Hip Hop culture in the Cape and eventually South Africa. Secondly, awareness campaigns as well as themes in lyrics and productions, were determined by the frustrations of the time in that very space. Therefore, these changes must be carefully plotted on an historical timeline

⁸⁵ D. Martin: *Sounding the Cape, Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa* (African Minds, Somerset West, 2013), p. 294.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁸⁷ Jared Ball in conversation with Shaheen Ariefdien & Rico Chapman, “From South Africa to the United States: The continuity of Black Consciousness Movements (Part2)”, *iMixWhatILike*, http://therealnews.com/i2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=12931 (accessed 27 May 2017).

⁸⁸ D. Kunzler: “South African Rap Music, Counter Discourses, Identity, and Commodification Beyond the Prophets of Da City”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37(1), 2011, p. 35.

to reflect probable cause and effect. Certainly, POC were not the only group in existence at the time, therefore adequate attention should be given to other artists.⁸⁹ Furthermore, one could pose a rather counterfactual question. If it were not for the political system of the 1980s, would Hip Hop at the Cape, and in South Africa, have had a vastly different trajectory? It is here that the overarching element of *Knowledge of the Self* becomes important as it pertains to the pervasive space occupied by the vast majority of Hip Hop protagonists at the time, Coloureds. Lastly, in the age of the hash-tag in contemporary youth protests in the country, meticulous contextualising of Black Consciousness movements is even more relevant.

The history of Coloureds at the Cape is vast and somewhat contentious.⁹⁰ During apartheid, Coloured intellectuals themselves were rather divided on what it meant to be Coloured or on what strategy to adopt in the advent of declining political and social rights for the racial group as a whole.⁹¹ The Coloured youth too were at a loss. It is in this context that one notices the proliferation of Coloured gangs on the Cape Flats, argued to be one of the ways in which youths were reacting to their newfound position in the urban periphery of Cape Town.⁹² Wilfried Scharf specifically

⁸⁹ This inspired Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁹⁰ Please refer to I. Goldin: *Making race: the politics and economics of Coloured identity in South Africa* (Longman, London, 1988); H. Giliomee: *Nog altyd hier gewees: Die Storie van 'n Stellenbosse Gemeenskap* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2007); T. Keegan: *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1996); G. Lewis: *Between the wire and the wall: a history of South African "coloured" politics* (St Martin's Press, New York, 1987); J. S. Marais: *The Cape Coloured People, 1652-1937* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1957); C. Saunders: *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on race and class* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1988); Z. Erasmus: *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2001); M. Adhikari: "The product of civilization in its most repellent manifestation: Ambiguities in the racial perception of the APO, 1909-1923", *Journal of African History*, 38, 1997, pp. 283-300; V. Bickford-Smith: "Black Ethnicities, Communities and Political expression in Late Victorian Cape Town", *The Journal of African History*, 36(3), 1995, pp. 443-465.

⁹¹ M. Adhikari: "Hope, Fear, Shame, Frustration: Continuity and Change in the expression of coloured Identity in White Supremacist South Africa, 1910-1994", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(3), 2006, pp. 467-487.

⁹² See for example B. Dixon, & L. Johns: "Gangs, Pagad and the State: Vigilantism and Revenge Violence in the Western Cape", *Violence and Transition Series*, 2, 2001; I. Kinnes: "From Urban Street Gangs to Criminal Empires: The Changing Face of Gangs in the Western Cape", *Institute for Security Studies Monograph Series*, 48, 2000; D. Pinnock: *Gangs, Rituals and Rites of Passage* African Sun Press, Cape Town, 1997); D. Pinnock: *The Brotherhoods*,

discusses gangs on the Cape Flats in the 1980s.⁹³ This is not to suggest that gang culture was only prevalent at the Cape nor that this was the only avenue for self-expression.⁹⁴ On the contrary, it is in this context that some frustrated youth turned towards Hip Hop in union with their black brothers and sisters, both at home and abroad, and in defiance of the state imposed racial classification. One cannot accurately determine whether some made use of both Hip Hop and gangsterism as mediums of expression or whether they were motivated by ideological standpoints or simple teenage rebellion. Needless to say that by 1995, reclaiming of the black heritage is explicitly outlined in the lyrics of POC's "Black Thing":

The term 'coloured' is a desperate case
 Of how the devils divided us by calling us a separate race.
 They call me 'coloured' said my blood isn't pure,
 But G,
 I'm not yukking my insecurity.
 So I respond to this and ventilate my mental state
 With Black Consciousness...
 And I believe in
 Each one teach one reach one
 From the heart
 'cause that's where the beats are from...
 But racism's a trap and the nation seems to lack knowledge of self.
 But it means, what it seems we're attracting anything but a black thing.⁹⁵

Shaheen Ariefdien clearly rejects the racial classification of the past and clearly locates Hip Hop at the Cape within the broader Black Consciousness movement. However, this could rather reflect

Street Gangs and State Control in Cape Town (David Philip, Cape Town, 1984); D. Pinnock: "Breaking the Web: Gangs and Family Structures in Cape Town", D. Davies & M. Slabbert (eds.), *Crime and Power in South Africa* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1985), pp. 87-102; D. Pinnock: "Stone Boys and the Making of a Cape Flats Mafia", B. Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, Community, and Conflict* (Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 143-165.

⁹³ W. Schärf: "The Resurgence of Urban Street Gangs and Community Responses in Cape Town during the Late Eighties", D. Hansson & D. Van Zyl (eds.), *Towards Justice: Crime and State Control in South Africa* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1990).

⁹⁴ Gangs were also prevalent in Gauteng, and have much earlier histories. See for example, C. Glaser: *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Heinemann, Portsmouth, 2000); S. Mokwena: "The Era of the Jackrollers: Contextualising the rise of the youth gangs in Soweto", seminar paper presented at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 30 October 1991, available at <http://www.csvr.org.za/index.php/publications/1805-the-era-of-the-jackrollers-contextualising-the-rise-of-the-youth-gangs-in-soweto.html> (accessed 21 October 2017).

⁹⁵ Prophets of da City: "Black Thing" *Phunk Phlow*. Ghetto Ruff Records, 1995.

Kunzler's call for a unifying African identity in a post-apartheid era rather than the realities of a Hip Hop culture unfolding during times of political and social turmoil. For this reason, closer analysis of lyrics is desirable.

In the context of the fairly comprehensive literature on global Hip Hop trends and the establishment and development of Hip Hop at the Cape, this dissertation reflects on the manifestations of Breakdancing and Rap at the Cape from 1983 to 2015, namely the films, lyrics, places and cyber-releases purported to be of significance in this unfolding story. This is not in criticism of a largely oral recollection of this movement but rather a reflection on how these forms, through their message, could have had an impact on the genre and the people involved. It is through this analysis that one can better understand how Hip Hop artists at the Cape negotiated anti-establishment sentiment, why they chose those spaces to perform and what particular consciousness-raising campaigns they promoted. Of great importance to the historian, how did these change over time?

1.2 Methodology

Hip Hop is a relatively young musical genre in South Africa. Archival evidence is therefore slim and personal recollections emanate mostly from the veterans of the discipline. The SABC archives were particularly restrictive in granting access to requested material (citing copyright infringements on American productions) therefore personal collections of various artists had to be consulted. These included vinyls, cassettes, posters, magazines and articles. It goes without saying that this personal memorabilia could reflect their own interest and not be representative of all aspects of the Hip Hop movement. Meticulous perusal of newspapers and magazines at the

National Library in Cape Town also provided a snapshot view of the unfolding art form. These mediums are also fraught with theoretical limitations. Music magazines were particularly useful for the permutations observed in the early nineties.

Ster-Kinekor and other movie houses were quite forthcoming about the films considered to be the impetus behind the Hip Hop movement. Three films in particular are discussed in this dissertation: *Style Wars* (1983), *Wild Style* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984). Little statistical information could be obtained on film distribution or audience attendance, however, this is of little consequence as it has been determined that bootlegging and home viewings were quite prolific at the time. Censorship Board reports were obtained from the National Archives of South Africa, Cape Town repository, hereafter referred to as KAB.

Bush Radio was a community radio station that was responsible for broadcasting some of the earliest Hip Hop music from Cape Town during the nineties. Access was granted to their sporadic and uncatalogued archives based in Salt River, hereafter referred to as BRA. Compact discs of old shows and community campaigns were studied. Of particular interest were cassette recording of prominent figures such as Trevor Manuel, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Cheryl Carolus, Breyten Breytenbach, Kereopetse Kgositse and lectures by educational figures such as Neville Alexander were present on audio cassette.

One of the greatest challenges on a personal level is my own involvement in Hip Hop and with the Hip Hop community of the Cape. Initial research observations were admittedly biased and negotiating the minefield between academic endeavour and professional involvement proved to be

strenuous. This was particularly prevalent during interviews with veterans of the genre. My place within the community as well as my affiliation with Stellenbosch University was met with trepidation. One respondent in particular expressed his annoyance at the distance placed between an academic account of Hip Hop and the practitioners of Hip Hop. These restrictions made unpacking the notion of a single Hip Hop community at the Cape almost impossible to challenge within this academic study.

An important source of information remained oral interviews. The memories of Hip Hop Headz allow the reader to understand the importance of Hip Hop as a culture from a particular sub-section of the community, namely the performers. It is apt to therefore reflect on the notion of subjectivity. According to professor of history, Lynn Abrams, “subjectivity refers to the constituents of an individual's sense of self, his or her identity informed and shaped by experience, perception, language and culture”.⁹⁶ She adds, “in the oral history context we are especially interested in how the interviewee constructs an identity, or subject position”. In this study, the artist firmly locates him or her self within the discipline highlighting their own contributions to the genre. Questions arise about memories and perceived contributions. Oral historian Alessandro Portelli states: “In oral history, in fact, we do not simply reconstruct the history of an event but also the history of its memory, the ways in which it grows, changes, and operates in the time between then and now”.⁹⁷ He adds: “at the centre of this memory lies a false memory”.⁹⁸ This was definitely a consideration

⁹⁶ L. Abrams: *Oral History Theory* (Routledge, New York, 2007), p. 54.

⁹⁷ A. Portelli: “What makes Oral History different”, L. Del Giudice (ed.), *Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans* (St Martins Press, New York. 2009), p. 28.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

when conducting oral interviews with participants so involved in the making of Hip Hop at the Cape.

Another theoretical consideration is using film as an historical source. This is specifically of importance in Chapter Two. Film is one of the earliest manifestations of Hip Hop at the Cape. Film can romanticize situations, have added an unnecessary dramatic effect and even entice audiences to act in certain ways.⁹⁹ It has the ability to “distort reality, and for disguising discontinuities in its recording of events”.¹⁰⁰ It can even recreate nostalgia in order to entice audiences.¹⁰¹ Media hype that is created around a film’s release may even skew the quality of a film.¹⁰² Professor of history, Robert Rosenstone mentions two avenues of engagement that focusses on film as historical sources, namely incident and altercation. Rosenstone writes that “altercation changes documentable historical fact by restructuring incidents or events (altering time, place, participants), while invention freely creates characters and incidents”.¹⁰³ He further argues that in order for history to be recorded and interpreted on film in a way that allows the cinematic language to work, even the most accurate *altercations* of history require small doses of invention. It does, however, have the ability to demonstrate societal complexities, allowing audiences to engage with distant societies. In the 1980s, marginalised youths engaged with such films because they could identify not only with the fictitious characters but could relate with the conditions in far-off places. Content was not about reality but rather a dream to which they could aspire. Escapism and

⁹⁹ R. Rosenstone: *Visions of the past, the challenge of film to our idea of history* (Harvard University Press, London, 1995), p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ W. Hughes: “The evaluation of film as historical evidence”, P. Smith (ed.), *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1976), p. 59.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁰² R. Rosenstone: *Visions of the past, the challenge of film to our idea of history*, p. 30.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

regaining some sense of personal power informed their reading of these films. As Rosenstone mentions:

the familiar, solid world of history on the page and equally familiar but more ephemeral world history on the screen are similar at least in two ways: they refer to actual events, moments, and movements from the past, and at the same time partake of the unreal and the fictional, since both are made out of sets of conventions we have developed for talking about where we human beings have come from (and also where we are and where we think we are going).¹⁰⁴

Film is therefore an important portal for audiences to experience the lives of others. As professor in film and history, William Hughes, explains:

the visual content of a film may provide important clues. Architectural styles, landmarks, the level of technological development, modes of transportation, fashions, furniture and other decorative items, placards, symbols, uniforms, even patterns of language and behaviour, are useful indicators for the historian who is trying to place his footage chronologically or geographically.¹⁰⁵

The ability of film to inform audiences in this manner is referred to as “surfaces of reality”. Hughes writes that “feature films are done in strikingly realistic style, many observers - critics and theorists, as well as large audience - see a direct connection between the images on screen and the real world”.¹⁰⁶ Hughes further explains that sounds and the look of a particular sequence of images can contribute to audience’s unpacking and understanding the subject matter of film through a historical context. Thus adding “historical value” to the audience’s engagement with the film.

The final important element of film that contributes significantly to this discussion is the music or soundtrack that can be engaged with in film. Many participants in this study have discussed the influence of songs within Hip Hop-centred movies which gave them insight into Hip Hop music

¹⁰⁴ R. Rosenstone: *History on Film/Film on History* (Pearson Longman, Great Britain, 2006), p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ W. Hughes: “The evaluation of film as historical evidence”, P. Smith (ed.), *The Historian and Film*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

and the broader culture of expression within the United States. In this instance, the above mentioned engagements with film also translate through the music present within the film. Therefore during this discussion, the importance of the music within the films will be highlighted and explored as a contributable element in the making of the earliest Hip Hop Culture in the Cape.

It should be stated that the case studies presented in this dissertation are a select sample of some of the most prolific artists of the Cape scene. Artists from other areas of the country and from the neglected art forms include Graffiti artists such as MakOne, Falko, Mantis, Fok Alles, Prefix99, NardStar, Aple, Brush, FAITH47, ICE and TOE.¹⁰⁷ This study is by no means a comprehensive study of Hip Hop artistry in the Cape but a simple reflection on some of the most palpable aspects between 1983 and 2015.

1.3 Chapter Outline

There are three noticeable time periods in which various Hip Hop expressions manifested at the Cape.

Chapter 2: The Role of Film in the Early Establishment of a Hip Hop culture at the Cape, 1983-1984 investigates the audio-visual imports which are purported to have made a direct impact on veteran Hip Hop Headz at the Cape. This chapter evaluates the elements which could have possibly motivated such a movement.

¹⁰⁷ M. Olckers: *Painting Cape Town: Graffiti from South Africa* (Shelflife, Cape Town, 2013), p. 4.

Chapter 3: “Hearing Cats Spit”: Local Venues, Radio Broadcasts and Television, 1986-2013, reflects on the development of Hip Hop performers and the spaces in which they spread their message. The chapter will also trace the shift from radio to television broadcasts, with a specific focus on Bush Radio, The HeadWarmaz show, HIV HOP 2000, The Alchemy Workshops and CLEAN; and finally the DSTV channel MK89.

The final content chapter, **Chapter 4: The YouTube Generation 2011-2015**, seeks to unpack the process of certain Cape Town based artists who addressed particular local social conditions through their self-produced and uploaded online videos. These videos bypassed the normal television curated playlists and thus created their own digital followings. This marked a new platform of engagement beyond the conventional radio and television networks. Attention will be given to the works of Die Getties, Jitsvinger, Niko10long, Garlic Brown, Dookoom and Dope Saint Jude.

Chapter 2

The Role of Film in the Early Establishment of a Hip Hop Culture at the Cape, 1983-1984

Contemporary Hip Hop artists have largely attributed the rise of a Hip Hop culture in the Cape to specific cinematographic releases in the country. These include both Kung Fu films broadcast on television as well as Hollywood productions released in local cinemas but largely viewed in informal settings. This chapter will introduce the films purported to have left a lasting impression on contemporary local Hip Hop artists. Secondly, film reviews will be presented, followed by how the apartheid state dealt with these particular productions from censorship to circulation. Lastly, a detailed analysis of the film will foreground the themes of each production, which have contributed to the unfolding Hip Hop culture at the Cape. This chapter will conclude by determining whether the content of these films did indeed contribute to Hip Hop culture in the Cape or whether they have rather become a figment of a nostalgic contemporary Hip Hop identity in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Historian Robert Rosenstone poses the question, “With their varying approaches to history on the screen, each of these types of film makes somewhat different assumptions about historical reality, about what is important for us to know of the past”.¹ This question therefore highlights an important subjectivity which film makers are afforded when recreating historical narratives. They

¹ R. Rosenstone: *History on Film/Film on History* (Pearson Longman, Great Britain, 2006), p. 15.

have a particular creative licence which hones into various historical events through highlighting selected narratives within film. In this case, film can be viewed as an important medium to retell and re-invoke a sense of importance pertaining to certain historical events. In the case of this dissertation, film can be viewed as an important cultural resource which informed audiences regarding another subcultural phenomenon which emerged in a completely different context.

In this instance, Rosenstone's thoughts regarding film as a historical document are fitting when evaluating the effect of film on the development of Hip Hop within the Cape. In various contexts, film (whether fictionalized drama or documentary) have involved the illustration of historical events as a means of social education and cognizance regarding a particular history.² This can be related to Hip Hop films which were viewed as avenues of history and education regarding the reach and influence of Hip Hop culture. Rosenstone highlights that factual recollection is important when film and history are connected.³ With the critical response to films, more factors are at play beyond the historical facts. The components of screenplay within film brings various new aspects into consideration when a movie is being viewed. As Rosenstone recollects, "the power of history on the screen emanates from the unique qualities of the medium, its abilities to communicate not just literally (as if any historical communication is entirely literal), not just realistically (as if we can realistically define realism) but also, in Lerner's words, 'poetically and metaphorically'".⁴ Here Rosenstone through the assistance of historian Gerda Lerner indicates that the engagement with

² R. Rosenstone: *History on Film/Film on History*, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

film is a holistic process. Therefore it can be noted that the engagement with film is layered according to the setting, accompanying soundscapes and acting. When understanding film through this lens, the engagement and excitement towards Hip Hop films and the presented elements of the culture become clearer, especially when understanding the contribution of film to the development of Hip Hop within the Cape.

Film is therefore viewed by Rosenstone as broadening the historical vocabulary when engaging with particular moments through movies and the depiction of history within film.⁵ Film therefore has the ability to make history “more complex, interrogative, and self-conscious”⁶.

2.1 Contemporary Artist Reflect on their Childhood Experiences: Film and Music

Historically, the relationship between African-Americans and Cape Town stretches back to 1865, when the confederate ship, *The Alabama*, anchored itself in Table Bay. The folk song, *Daar Kom Die Alabama* (There Comes the Alabama) was created to celebrate the ship and its patrons who were settling in Cape Town.⁷ This was further enhanced in the 20th century when Marcus Garvey’s ideas of reclaiming Africa as a homeland emerged and when he established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Representatives were encouraged to immigrate and some settled in the northern suburbs of Cape Town.⁸

⁵ R. Rosenstone: *History on Film/Film on History*, p. 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ M. Duby: “Reclaiming indigenous knowledge through a Cape Jazz lens”, *Journal of Music Research in Africa*, 11(1), 2014, p. 99

⁸ R.T. Vinson: “‘Sea Kaffirs’ ‘American Negroes’ and the gospel of Garveyism in the Early Twentieth Century in Cape Town”, *The Journal of African History*, 47(2), 2006, p. 283.

Cultural artefacts arrived at the Cape from the 19th century. However, the greatest contribution to a local artistry can be traced to the arrival of cassettes in the latter half of the 20th century. Historically, port cities have long been considered “cultural melting pots”.⁹ People of colour in the Cape, saw African-Americans as agents of modernity bringing new understandings of technology into Africa.¹⁰ Although not clear when veteran artists became aware of this connection, Shaheen Ariefdien explicitly notes:

There is a shared history that made it possible and more importantly since the late 1800s – some say before then – there's been contact with African-American musicians. African-American musicians were the cleaning and cooking crew in a lot of the confederate ships from the States during the Civil War and all of that kind of *kak*. And some of them, for whatever fucking reason, found themselves in Cape Town.¹¹

David Coplan echoes this geographical link.¹² If this longstanding connection was already in existence and Hip Hop became popular in America from 1976, why did it take another 7 years to arrive in the Cape? It is here that one notices the importance of visual stimuli such as film in the propagation of ideologies and art forms.

American professor of film studies, Kimberley Monteyne, has brought attention to the importance of film and Hip Hop in the American context.¹³ Historically, there exists a shared feeling of

⁹ C. Miller: “Julle kan ma New York toe gaan, maar ek bly innie Manenberg: an oral history of Jazz in Cape Town from mid-1950s to the mid-1970s”, R. Meyer, F. Swanson & S. Field (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (HSRC, Cape Town, 2007), p. 145.

¹⁰ R.T. Vinson: “‘Sea Kaffirs’ ‘American Negroes’ and the gospel of Garveyism in the Early Twentieth Century in Cape Town”, *The Journal of African History*, 47(2), 2006, p. 283.

¹¹ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, 25 April 2017.

¹² D. Coplan: “The African Musician and the development of the Johannesburg Music Industry 1900-1960”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5(2), 1979, p. 148.

¹³ K. Monteyne: *Hip Hop on Film: Performance Culture, Urban Space, and Genre Transformation in the 1980s* (Mississippi University Press, USA, 2013), p. 114.

oppression between young people in The Bronx and Mitchells Plain dating back to the 1980s. This perceived shared heritage is located in the street culture in its purest form, and not necessarily in the commercial tenets of contemporary Hip Hop artistry.

Ariefdien explicitly draws parallels between these two geographical spaces, stating that “Mitchells Plain was like The Bronx, we even looked like the people from there. I remember checking the people from that side who would appear on music videos. I was always like, these *mense* [people] look like they [sic] from Cape Town”.¹⁴ He adds:

Although hip hop in South Africa can be traced to the early 1980s, the cultural exchange between Southern Africa, the Caribbean and black America can be traced back a few centuries. Since the final days of formal slavery, *coloureds* were introduced to and attracted to the ‘music and dance styles of black North America and West Indian sailors, adventurers and minstrel troupes who displayed talents in Cape Town.¹⁵

Professor Duncan Brown illustrates the factors that allowed for the incubation of Rap as a Hip Hop element in his book, *To Speak Of This Land: Identity and Belonging in South Africa and Beyond* (2006). He states that Rap was from the start a form expressing urban identity and agency. “North American blacks, Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Caribbean people with roots in other postcolonial contexts reshaped their cultural identities and expressions in a hostile, technological sophisticated, multi-ethnic, urban terrain”.¹⁶ The Cape Flats was a hostile environment, largely

¹⁴ S. Ariefdien: “Dalah Cape Flats: Hip Hop, Resistance and Colouredness”, S. Essof & D. Moshenberg (eds.), *The New Calculus of Dignity* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2011), p. 8.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶ D. Brown: *To Speak Of This Land: Identity and Belonging in South Africa and Beyond* (University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Natal, 2006), p. 156.

Coloured and lack of resources meant that limited technological equipment gave rise to alternative methods by which Hip Hop products could be disseminated.

The shared heritage between the previously oppressed township communities of Cape Town, South Africa and the African-American community in the South Bronx, carry significant parallels. This is reiterated by Remi Warner. He draws on the similarities of displacement caused by the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Slum Clearance Program that took place within the United States. The process of forced relocation inflicted by governmental policies during the early seventies and eighties had a direct impact on the cultural form of expression channelled into Hip Hop as a platform of expression. Warner highlights this process by writing:

The experiential sharing of a brutal process of communal destruction and relocation, in the aftermath of government-sponsored and executed ‘urban renewal’ projects. The overlapping policy rationales of such projects on both sides of the Atlantic (engaged below) are in many ways illustrative of the relative non-exceptionalism of racialized urban development policies in South Africa, as compared to other (post)industrialized urban metropolises.¹⁷

This illustrates the avenue of expression that Hip Hop afforded young people in displaced communities across the spectrum. The realities that many youths on the Cape Flats were exposed to, were aided by an oppressive apartheid regime that enforced separate development and thus allocating most of the country's resources to the white minority. These shared conditions would make audiences more susceptible to drawing on these parallels when “seeing” their realities reflected on screens.

¹⁷ R. Warner: “Colouring the Cape Space Problem: A Hip Hop Identity of Passions”, P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader* (African World Press, New Jersey, 2011), p. 120.

Ariefdien, who formed part of the internationally acclaimed Cape Town based Hip Hop crew, POC, reflects on how he was motivated into using Hip Hop as a form of expressing this frustration:

I checked *Beat Street* at Town Centre and then the million times after that it was all on Beta Max and VHS cassette, you know the Bootleg Networks [...] I'm pretty sure that I saw *Beat Street* in Town Centre [...] When we saw *Beat Street*, I wore those tennis player sweat bands around my head and arms.¹⁸

These films also introduced local audiences to specific “protest” songs. Dj “Real Rozzano” Davids mentions that he would wait for the credits at the end of films and this inspired him to actively search for the musical lyrics.¹⁹ Kung Fu films, actual Hip Hop related films and documentaries therefore made a significant impact on the development of Hip Hop at the Cape.²⁰

The most commonly identified Kung Fu films by local Hip Hop Headz include Fists of Fury (1972), Enter the Dragon (1973), Drunken Master (1978) and The 36th Chamber of Shaolin (1978). They were circulated on both formal and informal distribution networks within the Cape Flats and served as a precursor to films with a Hip Hop theme which appeared from the 1980s. Reception of these films echoed that of African-American youth across the Atlantic, also experiencing similar oppressive socio-political conditions during the 1970s. Lead characters, most notably Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, were often portrayed as unassuming heroes, enticing

¹⁸ S. Ariefdien: interview with author, 26 May 2016.

¹⁹ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

²⁰ The influence of Kung Fu movies on Hip Hop films has been illustrated through various authors such as M.T. Kato's *“From Kung Fu to Hip Hop: Globalization, Revolution and Popular Culture”* and the influence of Kung Fu within the African American community was explored by Amy Abugo Ongiri in their paper titled “HE WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE BRUCE LEE”: African Americans, Kung Fu Theater and Cultural Exchange at the Margin”.

audience's attention in the Cape. Despite the language barriers, these productions contained Hip Hop-influenced dance and art moves such as breakdancing.²¹

Professor emeritus of communication, Janet Steiger suggests that one of the features for interpreting reception to film is that, "contexts of social formations and constructed identities of the self in relation to historical conditions explain the interpretive strategies and affective responses of the readers".²² When exploring these factors amongst Cape Flats youth, the historical positioning of these young people fueled their responses to these visual texts. The displacement and systemic inequality that youth classified as Coloured under the apartheid racial hierarchy endured can be argued to be an influential factor that resulted in them viewing these films in a particular manner. In this instance, it provided a moment of escapism from the brutalities of a lived experience. The style of narrative within Kung Fu films also foreground themes of honour, betrayal and triumph.²³ Through tenacity, the protagonist could overcome and conquer.

Kung Fu films therefore appealed to people of colour (in this case, Coloured youth on the Cape Flats) due to this victorious narrative that the unassuming hero would embark on. The protagonist would usually be versed in some form of martial arts, embarking on a journey of revenge and earning respect from peers with some skilled form of fighting.²⁴

²¹ M. Morgan and D. Bennet: "Hip Hop and the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form", *Daedalus*, 140(2), 2011, pp. 176-196.

²² J. Steiger: "Film, Reception and Cultural studies", *The Centennial Review*, 36(1), 1992, pp. 84-104.

²³ A. Ongiri: "HE WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE BRUCE LEE": African Americans, Kung Fu Theater and Cultural Exchange at the Margins", *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 5(1), 2002, pp. 31-40.

²⁴ Y. Shu: "Reading the Kung Fu Film in an American Context: From Bruce Lee to Jackie Chan." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 31(2), 2010, pp. 50-59.

One factor that stimulated excitement and can be highlighted as a reason for the eager reception of both Kung Fu and later Hip Hop style movies is the manner in which the protagonists body was an avenue of expression. In the case of Kung Fu films, the protagonist would utilize the body as a means of defense, survival and victory. The body, therefore became a site of resistance and further highlighted the relentless nature of the protagonist's skill sets. As Coloured audiences on the Cape Flats engaged with these films, a resonance took place. A resonance that Amy Ongiri refers to as a "instrument for social justice".²⁵ Ongiri highlighted that when the body becomes a site for visual narratives in the way which Kung Fu films managed to achieve, this resonance further intrigues the world's oppressed populations.²⁶ The disciplined body becomes a mechanism of "performative resistance" and "creative self-defence" with minimal resistance.²⁷ It transcends geopolitical boundaries and unites the marginalised in what is described as a "downtrodden global ghetto."²⁸

Ongiri further illustrates that various creative martial arts styles which developed in Africa were exported to the rest of the world through Africans who travelled both voluntarily and involuntarily. One such form of martial arts is the Brazilian martial arts style known as Capoeira.²⁹ This infuses dance into a fighting style and therefore aesthetically portraying a rhythmical form of expression as well as defence. Breakdancing (one of Hip Hop's elements) has been influenced heavily by Capoeira, lending both dance styles and acrobatics from the Brazilian fighting style.

²⁵ A. Ongiri: "HE WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE BRUCE LEE": African Americans, Kung Fu Theater and Cultural Exchange at the Margins", *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 5(1), 2002, pp. 31-40.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

A Hip Hop crew who has achieved immense international success bringing many new audiences to Hip Hop music derived their name from a Kung Fu movie, *The Wu Tang Clan*.³⁰ Kung Fu films were loaded with martial arts fighting routines, with simply plotted storylines. Most importantly, the protagonists were people of colour – in stark contrast to the predictable plots of Hollywood films juxtaposing white heroes and black villains. Ariefdien confirms the impact Kung Fu films had on his self-awareness as a person of colour living in the context of apartheid on the Cape Flats. He compares these productions to those he was subjected to as a youth, particularly the James Bond series.³¹ The acrobatic movements of the actors inspired breakers or break-dancers (later this term would evolve into *B-Boy/B-Girl*). One dancer for the internationally recognized Hip Hop crew POC, Ramone “Ram-One” De Wet mentioned in a documentary, entitled *Hip Hop Revolution*, that growing up in Bishop Lavis during the eighties, Kung Fu Films had a direct influence on his perception of movement. Ram-One recalls that “Kung-fu films het my geinfluence om in ‘n way to move en om in ‘n battle te gaan met daai Kung- Fu gedagtes”.³²

Kung Fu Films therefore became another medium through which innovation in corporeal expression at the Cape filtered through from the outside. Actors such as Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan were particularly influential figures in the Cape. Dj “Real” Rozzano recalls:

Bruce Lee was always big. Having the posters on your wall and finding out what shops had the posters. CNA always had that big poster thing that you can flip through and see the different posters. When video came out, all Jackie Chan’s early stuff came out. We got to know Jackie in the eighties but we never knew Jackie actually came from the seventies. The flying shaolin stuff was huge. Even Jazzmo who was the beatboxer of Prophets of Da City, he had his own Kung Fu routine. He would speak like

³⁰ V. Pasha: “Bruce Lee and the anti-imperialism of Kung Fu: A Polycultural Adventure”, *Positions*, 11(1), 2003, p. 51.

³¹ S. Ariefdien: interview with author, 26 May 2016.

³² Kung-Fu films influenced me to move in a certain way and to enter a battle with those Kung-Fu ideas, *Hip Hop Revolution*. Directed by Naphia Cocks. Shamanic Organic Productions, Cape Town, 2007.

the *ouens* (guys) on the movie.³³

Here Rozzano indicates the importance of Kung Fu Films building on the idea that it was popular due to the protagonist being a person of colour, but more importantly that Kung Fu moves inspired aspiring Hip Hop artists to be innovative in their expressions. There is little doubt that mock battle scenes were particularly appealing. The peculiar dubbing technique in these films also provided a source of humour and escapism from depressing living conditions.

Dj Deon “Ready” D also recalls that Kung Fu films had a lasting impact. For him, it was the way in which one could fight back that inspired him to cut his mother’s broomsticks to model makeshift nunchakus (Okinawan martial arts weapon).³⁴ He adds: “the best part of Monday before school started, before the b-boying kicked off, you would discuss what movie you watched over the weekend. Then the guys would act it out. Everything was animated!”³⁵ These re-enactments and indeed the “heroes” and “villains” represented not only in Kung Fu films, but subsequent Hip Hop films, reinforce the gender bias in which only “real” men are being represented and mimicked. It is here that the importance of distinguishing between contemporary Hip Hop and Hip Hop as a protest genre, as discussed in Chapter 1, is relevant. While this anomaly should be further unravelled, like most revolutions, gender differences, or complete indifference, were of little consideration in the threat of a more prevailing force, namely political, social and economic oppression of a mass of people, regardless of gender.

³³ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

³⁴ D. Daniels: conversation with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

³⁵ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

Accompanying the popularity of music video television, the 1980s witnessed a new wave of Hip Hop filmmaking in the United States that subsequently landed and circulated in the Cape. These films would contribute to the awakening of a global Hip Hop culture, disseminating Hip Hop across the world, reaching the Cape Flats.³⁶

Hip Hop gained popularity amongst other artists such as photographer Martha Cooper and filmmakers such as Charlie Ahearn, who started documenting the development of the culture through film and video. Musician and civil rights activist, Harry Belafonte had also noticed the expressive powers that Hip Hop music contained. Thus motivating him to act as a producer for the film, *Beat Street*.³⁷

Ariefdien recalls that there were several foreign films which spoke to the broader Hip Hop culture of discontent and anti-establishment resistance. They focused on socio-political conditions of people of colour from different countries. He explains: “there were movies that were not necessarily Hip Hop but would depict the environment that created Hip Hop”. He adds:

If you look at stuff like police brutality, if you look at poverty, you look at how the state didn't give a fuck about people. It was through Hip Hop that we got to hear stories painted of an America that did not push Disneyland and Hollywood down our throats and that “Home of The Brave” shit. It was like whoa, this is real struggle and a *beweging*³⁸ that we could really identify with.”³⁹

Former HeadWarmaz host and Hip Hop Deejay, Andre “Big Dre” Maggot also makes a similar

³⁶ R. Warner: “Colouring the Cape Space Problem: a Hip Hop Identity of Passions”, P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader*, pp. 106-148.

³⁷ Harry Belafonte, 30th anniversary New York screening of *Beat Street*, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEwNc3ukm10> (accessed January 2017)

³⁸ Movement.

³⁹ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, Cape Town via Skype, March 2017.

observation. Here, one notices the manner in which the global Hip Hop culture was being entrenched. He states: "I felt connected to these movies. People similar to us, growing up in situations similar to ours and their surroundings were similar to ours, okay we didn't have as many buildings but they looked like us. The moves and the attitude made you feel like you could do something".⁴⁰

Three films in particular were of great importance for Hip Hop Headz interviewed in this study. *Style Wars* (1983), *Wild Style* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984) provided insight into Hip Hop cultures abroad. *Style Wars* was a documentary which focussed on Graffiti artists in New York City while *Wild Style* and *Beat Street* are considered Hip Hop musicals. All combined reality recollection and fiction.⁴¹ *Beat Street* however, is the only film that was officially released in South Africa. *Style Wars* and *Wild Style* were circulated amongst community networks. *Wild Style* however, was reviewed by the Film and Publications Board. It was subsequently released in video stores around the Cape.

Two contextual points of consideration need to be foregrounded before attention is given to these manifestations of the art form. Firstly, the socio-political context in which this occurred and secondly, the regulating of spaces in which they appeared.

⁴⁰ A. Maggot: conversation with author, Cape Town, 2016.

⁴¹ K. Monteyne: *Hip Hop on Film: Performance Culture, Urban Space, and Genre Transformation in the 1980s*, p. 114.

2.1.1 Cape Town in the 1980s

The Theron Commission of 1976 summarised the impact of apartheid legislation on Coloured communities in the Cape. Chaotic relocation to Coloured townships lacking infrastructure and avenues of entertainment led to the rise of criminal activity:

Instead of the families with higher values having a salutary influence on the other families in the new environment, the adults withdrew into greater isolation, while the juveniles learnt to smoke dagga and to take part in other ‘skolly’⁴² activities with the children of the new neighbours.⁴³

These conditions led to the growth of the Coloured rejectionist movement in the 1980s, with an increased interest in the redefinition of the self, according to a politically black ideology. On 28 August 1983 in the Rocklands Civic centre in Mitchells Plain, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was established, bringing an amalgamation of various organizations within the mass democratic movement, to counter the apartheid legislation instituted within South Africa. The UDF called upon mobilization from Cape Flats townships in order to strengthen its membership against the apartheid regime. Furthermore recruiting was done at the University of the Western Cape, which was a highly politicized institution during the 1980s. The popularity of Black Consciousness ideology post-1976 was a contributing factor to the growth of the Coloured rejectionist movement. From the formation of the UDF in 1983, an increasing amount of politicization was occurring among young people within the Cape Flats peripheral communities. The mass democratic movement within South Africa was furthering its anti-government protests

⁴² Gangsterism, discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

⁴³ R.P 38/1976 *Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Coloured Population Group* (Government Printer, Republic of South Africa, 1976), p. 294.

publicly.⁴⁴

Coupled with the changing political context, were social and economic restrictions imposed on Coloured communities on the Cape Flats which gave rise to the second point of consideration: informal spaces for entertainment and bootlegging systems.

2.1.2 Informal Entertainment Centres and Bootlegging

The venues in which films and performances could take place were limited and regulated by the apartheid state.⁴⁵ District Six, a notorious forced removals zone in Cape Town, had numerous bioscopes. They provided spaces in which people could watch state-sanctioned productions as well as providing entertainment spaces for youths. Cape Town writer, Richard Rive, remembers his time in District Six, attending various cinemas within the District. Rive recalls in his book *Writing Black* (1981) that he had the luxury of several outlets during his childhood, such as “the Star in Hanover street, the British in Caledon Street and the National in William Street, watching Bobby Breen and Zorro in these crowded auditoriums”.⁴⁶

By 1976, there were 86 cinemas for Coloured people in and around the Cape Flats.⁴⁷ These included The Luxurama (Wynberg), Monaco (Elsies River), Panorama (Elsies River), Arcadia

⁴⁴ J. Seekings: *The UDF. A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* (David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, 2000), p. 14.

⁴⁵ C. Miller: “Julle kan ma New York toe gaan, maar ek bly innie Manenberg: an oral history of Jazz in Cape Town from mid-1950s to the mid-1970s”, R. Meyer, F. Swanson & S. Field (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town*, p. 135.

⁴⁶ R. Rive: *Writing Black* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1981), p. 12.

⁴⁷ R.P 38/1976 Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Coloured Population Group, p. 293.

(Elsies River), Kismet (Athlone), The Scope (Elsies River), The Palace (Salt River) and The Gem (Salt River). There were a further 41 cinemas catering for mixed crowds. Only 21% of seats were reserved for the most populous racial group of Coloureds. Coupled with this was the financial cost of attending formal cinemas in the context of growing inequality and economic hardships, as well as hardening regulations on material allowable in these spaces.⁴⁸ However, black-market material was already in circulation. The copying and wider circulation of this material increased as technologies improved. In 1982, for example, Video Home Systems (VHS) was released in South Africa.⁴⁹

Bootlegging networks and the peer-to-peer distribution of visual content on the Cape Flats became more prevalent.⁵⁰ Informal screenings of ground-breaking films therefore proliferated. Dj “Ready” D, for example, remembers that his father would convert their house into a makeshift cinema hiring a projector and entertaining family and friends by showing a variety of movies.⁵¹ Dj “Real Rozzano” Davids even recalls befriending a video store clerk who copied the latest films for him. He would also set up an informal cinema in his home in Mitchells Plain, thus attracting Hip Hop enthusiasts from different neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats.⁵²

⁴⁸ One such example of the regulatory practices of the apartheid state can be seen in G. Paleker: “The B-Scheme subsidy and the ‘black film industry’ in apartheid South Africa, 1972–1990”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22(1), 2010, pp. 91-104.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ R. Warner: “Colouring the Cape Space Problem: a Hip Hop Identity of Passions”, P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader*, pp. 106-148; S. Kloppers: “Hip Hop graffiti art”, S. Nuttall & C. Michael (eds.), *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000), p. 183.

⁵¹ D. Daniels: conversation with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

⁵² R. Davids: communication with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

Bootlegging was not restricted to film. Deon “Ready D” Daniels remembers being exposed to Hip Hop through vinyl collections imported from the United States.⁵³ “Ready D” explains:

My first experience with Hip Hop was through music. Our neighbourhoods were dominated by music. My father had a hi-fi system. My sister, who was a teenager then, had many friends who were mobile Deejays. These were all young men who used to work for Safmarine⁵⁴ and all these boats and would have jobs like that. They would always come back with the newest trends and music. They used to have a portable turntable with a pile of records. In that pile there was *Rappers Delight* and *Kurtis Blow*.⁵⁵

Foreign Hip Hop paraphernalia often made its way to the shores of South Africa through these informal networks. This also led to a proliferation of bootlegging within the Cape.⁵⁶

The circulation of recorded video material amongst community networks resulted in the spread of Hip Hop material amongst young people located on the Cape Flats. These videos were an important avenue of Hip Hop education, providing visual cues as to how to perform Breakdancing, Rap, Deejaying and Graffiti.⁵⁷

Distribution and statistical evaluation of cultural products such as films and records in circulation at the Cape therefore has little significance on the actual impact made on the protagonists, who actively identified and assumed the roles of icons from abroad. As such, it seems more valuable to assess the actual content that is said to have made such a lasting impact on the rise of a Hip Hop

⁵³ Dj “Ready D” is a founding member of the influential Cape Hip Hop crew Prophets of Da City as well as Brasse Vannie Kaap. With over 30 years as a Hip Hop practitioner, “Ready D” has built and maintained various Hip Hop driven platforms. Now as a radio Deejay, “Ready D” broadcasts a Hip Hop show on GoodHope Fm radio, www.readyd.com.

⁵⁴ Formed in South Africa in 1946, Safmarine is a global shipping service that transports good across continents. <https://www.safmarine.com/> (1 March 2017)

⁵⁵ D. Daniels: personal communication with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

⁵⁶ D.C. Martin: *Sounding the Cape: Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa* (African Minds, Somerset West, 2013), p. 105.

⁵⁷ S. Kloppers: “Hip Hop graffiti art”, S. Nuttall & C. Michael (eds.), *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies*, p. 183.

culture at the Cape.

2.2 *Style Wars* (1983)

Style Wars is a 1983 documentary directed by Tony Silver focussing on Graffiti writers during the 1980's. In this time, Ed Koch, the mayor of New York, led an active campaign against graffiti art. Koch went as far as to launch various anti-graffiti campaigns on television and print-media. The documentary follows young graffiti artists around the city of New York and into the homes of their disapproving parents who ridicule their artistry and agree that it is no more than a public form of vandalism. Silver documents a moment within New York City's periphery, showcasing how young people displaced outside of the city formulate their expression through graffiti. *Style Wars* provides viewers insight into the various expressive elements of Hip Hop. Providing context to the expressions that are taking place during the film.

Within *Style Wars* the idea of communal recognition is portrayed to the viewer, illustrating the intricacy and inner-workings of Graffiti writers within New York City.⁵⁸ One defining moment within the film is an interview with a young 17-year-old writer, who goes by the name of Skeme, alongside his mother who opposes the "subculture", as she refers to it. Ahearn's film engages with the recognition bestowed upon writers within the community. In the interview Skeme explains that there is a distinctive moment of prestige and achievement when a graffiti writer goes "All-city". Skeme explains that "it's a matter of getting a tag on each line and each division. You know, it's

⁵⁸ It is important to note that Graffiti artists would refer to themselves as writers as they could "write" their names and thoughts in public spaces.

called, going all-city". He continues to explain amidst his mother's contestation:

It's a matter of bombing, knowing that I can do it. Every time I get into a train, almost every day I see my name. I say, "Yeah, you know it. I was there, I bombed it." It's for me. It's not for nobody else to see. I don't care-- I don't care about nobody else seeing it, or the fact if they can read it or not. It's for me and other graffiti writers, that we can read it. These other people who don't write, they're excluded. I don't care about them, you know? They don't matter to me. It's for us.⁵⁹

Here the young writer touches on the idea of recognizing himself through his bombing. More than this, he locates himself within a graffiti community, who can understand his work. The idea of group acknowledgement allows for further acceptance within circles and allows for the further challenging of systemic inequality through artistic endeavour. Professor of sociology Tricia Rose, explores this idea in her book titled, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* by writing that “group identity and individual development are equally central to graffiti writers’ practices”.⁶⁰

The name *Style Wars*, may have derived from the 80s film series which was extremely popular amongst audiences, *Star Wars*. Furthermore it could refer to the crafting of style through graffiti. The complexity of knowledge within the graffiti community is brought forward and explored through the imagination of these artists, who then bring their ideas and realities to life through art. During the film, style is a recurring theme that young people discuss and engage with, illustrating the personalized nature of its construction. Style therefore plays an important role in bringing about individual identity onto performance platforms where style is exhibited. The individual who

⁵⁹ *Style Wars*. Directed by T. Silver. Public Arts Films, New York City, 1983.

⁶⁰ T. Rose: *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Wesleyan University Press, United States, 1994), p.137.

undertakes this process of exhibiting their style incorporates a persona and alias under which they perform, affording them freedom through expression as well as redefining their identity. Within *Style Wars*, these identities are understood through the filmmakers' choice and use of interviews. While the finished product is therefore a construction, the freedom of expression is afforded to these young people and they are offered a space to challenge and escape the societal assumptions about their living conditions and the context they come from. Importantly, their message is shared across oceans.

This renaming of the self within a context that does not always celebrate these young people, allowed for their community (in this case young people who ascribed to Hip Hop culture and the elements which it is comprised of) to identify with each other. Both Rose and Monteyne address these ideas of urban youth renaming themselves in order to assume new identities within their immediate communities, allowing these identities to gain new acknowledgements. Throughout the film there are moments that highlight the collective recognition afforded by graffiti artists to each other, not necessarily understood by outsiders to the culture.

Monteyne refers directly to two scholars namely, Herbert Kohl and James Hinton. Referring to their ideas of young people from displaced communities renaming themselves, allowing them the freedom to reclassify themselves according to their own devices. She writes:

Herbert Kohl and James Hinton have argued that the ability to rename the self, facilitated by the practice of graffiti, takes on an urgent political dimension for urban youth. Once the renaming of the self has taken place, there is a commitment that occurs towards the identity and persona which is created. The persona or *Nom De Plume* becomes a personally constructed platform for a geo-political reflection to

occur. Hip Hop becomes a lens for young people to view society through. The recreation of the self and the expression thereof, would expose itself to be a powerful mechanism for geographically displaced people. The construction of style in its essence to communicate internalized frustration through graffiti within Hip Hop culture, refusal of the given or family name, and the adoption of a self-chosen name, or one selected by peers, insists upon a radical repudiation of the authority of the parent generation.⁶¹

The construction of style and a new identity would allow young people to view other contexts creating a cross-ocean solidarity amongst young people born into similar social situations.

Cape Town based Rapper, Garlic Brown who has now renamed himself Abadon Horseman,⁶² highlights the attractiveness of creating art despite public law enforcement not viewing graffiti as an art form. Garlic Brown recalled that two factors excited him about the film and made him want to practice Breakdancing and Graffiti when he saw *Style Wars*. He adds: "seeing how people across the ocean who looked like me were using their voices and using their creativity to fight against Babylon,⁶³ inspired me to want to do the same. Those people on that movie just looked free and looked as if no one could stop them from getting their message out".⁶⁴

Ariefdien suggests that *Style Wars* resembled a Kung Fu movie, calling it "a Kung Fu version of street youth and Hip Hop in New York". He praises the warrior manner in which the young artists

⁶¹ K. Monteyne: *Hip Hop on Film: Performance Culture, Urban Space, and Genre Transformation in the 1980s*, p. 116.

⁶² Garlic Brown possesses various alter-egos including Abadon Horseman. When asked what the difference between Garlic Brown and Abadon Horseman was, he indicated that he is now a trained swordsman. Seeing himself as a warrior within Hip Hop culture, protecting it against intruders who want to exploit and diminish the sanctity thereof. Garlic Brown therefore sees Hip Hop as a safe space for him to express himself and, through the character of Abadon Horseman, will rabidly protect the culture from any form of infiltration or attack. He has therefore declared himself a self-styled guardian of the culture.

⁶³ Referring to public law enforcement institutions such as the police and security forces.

⁶⁴ G. Brown: conversation with author, Mitchells Plain, May 2014.

perform their tasks and protect their craft".⁶⁵

Throughout this documentary, these young people are on a quest to define, carve out their individual style and even defend their craft in true Shaolin style. This expression, resilience and determination in the face of adverse political, social and economic conditions, inspired Cape youth to become *biters*.⁶⁶

2.3 Wild Style (1983)

Wild Style is an independent, low budget film created by Charlie Ahearn in 1983. The fictional film is presented as a documentary film, thus creating the impression that it is a recollection of actual events. Never officially released in Cape Town, it serves an example of a highly successful film within the informal networks established by the early Hip Hop veterans.⁶⁷

Wild Style follows the life of a Graffiti artist in New York City when Graffiti art was becoming recognised by filmmakers and photographers. Raymond a.k.a Zorro (Lee Quiñones) is a graffiti artist who believes Graffiti is a street art form and rejects the work of his fellow graffiti artists who begin to accept commissions from galleries and put their work on canvas. Zorro believes that this is not a legitimate stance for artists to take as galleries and their regulatory practices impact the authenticity of the artistic form. The film follows Zorro around and explores his Graffiti missions.

⁶⁵ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, May 2016.

⁶⁶ Hip Hop cantered term which refers to another individual who has adapted someone else's style. It is the Hip Hop equivalent of academic plagiarism.

⁶⁷ *Wild Style*: Directed by C. Ahearn. Submarine Entertainment, New York, 1983.

The impromptu shooting style provides the film with an unrehearsed and natural flow. Many scenes within the film seem unscripted due to this impromptu nature of film production. Zorro's ideology is that doing the art is about taking risks and doing the impossible in order to accomplish a Graffiti piece. Furthermore, his constant battle is against the current commodification of his art form, and trying to find ways to survive without accepting commissions to do public murals. This could be understood to be one person's rejection of capitalism in order to maintain their creative freedom.

Zorro receives acclaim from the rest of the community because of his individualised “*wild style*” referred to as “kinetic cubism.” This is a self-engineered style which explores a cubic style of writing. Ahearn cleverly casts amateurs in his production, adding to the authentic feel of a docudrama.⁶⁸ However, according to film critic David Gonzale, the film is said to have inspired Hip Hop culture not because it reflected a reality but rather because it provided a hope for the future.⁶⁹

Film critic Karen Jaehne applauds the manner in which art is brought alive in the production. She writes, “part of the fascination with the "lively arts" of graffiti and Rap music derives from the spontaneity of their expression”.⁷⁰ The growing underground Graffiti culture is also significantly showcased. It was through this film that Graffiti art was critically engaged with as a recognisable

⁶⁸ K. Jaehne: “Charles Ahearn: *Wild Style*”, *Film Quarterly*, 37(4), 1984, pp. 2-5.

⁶⁹ D. Gonzale”: “*Wild Style* at 25: A Film That Envisioned the Future of Hip-Hop Culture”, *New York Times*. 11 Nov. 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/12/nyregion/12wild.html> (accessed February 2017).

⁷⁰ K. Jaehne: “Charles Ahearn: *Wild Style*”, *Film Quarterly*, 37(4), 1984, p. 3.

art form. Kimberley Monteyne attributes the cult-like status of the film to its “innovative cinematic language”.⁷¹

On 1 August 1984, the South African Film and Publications board reviewed *Wild Style* to decide whether this film should be released to the public. Guided by Article 47 (2) of the Law of Publications (1974), certain expletives needed to be censored before the film could be released to the South African public. One reviewer, Y. Matrinovic recalled that the “dialogue (all in hard-to-follow Bronx dialect) is sprinkled with expletives that are never functional. They should all be removed”.⁷² He also suggests that it is riddled with “musical renditions by negro rhymesters which reflect the aspects of ghetto life”.⁷³ This is reiterated by reviewer, D. Postma.⁷⁴ A.E Loubser pointed out that the film was intended for a black audience adding that certain elements should therefore be adapted before it could be released.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Loubser reviews the film as a “graffiti kunstenaar se pogings om erkenning te kry en om genoeg te verdien in die proses. Konflik word geskep deur die feit dat graffiti ‘n vorm van vandalisme is, wat ook polities aangedra kan word en ander tye die moontlikheid om oninspirerende ghetto-omgewings op te vrolik”.⁷⁶ Here

⁷¹ K. Monteyne: *Hip Hop on Film: Performance Culture, Urban Space, and Genre Transformation in the 1980s*, p. 116.

⁷² KAB FPB R84/7/135 2(143) Information Directorate Publications. Review of *Wild Style*, Y. Martinovic, 1 August 1984.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ KAB FPB R84/7/135 2(143) Information Directorate Publications. Review of *Wild Style*, D. Postma, 1 August 1984.

⁷⁵ KAB FPB R84/7/135 2(143) Information Directorate Publications. Review of *Wild Style*, A. E. Loubser, 1 August 1984.

⁷⁶ Graffiti artist’s efforts to receive recognition and to earn enough in the process. Conflict arises due to the fact that graffiti is a form of vandalism, that can also be viewed as political and in other occasions carries the potential to beautify uninspiring ghetto environments, KAB FPB R84/7/135 2(143) Information Directorate Publications, Review of *Wild Style*, A. E. Loubser, 1 August 1984.

the reviewer is quite aware of the political undertones of the film but suggests that the potential for Graffiti to “beautify” grim locations could be a mitigating factor.

Loubser continues to add: “Die verhaal het min om die lyf en daar word nie ‘n goeie spanningslyn gehandhaaf nie. Die verloop word gestiem deur die eindeloze swart-mag klubtonele met gepaard gaande ritmiese musiek. Die film het min artistieke meriete”.⁷⁷ Again there is a clear indication of the political undertones and a complete dismissal of the artistic value. It is clear that the film was considered subversive enough not to officially allow it to be released in the public domain. Nevertheless, it was a hit within the informal networks because, much like *Style Wars*, it created an awareness of the similar conditions experienced by oppressed groups in the South Bronx, and offered an artistic outlet for pent up frustrations amongst frustrated youth in the Cape. Significantly, it provided artists such as Dj “Real Rozzano” Davids, not only lyrics but also Breakdance moves.⁷⁸

2.4 Beat Street (1984)

Beat Street was released in South Africa in 1984. It made a significant impact on the local Hip Hop scene because it introduced all four elements of Hip Hop, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Set in the South Bronx of New York City, *Beat Street* is a coming of age film following the lives

⁷⁷ The story has little substance and there is no dramatic thread that is maintained. The running time is steamed with endless black-power club scenes born out of rhythmical music. The film has little artistic merit. KAB FPB R84/7/135 2(143) Information Directorate Publications. Review of *Wild Style*, A. E. Loubser, 1 August 1984.

⁷⁸ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

of four friends who are figuring out their transition from adolescence to adulthood. These four young friends are all involved in the different aspects of Hip Hop culture. There is the older brother and aspiring Deejay/Rapper Kenny “Double K” Kirkland (Guy Davis) whose skill as a crowd controller and deejay is starting to be noticed by prominent members within the New York Hip Hop community. His younger brother, Lee Kirkland (Robert Taylor), is a fast-talking *B-boy* trying to impress his older brother and his friends with his command of Breakdancing. Throughout the film, Lee’s breakdancing becomes a talking point of the gathering. Their friend Ramon “Ramo” is a Graffiti artist whose character and story line carries similarity to the young people featured in *Style Wars*. The fourth friend in the crew is the business minded Chollie who plays a character inspired by the early life journey of Russell Simmons and contributes to the attention being focussed on Kenny “Double K”.⁷⁹ Chollie sees himself as the promoter/manager of Double K, creating opportunities for Double K by using his fast talking hustling skills to gain interest of clubs who are looking for Deejays to play a set and act as a Master of Ceremonies.⁸⁰

The South African Film and Publications Board reviewers, much like their counterparts reviewing *Wild Style*, had grave difficulties identifying the genre of this film. This is an indication of the absence of a definable Hip Hop culture at the Cape at the time. One reviewer, J. E Scholtemeyer

⁷⁹ The crew plays an important part in group identity formation within Hip Hop culture. Rose refers to the crew as “local source of identity, group affiliation and support system”. Rose further aligns the crew and identity formation by writing that the crew and the connection to their local context and experience rooting it in the specific affirmation received from the collective’s affirmation of the individual. When referring to the crew in this study it must be noted that Rose’s definitions are taking into considerations. Russel Simmons is considered to be an influential Hip Hop entrepreneur as Simmons was one of the first individuals to make extensive amounts of financial profit from Hip Hop and its cultural composition.

⁸⁰ *Beat Street*. Directed by S. Latham. Orion Pictures, USA, 1984.

refers to the production as being a “modern musical in the tradition of “Footloose” and “Breakdance”. He suggests that the fragile plot is only held together by Harry Belafonte’s music,⁸¹ with spectacular displays of disco and modern dancing”.⁸² Another reviewer, Mrs P. Metelerkamp remarks that the film follows “various rock groups” and their mission to be heard within the South Bronx. Unaware of the suggestive power of the production, the reviewers recommend that the film be released in bioscopes in South Africa, on the precursor that expletives be censored.

The *Cape Argus* pointed out that the box office ratings in America were poor but hastens to add that the film gives insight into the struggles of young artists who have envisioned Hip Hop as an avenue for expression.⁸³ Film critic Phillip Berk, suggests that American audiences failed to see the vision projected by the renowned producer and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte. Berk suggests that the context was “too real” for American audiences, not wanting to confront the realities of life in the Bronx. He concludes by stating that he found it to be ground-breaking for Breakdance moves. Clearly this critic had an appreciation for the art form and understood the performative and ideological elements situated in Hip Hop cultures. This is in stark contrast to the reviewers of the Film and Publications Board who simply assessed its entertainment value, or lack thereof.

⁸¹ Harry Belafonte is a producer for one song and a co-producer for three songs.

⁸² KAB FPB R84/5/67 2(233) Information Directorate Publications. Review of *Beat Street*, J. E. Scholtemeyer, 30 June 1984.

⁸³ P. Berk: “Belafonte’s ‘unchallenged’ *Beat Street* isn’t feeling the heat at box office”, *Cape Argus*, 9 July 1984.

Capetonians were encouraged to view the film. Advertisements in the *Cape Argus* were clearly also designed to entice the youth through its informal tagline: “If you wanna know what hip-hop’s about. Don’t waste time—come check this out!” Burgeoning Hip Hop artists needed no further encouragement. “Real Rozzano” notes, “once *Beat Street* came out, there were Hip Hop crews all over the city, you would find *mense* break-dancing with a *stuk tapyt*⁸⁴ everywhere. We formed our crew, the City Breakers. *Mense* were B-Boy *mal*^{85,86} Dj “Ready D” echoes this by remembering that once *Beat Street* had been released in cinemas, it brought about a spark of Hip Hop. He clearly points out that *Beat Street* encapsulated the true spirit of Hip Hop when he stated, “we gravitated towards *Beat Street* because we felt that *Beat Street* was a less watered down version of what Hip Hop represents”.⁸⁷

Beat Street touches on various themes that can be seen as a continuation of what was viewed by young audiences in Mitchells Plain in the various other movies that were circulated amongst communities during the eighties. The theme of communal recognition plays a major part in the film and the affirmation that dancers, artists and poets within Hip Hop culture. Another continued theme is the idea of the unique journey which each artist embarks upon to find their own style. The idea of *biting* and *mimicking* another performer or artist’s style is seen as a grave offence and is taken to task by means of artistic confrontation namely, a battle. Furthermore the search for individual identity through expression allows the performer to highlight to audiences why their

⁸⁴ A veneer used to smooth out performing spaces in public areas.

⁸⁵ People were *B-Boy* mad.

⁸⁶ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

⁸⁷ D. Daniels: conversation with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

style is unique, giving them an individualized identity within this broader concept of a community.

These films became a fuelling mechanism to explore new forms of expression and utilize their existing talents in new ways. Ariefdien writes about this and substantiates this by explaining that “Hip Hop in Cape Town provided many *headz* a space, a language, a set of expressive practices, an opportunity and a vehicle to produce art against apartheid, fashion alternative lifestyles, refashion identity, as well as provide pleasure”.⁸⁸ The innovation through expression that was exhibited via these films and via the music that was being circulated amongst young people, would create awareness of the social contexts in which these protagonists were located.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

Understanding the excitement towards Kung Fu films can be developed into a framework which explains the reception of Hip Hop films by disenfranchised youth on the Cape Flats. Similar to Kung Fu films, it is not possible to trace a quantitative response through statistics, however through the presented evidence the response to Hip Hop films can be recognized. The acrobatics, artistry, poetics and instrumentation constructed within the elements of Hip Hop created drew viewers to these films in particular. The minimalist production value of a film such as *Wild Style* provided an authentic engagement of Hip Hop to young people on the Cape Flats.⁸⁹ It allowed the urban subculture to showcase its potential as both a platform and culture for those who were interested,

⁸⁸ S. Ariefdien: “Dalah Cape Flats: Hip Hop, Resistance and Colouredness”, S. Essof & D. Moshenberg (eds.), *The New Calculus of Dignity* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2011).

⁸⁹ R. Warner: “Colouring the Cape Space Problem: A Hip Hop Identity of Passions”, P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader*, p. 122

harbouring a community which would later engage with the locally produced Hip Hop music and culture.

Hip Hop films, engineered a space for dislocated young people on Cape Town's apartheid created periphery to reimagine themselves in response to their environment. Thus, it made Hip Hop films a point of departure into what Perry refers to as a "recontextualization" of the culture.⁹⁰ This is where geo-specific social conditions were addressed by the podium provided within Hip Hop, enabling a space for critical reflexivity to occur amongst its participants. Hip Hop sanctioned a platform of listening and speaking, where audiences could critically observe the views of their peers with the dual lens of introspection and externalised relativity. Films unpacked this platform and gave insight into how live performance contributed significantly to Hip Hop as a culture, similar to The Roxy being an important platform for the crew to eventually perform in *Beat Street*. The Base would have equal importance to young people from the Cape Flats periphery within Cape Town. The collective response from an audience is an important factor within Hip Hop culture and this was illustrated through films which showcased Hip Hop and its elements.

Hip Hop films which were intertwined with narratives located within the daily lives of protagonists provided insight to audiences regarding the attitude of those who identified with the culture and all the hegemonic structural issues it addressed. A certain performativity was undertaken when identifying as a Hip Hop Head. Films provided this insight in a way that was easy to relate to, yet

⁹⁰ M. Perry: "Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space", *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(6), 2008, p. 643.

still authentic to local conditions. Perry refers to gender theorist Judith Butler's ideas surrounding performativity stating that, "as a mode of self-representational practice, style in this way must be understood as "performative".⁹¹ Furthermore, Butler speaks of "how individual subjectivities and the social categories that define them are in the end constituted only in so much as they are enacted or *performed* in the quotidian".⁹² In this instance, *Wild Style*, *Beat Street* and especially *Style Wars* (as a documentary), gave audiences insight into the daily movements of a Hip Hop Head, unveiling a method of engagement for those intrigued by Hip Hop culture.

These Hip Hop films therefore provided insight into an alternative platform of performativity within a community. Thus a new imaginative space emerged for youth on the Cape Flats to express their self-constructed style of expression, allowing space for the recreation and re-imagination of their current context. It must be noted that music videos in the early 1980s did contribute to the unveiling of information pertaining to Hip Hop and its elemental composition. However as indicated, films provided more substance regarding dialogue and thematic engagement with the culture.

It is clear that the initial Kung Fu films, which inspired corporeal expressions to flourish at the Cape were heteronormative and hypermasculine. The subsequent films which appeared formally and informally, did little to rectify these shortcomings. Intricate networks allowed for a sharing of

⁹¹ M. Perry: "Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space", *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(6), 2008, p. 645.

⁹² *Ibid.*

ideas and artistic expressions, thus overcoming many class barriers which could have restricted access to these cultural imports. The films also explicitly rejected conformity and capitalism and this too appealed to audiences. They literally created a sense of brotherhood and shared suffering between two groups of people living on two sides of the Atlantic. For Coloured youths this was in the advent of an increased Black Consciousness movement; at a particularly turbulent political period in South African history when new forms of identity formation and political negotiation required a reappraisal of the obscure position of being “not white enough” and “not black enough”. However, the films which brought Hip Hop to the Cape were not only about Black Consciousness in South Africa, and were certainly not about suffering in the Cape. This would only develop by 1988 when POC recorded DAALAH FLETS in a Cape variant of Afrikaans, clearly illustrating the social realities of Coloured townships.

The apartheid state, as seen through the limited excerpts of the Film and Publications Board, were oblivious to the deeper ideological component of these films, even if they suspected that there existed some underlying political subversion which had to be regulated. For the budding Hip Hop Headz, these cultural imports fundamentally changed their lives.

Armed with this new sense of belonging and practical tools to improve their performance, Hip Hop Headz carved out a space for their own forms of self-expression and went in search of spaces in which they could spread the message to other enthusiasts.

Chapter 3

“Hearing Cats Spit”: Local Venues, Radio Broadcasts and Television, 1986-2013¹

Prophets of da City’s album, *Age of Truth* (1993), was released during CODESA and political transition in South Africa. It was subsequently banned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), because it was considered subversive and counterproductive to the process of nation-building. This is considered a turning point in the development of Hip Hop not only in the Cape, but also in South Africa at large. Hip Hop was now a definable and subversive genre of self-expression.

From its arrival in cinematographic form, Hip Hop developed into a definable genre in the country. This chapter therefore investigates the spaces in which this occurred, namely formal places such as nightclubs, radio broadcasts and television emissions; and further probes the material presented in these mediums. It is important to specify that informal performances continued to thrive in the city, but these are more difficult to locate and quantify. It will be argued that these manifestations of Hip Hop, as seen through its content material, aided the development of a specific Hip Hop culture at the Cape and subsequently developed a mass appeal for a broader South African society.

¹ Cat is Hip Hop jargon for individuals. Therefore, the title intends to reflect the flow of ideas between individuals in the Hip Hop scene.

3.1 From Informal to Formal Performance Spaces, 1986-1993

The arrival of a Hip Hop culture through films and bootleg material led to an increased awareness of another possible avenue of self-expression at the Cape. Hip Hop formations during the late 1980s afforded Hip Hop Headz, a portal to engage and explore an Africanized identity. From the influence of crews from the United States to the engagement of local thinkers and theorists regarding these ideologies, Hip Hop Headz in the Cape started to unpack their positioning within a social setting through various Hip Hop forms in protest of the already established and somewhat imposed notions of *Colouredness*.² Well known Hip Hop crews such as Black Noise and POC, instituted a distinctly Cape Town expression.³ This had to occur, according to Chapman and Ariefdien, because Hip Hop audiences were craving locally specific content.⁴ By the late 1980s to the early 1990s, there were an abundance of Hip Hop crews from various areas on the Cape Flats and indeed the rest of the Cape. However, they had to negotiate hardening political restrictions. By 1985, P.W Botha had declared a state of emergency in South Africa,⁵ and this had a direct impact on Hip Hop performances. Two forms of venues existed: formal and informal.

Dj “Ready D” Daniels recalls:

When weekend arrived, we would first go to the white station, we wanted to battle at the white station during this time. We wanted to go here because of our rebel nature and we knew that we were going to get

² M. Adhikari: “Hope, Fear, Shame, Frustration: Continuity and Change in the expression of Coloured Identity in White Supremacist South Africa, 1910-1994”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(3), 2006, p. 467.

³ The Afrikaans Rymklets movement has created a platform for Afrikaans Rap music to evolve. Since 2017, digital platforms exist solely for the release of Afrikaans Rap music, developing an audience of Afrikaans speakers across South Africa. One website of interest is, Rymklets Republiek (www.rymklets.co.za).

⁴ S. Ariefdien & R. Chapman: “Khoi Hop-Hip Hop, Youth Activism and the Dilemma of Coloured Identity in South Africa”, M. Clark & M. Koster (eds.), *Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa*. (Lexington Books, London, 2014), p. 7.

⁵*Ibid.*

chased away by police and security. But we were ready. We would meet crews from all over. Have a bit of a battle. Get chased away. Onto the next location.⁶

He goes on to reflect about incidents, which brought Hip Hop crews in direct conflict with the police and sometimes the army. But these curfews would become stricter with police eventually arresting subversive elements.⁷

Dj “Real” Rozzano further explains the implication of this for the artists:

We would travel to the city. Town would mean that everybody would take their parents weekly tickets on the train. Then we would move to the city on Saturday. What happened is that B-Boys/Girls would come from all over on the weekend. Bellville Line, Mitchells Plain line, Athlone Line, Simon’s town line. All different colours, shades and sizes. The people would walk with their cardboard and vinyl covering. When we come to town, we would find a corner there. Jay! Here’s a few break dancers and everybody would start dancing. Within five minutes, all the security comes running towards us. It’s a state of emergency, we can’t be doing these things. They would just see this gathering and then they would kick us out of the station.⁸

Shaheen Ariefdien refers to moments of defiance as “unintentional political acts”.⁹ These actions were therefore more a reflection of the need to create a space for Hip Hop not simply in defiance of political oppression.

Dj “Rozzano” points out that there was a need to perform Hip Hop dance-moves and sequences. During 1984, Michael Jackson impersonation competitions around the Cape Flats were

⁶ D. Daniels: conversation with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

⁷ S. Ariefdien & R. Chapman: “Khoi Hop-Hip Hop, Youth Activism and the Dilemma of Coloured Identity in South Africa”, M. Clark & M. Koster (eds.), *Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa*, p. 7.

⁸ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

⁹ S. Ariefdien & R. Chapman: “Khoi Hop-Hip Hop, Youth Activism and the Dilemma of Coloured Identity in South Africa”, M. Clark & M. Koster (eds.), *Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa*, p. 11.

common.¹⁰ Breakdancers would take the opportunity to showcase their new dance moves.¹¹ These debuts secured regular spots for crews such as The City Breakers (Ready D and Graffiti artist Gogga) at nightclub venues such as Club Fantasy in Mitchells Plain.¹² This motivated Headz like Rozzano, Gogga and Dj “Ready D” to actively secure formal venues for their performances.

Club T’zers, owned by Gee Ho¹³ and located in Harrington Street in Cape Town’s central business district, served as an important Hip Hop venue between 1985 and 1988. It was renowned for playing “alternative” music.¹⁴ Playing music such as reggae, punk rock, dub and funk, also meant that it was a multiracial space. It was unpretentious, thereby appealing to a cross-section of the population and it had only one regulation – no entry to members of Cape Flats gangs. How this was regulated and even if it was regulated remains questionable. Nevertheless, it did provide a brief slot for Hip Hop artists. Real Rozzano recalls, “at Club T’zers, from 85-88, that first three years there, before it became the Base, the Hip Hop set was only 15 minutes. And it was only dance music. The pop locking stuff for the breakers”.¹⁵

¹⁰ The release of Michael Jackson’s 1982 album titled *Thriller* was a top Billboard hit globally and according to Billboard’s website reached number one in almost every market including apartheid South Africa, C. Stutz: “Michael Jacksons ‘Thriller’ becomes first ever thirty times multi-platinum album-exclusive”, *Billboard*, 16 December 2015. <http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/pop/6812781/michael-jackson-thriller-30x-multi-platinum-album> (accessed 17 July 2017)

¹¹ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

¹² R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

¹³ N. Nkonyeni: “Da struggle continues into the 21st century: two decades of nation-conscious rap in Cape Town”, R. Meyer, F. Swanson, S. Field. (eds.) *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2007), p. 157.

¹⁴ According to conversations with participants in this chapter (Ready D, Gogga and Rozzano) the music that was played here included punk rock, funk, reggae and dub music.

¹⁵ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

In 1988, the club relocated to Shortmarket Street and was renamed Planet Base or simply, The Base. Saturday Hip Hop matinees attracted a younger crowd and developed into the epicentre of a formal Hip Hop culture, as it was here that one was exposed to the latest content such as Public Enemy and Ice Cube.¹⁶ It also became a space for political thought and conversation. One movement in particular that arose from the weekly Saturday sessions at The Base was the African Hip Hop Movement (AHHM).¹⁷ Conceived by Dj “Ready D”, Rozzano X, Shamiel X and Shaheen Ariefdien, it was a public platform designed to challenge the political situation in South Africa during 1988-1989. The Base would become a recruiting ground for this movement, attracting young people (mostly *Coloured* males), to find solutions to social challenges.¹⁸ Ariefdien explains, that “members of the AHHM used their identities as Hip- Hop headz and formed what was considered a Hip-Hop movement to mobilize working class youth against the apartheid regime, promote the spread of hip-hop and challenge negative stereotypes of working class *coloured* youth as lazy good-for-nothing gangsters”.¹⁹ There was also a shared solidarity with American rap groups like Public Enemy and N.W.A (Niggaz With Attitude). Crowds would become ecstatic when N.W.A’s song, *Fuck Da Police* would play. The sentiment was shared between African-Americans and youths from the Flats.²⁰ By 1993, The Base declined in popularity as public safety concerns made it unsafe for audiences to attend venues in the CBD.²¹ This was due to the lack of security on public trains.

¹⁶ N. Nkonyeni: “Da struggle kontinues into the 21st century: two decades of nation-conscious rap in Cape Town” R. Meyer, F. Swanson & S. Field (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2007), p.158.

¹⁷ S. Ariefdien: “Dalah Cape Flats- Hip Hop, Resistance and Colouredness”, S. Essof & D. Moshenberg (eds.), *Searching for South Africa: The New Calculus of Dignity* (UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2011), p. 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁰ Shaheen Ariefdien: Hip Hop in Cape Town. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t96NcElupGo> (21 June 2017)

²¹ There is much space to research these events that started at the end of The Base as a gathering ground for Cape Flats Hip Hop Headz.

One of the most influential characteristics of The Base, was the need for local artists to produce their own innovative moves and lyrics. Between 1990 and 1994, local Hip Hop records began to be released. Prophets of da City (POC) were the most notable group to release Hip Hop music during this time.²² These were not only being performed on stage but were now being played on the airwaves to a much greater audience.

3.2 The Rise of Prophets of Da City, 1990-1997

The most renowned local Hip Hop crew, Prophets of Da City, produced local Raps and performed throughout the country.²³ This was a local Cape Town group made up of members from various parts of the Cape Flats, incorporating members from other parts of the country as it grew in popularity. When *Our World* was released in 1990, crew members included many individuals interviewed for this study: DSA (Shaheen Ariefdien), Ready D (Deon Daniels), Ram-one (Ramone De Wet) and Jazmo (the group's beatboxer).²⁴ Furthermore, their unique sampling of Cape Jazz music recreated this particular Cape Flats style of Hip Hop. It was also the first South African Rap album released by a record company.²⁵ Another of its songs, ROOTS, which critically unpacked the Black Consciousness Movement, was censored by the SABC.²⁶ As importantly, it also included the first Hip Hop Rap song in an Afrikaans dialect.

²² Please refer to A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2012), p. 32 for details of the release figures.

²³ This has been discussed in great length in A. Haupt: "Rap and the articulation of resistance: An exploration of subversive cultural production during the early 90's with particular reference to Prophets of Da City", MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1995.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Daalah Flet, while in a local vernacular language, strongly resembles the Hip Hop released song *The Message*, by GrandMaster Flash and the Furious Five, as mentioned in Chapter 1. However, closer analysis of the lyrics clearly indicates the shift in focus to local concerns:

*Kykie my broe
 Al daai dinge moet jy los
 Want daai geld kan gegaan het
 Vir die week se kos.
 As ek jy is
 Dan kry ek my 'n pos.
 Maar jy lam eida op die hoek
 Om 'n pyp te roek
 Daai dinge sal 'ie werk 'ie
 Dit maak jou oek 'ie sterk 'ie
 Jy's uitgedraai
 En jy gaan oek nie meer kerk 'ie.
 Jou ma/ Jou pa hulle altwee kry swaar
 En sonder 'n job is als deurmekaar²⁷*

The lyrics clearly targets a lost youth on the Flats. It points out that they have some responsibility for their own predicament, and calls on them to act rather than blame their circumstances on their forefathers, also bound up in their own bleak circumstances.

Afrikaaps, the Cape variant of Afrikaans, was a clever tool. It made the song more relatable and narrowed the distance between a lost generation of youth and an up and coming sensation, namely POC. Five more albums that delivered commentary on the South African socio-political conditions were subsequently released: *Boom Style* (1991) *Age of Truth* (1993) *Phunk Phlow* (1994) *Universal Souljahz* (1995) and *Ghetto Code* (1997). The content of the albums released

²⁷ Look here my brother/ Leave all those things alone/ Because that cash / Could have gone for the weekly food/If I were you/ I would find myself a job/ But you would rather sit on the corner/ And smoke a pipe/Those things won't work/ Those things don't make you strong/ You've changed/And you don't attend church anymore/ Your mother/Your father/They are going through a lot/And without a job/Everything is confused, Prophets of Da City: Daalah Flet, *Our World*. Ku Shu Shu records, 1990.

in 1993 and 1994 (*Age of Truth* and *Phunk Phlow* respectively), were particularly critical of the political conversations taking place at the time: The release of Nelson Mandela, unbanning of the African National Congress and other political organizations in 1990 as well as the commencement of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in 1992-1993, the assassination of Chris Hani in 1993 and of course, the first democratic elections of 1994.²⁸

This local content now needed a platform outside of the formal and informal performance spaces. It is here that radio and television broadcasting plays a pivotal role in the development of Hip Hop in South Africa.

3.3 Democratising the Airwaves: Hip Hop on Radio, 1989-2005

The political transitions in the 1990s widened the amount of airtime given to previously unheard genres of music to be played for public consumption. This is not to suggest that “subversive material”, was liberally broadcasted. SABC’s banning of certain POC hits would suggest otherwise. However, it is in this period that one notices the proliferation of Hip Hop Raps and Hip Hop content.

The South African parliament adopted the Broadcasting Act in 1936. The state was the main stakeholder of broadcasting rights in the country.²⁹ During World War II, there was a mass migration of Afrikaners to the city in search of industrialized employment.³⁰ Pressure was

²⁸ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion*, p. 32.

²⁹ P. B. Orlik: “Radio in the Republic of South Africa”, S. W. Head (ed.), *Broadcasting in Africa: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television* (Temple University Press, Cape Town, 1974), pp. 140-146.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

placed on the SABC to adapt its content to its largely Afrikaner Nationalist audience. The SABC, modelled after the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in its earliest formation, began to drift away from the support that it was receiving from the BBC. By 1948, the SABC had to create its own news agency, generating news that enforced apartheid propaganda.³¹ Content followed suit.³²

By 1959, the SABC was able to broadcast in rural areas.³³ It was in this context that Radio Bantu came into existence, and broadcast messages which advocated apartheid ideology in the homelands.³⁴ Music historian Schalk Van Der Merwe notes that during the 1960s the national broadcaster aligned itself to the political policies of the time, ensuring that subversive material be censored.³⁵

Once the state of emergency was implemented by the Afrikaaner Nationalist government in 1986, there was an intensified defiance campaign that originated within the alternative press.³⁶ The printing press thrived among activists within South Africa during the 1980s, as quick

³¹ P. B. Orlik: "Radio in the Republic of South Africa", S. W. Head (ed.), *Broadcasting in Africa: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television*, pp. 140-146.

³² T. Bosch: "Radio as an instrument of Protest: The History of Bush Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 13(2), 2010, p. 251.

³³ P. B. Orlik: "Radio in the Republic of South Africa", S. W. Head (ed.), *Broadcasting in Africa: A Continental Survey of Radio and Television*, pp. 141

³⁴ T. Bosch: "Radio as an instrument of Protest: The History of Bush Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 13(2), p. 251.

³⁵ S. van der Merwe: "Radio Apartheid: Investigating a History of Compliance and Resistance in Popular Afrikaans Music, 1956-1979", *South African Historical Journey*, 66(2), 2014, p. 353.

³⁶ T. Bosch: "Radio as an instrument of Protest: The History of Bush Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 13(2), 2010, p. 254.

distributive methods were developed in order to spread anti-governmental journalism.³⁷ The political situation had been extremely fragile within South Africa and the government was protecting the airwaves as anything could become a catalyst for political violence. Ironically, the apartheid government, still in control of state institutions, would grant licenses to people who had a direct right wing, pro-apartheid agenda therefore allowing them to broadcast locally. For instance, Radio Pretoria was afforded a community license during this period of negotiations while other community broadcasting platforms were not.³⁸

South African airwaves were a contested platform during CODESA because the broadcasting of propaganda continued to be a point of dissention across the political spectrum. Right-wing Afrikaner movements, for example, continued broadcasting pro-apartheid anti-liberation messages via radio.³⁹ Nevertheless, movements pushed for the idea of free speech and the democratization of the airwaves.

Peace Radio was registered as a community radio station and widely considered by contemporary Hip Hop artists to be the first station to play Hip Hop.⁴⁰ Shaheen Ariefdien affirms:

Peace FM was this radio station that was developed for a short little while during the transition period from under apartheid to post-apartheid. And because they feared that a Rwandan

³⁷ T. Bosch: "Radio as an instrument of Protest: The History of Bush Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 13(2), 2010, p. 251.

³⁸ A. A. Olorunnisola: "Community Radio: Participatory Communication in Post-apartheid South Africa", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 9(1), 2009, p. 135.

³⁹ BRA Edrich Gorfinkel interview with Helene Michaude, 20 April 2003 on *Radio Netherlands*.

⁴⁰ After searching various archives, the Peace Radio collection could not be located. This particular section has potential for more research, as it was established as a mechanism for maintaining peace within South Africa.

situation will happen, they tried to have different kinds of "peaceful" propaganda campaigns in place to prevent that from happening. So this thing called Peace FM, this radio station, really was given licence for – I'm not sure, maybe a year something like that – and that's really the first time Hip Hop got played on local radio stations.⁴¹

Dj "Ready D", from POC, confirms that the station played their material: "we were on tour and I'll never forget, we came through the tunnel and we caught Peace Radio. They were playing all these hard underground Hip Hop songs. We got so excited".⁴² However, the station which has claimed most notoriety for disseminating and impacting Hip Hop in the Cape is Bush Radio.

3.3.1 CASET to Bush Radio, 1989 -1995

Bush Radio was an instrumental radio station for the dissemination of Hip Hop at the Cape. From pirate broadcasts, it eventually transmitted and relayed sanctioned broadcasts via FM stereo from 1995.⁴³ The self-proclaimed, "mother of community radio stations", continues to cater to audiences in the greater Cape Town region.⁴⁴

It is in the political context of transition that clandestine radio stations broadcast activist material. One such organization was CASET (Cassette Education Trust). CASET was established during the re-emergence of the Defiance Campaign that intensified in South

⁴¹ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, March 2017, Cape Town via Skype.

⁴² D. Daniels: conversation with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

⁴³ T. Bosch: "Radio as an instrument of Protest: The History of Bush Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 13(2), 2010, p. 261.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Africa in 1989. From its inception, CASET aimed to develop community radio by training people in live recording as well as programme producing. The organisation partook in the defiance campaign by recording live speeches of banned activist at political rallies and distributing those cassette tapes between its network of listeners who were purchasing these tapes.⁴⁵ One of the original members of CASET, Edrich Gorfinkel recalls in an interview with Radio Netherlands, “Cassette Education Trust was clearly about using audio cassettes as a medium to play radio. The work that we did was clearly about covering what was going on in the defiance campaign”⁴⁶

CASET focussed on many topics such as personal hygiene, literacy and community building through anti-crime programs.⁴⁷ Edrich Gorfinkel recalls:

At the end of 1989 there was a conference at the University of the Western Cape, on facing the challenges of the future. CASET was asked to record that, as well as do a lunch time thing on interactive radio. For that lunch hour program we produced a lunch hour program, which was a simulated broadcast from 1999. We called that production, Bush Radio. Basically because it was happening at the University of the Western Cape which in the old days used to be called Bush. It was called Bush University because it was in the Bush. It was for coloured people and coloured people live in the Bush. It had that connotation. That production was done by Sandile Dikeni and myself. In some ways I supposed that could be marked I suppose as the first time that the name Bush Radio was used.⁴⁸

By 1993, the CASET team realised that a broadcasting licence would not be afforded to them. They began pirating the airwaves. Gorfinkel recalls that a transmitter was smuggled

⁴⁵ T. Bosch: “Children, Culture, and Identity on South African Community Radio”, *Journal of Children and Media*, 1(3), 2017, p. 279.

⁴⁶ BRA Edrich Gorfinkel interview with Helene Michaude, 20 April 2003 on *Radio Netherlands*.

⁴⁷ A. A. Olorunnisola: “Community Radio: Participatory Communication in Post-apartheid South Africa”, *Journal of Radio Studies*, 9(1), 2009, p. 135.

⁴⁸ BRA Edrich Gorfinkel interview by Helene Michaude, 20 April 2003 on *Radio Netherlands*.

into the country via the Mayibuye Centre which served as the ANC documentation centre at the time.⁴⁹ On the 10th April 1993, they setup a transmission station in preparation for the May Day broadcast. On this fateful day, Chris Hani was assassinated and the team was able to broadcast this to audiences in Cape Town.⁵⁰ Dikeni recalls that this illegal broadcast was the moment when CASET would transform to Bush Radio.⁵¹

Since the earliest illegal broadcast, Hip Hop has always been intertwined into the foundations of Bush Radio. Gorfinkel remembers that during the first May Day broadcasts of 1993, a young group of youth from the Salt River area had received information that there will be a broadcast taking place from the Trade Union building in the same area. They wanted to be a part of the broadcast by performing rap verses which they had written.⁵²

On 1 August 1995, Bush Radio 89.5 FM, received their broadcasting licence. Now located on the border of Salt River and Woodstock, Bush Radio became a community radio station that targeted the working class of the Cape Flats. It had four definable platforms: talk shows, music programs, community interest programs and international programs and rebroadcasts of international programs from the BBC world service and other global

⁴⁹ BRA Edrich Gorfinkel interview by Helene Michaude, 20 April 2003 on *Radio Netherlands*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ BRA Sandile Dikeni interview by Helene Michaude, 20 April 2003 on *Radio Netherlands*.

⁵² BRA Edrich Gorfinkel interview by Helene Michaude, 20 April 2003 on *Radio Netherlands*.

platforms.⁵³

Naturally, radio waves provided a space for musical performance. However, it quite importantly provided a platform for the development of the overarching element of Hip Hop, *Knowledge of Self*. It is here that four particular programmes are of interest. The HeadWarmaz Show (1996-2000) followed by a variety of community intervention workshops, namely, HIV HIP HOP 2000, the Alchemy Workshops and CLEAN (2005).

3.3.1.1 The HeadWarmaz Show, 1996-2000

The Show, later renamed *The HeadWarmaz Show* in 1996, provided the earliest platform for Hip Hop music and debate. Artists and one of the hosts of the show, Ariefdien recalls:

HeadWarmaz was basically a current affairs political show that was also a Hip Hop show. So it wasn't ever about music only, you know? We had like research projects where we do stuff around globalisation, who owns what in South Africa and do like a whole fucking deconstruction of that on air [...] The current affairs segment of the show happened because we had people connected to the show who were researchers, so we'd meet up during the week and research something. We had a team connected to us, who had time, resources and the skills to be able to find out like, who the hell owned media in South Africa! Like who are the stakeholders, who are the companies who own shares and where does that lead to, so we did a lot of those type of things on air as well.⁵⁴

The current affairs educational segment allowed listeners to critically engage with various realities. Understanding the new democratic dispensation within South Africa is such an

⁵³ T. Bosch: "Radio as an instrument of Protest: The History of Bush Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 13(2), 2010, p. 261. The community interest programs includes free on-air legal services as well as educational platforms that provided outreach to listeners.

⁵⁴ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, March 2017, Cape Town via Skype.

example. The team encouraged active participation of local audiences and provided a space for self-expression. It also provided a space in which one could connect with like-minded people. Marlon Swai, for example, remembers that he would even “ditch” his company to sit and tune in to the show in his vehicle. He yearned to hear more people who spoke his language and this motivated him to become a Hip Hop artist:

The music and discussion was captivating but then of course hearing cats from all over call in. Not only were the presenters talking in the way that I talk. That was something that I have not heard on radio anywhere else or tv. I wasn't seeing it but then the cats calling in and rhyming. Doing it all in the vernacular immediately made me feel like, oh wow! This is something that I can do.⁵⁵

Mitchells Plain based rapper and poet, Rimestein confirms this observation:

I used to listen to the different local sounds on a Friday night after ten. Just the mere fact that it was guys from your own area that you would hear on radio. We were always under the impression that in order for you to be on radio you had to be like this very special person. You had to be this amazing artist, to actually reach that platform. When I heard that it was possible to rhyme in Afrikaans and still get played on radio? I was like Saloet man! I remember that it was difficult for guys like us to get into radio because of how you spoke.⁵⁶

Ariefdien confirms that the structure of the show was unconventional. This was intentional in order to allure the listeners:

We didn't use the approach in terms of language, in terms of structure of other mainstream radio. As a community radio show, our striving was, how do we create a beweging[movement] that people can feel connected to. So if you listened to some of the kakpraat [shit talking] and terg [teasing] and all of that things, it would be stuff that you would hear lamming in the yart [shebeen] or huis jol [house party] or something like that. In some way that was very deliberate, but not deliberate in the sense that it wasn't genuine. We were just not putting on an accent or a style of speech that is conventional to radio. That was one of the specific reasons why the HeadWarmaz took on a specific type of feel.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ M. Swai: conversation with author, March 2017, Cape Town.

⁵⁶ D. Swartz: conversation with author, February 2017, Mitchells Plain.

⁵⁷ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, February 2017, Cape Town via Skype.

This approach created familiarity and encouraged humour while at the same time, informing audiences of social issues and creating a sense of awareness across a wider audience. Furthermore, Ariefdien and Andre “Big Dre” Maggot would guide the conversation with their insights on music and the messages that were being communicated through the music. The two hosts and producers of the show would therefore provide much more context to the content. Dj “Real Rozzano” Davids, for example, appreciated the way in which American Hip Hop was even critiqued on the show.⁵⁸

Ariefdien also suggests that through his international friends, local audiences were also hearing newly released and rare material. What he suggests here is that the show allowed for local talent to exhibit their art forms but also remain informed of latest global trends.⁵⁹ The show also legitimised local productions.⁶⁰ Shameema Williams, for example, recollects:

We didn't have a lot of local content, you couldn't go into a store and buy a local Hip Hop album. So the opportunity to hear local cats rhyming and hearing what cats were doing and saying with rap was super important. People weren't really making albums and if they were making albums they were selling it in their little hoods and then the quality wasn't that good. So the HeadWarmaz was our own listening session of what cats were doing locally.⁶¹

Dj “Real Rozzano” Davids was invited to play at the HeadWarmaz show. He was delighted at the prospect of not having to censor his message. He points out that the show allowed those unable to hear the lyrics at formal venues such as *The Base*, could now

⁵⁸ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

⁵⁹ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, March 2017, Cape Town via Skype.

⁶⁰ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

⁶¹ S. Williams: conversation with author, April 2017, Observatory, Cape Town.

become part of the airwave community of Hip Hop enthusiasts.⁶²

The show also exposed listeners to intellectual debates. Swai recalls the innovative manner in which presenters cleverly intertwined Michael Parenti and Noam Chomsky into the programme.⁶³ Shameema Williams, for example, recalls how she was first introduced to the works of Chomsky through the programme.⁶⁴ This also appealed to older audiences. Being an alternative radio channel, some members of the audience would stay tuned to the show, not necessarily because they were interested in Hip Hop content but because it spoke of much wider issues and political theorists.⁶⁵ Of importance too was the Call-in session of the show.

3.3.1.1.1 HeadWarmaz Call-in Line

This platform allowed the audiences to contribute to the discussions instituted by the presenters. It allowed for the introduction of new themes and also provided an opportunity for budding artists to call in and share a Rap verse. This could be sung acapella or to accompanying instrumentals.⁶⁶ It also served as an almost cathartic outlet for marginalised communities. Dj “Ready D”, for example, recalls how inmates from Pollsmoor prison would call and plead for assistance. Traumatised members of the community would call

⁶² R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

⁶³ Referring to the HeadWarmaz presenters

⁶⁴ S. Williams: conversation with author, April 2017, Observatory, Cape Town.

⁶⁵ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, March 2017, Cape Town via Skype.

⁶⁶ R. Davids: conversation with author, March 2017, Goodwood, Cape Town.

in and let audiences hear the gunshots fired in their neighbourhoods. They were provided a space to vent their frustration at the growing gang violence plaguing their communities.⁶⁷ It is from this growing platform that the idea of running community workshops transpired.

3.3.2 Hip Hop Workshops: HIV HOP 2000, The Alchemy Workshops and CLEAN, 2000-2005

In 2000, Bush Radio in collaboration with Radio Netherlands, curated a school tour project entitled HIV HOP YAA 2000 (Youth Against Aids). This project toured around various Cape Flats based schools and used Hip Hop music and Rap as an avenue to educate young people about HIV and AIDS as well as safe sex practices and information on sexually transmitted infections. The tour featured artists such as Cape Flats Rapper, Mr. Devious,⁶⁸ EJ Von Lyric and Dj's Andre Big Dre, Ready D and Rozzano X. The tour was compiled into a compact disc and incorporated educational information with musical Raps. Its success led to the implementation of the Alchemy Workshops between 2000 and 2005.

These workshops incorporated critical skills learning with critical thought. Topics ranged from the origins of slavery and colonialism to understanding the term neo-liberalism.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ D. Daniels: conversation with author, February 2017, Southfield, Cape Town.

⁶⁸ Mr Devious who was murdered in 2004 is considered to be a founding member of The Cape Flats Hip Hop community. His work with youth in correctional facilities was an instrumental part of his contribution to the Hip Hop community in the Cape.

⁶⁹ S. Ariefdien: conversation with author, March 2015, Cape Town via Skype.

Leading figure Father Michael Weeder,⁷⁰ gave talks about his position within the struggle. Consciousness leaders outside of Africa, such as Paolo Freire, were also introduced.⁷¹ Attendees were encouraged to use Hip Hop (Deejaying, Rapping and Breakdancing in particular), to express themselves. Hip Hop thus became as a medium to dissect complex issues in an accessible manner.⁷²

In 2005, Bush Radio in collaboration with Brasse Vannie Kaap front Ashley “Mr Fat” Titus and Ricardo “Dj Azuhl” Nunes organized an anti-drug school campaign entitled Community Learners and Educators Against Narcotics (CLEAN). This involved a school tour throughout the Cape Flats. Hip Hop was again used a mechanism for educating school-children about the social threats which they were susceptible too if they did not practice self-care and social responsibility.⁷³ Their aims were explicit. They wanted learners to fight drug abuse, impart and develop a sense of positive self-image, strengthen community interventions and build lasting networks between Bush Radio, schools, educators, youth, parents and the community.⁷⁴ BVK’s song *T.I.K* (Terror In Kids), was

⁷⁰ Father Michael Weeder is a notable anti-apartheid Anglican priest who stood alongside communities of colour in defiance against the apartheid government. Weeder’s role as an anti-apartheid activist includes work in the interior of the Western Cape in towns such as Ashton and Montagu.

⁷¹ A. Haupt: “Bush Radio’s ALKEMY and Hip-Hop Activism 2.0 Adam Haupt in Conversation with Nazli Abrahams”, A. Haupt, Q. Williams, H.S. Alim and E. Jansen (eds.), *Kaapse Styles: Hip-Hop Art and Activism*, p. 7.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³ According to an informal survey conducted at a Psychiatric institution in the Cape Flats neighbourhood by the Medical Research Council, 5% of admitted patients was for the use of Crystal Meth (TIK) in 2004-05. The following year it rose to 11%. By 2007 it was up to 16%. By 2008 there was an estimated 100 000 Tik users in the city of Cape Town. With the Western Cape premier Helen Zille stating in 2008, that 70% of the crime committed in Cape Town could be attributed to the influence of drugs and alcohol, C. Kapp: “Crystal meth boom adds to South Africa’s health challenges”, *World Report*, 371, 19 January 2008.

[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(08\)60120-8.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(08)60120-8.pdf) (20 September 2017)

⁷⁴ BRA “C.L.E.A.N project proposal”, 18 July 2005.

used in the project to educate school children on the destructive nature of this drug, particularly prevalent within these communities at this time. Furthermore, during the shows, radios were handed to school principals as an avenue for young people at these schools to tune into Bush Radio and the various community education programs that are available for community education.

It is at the end of each of these sessions that Mr. Fat would sign off with an inspiring message. This captures the essence not only of the workshops but the basis of the self-awareness element of the Cape Hip Culture:

Do we understand the concept of knowledge? Do you understand the concept of wisdom, knowledge and self-understanding. The whole concept of this movement is self-belief. Moving forward in a direction. Not looking back when you make a mistake. It's part of learning. Move away from Drugs, buying cigarettes. The cigarettes have gone up again. Trevor Manuel said the cigarettes are going up again. It's a costly business what you are doing. So stay strong and love yourself is the number one thing. You are special and unique like you said. B.V.K, Brasse Vannie Kaap says very very thank you.⁷⁵

The evolution of Hip Hop on radio therefore led to community intervention strategies of great importance in the unfolding culture at the Cape. It touched many more audiences than those located in informal and formal spaces. The messages were also far-reaching. Because of the socio-economic class of the majority of its audiences, it was also the most successful medium of expression, even compared to television productions.

⁷⁵ BRA “C.L.E.A.N project proposal”, 18 July 2005.

3.4 Hip Hop Goes to MK89, 2005-2013

In 2005, a music channel dedicated solely to Afrikaans and South African music started on South African DSTV, channel MK 89.⁷⁶ This provided a platform for newly recorded Afrikaans music videos and other alternative South African products.⁷⁷ Alongside these music videos, the channel contained a variety of music focussed television programmes. Amongst these was the television show entitled *Hip Hop*. The program was initially hosted by Mr. Fat of Brasse Vannie Kaap and Dj Ready D and explored the South African Hip Hop scene with special focus on the Cape as a space for the growth of Hip Hop. The show was later hosted by Dj Azuhl and Jo-anne “Contro’versy” Peterson who hosted the show until 2011.

The television programme focussed on local and international Hip Hop music video releases, providing audiences with insight into the latest releases from South Africa and abroad. Furthermore, an interview segment allowed for discussions between various protagonists, namely representatives from record companies, photographers and filmmakers, as well as artists. These included Hip Hop performers such as Jaak Spraak, Dj Eazy and Muis is Baas who would later become known as Jack Parow.

⁷⁶ DSTV is a popular subscription television service within South Africa. Containing a variety of television channels, the music channels included famed international television services such as MTV.

⁷⁷ K. van Der Waal & S. Robins: “‘De la Rey’ and the revival of ‘Boer heritage’: Nostalgia in the post-apartheid Afrikaner culture industry”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37(4), 2011, p. 8.

The show was predominantly in Afrikaans. It came to an end when the channel was removed from DSTV in July 2013. This show mainly featured artists from the Cape Flats and it should be acknowledged that the Hip Hop show would not have been as effective in disseminating Hip Hop for two particular reasons. Firstly, the Hip Hop show took place on a television channel that was only accessible through a hefty monthly subscription. Secondly, the majority of the show took place in Afrikaans, and would therefore only target an audience already acclimatised to Hip Hop at the Cape.

The channel attempted to migrate to an online platform, however this was short lived. The content still exists online, occupying a *YouTube* channel with various live music shows that have been recorded and stored on the platform. It is here that greater reflection is needed. Hip Hop in the age of the Internet forms the basis of the next chapter.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

As it has been illustrated, the earliest forms of Hip Hop expression in venues which accommodated the artform and cultural production through releases influenced political thought. From 1983, once movies were being released, the visual guide that accompanied young people facilitated the unfolding of Cape Town's Hip Hop community. Once these movies were accessed, it gave young people knowledge and capability of producing their own forms of Hip Hop.

From the gatherings that occurred at The Base to the releases of Prophets of Da City indicated the viewpoint of a group of young people from the Cape Flats periphery. Furthermore, these releases challenged apartheid-constructed identities and provided commentary on the political transitioning that the country was embarking on.

Negotiating censorship, radio programmes emerged which not only provided a space for local Hip Hop Headz to share their music, but provided an opportunity to “hear the spits” of international and budding local Hip Hop artists. Through radio, ties were formed, community awareness and relatability of Hip Hop to social conditions became much more apparent and this sparked community workshops to actually help deal with social ills. Television was less successful because of the financial implications. However, cyberspace and the use of internet as a method of communication, becomes the focus of Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

The *YouTube* Generation, 2011-2015

The uploading of self-produced videos to digital platforms within South Africa and especially within the Cape contributed significantly to an online visibility and greater reflection on more relevant social themes – in stark contrast to global suffering, expressed in Chapter 2, Cape-specific conditions in Chapter 3 and Cape socio-political conditions reflected in lyrics in Chapter 4. This medium attracted and broadened Hip Hop followers. It also allowed artists to share their ideas at a much lower production cost. New Media platforms (*Myspace*, *YouTube* and *Facebook*) became an encouraged platform for artists. This chapter will focus solely on *YouTube* and the artists who released work via the platform since 2011-2015.

This chapter will unpack some of the content that artists released on this digital platform. Furthermore, it will be shown that *Knowledge of Self* shifted to nuanced social issues, such as gender differences. The extent to which Hip Hop becomes a means of expression also becomes apparent in a variety of different locations in previously Coloured only settlements in Cape Town. The artists identified here are Die Getuies, Jitsvinger, Garlic Brown, Niko10Long, DOOKOOM and Dope Saint Jude. Some of these artists have been mentioned in secondary literature, however, further reflections will be made on the actual lyrics of the Raps, to enhance their arguments.¹ Each of these Rappers combine visuals with their music,

¹ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2006).

almost bookending the early manifestations of Hip Hop at the Cape through film.

These case studies are by no means representative of the surge in online productions. Die Antwoord and Jack Parow, for example, also excelled to global recognition due to their usage of social media.² Die Antwoord exploded onto the international music scene with videos that portrayed the group as a “Zef Rap Crew”. They borrowed language and expressions from both white and Coloured working class communities, creating caricatures drenched in stereotypes.³ Haupt has argued that these caricatures are forms of *blackfacing* and cultural appropriation common within the music industries of both the USA and South Africa.⁴ Furthermore, Haupt reveals that according to many Hip Hop Headz in the Cape, the lead rapper of Die Antwoord, Watkin Tudor Jones, spent a large amount of time in Mitchells Plain with Garlic Brown and Isaac Mutant.⁵ Jack Parow, another Rapper who borrowed Afrikaans based colloquialisms from the Coloured community, appropriated these expressions in his music. His video *Cooler as ekke* reached 3 million views in 2015 making it the most watched Afrikaans video of that time.⁶ It would be apt to focus on their role and involvement in the continued development of Hip Hop in South Africa at large for further research.

²A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2006). p.116.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶ IOL Arts Writer: “Cooler as ekke klaps 3 million views” *IOL ONLINE*. 18 June 2015
<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/arts-portal/music/cooler-as-ekke-klaps-3-million-views-1873012> (Accessed 1 October 2017)

The chosen Hip Hop artists in this chapter have delivered some form of social commentary through their music and have released self-produced music (and in some cases collaborative videos) on YouTube. Thus, awareness regarding a certain social condition is uploaded using video as a means to engage with broader audiences. Naturally, one cannot conduct an extensive review of all uploaded creations. However, six notable performers or groups will frame this chapter. Each have made a substantial contribution to the Hip Hop scene at the Cape by incorporating local issues into their artistry.

4.1 Die Getuies

Die Getuies is a Cape Town Hip Hop duo that originates from the Cape Flats township of Belhar.⁷ Marco “Maniak/Kainam” Snyders and Trevor “Dmus” Jacobs have tackled issues of social inequality and have explored the social translatability of democracy within a post-apartheid South Africa.⁸ The duo have released music videos via *YouTube* since 2011 and have conducted various self-curated interviews as well as videos that dramatize their opinions regarding their position within a post-apartheid democratic South Africa.

The duo released four videos over the period of one year from 2011-2012. The first song

⁷ The literal translation reads as “The Witnesses”. However when used in a colloquial Cape Flats manner, it translates as “The Aficionados”.

⁸ In an interview with Snyders, he pointed to his name containing both the darkness and the light of his personality. Thus he decided to write his name backwards, as he was exploring his indigenous heritages alongside indigenous activist Jethro Louw, J. Louw & M. Snyders: In conversation with the author, October 2015. Kalkfontein-Kuilsriver, Cape Town.

released by the outfit was titled *Runaway Slave*. This depicted the harsh realities of working class youth on the Cape Flats, having to maintain households with minimum wage incomes. They continue, however, to create links with the initial ideology of the Hip Hop movement. For example, their music video makes use of footage of murdered South African Communist leader Chris Hani, and Black Consciousness thinker, Steve Biko. The video sees two camouflaged protagonists on an escape mission from their Cape Flats home, running through open fields (a blatant reference to a feeling of freedom) and finally breaking through gates of Belhar homes to achieve ultimate freedom. This is juxtaposed with lyrics. It is here that the social critique suggests that as much as one “runs”, there is no prospect of escaping the harsh realities of capitalism. In the final chorus, Dmus sings: “you running, you running but you can’t get away. You working and working but you ain’t getting paid. You running and running but you can’t get away. You working, *sewe dae sonder pay*”.⁹

Better Must Come was released in 2012. The Belhar resident’s critique the post-apartheid era in South Africa. The two artists Dmus and Maniak/Kainam, extensively speak about the role of working class youth within this democracy. The two artists unpack the word “democracy” to their audience.¹⁰ The video cleverly opens with an old rendition of the Enoch Sotonga hymn, *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*, synonymous with hope for a brighter future. Their dialogue clearly reflects on dashed dreams of a better life for people on the Cape Flats.

Dmus: *Here’s what I have to say about Democracy. They are crazy. It’s actually DemoCrazy.*

⁹ Seven days without any pay, Die Getuies: *Runaway slave*, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmS09YRztAs>

¹⁰ It is unclear who the interviewer in this video is however the video was released on the YouTube channel of “Shamiel X” on 22 June 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afccaTNa-nw>. (accessed 1 February 2017)

the world is simply crazy now. You understand? Its pure madness. They trying to drive us all mad here. So I don't see this democracy. Not in my hood. It's still tough out here brother. They still make it difficult for us.

Maniak/Kainam: *It's still heavy and very difficult for our people out here brother. Most people around us still live in fear. The picture of apartheid has created many complications for our people. Our people are so afraid and are watching each other. Neighbours are suspicious of neighbours. It's like we are all stuck in a hole and everyone is keeping each other in this hole. We are destroying each other.*

Dmus: DIVIDE AND CONQUER!

Maniak/Kainam: *Self destruction is actually a sickness that was engineered for us to destroy ourselves.*

Dmus: *Things are worse. It's almost as if people have voted for others to live better.*¹¹

The duo speak collectively on what they call the facades of a democratic revolution within South Africa. They foreground post-apartheid trauma amongst people of the Cape Flats. They leave the audience with a glimmer of hope by singing: “while you stare into the darkness remember... better must come”.¹² It can be noted that the duo’s engagement with the political dispensation of the time is one of disenchantment. They manage to engage with the political landscape unapologetically, speaking candidly about the inequalities of South Africa’s new democratic system.

During the interview the duo eloquently unpack one of the core systematic strategies of apartheid namely divide and conquer. By pointing this out, the duo highlights the structural implications of apartheid within a democratic South Africa. They unravel the effects that this system exerted on the population living on the Cape Flats and the continued resentment

¹¹ Die Getuies: *Better Must Come*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afccaTNa-nw>

¹² *Ibid.*

towards ineffectiveness of the new political dispensation.

This group therefore made use of Hip Hop as a self-reflective platform to deliver commentary surrounding the conditions within their neighbourhood, providing insight into these realities through their music. The legacy of apartheid's divide and conquer policies are referenced by the two rappers, highlighting the aftermath of apartheid on their reality. The social conditions highlighted by Die Getuies, that form part of the systemic inequalities within democracy. This is a remnant of apartheid's imbalance.

The music videos of the group were therefore evaluations of the political dispensation within South Africa and would not necessarily have conformed to the mainstream media's broadcasting agenda. Their criticism of the social political structure of their immediate community garnered support and was a direct criticism of South Africa as they perceived it. Their hypercritical stance, low budget self-produced videos would not have appealed to mainstream media broadcasters. Another artist who offered a social criticism but with an environmental twist was Jitsvinger,

4.2 Jitsvinger

Quintin "Jitsvinger" Goliath is from the Blue-Downs/Kuilsriver area, and rapped solely in

Afrikaans (more specifically, Afrikaaps).¹³ He is considered a proponent of the Afrikaans *Rymklets* rap movement, initially pioneered by rap group POC. He also collaborated with a variety of social organisations such as the Treasure Karoo Action Group (TKAG), known for their environmental activism. Jitsvinger promoted awareness against fracking in the Karoo,¹⁴ in his 2011 track entitled *Frack Attack*. He points to the environmental damage of extracting nutrients and shale gas from the planet. His video clearly places blame on greedy capitalist oil companies.

In order to convey his message and pull at the heartstrings of his audience, Jitsvinger starts his video with a clip of a young boy, walking through the desert landscape of the Karoo, clearly perturbed by the contamination of drinking water. Animated water taps spit out flames. Jitsvinger is not only targeting a much younger audience but instilling a sense of environmental awareness and urgency to act. In an interview with the online news publication, *Timeslive*, Jitsvinger explains why he has become an activist against fracking:

When I was approached by these people, I thought they just knew that I'm going to love the topic because I always try to speak for the misrepresented, the misunderstood, the people whose voices are always muffled by the big businesses, because I've shared this history with people.¹⁵

¹³ In 2011, the artist was a prominent part of the Theatre production, Afrikaaps. This theatre production explored the phonetic roots of Afrikaans. For more on this production refer to M. Van Heerden: "AFRIKAAPS: A CELEBRATORY PROTEST AGAINST THE RACIALIZED HEGEMONY OF 'PURE' AFRIKAANS", MA Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2017.

¹⁴ The Karoo has faced immense interest from oil and petroleum companies who wanted to frack within the area due to the rich amount of nutrients and shale gas found below the surface of the ground. This interest has been faced with contestation from environmental groups who are opposed to these companies, K. du Pisanie: "Fracking in the Karoo: opportunity or threat?", *Stockfarm*, 7 (7), 2017, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵ T. George: "Frack, its a Jitsvinger rap attack", *Timeslive*, 3 August 2011. <http://www.iol.co.za/entertainment/music/frack-its-a-jitsvinger-rap-attack-1110947> (accessed July 16th 2017)

Jitsvinger has at the core of his mission, anti-corporatisation and anti-capitalist sentiment, as well as a strong inclination towards conservation. This video is another case of activism intertwined with Hip Hop music, delivering commentary on the environmental destructive realities fracking. Jitsvinger and his critical commentary about individuals who would benefit from fracking is an important part of the song. He clearly criticises the economic benefits that accompany this environmental drilling. Jitsvinger's work would therefore exist uncensored on a digital platform such as YouTube compared to a more hegemonic media platform aimed to serve the mainstream audience.

Another example of an artist whose work exists in its rawest forms, unveiling social situations to listeners, is Garlic Brown. With a variety of themes in his work that relate to social conditions within Mitchells Plain, Garlic Brown uses music as a mechanism to deliver social critique beyond a mainstream viewership but more importantly, he explores alternative identities.

4.3 Garlic Brown (Knoffel Bruin)

Garlic Brown a.k.a Abadon Horseman, has probably utilized *YouTube* in its rawest form with unedited clips of him rapping at various events including park jams and live events.¹⁶ Alongside his former crew, League of Shadows (LOS), Garlic Brown has frequented most

¹⁶ A park jam is a traditional Cape Flats Hip Hop event where different parks around the Cape Flats are activated with sound systems. Invited guests include Rappers, Deejays, Break-dancers and Graffiti artists. These events are generally free and occur at various public parks around the Cape Flats.

local Hip Hop events within the city of Cape Town and the rest of South Africa. With one edited video produced and directed by the channel *Pronoia*, Garlic Brown has become synonymous with the Cape's Hip Hop scene. Some of Garlic's socio-political messages will be further explored.

Garlic Brown possesses many alter-egos and performs in both English and Afrikaans, under the name Knoffel Bruin. He re-creates indigenous identities through imaginative lyrics in Afrikaans, painting a lyrical picture for listeners. This Mitchells Plain resident and Cape Flats Hip Hop stalwart, has effectively utilized the *YouTube* platform in order to release many of his performances and videos. With one edited and produced video for his song *Supersonic* (released in 2014), most of his online performances are *freestyle raps* or videos which document his live performances.¹⁷ Of importance is his rejection of gang violence. In 2011, he performed at the Bonfoi park jam in the Mitchells Plain neighbourhood of Westridge. Along with his crew, LOS, he performed a variety of songs. One song in particular, was in dedication to the Cape Flats rapper, Mario "Mr Devious" Van Rooy who was murdered in 2004 outside his home. The song starts with Garlic Brown talking about his hometown and referring to it as the "*Wilde tuin*".¹⁸ Garlic further speaks about him representing a certain class of society by saying: "I represent the ghetto youths, the ghetto youths are universal. We

¹⁷ Freestyle Raps refers to unrehearsed impromptu rapping about contemporary issues.

¹⁸ Translated as Wild Garden with particular reference to wild animals which occupy a particular space, similar to a game reserve. Here Garlic Brown refers to the high amount of gang violence that occurs within his hometown.

can't die".

The song's chorus is clearly intended to inform audiences not *au fait* with ghetto lifestyle:

*Robbers rob the robbers
 Killers kill the killers
 If you live in the ghetto
 Then you know what the deal is
 I'm not making a joke
 I'm, totally serious
 If you don't know,
 My people are under ignorance.
 Robbers rob the robbers
 Killers kill the killers
 If you live in the ghetto
 Then you know what the deal is
 I'm not making a joke
 I'm, totally serious
 If you don't know,
 Look what happened to Devious.*¹⁹

In the last line of the song, Garlic Brown referred to the murder of Devious. Furthermore the footage was taken at a park jam. It was not a commercially sponsored event and was organized with minimal marketing or resources. This performance clearly rejects the commercialisation of Hip Hop.

In the video, Dj "Rozzano X" is shown to be Deejaying at the event, handing a microphone to members of LOS. Of importance is Brown's explicit membership to the plight of "his" people. He firmly showcases the conditions of the working class within the Cape Flats periphery and he too, speaks out against the post-apartheid political system:

¹⁹ League of Shadows: *Robbers rob the Robbers*, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=792RWgC-w5Y> (Accessed 16th June 2017)

*Ek bou my huis op n rots
 My tong is los
 Ek is op n pos
 Jacob Zuma het opgemos
 Ons het hard gewerk
 Ons raak te sterk
 Toe ons Nama praat
 Het hulle onse voerste vier tandे uit getrek.²⁰*

Jacob Zuma, rather than the state, is clearly identified as a political villain in a long string of villains. Referring to why people extracted their teeth, Brown suggests that this is in response to colonial authorities who would perform dental mutilation when indigenous languages, such as *Nama*, were spoken.²¹ Garlic Brown's imaginative retelling of historical occurrences through lyrical composition has been a unique characteristic of the rapper.

Brown's identity and commitment to reigniting pride in indigenous heritage is epitomised in his rap alongside Sammy "Paddastoel" Sparks, *KhoeSunz*:

*My naam is Knoffel Bruin
 Ek bly innie Kaap
 Se Kasteel
 Bewaar jou Siel
 As jy vals is
 Here en Dames
 Ek is warrior met'ie
 Krag van my voorvaders
 Mense het gedink
 Ons het weg gefade
 Check dit uit
 Maak die chalice vol*

²⁰ I build my house on a rock/my tongue is loose/ I'm on a mission/ Jacob Zuma has messed up!/ We worked hard/ we getting too strong/ when we spoke Nama they extracted our four front teeth, G.Brown: *My naam is Gam*, WestRidge, Mitchells Plain. 2011. <https://soundcloud.com/league-of-shadows/my-naam-is-gaam-live> (accessed 3 September 2017).

²¹ There are various mythologies attached to the reasonings for these extractions. Some include gang affiliation to the numbers gang. This would make for interesting future research.

*Breek die heilge gebrood
Meditate en trek n skyf
Hou dit in so lank
Wat ek kan
Soos n ninja
Ek is n Boesman,
San, khoi
En n Griqua!*²²

From the outset, Knoffel Bruin engages with the iconography of the Cape, presenting himself as a resident of the colonially built Castle, a prominent feature on the landscape of the inner city central business district. He points to the historical connection he has to the Castle, a symbol of strength, and his forefathers, celebrating his indigenous roots. This should be read in the political context in which questions were being asked about the place of Coloureds and their role during apartheid.

Garlic Brown reimagines indigenous identity as well as a sense of self within many of his releases. Through various engagements it was noted by the artist himself that he does not want to be located in a mainstream realm and enjoys a fringe audience. This gave him and continues to give him more space to express a critical reflexivity regarding his social political environment and his place within it. Many of his video productions do not contain much editing and are raw recordings of his live performances at different events. Another artist who was openly critical of the political dispensation within the Western Cape and delivered direct commentary of this is Niko10Long. He explicitly names and shames specific individuals.

²² My name is Garlic Brown/ I stay in the Cape Castle/ Protect your soul/ If you are false/ Ladies and Gentleman/ I am a warrior with the power of my forefathers/ People thought we faded away/ Check it out/ Fill up the chalice/ Break the holy bread/ Meditate and have a puff/ Keep it in as long as I can like a ninja/ I am a bushman, San, Khoi/ And a Griqua, League of Shadows: “Khoe Sunz” Self published on Soundcloud, 2010. <https://soundcloud.com/league-of-shadows/khoesunz> (accessed 1 June 2017)

4.4 NIKO10LONG

Leagan “Niko10Long” Davids is from Wesbank, an annexure of Kuilsriver (opposite the Delft region). It is considered an extension of the Cape Flats due to its geographical location. Niko10Long alongside his committed team of visual directors, have created music that comments directly on the social condition of both Wesbank and life within the Western Cape. Niko10Long, who has referred to himself on various occasions as Wesbank’s Ward councillor, sparked various geo-specific social and political topics with his musical releases.

In 2011, Niko10Long collaborated with production company, Azania Rizing to release his debut video, *Vaderfiguur*.²³ In the video Niko10Long explains the meaning of fatherhood to a young man who has struggled without a father figure himself. He unpacks his own positioning as a father figure who wants to break the circle of absent fathers. The artist broaches on an important aspect of parental neglect.

The music video was filmed in Wesbank and released on the 13th September 2011 during a weekly open mic night known as Lyrical District.²⁴ It was used in a short 16-minute “experimental musical documentary” entitled *Unseen Ones* produced by filmmaker Kurt Orderson. This documentary showcased the living conditions in Delft, and the service

²³ Father figure.

²⁴ Lyrical District was a weekly open mic night that took place within the Ragazzi Venue that used to be located in Long Street, the nightclub district of Cape Town, R. Cockcroft: “Nikotien kills”, *Mahala online publication*, 16 September 2011, <http://www.mahala.co.za/music/nikotien-kills/> (accessed 19 July 2017).

delivery protests which erupted in 2008 when ‘backyard dwellers, who occupied over 1000 newly built N2 Gateway houses, were violently evicted by police using rubber bullets’.²⁵

The music video *VaderFiguur* follows the rapper through his hometown. It also unpacks Niko10’s past involvement in gangsterism. He emphasises how Hip Hop directed him away from the underworld. Through this medium, he states, he could explore the power of lyricism and poetics instead of gun violence within his own community. Niko10’s performances are politically charged delivering commentary about the socio-political environment within the Western Cape. Subsequent releases continue in the same vein, exploring situations around land and the displacement of communities with the Western Cape region.

Niko10Long is critical of the political dispensation within the Western Cape, and raises specific questions about land redistribution and gentrification. However, the explicit naming of individuals he deems responsible for these inequalities would be a point of contention for mainstream broadcasters. Furthermore, he unpacks intricate political situations in a consumable manner for the general public. DOOKOOM goes even further by pointing out all of the continued exploitation that occurs on farms in the Western Cape.

4.5 DOOKOOM

In August 2012, a series of strikes commenced with farm workers from a variety of Western

²⁵ K. Orderson: “Launch of *VaderFiguur* and *Unseens Ones* press release”, 13th September 2011, Courtesy of *Azania Rizing Productions*.

Cape towns, protesting about the minimum wages they were receiving. These strikes lasted through the latter part of the 2012 into 2013.²⁶ These protests which started in the Western Cape sparked a national outcry from farm workers who were frustrated with the minimum wage. Approximately 9000 farm workers across Western Cape's Boland Farming region protested against the lowering of the already minimum wage which was R69 a day.²⁷ Coupled with these economic concerns, were the deplorable living conditions and human rights of farm workers. The riots received international attention and serious discussions unfolded on the position of the rural working class.

One South African band who joined this debate was *Noise Rap*. The group, known locally as DOOKOOM, sparked a national debate with their striking videos and songs that carried political motifs. In particular, *Larney Jou Poes*, sparked a national debate on the plight of striking farm workers in South Africa.²⁸

The word DOOKOOM has multiple meanings. Filmmaker and writer, Dylan Valley, explains that DOOKOOM is:

A by-product of the Cape's slavery history, from the Malay word *dukun*, which is a kind of spiritual healer/witch doctor. In the Southeast Asian context it doesn't have necessarily negative connotations. In the Cape context the *doekoem* is seen as a practitioner of black magic and is therefore dangerous. The idea of Malays/Muslims as dangerous was common and held even up until the early 20th century — they were said to curse and poison people, possessing knowledge

²⁶ S. Christie: "Leaderless farm strike is organic", *Mail and Gaurdian Newspaper online*, 16 November 2012, <https://mg.co.za/article/2012-11-16-00-leaderless-farm-strike-is-organic> (Accessed 4 October 2017)

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ The title of the song roughly translates to "Boss Your Cunt" Dookoom: "Jou Poes My Larney" *DOOKOOM EP*, IOT Records. 2013.

of “Malay trickery”.²⁹

The word therefore refers to a magical spell or black magic that is practiced on a person.³⁰

The band consists of a variety of locals, lead by veteran Cape Flats Hip Hop lyricist, Isaac Mutant. DOOKOOM produces an amalgamation of musical genres incorporating Hip Hop and electronic music. Mutant navigates this musical fusion in *Afrikaaps*, and tackles complex social issues through his lyricism.³¹ The drummer used flashing images during live performances. Other members include Human Waste (producer), DJ Roach (Deejay), and Spooky (Visual Coordinator). Their new flare is often interpreted as a sign of inherent aggression.³² One of their first videos, *Kak Stirvy*, premiered the band’s grungy sound, lifting the curtain on this new collaboration that took the stage.

The band’s visual presence on *YouTube* was associated with controversy that sparked various discussions around whether their content was ‘freedom of speech’ or ‘hate speech’. The most famous video that sparked this debate was the 2014 released video, *Larney Jou Poes*. It portrays a riot that takes place on a farm. The video itself became a topic of discussion on

²⁹ D. Valley: “Cape Town Hip Hop just got interesting again”, *Africa’s a Country*, 23 October 2013, <http://africasacountry.com/2013/10/cape-town-hip-hop-just-got-interesting-again/> (accessed 16th July 2017).

³⁰ It is interesting to note that in 2017, Cape Town based rapper and producer SIEP (SOUL IN EVERY PERSON) engaged with the band and its name. In a verse for his song *Beklemtoon*, the rapper mentions “Ek’s mal oor Isaac Mutant maar ek speel nie met DOOKOOM nie” (I’m crazy about Isaac Mutant but I don’t play with DOOKOOM.) Here the artist refers to the dangers of playing with *doekoem*.

³¹ Here once again the different variants of Afrikaans are being referred to, depending on the geographical location of the speakers. The Cape has a particular variant that is renowned amongst South Africans and geo-specific to the area. Various parts of the Western Cape contain different phonetic expressions within this language. Highlighted by accent and colloquial expression, J. Schuster: “Afrikaans on the Cape Flats: Performing cultural linguistic identity in Afrikaaps”, MA Dissertation, Stellenbosch University, March 2016, p. 54.

³² G. Koen: “Why is Dookoom so angry”, *News24*, 12 October 2014.

<http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Why-is-Dookoom-so-angry-20150429> (Accessed 13 October 2017)

prime time news bulletins.³³

The video opens with Isaac Mutant singing the following lyrics to the musical notation of a well-known Christian hymn which refers to a bible character Abraham, the hymn sings:

*Father Abraham had many sons
Had many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them
And so are you
So let's just praise the Lord.*³⁴

However in the song by DOOKOOM, the band's front man Isaac Mutant reworks the lyrics.

This reworking of the well known Christian hymn is sung in the song as follows:

*Farmer Abrahams has many farms /
Many farms has farmer Abrahams /
I work one of them /
And so do you /
So let's go burn them down.*³⁵

In the music video, Isaac Mutant is portrayed as a farmer driving a tractor through the farmlands, with a number of farm workers standing on a connected trailer with pitchforks.

The music video proceeds to show images of farmer workers drinking *papsak*,³⁶ a reference to the *dop system*, or tot-system, rumoured to still be practiced on farms throughout the

³³ Isaac Mutant, interview by SABC news crew, 15th October 2014, *SABC*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Z7Y4TbN0fE> (Accessed 12 October 2014)

³⁴ Author Unknown: *Father Abraham*. via Children bible songs. <http://childbiblesongs.com/song-27-father-abraham.shtml>

³⁵ DOOKOOM: "Jou Poes My Larney", *DOOKOOM EP*, IOT Records. 2013.

³⁶ *Papsak* refers to the silver packaging that boxed wine is sold in.

Western Cape.³⁷ The *dop-geld* system, refers to the payment of farm workers in poor quality alcohol. This system of payment was legal until 1961 but still occurred through a technicality within the law that allowed for alcohol to be distributed as an *honorarium* to workers.³⁸ It should be added that the Western Cape has some of the highest reported levels of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) cases in the world.³⁹

The video also depicts workers looking into camera and shouting “Jou Poes My Larney” with immense anger.⁴⁰ The video finally culminates in the band's name “DOOKOOM” being burnt into the open field on the farmlands, exposing the burning fire with an extended aerial shot, amidst the rolling hills of farmland. The boldly burning name becomes the centre point of the frame.

With familial connections to the northern located Western Cape town of Vredendal, Mutant spent some time in Ashton during the farm worker protests in 2012.⁴¹ This song was inspired

³⁷ For more information regarding the *dop system* (tot-system) the work of scholars such as Susan Levine and Leslie London should be referenced. Furthermore the effects of the *dop system* has been studied through conditions such as Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (F.A.S) by these scholars as mentioned by Haupt in his article. “Dookoom’s voice in SA Music” *City Press courtesy of News 24*, 12 October 2014 <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Dookooms-voice-in-SA-music-20150430> (accessed 16th July 2017).

³⁸ J. Gossage et al., "Alcohol use, working conditions, job benefits, and the legacy of the “Dop” system among farm workers in the Western Cape Province, South Africa: Hope despite high levels of risky drinking", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 11(7), 2014, p. 7404.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ The phrase once again roughly translates to “You’re are a cunt my boss”.

⁴¹ A. Haupt: “Dookoom’s voice in Sa Music”, *City Press courtesy of News 24*, 12 October 2014, <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Dookooms-voice-in-SA-music-20150430> (accessed 16th July 2017).

after witnessing the anger and frustration of these workers during the riots. The band became synonymous with anger. Mutant is little disturbed by this adding that “DOOKOOM is a very emotional band.” “Dookoom is an emotional response to a world most people are too scared to confront. It’s a state of mind. It’s the darkest corner of your psyche, a world of shadows and demons you can either confront, or be haunted by”.⁴² Thus bringing conversations which are considered to be difficult to the forefront.

The imagery of farm workers expressing anger towards a farmer sparked outcry. Some audiences failed to recognise the exploitative elements of farming in the country.⁴³ Civic organizations suggested that the video glorified farm murders. Afriforum, in particular, lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Commission, saying that the content was tantamount to hate speech.⁴⁴ The band’s response was unequivocal: “There’s a difference between expressing anger and inciting violence. Let’s focus on why people are angry. Social injustice. Surely treating workers worse than animals is an incitement to violence?”⁴⁵

⁴² Z. Gqola: “Dookoom: screaming about injustice” *Groundup*, 15 October 2014. https://www.groundup.org.za/article/dookoom-screaming-about-injustice_2352/ (accessed 13 July 2017)

⁴³ It must be noted that in an opinion piece by Prof. Adam Haupt, the question was posed why not “Larney Jou Piel” (You’re a Dick Boss). In this article published in News24 online, a gender debate ensues amidst the release of this music video. Haupt writes in the opinion piece that “In Larney Jou P**s”, we see themes such as the ongoing exploitation of farm workers and land rights being addressed by men (Isaac Mutant and the farm workers) to men (the white male farmer, the larney)”, A. Haupt, “DOOKOOM: why not larney jou piel?” on *News24*, 19 October 2014, <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Dookoom-Why-not-Larney-Jou-Piel-20150429> (accessed 16th July 2017)

⁴⁴ G. Koen: “Why is DOOKOOM so angry?”, *News24*, 12 October 2014, <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Why-is-Dookoom-so-angry-20150429> (accessed 16th July 2017).

⁴⁵ G. Koen: “Why is DOOKOOM so angry?”, *News24*, 12 October 2014, <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Why-is-Dookoom-so-angry-20150429> (accessed 16th July 2017).

DOOKOOM not only foregrounded the socio-economic hardships of rural Cape workers, in contrast to conditions in the Cape Flats, but also represented and appealed to a large community, previously neglected not only by politicians but also by early Hip Hop movements. They created a space in which the protagonists were not simply spoken about but allowed them to be incorporated into the genre. Their efforts also sparked national discussions around social issues in the Cape.

Unlike the previously discussed artists, DOOKOOM was able to break into the mainstream through their unique and direct social commentary which coincided with ongoing debates about workers' rights that began with the farm protests of 2012. It is really with the appearance of Dope Saint Jude that the concerns around misogyny and sexual identities is liberated in the Cape Hip Hop movement.

4.6 Dope Saint Jude

The ability to communicate layered ideas via the poetics of Rap has often been substituted by misogynist sexualizing of women within videos. In many cases women's position within Hip Hop music videos have been merely pleasurable subjects for the male gaze. Amidst the romanticizing of toxic masculinities, there are artists who identify as women that have navigated the culture, utilizing it as a platform and departure point to spark debates regarding various social conditions, particularly with reference to gender based violence. Often phobias

have plagued various RAP songs, with derogatory expletives being uttered regarding the sexual orientation of queer people. With this in mind, this does not mean that the culture has been inaccessible for people wanting to use the platform to exhibit their various identities and construct their own lyricism to describe these to audiences.

Cape Town born Dope Saint Jude, serves as “an example to all girls. Dope Saint Jude (DSJ) is an academic, a thug, a rapper, a hustler, an activist, a producer, a community worker, a filmmaker, a party animal, a lover, a sister and a BOSS BITCH!”⁴⁶ DSJ has created work within a cultural landscape that has been plagued with traces of misogyny and homophobia. Gender based violence that has been ignored on occasion within the Hip Hop community, DSJ uses Rap as an avenue to express their queer identity. In the online publication *Afropunk*, an article titled, “THE FUTURE OF HIP-HOP IS BLACK & FEMME: 4 ARTISTS TO WATCH”, DSJ was mentioned due to the Cape specific portal they open for audiences viewing their work. The writer Nicole Regan noted that “Dope Saint Jude is part of the next generation of conscious lyricists. A wordsmith with a knack for addressing socio-political issues. Their music touches on everything from queerness and self-love to the racial politics of their native South Africa”.⁴⁷ This description describes the topics and themes that DSJ engages with in their work.

⁴⁶ S. M. Mazaza: “Dope Saint Jude: Hip-Hop, Feminism, Race Politics & Cape Town Queer Culture”, *OkayAfrica*, 27 March 2015, <http://www.okayafrica.com/video/dope-saint-jude-hip-hop-feminism-race-politics-cape-town-queer-culture/> (accessed 17th July 2017).

⁴⁷ R. Nicole: “THE FUTURE OF HIP-HOP IS BLACK & FEMME: 4 ARTISTS TO WATCH”, *AfroPunk*. <http://afropunk.com/2017/08/future-hip-hop-black-femme-4-artists-watch/> (accessed 9 September 2017).

In one of the more notable videos released on *YouTube*, Dope Saint Jude utilizes colloquial expressions that have been synonymous with the queer community within the Cape. Haupt has already unpacked the “queering of a male dominated platform” in his article titled “Queering Hip-Hop, Queering the City: Dope Saint Jude’s Transformative Politics”.⁴⁸ In 2015, the release of a track entitled *Keep in Touch* challenged the thought that Hip Hop culture has no space for queer people.

This tradition of queering Hip Hop and creating a safe space of expression has been a global tradition. Dope Saint Jude is part of a global movement of Hip Hop artists who utilize Hip Hop as a space to express themselves. Where usually it would be frowned upon from community members, Dope Saint Jude, utilizes the platform value of Hip Hop to reimagine the communicative powers that it possesses in a local context. The video’s director, Chris Kets even suggested that coincidental moments in the video such as the arbitrary “photobombing” of a passing taxi, contributed to the authentic feel of the music video. Kets mentions that “*Keep in Touch* was a remix of the Ballroom/Vogue style that came out of New York and we decided to incorporate Gayle within the video, a dialect that was unique to Cape Town which would bring a distinct feel to what we were trying to achieve”.⁴⁹ Kets therefore refers to the manner in which the introduction of the film was compiled therefore allowing

⁴⁸A. Haupt: “Queering Hip-Hop, Queering the City: Dope Saint Jude’s Transformative Politics”, *MCjournal* 2016, <http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjourn/article/view/1125>(accessed 17th July 2017).

⁴⁹ Chris Kets: in conversation with the Author, 1 August 2017.

for a geographic setting to be highlighted through visual representation of Cape Town.

Within the introduction of the film, Dope Saint Jude is walking in a Cape Town neighbourhood. They are walking through the streets towards a public telephone where Dope Saint Jude is confronted by an individual who is referred to as a “*kak sturvy girl*”.⁵⁰ After this encounter, she takes out a twenty-cent coin which is colloquially referred to as a “two bop”. This also pays reference to the local clothing brand Two Bop that was a prominent clothing feature within Dope Saint Jude’s video. The lyrics also point to a rather Cape specific dialect of English and Afrikaans words, relying heavily on colloquial expressions. The choreography also incorporates a fusion of vogue/ballroom influences but importantly, Kets inverts DSJ’s role with one formerly reserved for male Hip Hop figures. She takes centre stage and her backup dancers are men.⁵¹

In addition to these new ideological shifts, the video is firmly located in the Cape Town setting, culminating in the portrayal of Cape Town’s queer based community. Coupled with this, three characters sitting with a backdrop of Table Mountain behind them, converse in Gayle, a coded language for members of the queer communities within South Africa and

⁵⁰ An extremely snobbish girl.

⁵¹ Chris Kets: in conversation with the Author, 1 August 2017.

especially the Western Cape during periods of immense homophobia during the 1970s.⁵²

Adam Haupt refers to Dope Saint Jude's utilizing of Hip Hop as a moment of "queering",⁵³ turning the platform against itself and furthermore allowing for their own expression to be centralised within a platform which was considered to be "male dominated and heteronormative".⁵⁴

Another DSJ release which succeeded *Keep In Touch* was the video entitled, *Brown Baas*.⁵⁵ In this video, DSJ describes the various intersections of identity. Here gender is intertwined with socio-economic conditions of the Cape Flats. DSJ is driven through the Cape Flats neighbourhood of Elsies River (where they grew up) and stops in front of the iconic Janjiera Motors, known for the selling and reselling of second hand motor vehicles, car-spares and tyres. The song's chorus starts with DSJ repeating: "What it's like to be brown for a girl like me/ for a girl like me. Do you know what it's like to be *baas* for a girl like me/for a girl like me"?⁵⁶ Use is made of various colloquial expressions to denounce the standard hegemonic classification of people of colour.

⁵² K. Cage: *Gayle: The language of Kinks and Queens: a history and dictionary of Gay language in South Africa* (Jacana Media, South Africa, 2003), p. 35.

⁵³ A. Haupt: "Queering Hip-Hop, Queering the City: Dope Saint Jude's Transformative Politics", *MCjournal* 2016, <http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjourn/article/view/1125> (accessed 17th July 2017)

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Brown Boss.

⁵⁶ Dope Saint Jude: *Brown Baas*. Directed by Kyla Phil, 18 September 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdEURn4m4wk> (accessed 1 September 2017).

Some global artists such as Angel Haze from the United States and Rico DalaSam from Brazil have also constructed queer identities within the framework of Rap. DalaSam makes use of colloquial expressions from the queer community in Sao Paulo. The hegemonic construction of Hip Hop is therefore challenged in this new era. Writer, D. Mark Wilson suggests that Hip Hop has allowed artists to question fixed notions of sexual identities and quite rightly suggests that this leads to even bigger questions about Hip Hop in general. He quotes fellow scholar, Craig Watkins, who poses the question: "Who and what is Hip Hop? For whom and for what identities will Hip Hop fight?"⁵⁷

4.7 Concluding Remarks

It is interesting to note that Jitsvinger and Garlic Brown continue to speak of identity and pride but rather than referring to a broad Black Consciousness movement, circumstances required that they shift attention to Coloured pride and heritage in the threat of a post-apartheid rhetoric which also threatened their existence, much like colonialism and apartheid. Afrikaans is embraced not as a language of the oppressor but one of an indigenous group to the Cape. The expectation after 1994, was better conditions for people impoverished under colonialism and apartheid. Conditions had hardly changed for communities living on the Cape

⁵⁷ D. Wilson: "Post-Pomo Hip-Hop Homos- Hip-Hop Art, Gay Rappers, and Social Change", *Social Justice/Global Options*, 34(107), 2007, p. 119.

Flats and this was a site of major frustration for these Hip Hop artists, facing a similar challenge in a new political context.

It is with the rise of groups such as DOOKOOM, Niko10Long and DSJ that the nuanced concerns of people at the Cape are assumed by the artists, incorporated into lyrics and performances and serve as a platform for awareness. This echoes the approach taken by earlier global Hip Hop artists in Jamaica and America, and reflected in films which motivated the movement at the Cape.

With the political foundations of Hip Hop in the Cape, the presented artists who have explored particular socio-political and personal ideas, have stayed true to this understanding of what the art form encompasses and in all of these cases, explored the power of video via *YouTube*. They used Hip Hop as a platform to engage with *Knowledge of Self* and provide insight into their self-created identities. Here they inform audiences about their ideas because they relate to them in an intimate manner and have the ability to incorporate these communities into their performances, probably because they come from within.

It is at this point that Cape Hip Hop expands beyond the confines of the Cape Flats and becomes exportable to a wider audience. Global movements also begin to acknowledge the context-specific contributions of local artists. It is therefore in this cyberspace that Hip Hop becomes much more democratic and affordable both for artists and audiences alike, and much

more reflective of the initial aims of Hip Hop - a platform to express lived experiences.

Conclusion

The evolution of Hip Hop culture across the world experienced a rapid growth, captivating audiences and enticing performers to utilize certain avenues of expression, namely Deejaying, Grafitti, Breakdancing and Rap. Hip Hop was subsequently hijacked by corporations as a medium to sell their products to a youth based market, giving rise to commercialised Hip Hop. One such example can be seen in the advertising strategy of Sprite, who incorporated Rap music in television commercials, thus attempting to attract younger consumers.¹ This is tantamount to the gentrification of Hip Hop. This dissertation investigates the arrival and manifestations of Hip Hop as a form of protest in Cape Town.

Hip Hop Headz fundamentally share a global platform. The genre provides a space for young people to express their thoughts and ideas about their own contexts. This creates a space for self-awareness and expression and allows for sharing these ideas with others, through this particular artistic art form.

In various countries across the world, Rap in particular is associated with grassroots activism that provides practitioners of the craft the necessary tools to speak out against injustices. In Cuba for instance, a national Hip Hop convention has been organised and funded by the national government. Former Cuban president Fidel Castro even suggests that Rap is “the existing

¹ A. Haupt: *Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2008), p. 148.

revolutionary voice of Cuba's future".² The pedagogic appeal of Rap has also been used as a mechanism for education in a country such as Brazil.³ The earliest development of Hip Hop across this South American country has been fairly similar and in some cases it could be argued that the development of Hip Hop within Brazil has been identical to the cultural development in South Africa. One prominent group within Brazil that has delivered extensive social commentary regarding the social situation of those located in the peripheral *favelas* is Racionais MC's.⁴ The group, much like the local crew Prophets of Da City, discuss the social realities of many individuals who have experienced systemic alienation. Globally, protest Hip Hop therefore serves as a platform against inequality. It also promotes the idea of taking pride in one's roots, and in colonised locations, this generally refers to the idea of Blackness.⁵ However, local context has crafted the way in which this developed and changed over time.

It has been argued within this dissertation that Hip Hop arrived at the Cape and was absorbed by youths in the Cape Flats, referred to as Coloured by the state. Two forms in particular proliferated. Breakdancing and Rap would flourish over Graffiti and Deejaying, as both of the latter elements required resources in order for them to be practiced.⁶ Like their global counterparts, they celebrated an overarching concept of Blackness in response to political oppression. Furthermore, they were critical of the social and economic conditions that resulted from this political oppression.

² T. Mitchell: "Introduction", T. Mitchell (ed.), *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA*. (Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 2001), p. 7.

³ M.D. Perry: "Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(6), 2008, pp. 635-664.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ M. Swai & S. Ariefdien: "Putting two heads together: A cross-generational conversation about Hip Hop in South Africa", P. Khalil Saucier (ed.), *Native Tongues: an African Hip Hop Reader* (African World Press, Somerset West, 2011), pp. 119-252.

As veterans Shaheen Ariefdien and Rico Chapman have pointed out, against the “day to day to reality of capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy”.⁷ They adopted rhythmically layered poetry in order to critically engage with their environments, to recreate their identities and challenge various social injustices. This took place as a separate manifestation to commercialised Hip Hop. This created a connecting thread between local and global Hip Hop expressions and eventually, local expressions informed global movements. One such example is visible through the reception of works constructed by Dope Saint Jude.

Hip Hop manifested in the Cape, channeling an existing spirit of expression, performance and creativity, coming to life in a context where music, performance art and artistic creation was firmly intertwined amongst communities of colour. Thus the incorporation of local sounds, movements and art emerged through local Hip Hop Headz expressions, borrowing from existing cultural iconography. This gave local Hip Hop a culinary twist.

Hip Hop’s emergence on the Cape Flats was also centered around personalized expressions, creating identities that were beyond the unimaginative hierarchy of the apartheid state. Redefining these newly created identities through an African lens (denouncing the aspiration to Europeanized identities) and reflection on the geographic locations where Hip Hop Headz found themselves.⁸ Afrikaans was re-appropriated as an indigenous language in this endeavour.

⁷ S. Ariefdien & R. Chapman: “Khoi Hop-Hip Hop, Youth Activism and the Dilemma of Coloured Identity in South Africa”, M. Clark & M. Koster (eds.), *Hip Hop and Social Change in Africa* (Lexington Books, London, 2014), p. 10.

⁸ S. Ariefdien: “Dalah Cape Flats: Hip Hop, Resistance and Colouredness”, S. Essof & D. Moshenberg (eds.), *The New Calculus of Dignity* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2011), p.10.

This study therefore attempted to track and unpack the development of Hip Hop in the Cape, particularly on the Cape Flats. Film and video played an essential role in establishing the earliest Hip Hop scene, culture and community interaction on the Cape Flats. Three films of significance were investigated: Tony Silver's *Style Wars* (1983), Charlie Ahearn's *Wild Style* (1983) and Stan Lathan's *Beat Street* (1984). These films served as a model for how frustration could be expressed outside of negative mediums already circulating, such as gangsterism. It also suggested that one did not have to simply accept what was considered and largely accepted as "the norm". This informed a *Knowledge of Self* and afforded young people an apparatus to create and recreate identities within the culture. Importantly, it gave them agency over their own destiny.

Additionally, these films provided an avenue of escape from harsh social conditions inflicted on communities through various apartheid policies such as the Group Areas Act (amongst others). American Hip Hop films, documentaries and Asian Kung Fu films which were aired on television, in cinemas and viewed in large part in informal settings through the bootlegging system, provided escape, expression and form to a budding Hip Hop culture at the Cape. How the content actually inspired Hip Hop Headz is explored in Chapter 2.

Understanding the reaction, or lack thereof, from the South African censorship authorities shows that there was no perceived threat to racial harmony as promoted by the state. The only recommendations were the removal of a few expletives. However the ideological value clearly sparked a local Hip Hop movement by marginalized young people. Adapting techniques and expressions, they designed and developed their own forms of expression suitable for their own immediate environments and with limited resources.

Furthermore this chapter explored the impact of music videos and the bootleg networks which were essentially community networks of friends who circulated video material which was either received through international links or community friends.

With the development of Rap songs, Breakdance moves and Deejaying techniques, local artists performed in informal spaces across Cape Town. Formal venues created cohesion amongst artists and provided a platform for a wider audience. This was enhanced as productions which were aired on radio and television. Access to these expressions draw significance to the class issues prevalent at the Cape at the time. Artists and audiences were largely from working class families and this had a direct influence on production, dissemination and access to these platforms. This is unpacked in Chapter 3.

The findings contribute to those presented within Nkonyeni's chapter in *Imagining the City*.⁹ They are supported by testimony from the artists. Additionally, understanding the shared cultural heritage between displaced Youth of Hispanic and African-American heritage in the United States and displaced Coloured Youth on the Cape Flats contributed to this discussion. Conditions at the Cape, as opposed to Johannesburg for example, made the establishment of Hip Hop in South Africa more conducive.

With this shared sense of a perceived black culture, it is worth noting that Colouredness was supposed to be replaced by the more encompassing term blackness. However, the large majority

⁹ N.Nkonyeni: "Da struggle kontinues into the 21st century: two decades of nation-conscious rap in Cape Town", R. Meyer, F. Swanson & S. Field (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2007).

of Hip Hop Headz emanated from this racial group. This continued categorisation had to occur because South African history revolves around issues of race, despite calls to the contrary. This can be explained in terms of the rich heritage of Cape Coloureds which activists were actively hoping to reignite. Genealogy, language and pride largely informed themes of expression. In addition, condemnation of deplorable living conditions and obscure political status of this racial group during the transition to democracy and post-1994, informed the movement more than any careful and real consideration of racial harmony. Attempts were visible in the creation of such as the African Hip Hop Movement (AHHM). However, no distinguishable patterns could be found. This was necessary at the time as artists clearly reflected the neglected status of the most populous racial group in the Cape, Coloureds. “Not white enough” and “not black enough”, they were being marginalised and neglected under the new political dispensation. On a class level, farm workers rights, had not been reappraised. Here, artists sympathise with rioters and bring to the discussion, other marginalised groups outside of the urban periphery of Cape Town. This chapter also reflects on the curious manner in which Hip Hop was being censored for these very same reasons.

The self-production and release of Cape Town Hip Hop records were explored, particularly through the lens of one renowned Cape Town Hip Hop crew Prophets of Da City. They were particularly critical of the political transition. They created a localized musical style of Hip Hop music through the recreation of Cape Jazz samples. They provided commentary around various conditions and importantly Rapped in Afrikaans. Their song titled *Dalah Flet* (Do It Thoroughly) addressed various social conditions within the Cape Flats, appealing to a particular audience and their specific concerns.

The chapter then engaged with Hip Hop on the airwaves, especially focusing on Hip Hop music which did not receive commercial attention from mainstream radio stations. This was referred to as underground Hip Hop music. In this chapter, the importance of Cape Town radio as a dissemination point for Hip Hop was explored, specifically through the recollections of various members and participants within the community. Within this chapter, the Cape Town based community radio station Bush Radio was explored. Bush Radio played an important part within the anti-apartheid movement during a time when it was still known as CASET. Once this transition took place from a platform that utilized audio-cassettes as an educational medium to a live radio station, it provided a platform for ground-roots movements in the Cape.

Importantly, Bush Radio instituted the HeadWarmaz show which disseminated music and provided a conversational platform for people from the Cape Flats. The dissemination of Hip Hop through this channel on a Friday evening at 10pm was effective in providing a platform for young people to be heard on radio and form a community with like-minded listeners. It provided a space for up and coming artists to gain self-confidence and it allowed for some intergenerational interaction when issues discussed transcended Rap and Hip Hop performances, moving to the poor living conditions and violence on the Flats.

With the combined connections of the hosts musical tastes and knowledge around current affairs within the world, Hip Hop music was used as a departure point for discussion and knowledge sharing regarding various current affairs. With Shaheen Ariefdien's global travels as part of the rap crew, POC, various independent Hip Hop international releases were broadcast via this radio

station as they were sent to the HeadWarmaz show from across the world, thus bringing newly unheard music to the HeadWarmaz listeners.

One particular segment within the HeadWarmaz show was the Call-in-line. This segment opened up the lines and people could call in from various parts of the greater Cape region. This opening of the airwaves for people to call in and share various expressions from Rap verses, poems and ideas regarding the discussions which were being facilitated by the HeadWarmaz hosts (Shaheen and Big Dre) ensured that listeners became content contributors to the show, broadcasting their ideas and creative expressions on live radio.

Hip Hop became an essential part of Bush Radio and this was an avenue which the station utilised for many community awareness projects that it undertook. In this chapter the role of Hip Hop as an educative tool was explored through the various projects which were conducted by Bush Radio. For instance, the HIV HOP project of 2000 and the CLEAN workshop series as illustrated within this chapter both utilised Hip Hop as an instrument for education, thus reaching young people from various Cape Flats neighbourhoods. Various social conditions were explored through mediums such as Breakdancing, Rap and Deejaying. Themes reflected concerns of that period and included safe sex education and building community awareness about substance abuse. This utilization of Hip Hop as an educational avenue contributes to present day discussion surrounding decolonization and the educative pedagogies which are able to contribute to this process. This engagement with Hip Hop as an educative avenue can be considered to be an important turning point within Cape Town's Hip Hop history.

Once the establishment of Cape Town Hip Hop scene had been entrenched in the Cape, various members from the Cape Town Hip Hop community were included in the broadcast of the newly formed Hip Hop Show on the music channel *MK89*. This broadcast brought about information regarding South Africa's Hip Hop movements through Cape Town Hip Hop presenters. This highlighted influence of a Cape Town Hip Hop scene on a national platform. This was short-lived and the costs to subscribe to this medium made it largely inaccessible for the group that wanted it most and in which its very origins can be located. Focus therefore shifted to the Internet, in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 explored how YouTube uploads not only democratised productions of Hip Hop but also access to Hip Hop content. Themes also deviated from the initial focus on identity to broader issues such as fracking and fluid identities, relatable to global audiences as well. It is here that the local scene gains even more momentum across geographical space.

Artists began to self-document their performances and furthermore utilized digital media platforms and social media in order for their work to be circulated amongst their newly emerging digital followers. The artists who were explored all presented some form of overt social or political expression utilizing Hip Hop. These included Die Getuies, Jitsvinger, Garlic Brown, NIKO10LONG, DOOKOOM and Dope Saint Jude. This chapter explored the digital dissemination of Hip Hop and how artists created a global platform for themselves. Many of the videos featured within this section would not receive airplay on commercial television due to the nature of the content which was being shown. However with the availability of various platforms such as YouTube, the eventual dissemination and viral circulation became possible with continued

online support. These videos played an important part in the establishment of online work which was being circulated by artists.

Another important factor that was explored during this dissertation is the utilization of avenues of self-actualization. Rapper Garlic Brown, for example, embraces an indigenous identity beyond *Colouredness*. For this reason, Hip Hop culture was demonstrated as affording local Hip Hop Headz insight into their social makeup, unpacking the layers of their context and engaging with the social conditions which they witnessed. Using music and expression as an avenue of engagement, *Knowledge of Self*, is demonstrated as an important element of Hip Hop throughout this dissertation but the practicing of this element is exemplified in this chapter.

The transnational similarities that occupy Hip Hop both as a global culture and movement are evident when analysing the rapid expansion within the Cape. This has its origins in Jamaican Sound Systems. With various audio-visual content contributing significantly to Hip Hop, the global interlinkages are visible through both its manifestations and expressions. One particular avenue of interest that has been explored is how young people were subjected to some form of systemic violence/inequality and how they utilised certain cultural expressions and musical forms to air their discontent. With Hip Hop journeying across contexts through a transatlantic portal, creativity was often considered to be a legitimate form of resistance to any systemic form of violence. In this case, Hip Hop can be understood to be a manifestation of what Gilroy terms, contemporary “routes” of diasporic identification.¹⁰ The manner in which Hip Hop provided an

¹⁰ P. Gilroy: *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993), p.16.

avenue for the recreation of self beyond prescribed localised identities transcends geopolitical borders. This is not unique to Hip Hop. Jazz, Funk and Blues show a similar trend. Gilroy argues that Hip Hop actually reignites African traditions within African-American cultures especially in the music of groups such as De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest.¹¹ In this context, Hip Hop is considered to exist on the cultural continuum of exchange and in return an export of black music across the world. Public Enemy, for example, also produced work that spoke of Africanised identities within the United States and this in turn traveled across borders influencing displaced youths across the world.

In South Africa, the group Prophets of Da City externalised a black identity which shifted from notion of Colouredness, which most of the group would have been classified under. Instead, the group on various occasions explored a Black identity which they self-created and shaped in defiance of apartheid's racialized hierarchy.¹² This resembled trends in Brazil where Hip Hop became a point of departure for many young people also attempting to redefine themselves in a Black Brazilian identity.¹³ This therefore highlights the global community that Hip Hop has initiated amongst young people from different countries. Hip Hop therefore became an identity reaffirming mechanism and the platform which accompanied the culture and movement elevated young people to engage with a listening audience.

¹¹ P. Gilroy: *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993), p.85

¹² A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2012).

¹³ M. Perry: "Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space", *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(6), 2008, p. 639.

This platform created a space for practitioners of the elements, particularly those who undertook Rap as a mode of expression to air their discontent with particular occurrences within their social political context. POC did this unashamedly through their commentary regarding “forgiveness” in their 1993 album *Age of Truth*. In 1993, a Brazilian Rap group Consciencia Urbana (Urban Consciousness) used their music to address police brutality, particularly the assassination by Rio police of a group of Black street youth, infamously referred to as the Candelaria murders.¹⁴

In 2011, A Senegalese Rap group by the name of Keur Gui, joined a collective of musicians and journalists to form *Y'en a Marre* (Fed Up). This collective sought to mobilise young people against the then president Abdoulaye Wade. Keur Gui were seen to be at the centre of this mobilisation and subsequently a documentary film was made about the Rap group and their movements against the president which saw one of the groups rappers being imprisoned.¹⁵

During the 2012 Arab Spring, Hip Hop became a platform for resistance and political free speech. Tunisian Rapper, Hamda Ben Amor (a.k.a El General) released a song a week before the subsequent self-immolation by Mohamed Bouazizi which triggered the start of the Arab spring. The Rapper supported the protests against the government. His music therefore became a soundtrack to the Arab Spring’s revolutionary mandate. Due to the release of this song, 30 police officers arrested him and this intensified the protests. With the intervention of the outgoing

¹⁴ M. Perry: “Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space”, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(6), 2008, p. 639.

¹⁵ Z. Mampilly: “Senegal’s rappers continue to ‘cry from the heart’ for a more just society.” *The Conversation*, 12 February 2018, available at <https://theconversation.com/senegals-rappers-continue-to-cry-from-the-heart-for-a-more-just-society-91263> (accessed 19 February 2018).

president, El General was released and performed his music to a crowd of protesters.¹⁶ In Egypt, during the same time period, a rap crew named Arabian Knightz recorded pro-protest songs. This sparked international solidarity around the Arab Spring and a variety artists contributed to this call of regime change.

Hip Hop did not necessarily change the soundscape where it emerged outside of the United States. It contributed to the already rich sound and oral tradition within a variety of places across the world. The understanding of Hip Hop's musical tradition where sampling older records and sounds was further explored by those who embarked on producing Hip hop music. In South Africa for instance, POC sampled Jazz icon Abdullah Ibrahim's music to create a new sound which had its roots in the Cape Jazz tradition.¹⁷ The inclusion of a poet such as Mzwakhe Mbuli within their music indicated their commitment to localized story-telling and indigenous knowledge sharing. Similarly in Brazil, Hip Hop producers started to explore Afro-Brazilian sounds through the inclusion of these instruments within their music. The *berimbau*, an instrument used during Capoeira was included in some productions. This example best describes the transatlantic fusion and collaboration which Gilroy refers to within his text.¹⁸

¹⁶ M. Morgan & D. Bennet: "Hip Hop & the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form ", *Daedalus*, 140(2), 2011, pp.176-196

¹⁷ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2012).

¹⁸ P. Gilroy: *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993), p. 87.

It is at this juncture that the important and particular element of Hip Hop, *Knowledge of Self*, develops. It binds the individual together with their artistic practice and in their locality. It avails various forms of knowledge to the participant and provides them a space to reimagine their own identity and their position within their own society. The knowledge factor within Hip Hop therefore refers to the, “aesthetic, social, intellectual, and political identities, belief, behaviours and values produced and embraced by its members”.¹⁹ With this in mind, conscious Hip Hop,²⁰ therefore provides an element of “Knowledge sharing” and critical reflexivity regarding the social, spiritual and political environment in which the individual locates him or her-self. There is therefore an innovative manner of knowledge sharing that arises through Rap and the other elements such as graffiti when they are firmly fused with Knowledge of Self. It is this element which defines the movement in a specific location but it continues to feed the constantly developing global movement.

In a South African, and particularly Cape Flats tradition of *Knowledge of Self*, some rappers have embarked on firmly redefining their identity. Exploring identities which were marginalised by the apartheid government in order to successfully implement the racialized hierarchy. In a 2015 rerelease of the 1997 track titled Cape Crusader, Shaheen Ariefdien explores the rich diversity of the Cape through lyrical composition. During the track, he raps about the diverse ancestral linkages that are present within the Cape. Ariefdien Raps that:

*Lyrics are fixed
with the spirit of District Six,
And revisit the mystic mix
Of our ancestors*

¹⁹ M. Morgan & D. Bennet: “Hip Hop & the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form”, *Daedalus*, 140(2), 2011, p.176-196.

²⁰ A. Haupt: *Static: Race and Representation in Post-Apartheid Music, Media and Film and Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2012).

*From Java, Jakarta, Europe, Madagascar, Mara Africa,²¹
 And the Khorinaiqua²²
 Story writer with Glory titles.²³*

Afriefdien explores the intergenerational memory in this verse through illustrating that there is a connection with his lyrics to the forced removals and uprooted community of District Six. He counters the belief that people only arrived in the Cape from Europe. He highlights the indigenous ethno-linguistic groups from the Cape and mentions their exact name. Therefore not grouping them under one umbrella term such as *Khoi-San*.

Another artist who exerts their own personalized knowledge of self within their music is the rapper Niko10Long, who continues to highlight that his music is an expression of an evolved indigenous identity. Within his song titled, *Die Onderhoud* (The Interview),²⁴ Niko10Long raps that: “My origin is Khoi-San en my attitude is Wesbank”²⁵

Within this phrase, the artist expresses that he is from an indigenous origin but his attitude is influenced by the place where he currently resides namely Wesbank.²⁶ Through this redefinition of the self in this case, artists have utilized Hip Hop as a vehicle to employ and uncover indigenous identities. However, this redefinition of self incorporates those practitioners of the culture into a global community of Hip Hop Headz. This borderless Hip hop nation is, “an international,

²¹ Mother Africa

²² The Khorinaiqua is an indigenous Khoi tribe from the Cape.

²³ Prophets of da City: “Cape Crusader.” *Ghetto Code*. Ghetto Ruff Records. 1997, re-released in 2015 via <https://vimeo.com/124319398>

²⁴ Niko10Long: “Die Onderhoud”, *Longonsteken*. Ill Major Movement. 2016.

²⁵ My origin is Khoisan and my attitude is Wesbank.

²⁶ Wesbank is a cape Flats township which is situated next to the R300 main road which connects the N1 and N2 roads. This road dissects through two townships and acts as a divind route between Delft and Wesbank.

transnational, multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual community made up of individuals with diverse class, gender and sexual identities".²⁷

Hip Hop therefore provided, and continues to provide, participants a space to uncover ancestral positioning and to explore this positioning within a specific location. From highlighting the shared black experience across the world, to allowing a refuge for those that experienced systemic inequality due to a variety of factors (race, class or sexual orientation), Hip Hop's performative elements provided a space for the practitioners within the culture to understand themselves.

The primary focus of this dissertation was to reflect on the manifestations of Hip Hop artistic expressions, explore the platforms in which these occurred and ascertain whether their content reflects these ambitions. There is little doubt that Hip Hop at the Cape was born out of a shared sense of loss, emanating from Jamaica. Initial content allowed protagonists to share in a brotherhood across geographical space. This remains largely a brotherhood with a few sisters included in a bid to become a global fraternity of like-minded Headz who create awareness about their own experiences, trials and tribulations. While this creates a shared culture of Hip Hop, as this dissertation has reflected, there are a variety of cultures and forms of expression that have contributed to the making of Hip Hop in South Africa. Local changes in political, social and economic conditions of the past, present and undoubtedly the future, will continue to feed into the growing and developing cultures of Hip Hop, locally and globally, leaving a space of individuality while still creating a cipher²⁸ for a shared Hip Hop family.

²⁷ M. Morgan & D. Bennet: "Hip Hop & the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form ", *Daedalus*, 140(2), 2011, pp. 176-196.

²⁸ To recap, a circle of knowledge-sharing amongst Hip Hop artists.

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