

Ntm's conflict with the french police

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NTM is a rap group in France that has had controversial lyrics and frequent conflicts with the authority. It is a group who started as breakdancing experts on an estate in France and later grew to become famous rap group. Its founding members were Didier Merville and Bruno Lopez. These rappers use Joey Starr and Kool Shen as their stage names respectively.

They were both born in 1968 and grew to become friends. They joined with a local DJ born in St Denis in 1966 to form a group by the name of DJ'S. Their first rap style was 'smurfing' originally from American rap movement such as the Sugarhill Gang. This was after the performances of the American rappers began in France from 1983. Analysis and the Consequences of the Song 'Nike la Police' The beginning of the group was itself in controversy.

This is because it based its name on an insult 'Nique Ta Mere'. This means 'motherfucker' which was a word in frequent use in the neighborhood that they grew in. The group's recording company tried to change the company's name in vain. The only change in their name was addition of the prefix 'supreme' before NTM. Many people also considered their lyrics as uncompromising and criticized them as being despairing and violent (Schmidt 54). The group defended their lyrics by stating that they were doing this in order to bring out the problems that they faced in the society in which they grew in.

they used these words to depict the situation such as drugs, violent crime and unemployment. The conflict with the French Authorities regarding their lyrics started first in 1993. This is when the group produced an album by the name 'j'appuie sur la gachette' which means 'I've got my finger on the

trigger'. In this album, there was a single track by the name ' police'. This group insulted the French Police violently through this single.

It had lyrics which accused the police of abuse of power and ignoring corruption in the society. This single caused a shock in the society in general and especially in the police force. The group also accused the police of turning a blind eye to the injustices that happened in the society and especially among the suburbs. This single showed extreme hostility towards the French Police. After the release of this single, the French Police took a case to court against the NTM group. However, the judge did not prosecute the group.

The judge considered this as an exercise of NTM's freedom of expression to bring out social evils. He warned the group of the use of insults and did not prosecute them. French radio stations decided to take an action against this single. They banned all the records that the group had produced from airwaves. The group ignored this ban and went ahead to release the single ' j'appuie sur la gachette' in this album. The single ' police' was also big blow the group's public performance career.

Different event and concert organizers rarely booked th group with the fear of the audience running out of control. The main single that brought a major scandal to the group was ' nike la police'. This was during a live performance in South of France (Looseley 57). This was during a musical concert by the name ' Rendez-vous de la Liberte'. The organizer of this concert was an anti-racist association in Seyne-sur-mer by the name of SOS Racisme. By this time, the group's fame had risen to the national level and beyond.

This was in July 1995. The group performed the highly controversial song halfway through their performance. The two rappers used violent lyrics against the police force. This made the audience uncontrollable and evidently violent to the officers of the law in attendance. There were French Police officers on duty to oversee security during the concert.

These officers apprehended Kool Shen and Joey Starr. They took the two rappers to court to answer the charges of 'insulting officers of the law'. Their case was in May, 1996. The judge listened to the lyrics and the remarks that the rappers had made during the concert and found them guilty of 'insulting officers of the law'. He sentenced them to six months imprisonment with an obligation to serve a minimum of six months each.

This sentence was also accompanied by a ban to perform in France in the next six months. NTM appealed the case and got a lighter sentence. This was two months suspended sentence in prison and a fine of 50,000 franc. The judge ruled that their concert was advocating violence against the French Police by the public. The scandal led to high levels of conspiracy against the group. Surprisingly, the scandal also helped the group in gaining more popularity and an increase in the number of fans (Perry 62).

One of the main consequences of the scandal was a national debate on the group. This scandal was featured in nearly all the media houses in France. It also hit the international entertainment industry. The authorities supported the court's decisions and insisted that the group was a threat to national and social order. However, the general population had different views about the group.

Hundreds of people expressed their support on the remarks by the NTM. They saw the group as the eye and the voice of the society. They explained that the group was simply making observations and expressing them fearlessly regardless of the powers of the Police Force. They also viewed it as the general situation in the suburb life where the two rappers grew. It took some time for the scandal to blow over and for the group to resume in production and stage performances. The group went to a confinement in the Puteaux studio in 1997.

This was in preparation to release a new album which had a track featuring Nas, a New York rap star. The group initiated a project to collect feedback from their friends, fans and fellow musicians. This assisted in setting up their new album and tracks to include other people's opinion. They released their first album after the scandal on 21st April of 98. This album was a proof that the group had matured and were now role models in the society.

The scandal had helped the group realize that they had a significant influence in the society. The opinions from the public after the scandal also assisted in helping them set their objectives and fulfil their fans' expectations (Emerson 49). The group produced tracks such as 'Laisse pas trainer ton fils' which means 'Don't let your son hang out in the evenings'. The group used this single to pass advice to both parents and the youth on the life in the suburbs. The single 'Pose ton gun' meaning 'put your gun down' advocated for peace in the society.

It advised young people to avoid suburb violent crime and focus on better programs which guaranteed a brighter future. The album helped the group

have even more fame and popularity not only in France but also beyond borders. The group resumed its live performance tours in the autumn of 1998. It also performed in major concerts in Paris such as le Zenith in the November of 98. The group sold more than 50, 000 copies of the album. This shows that the scandal was a major turning point of the group.

It helped them realize their full potential and exploit their talents effectively. After the scandal, the group avoided the use of violent and controversial lyrics altogether. The only crimes that affected the group from then were individual. Joey Starr went back to court on 24th February 1999 with the charges of attacking an air hostess in the November of 98 in a hotel lobby. He served two months in prison and paid a fine of 30, 000 francs.

He also went back to prison four months later on a six-month sentence after attacking and injuring Jennifer Galin, his ex-girlfriend. This created a ' Bad Boy of French Rap' reputation of Joey Starr. However, these were only personal weaknesses which did not involve the group in general. The group has continued to thrive regardless of numerous collapses and personal challenges. It still remains to be one of the most respected groups in France (Ramsbotham 160).

Conclusion The conflicts that NTM had with the police force went helped create a name for the group. The scandal helped in branding the group as the unofficial spokesmen of the society. The people regarded the group as bringing out the frustrations in the Lost Generation in France. This scandal helped the group in realizing that they could still pass their messages to the public without use of violent language and direct attack on certain

individuals. The group also brought about social evils such as racism and abuse of power in their lyrics.

They accompanied this by variation in the rap styles from Joey Starr and Kool Shen. This helped in earning them a wide fans' following and also brought them problems with the authorities. However, the group was able to rise from these conflicts and continue in their quest for a better society. They have even went ahead to release singles which are anti-violence and promote peace through different initiatives and concerts.