

# Example of the political and cultural role of hip hop in kenya and tanzania essay...

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



In the global world of the 21st century, music is among the few elements that have the capacity to cross both the political, cultural and the physical borders. The songs reflect and shape social life. In Kenya and Tanzania for instance, hip hop is an influential tool for political participation. Thus the reason various bodies such as the Independent Study Project have focused on the role played by hip hop music particularly in the youth culture. It is through hip hop that artists express their views in an open system that allows individuals, especially the young, some room for participation. Largely, their lyrics condemn the thirst for power, mismanagement, and corruption that is shown by politicians. Ideally, these lyrics caution citizens of numerous dangers that can emerge as a result of politicians' deception. During campaigns, hip hop artists in Kenya and Tanzania take major and significant initiatives by composing songs that denounce appalling issues, including marginalization and inequalities that is aggravated by selfish politicians who despise and marginalize masses (Ntarangwi 62). Ideally, hip hop has played a paramount role of breaking the culture of silence that surrounds social and cultural issues affecting the society including; HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and other infections that are sexually transmitted. Hip hop artists in these regions have taken an opportunity to address current issues such as the prevalence of HIV, testing, prevention, stigma, care, and management by means of colloquial language and metaphor. During music shows, these artists also engage in practical preventive activities including educating people on the importance of using condoms (Njogu 119).

As a fast-growing element of youth culture, hip hop offers an opportunity

express global and local identities and to address issues. It has also allowed East African youths in Kenya and Tanzania to participate in political, cultural, and social discourse on a global and national level. Subsequently, this participation radiates from hip hop music where hip hop artists have critically examined political leaders. Hip hop is today used as a voice of the youth. In Tanzania, for instance, hip hop artists such as Professor Jay, Nakaya, and Mwana F. A have invoked words and images of the former president. It is in this unique way that the artists have concurrently articulated criticism of present regimes.

The main factors influencing the use of hip hop in Kenya and Tanzania are political and economic changes. In the 1980s, when economies of these two countries were transforming, political leaders in the two countries initiated programs aimed at implementing IMF and World Bank adjustment policies (Barz 90). It was after the economies of Tanzania and Kenya took a stern hit that citizens of the two countries realized that some forces had resulted to deprive of neoliberal economic policies. It was after these amendments that many citizens opted to flee to the West. Another factor influencing migration to the West was deprived economic opportunities that were as a result of economic policies that had newly been implemented. As a result, many hip hop artists in these regions were inspired by the declined standard of living. The majority of hip hop fans in Kenya is the young generation between the ages of 12 to 35. It is worth noting that this generation is responsible for significant changes in various sectors including the economic, political, and cultural backgrounds. As the largest age group, this generation has high potential to influence politics, governance, and the economy of the country.

Thus the reason hip hop artists in Kenya compose songs that touch on politics in order to draw attention to this young generation. In essence, youths in Kenya and in Tanzania can easily be reached through specific forums such as hip hop music which is more appealing to them.

Hip hop is among the most imperative movements to happen in Kenya and Tanzania in the past decade. In fact, it has evolved into an effective and very powerful voice where youths can freely express themselves. Hip hop artists in Kenya and Tanzania have deconstructed economic oppression and social institutions in songs that particularly address the perceived failure of leaders to protect the younger generation, migration, and urban life. Markedly, a sample of hip hop lyrics from the Kenyan and Tanzanian communities depict ways in which hip hop is used as a voice of the young generation in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In Kenya, most the lyrics are reflections the behavior of Kenyans themselves and the society at large (Rubdy 171).

Many hip hop artists in Kenya have provided a discourse on political corruption, living conditions, ineffective political policies, and greed by delivering thought provoking lyrics. They have diverted their intentions from direct attacks on the economic and political system to social commentary. Kenyan hip hop has made a great impact on the politics. For instance, a successive president such as Uhuru Kenyatta has liberalized Kenyan society. However, the Kenyan hip hop community is yet entirely embrace effective ways such as direct condemnation of the government. Instead, artists indirectly address foreign and domestic policy impacts by commenting on social media.

Tanzania has never had a history of social protest mainly because it has not

experienced the type of repression and censorship countries such as Rwanda and Ghana experienced 2 decades ago. Also, political and social activism is uncommon among hip hop artists in Kenya and in Tanzania. The majority of the early hip hop artists in Kenya and Tanzania greatly embraced and influenced the tradition of addressing social issues through the use of hip hop. Various artists including; Kwanza, and Profesa Jay set the platform for the socially conscious hip hop that was set to be produced by upcoming hip hop artists. Ideally, since Swahili is the national language in Tanzania, the majority of Tanzanians relate their use of Swahili to national identity. Kenyan and Tanzanian hip hop provide paramount examples of political and social dialogues that occur among youths in the two nations. The youths listen to the voices of these artists. Subsequently, artists in Kenya and Tanzania have the ability to influence the actions, perceptions, and conversations among mainstream social institutions, and young Africans. Among the few Kenyan hip hop artists to speak out openly in addressing political issues is Jaguar. He released a song known as ' Kigeugeu' that addressed appalling issues in the county that are a result of negligence, selfishness, and lack of accountability by political leaders.

The song criticizes selfish members of parliament, urging them to dwell on real issues affecting the country. Jaguar also comments on corruption in the political process, and the greed that exists in the government. In this song, Jaguar admits that he is in jeopardy of being outspoken. Nevertheless, he adds, and insists that no one can stop him from addressing real issues and saving the country from the jaws of death. Notably, Jaguar has become famous and gained reputation among Kenyans for the political annotations.

He has chosen to discuss issues most Kenyan artists have avoided. Nonini is another hip hop artist who has criticized economic aspirations and Western values. He has particularly attempted to pull back the curtain on Kenyans living abroad. Ideally, he has touted all the benefits of making life more worthwhile at home in Kenya. Many Kenyan hip hop artists mainly deliver their lyrics a different approach that is to some extent linked to proverbs. Songs from these artists require one to first hear the entire story, then appreciate the message later.

Tanzanian artists including Professor Jay and chameleon gained popularity in the late 1990s by criticizing the government. Recently, a Tanzanian hip hop artist known as Sugu made history when he became the first hip hop artists in the country to win political office. Sugu has made a career by holding political and government leaders responsible. In the last elections, Sugu pointed to corruption and growing economic inequity as the main social evils facing Tanzania. Sugu's decision to contest for the position was mainly influenced by youths in Tanzania who are angered by mismanaged of funds, bad governance, and laxity of political leaders (Ntarangwi 98).

A hip hop artists in Kenya known as Octopizzo has a notable contribution to the society. He composed a song before Kenya's last general elections that were held in March 2013. His song urged citizens to live in harmony and peace, be vigilant, and vote peacefully. In addition to that, his song also addressed social issues in the society and false promises given by politicians. The hip hop song urged Kenyans to vote wisely and rationally. Hip hop fans and audience in Kenya view music as a tool conveys information across borders. Audiences are able to relate to social and political issues logically.

For instance, politicians who make a series of promises and deliver nothing are in for a rude shock. The youth in Kenya have shunned away false hopes and false promises by denouncing lame politicians openly in public rallies and in campaigns.

Hip hop artists in Kenya and Tanzania have gained both underground and mainstream following in various capacities. Most of these artists have called upon religious leaders and politicians and urged them to follow the steps of past politicians and visionaries who brought positive change to in the countries. Music is intended to appeal to listeners, however, in different settings, such as politics, it sends messages in form of parables either directly or indirectly. Leaders such as Julia Nyerere of Tanzania are quite popular among hip hop artists like Professor Jay. Basically, featuring political leaders in hip hop songs is a way of connecting to the public, who in this case is the young generation. It is a coherent way of engaging the audience to present and contemporary issues (Suriano 7).

Seemingly, most of the songs released by hip hop artists are looked up online, and passed around by youths throughout Kenya and in Diaspora. These songs are drawn into important economic, social, and political discussions. In connection to that, Facebook fan pages of many hip hop artists in Kenya such as Jaguar and Octopizzo indicate fans that are based in Diaspora and locally. These fan pages contain songs that fans can listen to online. Therefore, listeners are offered a platform and an opportunity to listen to their music at no cost.

Arguably, the youth and hip hop artists in Kenya are an essential element of progressive political and social struggles. Therefore comprehending and

relating the use of hip hop as social and political commentary is paramount, since it is a coherent means by which the young generation in Kenya and Tanzania can freely communicate with the broader society, and among themselves. Largely, hip hop artists and music reflect the urban setting of young Kenyans and Tanzanians. Tanzanian and Kenyan hip hop offer perspectives and stories that are precious for understanding political and social dynamics in the two nations.

A clear look at the factors influencing socially cognizant hip hop depict broader political, cultural, and economic forces impact expressions of the youths. Thus the reason Songs reflect and shape social life. In Kenya and Tanzania for instance, hip hop is an influential tool for political participation. Many artists have diverted their intentions from direct attacks on the economic and political system to social commentary. Kenyan hip hop has made great impact in the politics. Hip hop fans and audience in Kenya view music as a tool conveys information across borders. Audiences are able to relate to social and political issues logically. Hip hop is among the most imperative movements to happen in Kenya and Tanzania in the past decade. In fact, it has evolved into an effective and very powerful voice where youths can freely express themselves (Perry 12).

Conclusively, in Kenya and Tanzania for instance, hip hop is an influential tool for political participation. Hip hop music has played a paramount role of breaking the culture of silence that surrounds social and cultural issues affecting the society including; HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and other infections that are sexually transmitted. During campaigns, hip hop artists in Kenya and Tanzania take major and significant initiatives by composing songs that



denounce appalling issues including marginalization and inequalities that is aggravated by selfish politicians who disposes and marginalize masses.

Many hip hop artists in Kenya have provided a discourse on political corruption, living conditions, ineffective political policies, and greed by delivering thought provoking lyrics.

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