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Y'en a Marre! Hip-Hop Culture and Social Mobilization in Post Colonial Senegal

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Y'en a Marre ! Hip-Hop Culture and Social Mobilization
in Post Colonial Senegal

An Honors Thesis
Presented by

Lucie Latuner

To the Department of Anthropology

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
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Abstract

After over fifty years since decolonization, Senegal is seen as a success story in establishing democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. However, due to neocolonialism, Senegal is still far from independent, and its leaders are still working against the interests of their people. Emerging out of a history of anti-imperialist mobilization, young rappers continue a transnational struggle against imperialism in reference to the ideology of revolutionaries before them. These rappers and journalists, drawing on a sense of responsibility to a historical, multi-generational fight, unite to create the movement Y'en a Marre—a movement of civic mobilization to oppose their authoritarian government and fight for liberation—that through community-based initiatives, takes charge of the issues at hand to transform their discourse into concrete action. Based on research conducted in Dakar, Senegal, over the summer of 2017, this paper addresses the ways in which engaged rap in Senegal embodies a sense of responsibility to transnational anti-colonial discourse that embraces a global black identity, challenges marginality, and engages in political critique, which, through the creation of organizations and movements such as Y'en a Marre, contributes to a project of African development outside of the Western framework. Through the analysis of the movement Y'en a Marre that arises out of a politically conscious rap scene, and their shared goals with other civil society organizations, this study seeks to illuminate the systems of oppression faced by the Senegalese people living in a neocolonial state, but most importantly seeks to highlight the strong intellectual and artistic forms of resistance that arise despite economic hardship, to ask pertinent questions about government, leadership, and Africa's role in a global world.

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Most importantly, I would like to thank the members of *Y'en a Marre* and my other informants whose words and stories appear in the following pages. Without them, I would not have been able to complete this project.

Jërëjef Waye!

Introduction

On January 21st 2017, I opened my eyes after an eight-hour flight, during which I may have slept 40 minutes, to the voice of the flight attendant speaking in French, the colonial language in Senegal, announcing our imminent descent towards Dakar, a place I had only ever imagined. I had read about Senegal, but my mind was still flooded with images from TV series featuring African safaris and contrasting pictures of sunny beaches and striking poverty. It had been an overnight flight and we were arriving in Dakar mid-morning. When I had left JFK, it was pitch dark, 11:30 p.m., and throughout my sleepless flight, I had watched the sun rise over the expansive Atlantic. The water seemed calm, yet it looked cold and deserted. The waves were hardly distinguishable, and the ocean seemed flat and endless. As we began to descend, I could make out the white caps of the waves, the texture of the turquoise water, and the little, colorful *pirogues* of Dakar's local fishing industry floating amongst the waves. This was the Senegal of the pictures, the colorful vibrancy depicted in the guidebooks and highlighted on the study-abroad website. This was the romanticized Senegal, the place we talk about with intrigue and awe, often with wariness, a place defined as foreign: Africa. These images of exoticism and essentialized poverty are responsible for many misunderstandings about the diversity of cultures we have come to lump together as Africa, and contribute to the continuation of the dangerous process of othering that has fueled economic policies of inequality, systems of racism, and physical and epistemic violence.

All of a sudden, the plane tilted, making a narrow turn, revealing the peninsula of Dakar, the westernmost point of Africa—the site of one of the world's largest projects and industries of dehumanization: the trans-Atlantic slave trade—jutting out from the African coast. The plane tilted again, revealing the rocky *falaises* that line the peninsula, creating a barrier against the

crashing waves. The name of Dakar's commercial center, the *plateau* area, is an accurate depiction of the peninsula of Dakar, which rises out of the sea on rocky cliffs, 72 feet above sea level. As our plane continued to circle, I was struck by the sprawling, almost uniform speckled city of grey, brown, and pink tones of beige stretching for miles as the arm of the peninsula led eastward towards the vast continent of Africa. This place was completely new, and my expectations were clouded with centuries worth of history and discourse full of stereotypes and romanticization.

In the days ahead, I would be faced with and forced to acknowledge a relationship between my experience and the experiences of the Senegalese, a relationship that was embodied by my presence both physically and metaphorically, a relationship that I would discover to be more complex throughout my time there. What was my role as a student in Dakar? And how did my position impact my experience? What was I doing? Was I "exploring"? Was I "discovering"? These were questions, that I would reflect upon and critique, and that would eventually incite my interest in the discourse of resistance to global hierarchical systems of power embodied by Senegalese rappers and the movement *Y'en a Marre*.

At the airport, we, a group of 13 Americans, and were met by our program directors to be taken directly to our homestays. As we drove towards the Ouakam neighborhood, which would become the temporary home of about a third of our group, we passed through tightly-crowded streets filled with people, sheep, and horse drawn carts. Dripping with sweat, I was astonished to see the amount of people wearing winter jackets or beanie style hats. I had never felt so much like an observer. As we passed by, people stopped their daily activities to stare. Our bus full of mostly-white, overwhelmed college students stood out among the locals in the dusty streets, and an uneasy feeling came over me as I realized that I, as an introvert, was completely conspicuous.

I could not shake the feeling of intrusion. Everything was so new and exciting, vibrant and busy, yet from my high seat in the bus, I felt utterly distant, a complete outsider.

As time went on, I adjusted to life in Dakar; I started classes at the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE), made Senegalese friends and developed relationships with my host family, both immediate and extended. I became familiar with some of the local customs and I began to learn Wolof. Although the Senegalese population is made up of many ethnic groups, to me, Senegal was racially homogenous. At first, I felt more aware of my body in space than I ever had before, and while for the first time in my life, I was a racial minority, every interaction I had was in some way based on the power dynamics at play rooted in a deep history of dehumanization, slavery, colonialism, and Western narratives of success and material wealth. I was not a colonizer, but my body, my presence, and my identity represented a complex history and those early questions about my positionality became integral to understanding my everyday experience. I began to notice my presence less and less, or became more comfortable with being an outsider, but it was always clear that my privilege as a white woman allowed me to move through spaces or be out at night without judgment in ways that Senegalese women could not, or would not.

The four months of my study abroad program flew by, and the dry season of winter gave way to the humid, heavy weather of spring and summer, and I decided to extend my stay through the months of June and July to continue my internship with an organization that worked with child victims of sexual violence, and to conduct some independent research. I had been searching for a topic of study. Senegal has a rich culture of art, music, dance, and religion, even science. In addition, Senegal is a developing country full of socio-political issues, each uniquely interesting. Any topic could be of interest, but I had to pick one.

Primary inspiration for this project comes from the book *Planet of Slums* by Mike Davis, which was crucial in building my theoretical understanding of the economic and political culture that I would witness every day during my studies in Senegal. The book discusses and critiques conceptions of the third world, marginality, informality, and global economic processes that contribute to inequality. In his book, Davis speaks about a global monetary elite that is present across the world, and of how the governments of developing countries, instead of supporting their people, subscribe to this monetary elite citizenship, completely disregarding their people. He describes the large highways that traverse the cities of the developing world, soaring over slums and hiding areas where people live in extreme poverty, and beautification projects, where people are being displaced for the construction of high-rise buildings for the rich. He introduces us to the informal sector, a concept somewhat foreign in the US, but the main form of employment for many people around the world. While I was reading the book, I could only imagine the processes that Davis described, but during the time I spent in Senegal, I came to see firsthand these processes at work, and understand them through the everyday experiences and realities of so many of the people I lived among.

Given my interest in the topics of Davis's book, for a long time, I entertained ideas of looking into the informal economy, migration to Europe by sea, and most particularly, the dialogue and conflict surrounding the abusive systems of the Quranic Schools called *Daras* that force their children to beg for money in the streets. However, I became concerned about the implications of my work on these topics, especially the latter, and the ways in which Senegal and Africa as a whole are portrayed in academic and journalistic writing. Through the media, we see only the negatives, and the positives are outweighed and under-reported. I wanted to study a topic that showed the spirit of the country I had come to love from the moment I stepped off the

plane; I wanted a topic that embodied the culture that welcomed me with smiles and open arms, making me, a complete stranger, feel at home. When we talk about Africa, we often discuss the problems, but often fail to look at the discourse and activities that look to actively address those problems. I wanted a project that looked at resistance. I wanted a topic that confronted the romanticized and degrading assumptions of Senegal and “Africa,” and most of all, I wanted a project that dealt with some of the systemic issues involving the complexities of my identity as a white American and French citizen in a former French colony.

It was through a guest lecture for one of my classes at CIEE that I discovered a topic that would give me a lens through which to analyze and frame many of the socio-political issues facing Senegalese society today, and that would highlight the acts of agency that exist to begin to solve those challenges, all while addressing the imperial exploitative history of the relationship between France and Africa. Our guests were Malal Tall, known as Fou Malade (sick fool), Djilly Bagdad, and Thiat, three members and rappers of the social rap movement *Y'en a Marre* (Fed up/ Had enough). They gave us a history of their movement, which started in 2011 in response to the former president Abdoulaye Wade’s forcing of his unconstitutional candidacy to run for a third term. They spoke about the use of rap as a tool for the mobilization of thousands of Senegalese to protest and turn out in mass at the poles to vote. The defeat of Wade was a success; however, the work still continues. They stressed that *Y'en A Marre* was a movement designed to advocate for the voice of the people by holding the government accountable through peaceful protest and speaking out on important issues. Today, the movement focuses on building and reinforcing a civically and politically engaged youth, culture, and society through community engagement initiatives, engaged rap, and political activism.

The causes of the movement *Y'en a Marre* touched on many of the economic issues I had witnessed throughout my time in Senegal and many of the issues reflected themes that had interested me in my studies at home in the U.S. These processes, depicted clearly in Davis's book, are what led the Senegalese to say, "*Y'en a Marre!*" (That's enough/ We're fed up), and the movement's focus on rap as a tool for social mobilization stood out as a creative positive source of inspiration and method of expression in the face of threats of political authoritarianism and desperate economic times.

Through the study of *Y'en a Marre*, I explore how Senegalese rappers emerge out of the engaged rap scene in Senegal in a long history of anti-imperialist mobilization and discourse, to address some of the roots to many of the socio-political problems facing Senegalese society and economic development. The movement reflects the intrinsic spirit and resilience of the Senegalese culture and people to stand up for their rights and values in the continuous fight to strengthen democracy, ensure independence from neocolonial rule, and maintain African pride and social equality in the face of encroaching Western values, to support a politically active civil society.

Based on ethnographic research I conducted over the summer of 2017, and supported by the work of scholars before me, my initial research questions set out to situate *Y'en a Marre* in a history of social movements. However, as I explored further, I discovered that their mobilization is not simply about democracy, but also about the fundamental questions and values of democracy, such as integrity, freedom, and full participation. From my findings, my research shifted to look more closely at how the discourse and the actions of the movement *Y'en a Marre* engage with an anti-imperialist discourse. I explore how emerging from a deep and intricate history of social mobilization throughout the world, particularly in Africa, and a global history of

anti-imperialist, pan-Africanist discourse, *Y'en a Marre*, through unifying rap music, community engagement initiatives, and political critique, acts as both a symbol and an active force in not simply the Senegalese struggle, but more broadly, as they put it, in the African struggle and continual fight to maintain their democracies and gain autonomy and independence from ever-present neocolonial rule.

From my analysis of the movement *Y'en a Marre* within an historical framework, I argue that it is through their sense of civic responsibility in the name of revolutionary pan-Africanist visionaries before them, that the movement *Y'en a Marre* derives its power to move discourse into concrete action. Secondly, I argue that today, despite financial challenges, the movement is part of the project of thinking outside the Western framework of development to rebuild community and work from the bottom up through civic engagement.

Methodology:

My research had many stages of exploration and learning. Throughout my six months in Senegal, I was a participant observer. I was not Senegalese or part of the movement *Y'en a Marre*, but through my everyday experiences, I gathered crucial information and gained invaluable understanding of the relationship between France and Africa and about the neocolonial presence in Senegal. Throughout the first few months, I kept a book of field notes that I would write in following an interesting experience or conversation.

During the final two months of my stay, I focused on the Movement *Y'en a Marre*. I had little direction for my project, so my research was primarily an exploration. I conducted semi-formal interviews with movement members —approved by the Connecticut College Human Subjects Research Institutional Review Board—and had many informal interviews and

conversations in French, occasionally using my very rudimentary Wolof.¹ One exception to my interviews conducted in French was the one I conducted with Thiat, who preferred to converse in English. For the purpose of this study, I have personally translated all necessary direct quotes and have provided the original French in places where I found the language to be particularly colorful or expressive. Given their public identity, most of my interviewees preferred that I use their real names, but for those who didn't, I have either changed their name or made their identity ambiguous. I found that the members of *Y'en a Marre* wanted their names attached to their words, as their identity is so tied to the message of the movement. I also found that they took a certain pride in expressing their opinions on issues of such importance.

During the last two months of my stay, I also visited the movement's headquarters and attended weekly meetings, where I was able to see the movement in action. I also visited the national archives to comb through newspaper articles to learn more about the political environment at the birth of the movement. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend a concert that was scheduled for a few days before I left, but that was postponed due to tensions during the June elections.

Upon my return, I began to read about social mobilization, social activism, and rap, and through the study of films, speeches, YouTube interviews, and song lyrics, I began to develop the structure and framework through which to analyse my research. Throughout the process, I kept updated about *Y'en a Marre* through their Facebook pages and reading local news in Senegal.

¹ Approved July 6, 2017

Outline of the Study:

In the first chapter, I discuss the history of social mobilization in Africa, and how the movement *Y'en a Marre* fits into this history across the continent. I delve into the theme of responsibility and look at how the movement *Y'en a Marre* embodies the discourse of revolutionaries and activists before them. I discuss “independence” and the ways a post-colonial myth of Senegalese identity was constructed through the figure of Senegal’s first president Leopold Sedar Senghor in order to propose an alternative set of figures that better embody and personify the anti-imperialist struggle. I discuss those figures, and elaborate on their discourses to better understand the pan-Africanist perspective and identify the discourse on which the movement bases its mobilization. I deconstruct the myth of Senghor as “Father of the Nation,” and replace the idea of the association of Senghor “nation” with the discourse of others, such as Valdiodio Ndiaye, Amilcar Cabral, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, and even the religious figure, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba.

In chapter two, I discuss the rap scene in Senegal, and how it has emerged as a form of resistance in the political and social climate of Senegal among marginalized populations. I examine how rap takes the form of resistance that makes reference to the anti-imperialist struggle by reclaiming a space of self expression for disenfranchised youth in Dakar. I look at how the Senegalese rap scene embodies not only a pan-Africanist discourse, but also one that stretches across the world to embrace a global black identity. Finally, I conclude the chapter by analyzing how rap contributes to the construction of the revolutionary identity for rappers throughout Senegal, creating a greater social movement of its own, from which *Y'en a Marre* took form.

In chapter three, I tell the story of the beginnings of the movement and its crucial moments of mobilization throughout the election season from 2011 into 2012. I look at the

motivations for the creation of the movement and address a theme of responsibility towards figures of the past, their generation, homeland, and democracy. Through the analysis of the movement's slogans, rap songs, and discourse, I show how *Y'en A Marre* continues the struggle started by the passionate early revolutionaries before them, in reference to the previously identified pan-Africanist responsibility, through exercising their democracy through nonviolent action, ultimately to address how the activists' sense of responsibility transforms into action.

In chapter four, I look at *Y'en a Marre* today and how they still stand as the watchdog over democracy. I analyze how *Y'en a Marre* is working alongside other civil society actors to fight against imperialism in the form of the ever-present neocolonialism today, in 2018, under their president, Macky Sall. I look at their community action initiatives focused on citizenship and civic engagement, and ultimately discuss how *Y'en a Marre* networks across the continent and in the diaspora create a space for African unity and pan-Africanist thinking in the name of Thomas Sankara and Amilcar Cabral, to whom the movement pays homage by continuing the anti-imperialist struggle and forming a community-based alternative. I discuss their engagement with a project to move Africa towards development independent of Western influence and ultimately address the challenges faced when working within a neocolonial framework for development.

Chapter I

Y'en a Marre, a History of Social Mobilization, and Figures of Resistance: Responsibility to Pan-Africanist Discourse

“Chaque génération, dans sa relative opacité, doit découvrir sa mission,
l’accomplir ou la trahir.”² -Frantz Fanon

Introduction:

Social Mobilization in Africa has a long history. The struggle for the realization of democratic principles of governance by African peoples goes back to the time of slavery when the Western world saw Africa as “for the taking.” Africa was stripped of its resources, its people, and its cultures, a process whose consequences continue to manifest today through global processes of racism, inequality, and neocolonialism. Where there is oppression, there is always resistance, and as African people had fought for their liberation from the time of slavery, and throughout the colonial period, ultimately to achieve decolonization in the late 50s, they are still fighting today, even over fifty years into the post colonial period. Throughout Africa’s long history of mobilization, leaders have carried a discourse of African sovereignty, unification, liberation and full independence, cultural autonomy, and “first-class” status in the global economy. Throughout the years, these figures of independence have established and built upon each other's discourse, working towards freedom. Today, the movement *Y'en a Marre* emerges in another wave of mobilization, continuing the struggle for true independence. *Y'en a Marre* activists and other engaged rappers enter into a discourse that relies on and builds upon the revolutionary discourse of figures of resistance before them. Through their music, discourse, and actions, rappers and activists establish a narrative that addresses the neo-colonial state and privileges a pan-Africanist revolutionary identity.

² Translated as: “Each generation, in its relative opacity, must discover its mission, accomplish it, or betray it.”

In this chapter, I look first at a history of social mobilization in Africa and how *Y'en a Marre* emerges within that history. Secondly, I look at the creation of the discourse that has emerged out of that mobilization, to which *Y'en a Marre* holds itself responsible. The creation of this discourse involves the deconstruction of the image of the colonial nation that was established when Europe carved up the continent into individual countries, and ultimately requires thinking critically about the image of Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor as the father of the nation. This discourse, I argue, contributes to the construction of the pan-Africanist identities of *Y'en a Marre* members today.

Social Movements and Mobilization in Africa:

Social movement theory looks at the composition of social movements and how they mobilize to create change. In their book *African Struggles Today: Social Movements Since Independence*, Dwyer and Zeilig argue that “the social movement is a field in which struggle takes place, and hegemony is constantly contested” (2012, 7). Scholars have exhaustively debated the very nature of social movements and their implications; however, if one thing can be taken away from the study of social movements, it is that they are an historically-informed space for the expression of desires within a group context, which allows for mobilization and action, and in turn becomes a source of solidarity.

Social movements are often characterized as popular movements of the working class, where the poor and other marginalized populations of society mobilize against the oppressive ruling class (Baker 2013). We owe this early social movement theory to the work of Karl Marx, whose theory of class struggle describes a disenfranchised proletariat struggling against the oppressive systems of capitalism and imperialism. It pits the workers against the ruling class, and

the people against capitalism. It paints capitalism as a function for the elites to gain a power structure that works directly and intentionally, or better put, depends on the subjugation of the working class. Professor of Sociology at New York University Jeff Goodwin (2001) challenges the notion that social movements are solely the actions of the working class. Instead, he proposes that they are coalitions made up of different actors to drive change (in Dwyer and Zeilig 2012, 21). While there are critiques of Marx's theories, we can credit him for shifting our understanding of the relationships between the ruling elite and the working class and the processes of capitalism and imperialism, which create much of the conflict, poverty, and inequality in our world today.

In many ways, *Y'en a Marre* is, but cannot be reduced to a movement of class struggle. *Y'en a Marre* activists take pride in their rural and "ghetto" origins. They see themselves as representing those who have been disenfranchised, left out of the political sphere, and largely ignored by politicians. *Y'en a Marre* challenges these notions of the poor as marginal, engaging directly in political debate.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim took another approach to understanding social mobilization, looking at the collective behavior of the people. Durkheim equates grievances to structural problems in society and government in what we call structural grievance models. In his model, it is collective experience of insecurity that leads to collective grievances, which in turn motivates the people to mobilize to challenge the system and create structural change (Edelman 2007, 289). For *Y'en a Marre* members, their collective grievances revolve around issues of insecurity, such as poverty, and lack of resources, including food, water, and electricity, and also around specific issues of neglect from the state, such as inadequate schools, lack of systems of waste management, and few opportunities for employment.

Modern social movement theory builds upon the structural grievances model, taking into account class, the availability of and ability to mobilize resources, and, finally, the ability to manipulate and frame discourse. Today, there are roughly four mainstream theories of social movements that all together attempt to understand the intricacies of civic mobilization, including Resource Mobilization Theory (RM), where the rise and fall of movements is determined by their capability to mobilize resources. In Resource Mobilization Theory, grievances always exist, yet they can only become movements when actors mobilize resources to successfully create a movement (Edelman 2007, 290). Political Opportunity Structure Theory (POS) asserts that it is the political environment that affects people's expectations of success and failure and as a result provides incentives for collective action (Tarrow 1998). New Social Movement Theory (NSM), centers around the control of the production of symbols and redefining social roles. And, finally, Framing Process Theory (FP) introduces the subjectivist perspective, focusing on the ability of individual actors to influence and shape popular grievances (Shinichi and Shigetomi 2009, 3-5). When analyzing the movement *Y'en a Marre*, it is impossible to fit them specifically into one of these theories. They involve aspects of some, and reject aspects of others.

In *Protest and Social Movements in the Developing World*, Shinichi and Shigetomi (2009, 2) critique mainstream theories for their lack of consideration of the developing world. They fear that analysis of social movements and theories based on post-industrial societies leads to the lack of inclusion of environmental factors, so critical to the experiences of developing countries. They argue that in the process of mobilizing, the role of actors is uniquely important in western developed societies and less so in the developing world. They argue that a surplus of resources facilitates the manipulation of resources. They also assert that the presence of a highly-educated middle class allows for participation in social action free from social limitations and

consequences (5) and note factors such as environmental limitations, oppressive political systems, and social control within communities (6). Oppressive political systems create an environment where collective social movement action can be restricted due to laws prohibiting assembly in social spaces or anti-government discourse. Social control within communities can take the form of ethnic groupings and sub-state political hierarchy. Most notably, perhaps, it can include religious organizations that act in many places, as a societal authority outside the state that may or may not itself be loyal to the state or to specific political actors. I would caution against the assertion that these are factors that operate uniquely in the developing world, but I will allow that in some cases these factors are in fact elevated and that many of these factors are highly at play in Senegal, complicating political action.

Like Shinichi and Shigetomi, Thompson and Tapscott, in their book *Citizenship and Social Movements: Perspectives from the Global South* (2010, 15), argue that there are limits to modern theories in the southern context. They argue that rather than framing, it is political opportunities driven by desperation in immediate and pressing situations that drive mobilization. In the case of *Y'en a Marre*, the immediate threat of Wade's unconstitutional candidacy for a third term caused much of the country and the international community to feel the urgency of the cause and facilitated social mobilization.

Shinichi and Shigetomi (2009, 6) also create a dichotomy between the motives of developed countries and those of developing, stating that developed countries undertake social matters, while developing countries tackle matters of the state. Stephen Castles, professor at the Institute for Social Change and Critical Inquiry at the University of Wollongong, cited in Thompson and Tapscott's, work also contributes to this dichotomy by arguing that the global economy is based on a "fundamental asymmetry between countries" (2010, 1). I would note

again, the dangers in creating such a dichotomy, as it relies on a separation between developing and developed states. The idea that the struggles against government are unique to the developing world ignores many of the political struggles in developed countries, and assuming that developing countries do not take up social issues would be ignoring massive mobilization for social equality, racial equality, and public health awareness, specifically mobilization during the AIDS epidemic and struggles to end apartheid in South Africa.

According to Shinichi and Shigetomi (2009, 7), there are particular urban issues facing developing countries against which the civic community mobilizes to challenge. These issues include a low degree of capitalist penetration and accumulation, insufficient state administration, absolute poverty, and poor resource distribution by the state. These issues stem from multiple layers of exploitation from both local and international governments, a process I elaborate upon in the subsequent discussion on the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the 1970s.

Professor of Politics at the London Metropolitan University Jeff Haynes (1997, 60) claims that the emergence of many action groups in developing countries today stems from political policies such as the structural adjustment programs of the IMF and the World Bank. Haynes is referring to the neoliberal policies of the 1970s. Throughout the 1990s, on loan from the IMF and the World Bank, governments of developing countries began implementing social policy to help boost their economies and protect from the tendency of the capitalist market to drive the cost of labor down. By the late 60s and early 70s, these countries could no longer repay their debt. To solve the debt crisis, the IMF and the World Bank proposed new loans with new provisions to help restructure their economies. These structural adjustment programs (SAPs) called for a dismantling of government programs and spending and increased privatization. The SAPs of the late 70's were expected to create momentary chaos within developing countries, but

according to capitalist economics, the will to work and fight for survival would eventually kick in and new market economies would pick up. What this capitalist model failed to consider is the sheer fact that when set back, it is increasingly difficult to recover. Upward mobility within an economy is largely dependent on the economic and social position from which we start. Once the state began to shrink, government welfare programs to support the middle class disappeared, and those who were set back had no chance of regaining economic standing.

Shrinking of the state resulted in creating a distance between the people and the state, which Diane Davis (1999, 593), Professor of Regional Planning and Urbanism at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, describes in terms of geography, institutions, and class relations. From my research, geographically speaking, those living outside of urban centers are almost entirely separated from governmental structures. Their daily lives hardly ever involve the state or receive services of the state. This geographical distance is particularly apparent in Senegal, where many rural areas have minimal to no electricity or running water, and little to no access to hospitals and schools. Geographically speaking, even in the peninsula of Dakar, many residents of neighborhoods such as Guediawaye and Pikine are unable to send their children to school. As a result of certain geographical locations, the people are rarely involved with or interact with state institutions and in response form informal governing systems, living separately from the formal elite powers that govern them. Through this process, they become disassociated and often indifferent towards their government and the political process. While many Senegalese, specifically young university students, are actively involved in politics, my respondents expressed to me a feeling of alienation from the government, as if their opinion didn't matter. This distance also expresses itself in Senegal, as many citizens don't have bank accounts, pay taxes, or participate in the formal economy, a distance, which is often, but not always,

determined by class. The rich elite are involved with the political sphere, while the poor become isolated due to lack of education, and poverty heightened by geographical distance and distance from the state. The movement *Y'en a Marre* seeks to challenge this gap between the people and the state by actively engaging those who have become distanced in the political process.

A History of Social Movements In Africa:

Social movements take many forms. They advocate for a wide range of issues from social concerns to rights-based governmental struggles. Africans have always been involved in civic action, and it is wrong to suggest that there was simply a time when they started and when they end, but the African social movements of the twentieth to twenty-first century are commonly understood as having three waves or spanning generations, marked by specific political events. When analyzing these three waves of social action, it is important to keep in mind that they are part of a continuum of active civic engagement.

The first wave of African social movements can be characterized by the struggle for independence, nationalist movements, and decolonization. The second represents the struggle for democracy with the fight against neoliberal policies and structural adjustment programs of the 1970s and 80s and resistance to one-party socialism. And finally, the third wave is one that continues the struggles of the generations before, marked by the Arab Spring and the subsequent wave of uprisings across the continent that continues today.

In Senegal, railway strikes of 1947 marked the birth of the Senegalese nationalist movement (Dwyer and Zeilig 2012, 55). During this period leading up to decolonization, there were strikes and protests across Africa. In 1950, colonial police arrested union leaders and activists in Nairobi, Kenya (56). The arrests in Nairobi are examples of the many instances

where colonial authorities and later actors of the state actively repress and prevent collective action and mobilization and these instances of governmental suppression of civic action still continue today.

In *African Struggles Today*, Dwyer and Zeilig (2012) evaluate the role of ideology in the nationalist movement and ultimately the struggle for independence. Specifically, they look at the so-called *Intelligentsia*: highly educated individuals who were often educated abroad in the metropolitan universities of their colonial states. While these leaders held a nationalist perspective, their discourse and ideology were similar to that of the colonial powers, and many leaders looked towards the Stalinist model for capitalist development. The African nationalist development model is also characterized by a transition to socialism. This “African socialism” drew upon an idea of pre-colonial unity of society, and ultimately addressed issues of the class struggle expressed in the writings of Karl Marx.

We often ask ourselves the question, what went wrong post independence? Many scholars point specifically to the inability of new post-colonial leaders to develop political ideology outside of the Stalinist framework of nationalist thinking (Dwyer and Zeilig 2012, 31). Philosopher and revolutionary pan-Africanist thinker Frantz Fanon addressed this same question, suggesting that this so-called national bourgeoisie which developed during the process of independence became the very exploiting class against which they had originally organized and mobilized in their struggle for national liberation (Rabaka 2015, 251-253). Once in power, these nationalist elites became bought off by the profits of imperialist exploitation, leading to what essentially became the new ruling class in the place of colonial power.

Nationalism provided intellectual and moral leadership for elites. Leaders often saw themselves as not representing a specific group, but as expressing their identity with the national

liberation movement, speaking for all people. This struggle for liberation was not merely that of the nation, but came to embrace ideas of pan-Africanism, the idea of Africa uniting as one.

The nationalist ideology was lacking in concrete alternatives to colonial discourse and as a result, the driving force of the nationalist movement did not stem from nationalist ideologies, but from a collective belief and desire for independence. While the discourse of many African nationalists was lacking in foresight, some African nationalists recognized the need for new political ideology, which tackled a struggle greater than simply independence.

Prompted by global economic policies of the 1970s, Africa saw a new wave of social mobilization into the 80s and 90s. After roughly twenty years of independence, post-colonial Africa once again mobilized, this time to resist dictatorship and authoritarian governments, paving the way towards a more balanced democracy with a transition to multiparty democratic system. The social movements of the end of the 20th century were not unique to Africa. A resurgence of nonviolent, unarmed movements was felt around the world with the “people power” movement in the Philippines, the Solidarity movement in Poland, the fall of the Berlin wall in Germany, and the collapse of Apartheid in South Africa to name a few (Kurt and Schlock 2004, 16).

The global recession of the mid 1970s impacted African countries and other developing countries around the world in highly specific ways. Sub-Saharan African economies were significantly dependent on the export of primary sources and cash crops, the prices of which—determined by the London Metal Exchange and other western institutions—soared, devastating African economies. In Zambia, the collapse of the price of copper decreased the country’s GDP to half in just a few years. Dwyer and Zeilig argue that the cause in Zambia and other similar situations exposed the dependency of African states on outside powers and

international economic forces beyond the control of the assumed-to-be sovereign nation state (Dwyer and Zeilig 2012, 34). To deal with the problem, countries adapted by borrowing, creating long-term debt.

This period of the late 1970s when countries began borrowing and accumulating debt marked the beginnings of the shift towards neoliberal policies that would greatly impact the development capacities and ultimately the sovereignty of many African States. African states no longer borrowed commercially, but rather began taking out loans from large western financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which dictated a neoliberal policy shift of structural readjustments (SAPs) characterized by the retreat of the state from the social and economic sector and an increase in the privatization of public goods previously controlled by the state. The so-called “African Socialism” began to transition to a new form of neoliberal capitalism. In terms of international development, this shift was meant to incite capitalist development and ultimately increase the economic productivity; however, faced with increasingly severe loan conditions, basic food prices soared greatly, impacting the growing urban population. A decrease in agrarian subsidies, led to the worldwide phenomenon of mass urbanization, or as the French say, *exode rurale*, meaning the “rural exodus.” I believe the term *exode rural* offers an interesting alternative to the term urbanization as I feel urbanization implies a certain economic increase in city life and productivity. In reality, this *exode rurale* brought on by the sheer lack of resources and profitability of agriculture, resulted in what the Senegalese describe as a *ruralization* of urban spaces. With few jobs and a lack of industry in the urban centers, rural migrants settled in on the outskirts of major cities, establishing the *banlieue* (suburbs). They brought their animals, and other elements of the rural economy to the “urban

environment,” resulting in the mix of rural and urban systems so present in many African cities today.

Dwyer and Zeilig (2012, 36) discuss the experience of globalization. They argue that African countries and other developing countries experienced the effects and were prompted to respond at an earlier stage than western countries. It is important to understand globalization as a process with real economic and global consequences. We cannot simply think of globalization as economic liberation and the freedom of movement of people, goods, and ideas, rather we must understand it as a political process that has reinforced a global hierarchy of power.

While protest during this period was focused on the negative impact of neoliberal policies, many African countries, such as Zambia, Kenya, Mali, and most of Francophone West Africa made the transition to multiparty democracy. In Zambia, a coalition of trade unionists and political activists formed political opposition to one-party democracy. In Mali, again, students and trade unionists formed a grassroots movement against the military regime of Moussa Traoré, which resulted in the army taking the side of protesters in March of 1991. Alpha Konaré, the leader of the non-violent movement won the presidency (Waal and Ibreck 2013, 11). However, after a few years, advocates for democracy realized the fight wasn't over and were forced back in the streets to protest anew, the same injustices now challenging the very leaders they had helped to bring to power. The Zambian president Chiluba was ousted after an attempt to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. In the early 90s, Cameroon organized against their leader Paul Biya through civil disobedience, withdrawing from economic citizenship by refusing to pay taxes and engage in other forms of the formal economy. Eventually Biya conceded to a multi-party democracy (Waal and Ibreck 2013, 11-12).

With hopes of ending corruption and ethnic divisions, Kenya's Mwai Kibaki came to power in 200; however, he too fell victim to the very corruption of leaders before him (Waal and Ibreck 2013, 11). It became clear that it wasn't the president in charge that was the cause of these failures, but weak systems of democracy in need of maintenance and monitoring. In many cases, movement leaders themselves become corrupted, requiring a continual tradition of nonviolent civic action.

Proof of the devastation of the SAPs of the 1970s, throughout the 80s and early 90s, many instances of political unrest and major protests took place, eventually forcing any countries to introduce reforms in 1992. As a result, in 1993, 14 major countries held democratic elections. Over four years, 35 regimes lost power as a result of political protest movements, and many of these countries held elections for the first time since independence.

In 1981, Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor resigned after 20 years in office. Former Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense Abdou Diouf succeeded him, and would remain president until 2000, when youth mobilized for the election of Abdoulaye Wade. However, the new multi-party democracies pursued the same policies of structural reform, as no political alternatives were brought to the table. Frustrations with the retreat of the state from health, education, and public works led to the emergence of the Set/Setal movement to improve the environments of neighborhoods by removing garbage and dirt from the streets, as well as to clean up and reform political and social practices. Today the movement *Y'en a Marre* continues many of the principles of the Set/Setal movement through their programs *Dox ak sa Gox* and *Sunu Gox* and *Nouveau Type de Sénégalais*, all discussed in Chapter IV.

An Emerging Pan-Africanist Discourse:

Throughout this history of mobilization, leaders have arisen who have carried a discourse fighting for sovereignty, unification, and liberation, a historical discourse upon which, in continuing the struggle for independence, *Y'en a Marre* activists and other engaged rappers construct a pan-Africanist identity. Through their music, discourse, and actions, rappers and activists establish a narrative that addresses the neocolonial state and privileges a pan-Africanist revolutionary identity. The creation of this narrative requires the deconstruction of the colonial nation that was established when Europe carved up the continent into individual countries. Deconstructing the narrative involves thinking critically about the image of Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor as the father of the nation. Senghor is often depicted as the father of independence, but he was also responsible for maintaining Senegal's ties to France and the emergence of the neocolonial post-colonial state that exists today. In what follows, I look more closely at those revolutionary figures and visionaries, in order to build an understanding of the pan-Africanist identity at the heart of *Y'en a Marre*'s mobilization.

Born in Joal, Senegal, in 1906, Léopold Sédar Senghor can in many ways be considered the *model évolué*. At the age of 22, in 1928, Senghor moved to Paris to study at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, and in 1931, he received his *licence* (Bachelor's degree) from the university of Paris in literature. By 1933, Senghor became a naturalized French citizen (Spleth 1985), and he enjoyed the privileges of French citizenship, along with the elite status his privilege gave him.

At the time of decolonization, many African leaders were pushing for a pan-Africanist approach to nationalism and liberation. Senghor had a more moderate perspective. While he advocated for greater autonomy for France's colonies, he was against a complete break from France. Senghor wanted to avoid the balkanization of Africa, breaking Africa up into small

individual countries. Instead, Senghor thought the creation of a federation of French West-African countries would ease decolonization. Unfortunately, to the disappointment of Senghor, in 1858, Guinea broke away from French West Africa (Spleth 1985, 15), an important step in the process of Independence.

Based on a speech given in 1937, critics accuse Senghor of endorsing ideas of assimilation. However, Spleth argues that his words should be taken not as a promotion of assimilation, but rather as a suggestion that Africans assimilate what they find useful of the Western civilization, rather than being assimilated by it. As Senghor put it, the goal was “to assimilate, not be assimilated” (Spleth 1985, 11). The key distinction in Senghor’s statement is his insistence that Africans use their agency to assimilate, not to be assimilated by force. Senghor also believed that it was not only Africa that had something to learn from Europe, but also the other way around. In an essay entitled “*Ce Que l’Homme Noir Apporte,*” translated as what the black man has to offer, Senghor argued for what Africa has to offer to Europe. He believed in a concept he called *métissage*, the integration of black and white people in order to enrich the world (Spleth 1985, 11).

During his time in France, Senghor met his contemporaries, such as Aimé Césaire and Léon Demas, and together, they founded the Association des Étudiants Noirs. Their work and activism surrounding issues of black African identity and their extensive writing on the subject became part of the movement coined by Aimé Césaire as Negritude. Negritude stood for embracing what it means to be black and reclaiming power through black identity. Countering the logic of France’s civilizing mission, Negritude was based on deconstructing the concept that Africa is a place without culture, and embracing and promoting African culture. The colonial process was not simply the domination of political and economic spheres, but also the

domination of culture and language. The dehumanizing discourse of the civilizing mission and the legacy of the slave trade created a frame through which black bodies become erased from humanity and common discourse. Negritude was about reclaiming what had been erased and recreating a new narrative of pride and celebration of the black bodies and intellect.

In his poems, Senghor often refers to concepts of blackness, and black bodies, and through his work in *Hosties Noirs*, a collection of poems as a memorial for black soldiers who served in the war, he addresses the ways that black bodies became used as objects of war. In the poem entitled “Prayer for the *Tirailleurs*³ of Senegal,” Senghor writes:

I grew up deep in Africa, at the crossroads of castes of races and routes
At present, I am a private second class among ordinary soldiers.

Thou knowest that they have launched their reaper, their machine recruiting in the harvest of high heads

And the pain submits until the sharp ‘no’ of the free volunteers
Who offered their godlike bodies, their athletic splendor, for the catholic honor of man.
(Senghor 1969, 35)

Senghor’s poems celebrating blackness stand as resistance to the erasing power of the colonial and imperial process. As a student in France, Senghor’s belief in Negritude led to his involvement in black student organizations. In 1939, Senghor was taken prisoner while mobilizing to defend the bridge at La Charté- Sur-Loir, after which he was imprisoned in several different camps, and became involved in organizing the escape of prisoners (Spleth 1985, 4). Later in his career, Senghor would focus his doctoral work on researching Serer oral poetry, the language spoken in his hometown of Joal, Senegal (11).

Despite his promotion of African culture, Senghor’s presidency proved his allegiance to French culture, the French political system, and the elite status he gained from those ties.

³ African soldiers from French colonies who fought for the French during WWI and WWII.

Senghor's presidency displayed many cases of authoritarian rule, with the imprisonment of individuals involved in political opposition. A year after Senghor was elected president, he accused his Prime Minister, Mamadou Dia, of plotting a coup d'état and attempting to overthrow his presidency. Mamadou Dia, along with Valdiodio Ndiaye, was arrested and imprisoned. Dia's radical socialist views often clashed with the more moderate views of Senghor, and many Senegalese point to this moment as a missed opportunity for Senegal's independent development.

Senghor as Father of the Nation and Independence: the Deconstruction of National Identity:

Senghor is often depicted as father of the nation. In his article "Senghor? *Y'en a Marre!* L'héritage Senghorien prisme des écritures générationnelles de la nation Sénégalaise," Jean-Francois Havard (2013, 75) challenges the common myth of Senghor as the father of the nation of Senegal. He illustrates how anti-imperial resistance was not led by Senghor, but was part of a greater resistance in which Senghor only played a small role. He argues that the role of Senghor has become less important and replaced by other figures of cultural and political identification.

More important than Senghor, are religious figures such as Ahmadou Bamba, intellectuals such as Cheikh Anta Diop, and the true pan-Africanist revolutionaries and visionaries figures such as Valdiodio Ndiaye, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, and Amilcar Cabral construct an anti-imperialist, African identity to which the social movements today, such as *Y'en a Marre*, identify and make reference. The notion of pan-Africanism promoted by many nationalist leaders, such as Thomas Sankara, Amilcar Cabral, Valdiodio Ndiaye, and Ahmadou Bamba, "personify the honor of being African in this world" (Havard 2013, 75). They embody the struggle for freedom and true independence that resonates years after decolonization.

Havard (2013, 77) argues that deconstructing the myth of Senghor as the father of the nation is important in rewriting what national identity can mean. The construction of Senghor as father of the nation implies a false sense of national identity within the nation state. Prior to colonization, the nation state of Senegal did not exist. The area now known as Senegal is made of different ethnic groups that, due to the carving up of the country during colonialism, are now split between countries, often causing conflict. In many ways, the colonial borders that make up Senegal today are arbitrary, and pan-Africanist visionaries deconstruct the idea of a father of the nation by rebuilding an identity that relies on the visionary perspectives of the pan-Africanist leaders, often left out or even systematically removed from the political sphere and political history.

Havard (2013, 77) argues that the myth of Senghor as father of the nation allowed for the justification of one-party politics and the condensation of power throughout Senghor's presidency. As has been done by leaders across the world, by creating this myth of himself as father of the nation, Senghor put himself at the center of cultural and national unity, creating essentialist constructions of those identities (77). Identification with Senghor became inseparable from the Senegalese identity, allowing for the justification of his prolonged presidency.

In a movement to rewrite the history of independence, in 2010, the Mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, decided to rename the *Place de l'Indépendance* to the name of Valdiodio Ndiaye, and change the name of the *Boulevard de la République* to *Boulevard Mamadou Dia* (Havard 2013, 80). By replacing these names, Khalifa Sall honors Both Valdiodio Ndiaye and Mamadou Dia, acknowledging the missed opportunity for the development of Senegal to work toward true independence from France. While Senegal is often seen as a success after colonization,

Senghor's presidency and subsequent presidencies have been ridden with the same authoritarian and totalitarian actions so prevalent and often more obvious in many other African countries.

Many Senegalese perceive Senghor as tied to the French and French culture, a concept that came to light through my conversations. Adama Doga Mbodji is a young geography student of Université Cheikh Anta Diop. He's taking time off to save up to hopefully continue his studies. Today, Adama works mostly nights at the local gas station convenience store, which he calls his *boutique*. He hopes one day to open up his own *boutique* and have his own employees that work for him. Speaking of Thomas Sankara in conversation about African nationalists, Adama told me with conviction, "He is a man of values, who has marked the history of a continent" (Adama Doga Mbodji, pers. comm.). He told me that like Mamadou Dia, Thomas Sankara only wanted to work in the best interests of Senegal, not in the interests of France, like Senghor, and that it was for those reasons that he was killed and Valdiodio Ndiaye and Mamadou Dia were accused of the famous coup d'état. For Adama, Senghor worked solely in the interests of France to the point that he sees Senghor as more French than Senegalese. "Senghor was the son of Générale De Gaulle," he said accusing the president of being in the French general's back pocket. "For me, he is French" Adama continued. "... I consider him as a little French man" (Adama Doga Mbodji, pers. comm.).

Walking into Senghor's house (now a museum) in Fann, Dakar, you can see his taste for French and Western Culture. Senghor was married to a French Woman and had three children with his former Senegalese wife, most of whom have passed away. However, walking through his house, you would guess he had only one son. Majestic portraits of his youngest mixed-race son cover the walls. It is only in his office that you see small pictures of his other sons from his first Senegalese wife. His youngest son was clearly his favorite, and as the tour guide told me, he

was much loved as a figure and son of Senegal. Somewhat comically, Senghor's private life, marriage, and his love for his son fit into his ideology of *métissage*. In reference to lack of presence of and knowledge of Senghor's fully Senegalese children, Adama told me, "[it is] because history does not take interest in them, they are Senegalese." What Adama is getting at is the ability of history to erase the narratives, stories, of some and glorify those of others to further imperialist agendas.

As our conversation continued, it became clear that, for Adama, rewriting the history of "independence" was closely tied to his personal identity. "I am a bit of a revolutionary," he told me. When I asked if I had permission to use his name, he said, "You can use my name if you want. We, as revolutionaries, we don't hide." (Adama Doga Mbodji, pers. comm.).

Adama's desire to embody the revolutionary persona corresponds with Havard's argument that rewriting the history of independence is about rewriting self-identifications with the nation (2013, 80). For *Y'en a Marrantes* (those who identify with the movement) as well, these self-identifications are not simply with their nation, but more so with a pan-African identity that was taken from them when colonial powers, in their fight for control, carved up the continent. Through Adama's language, we can see that for some, if not many, the image of Senghor is no longer one of "father of the nation;" rather, Adama's heroes lie elsewhere, outside of the colonial construction of Senegal.

Pan-Africanist Figures and Revolutionaries: The Reconstruction of Identity

Distinguished by their struggles against imperialism and their fight for black empowerment, founder of the Mouride Brotherhood Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké, Lat Dior—the king of Cayor who fought in opposition to the colonial penetration—along with

Cheikh Anta Diop, an intellectual and opponent of Senghor (Havard 2012, 80), Patrice Lumumba (the first Prime Minister of the Congo), and Thomas Sankara, all contribute to the reconstruction of an African revolutionary identity.

Thomas Sankara, to whom Adama makes reference, is in many ways the West African hero of anti-colonial governance. Killed for his discourse and political action, he became a hero for the pan-Africanist struggle. Thomas Sankara seized power of Haute Volta (Burkina Faso) through a military coup d'état with the help of his friend and military officer, Blaise Compaoré, who would four years later betray him through assassination. Sankara became president of the newly-named country of Burkina Faso, meaning "the country of upright men," from 1983 to 1987, for only four years. His charisma and revolutionary ideas about governance gained him great popularity, not only in Burkina Faso, but also in the neighboring African countries. Sankara's policies were based on rejection of the growing neo-colonial state. He changed the name of the colonial Haute Volta to Burkina Faso and believed firmly in Africa refusing to pay their debts to the western banks. He believed that Burkina Faso provided the resources necessary to sustain itself and believed in the ownership of those resources. Sankara was also a promoter of women's rights and environmental protection from the desertification of the Sahel by planting trees. Sankara worked directly against Western interests and found himself at odds with other African leaders, such as Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire (Dembele 2009, 1-3). Even though Sankara's popularity had decreased towards the end of his presidency, he is an example of a leader who had a vision for his country of total independence and continues to inspire those who follow in his footsteps to continue his fight today.

The French were not the first to colonize the area we now call Senegal. Islam made its way across northern Africa and down through Morocco and finally into Senegal. The Senegalese

for the most part practice a form of Sufi Islam that has become somewhat of a hybrid of Islamic doctrine combined with traditional African practices. There are four main brotherhoods in Senegal: the Lyene, the Tijaniyyah, the Qadiriyyah, and the Mouridyyah. The Mouride Brotherhood is Senegal's largest indigenous brotherhood, founded by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké. Commonly known as Ahmadou Bamba, he is much revered for his anti-colonial discourse. He was exiled to Guinea for his pacifist struggle against French colonial rule, and is famous for his statement that he would not bow down to any powers, referring to colonial powers, other than the power of Allah. Ahmadou Bamaba's discourse has become somewhat complicated, as today it is used to reject the French school system and advocate for strictly Quranic schooling, a system in Senegal which in some cases has become corrupt and has resulted in thousands of young children begging in the streets. Despite the complexities in the manifestations of his anti-colonial discourse today, the figure of Bamba is much loved by the Senegalese, and celebrated for his fight against imperialism.

Cheikh Anta Diop was an intellectual, archeologist, and physicist committed to the study of human origin. He was instrumental in formulating our current understanding of human origin in Africa, and the ways our species evolved and migrated across the world, adapting to changes in environment. Cheikh Anta Diop is considered a key figure in promoting African pride, and countering Western imperialist constructions of the "uncivilized barbarian" by turning the argument on its head, and pointing to Africa as the origins of civilization (Ngome 2016, 11). In this way, his work actively deconstructs the colonial civilizing mission.

Born in Bafata, Guinea Bissau, to Cape Verdean parents, Amilcar Cabral was an internationally acclaimed militant leader of African Independence from Portugal. Most writing on African nationalism focuses on Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sékou Touré of Guinea;

however, Amilcar Cabral, was revolutionary in his thinking in ways that other nationalists failed to address. Cabral was critical of the so-called “African socialism,” cautioning against the desired classless Africa. He believed in the process of the revolutionary struggle against colonial powers, and that through this struggle would come cultural change addressing class differences.

Amilcar Cabral became instrumental in the Cape Verdean renaissance and cultural movement, where he eventually broke with Eurocentric models and focused his attention on life struggles, such as poverty, drought, migration due to lack of resources and poverty, and began his first critiques of colonial history (Rabaka 2015, 4). In 1945, Cabral, like other African Nationalists, went to Portugal to study for five years, where he began his career as a student activist, becoming involved in the Center for African Studies, The Anti-Colonial Movement, and The Committee of Liberation of Territories Under Portuguese Domination (5).

Cabral’s original objectives for decolonization were to pursue a legal and peaceful transition of power toward independence; however, in the face of extreme oppression, Cabral’s tactics eventually transformed. After starting the Recreational and Cultural Club for young people as a front for spreading his anti-colonial and nationalist ideas, Cabral was forced to leave Guinea Bissau and banned from returning. His exile from Guinea Bissau ultimately led him to abandon his plans to follow a constitutional method of liberation (Rabaka 2015, 7).

Cabral developed an understanding of imperialism and colonialism based on Marxist theories of class struggle and the desire to reclaim culture, which he believed had been destroyed by colonial and imperialist processes. Sulayman Sheih Nyang, cited in Chilcote’s *Amilcar Cabral’s Revolutionary Theory and Practice, A Critical Guide*, adds to Cabral’s understanding of the dispossession of Africans of their history, saying “The process of colonialism took the African out of his own historical realms and placed him in a Eurocentric historical drama”

(Chilcote 1991, 28). This quote reflects Cabral's idea that Africa experiences an interrupted history and that only through attaining full independence will they be able to continue forward to create their own history.

According to Cabral, colonialism manifests in two forms: classical colonialism and neocolonialism. Classical colonialism was characterized by direct domination through foreign armed forces and the administrative agents of the "settlers." He believed neocolonialism was a way of rationalizing the colonial project (Chilcote 1991, 27). He saw the process of colonialism imposing itself and destroying and replacing indigenous culture as central to the project of imperialism. He saw the reclaiming of culture and the embracing of indigenous values as resistance to this oppression and the colonial system.

For Cabral, culture was at the core of the national liberation struggle. He argued that with a strengthened cultural life, new forms of economic and political resistance would emerge to challenge foreign domination (27). Culture, he argued, could be understood on four levels. First, "popular culture comprising all positive values of the indigenous people." Second, "national culture, drawn from history and the success of the liberation struggle itself." Third, scientific culture, technological needs for progress." And fourth, "universal culture, striving for humanism, solidarity and respect for people" (29). He believed that the colonial system oppressed the indigenous people and that the same colonial system was responsible for creating social gaps, such as the difference between urban and rural populations, between ethnic groups, and between classes. Cabral saw the reclaiming of culture and the embracing of indigenous values as resistance to this oppression and the colonial system.

After WWII, "monopoly capitalism," as Cabral called it, "became prominent with the emergence of an international system of multinational corporations" (Chilcote 1991, 28). He

pointed to this time as a turn towards what he called neocolonialism: indirect domination by the colonial powers. He saw neocolonialism as an investment for European countries under the guise of policies of aid, creating interdependency between the colonies and the metropolises.

Cabral's theories of nationalism looked beyond the initial goal of independence (Chilcote 1991, 37). He did not see the independent nation as equivalent to liberation. He wrote, "We accept the principle that the liberation struggle is a revolution that does not finish at the moment when the national flag is raised and the national anthem played" (Dwyer and Zeilig 2012, 34).

Cabral's theories are far from perfect; no theory can be. However, I believe the understanding of how Cabral viewed nationalism and the struggle for independence is perhaps more insightful than any theory offered by an "objective scholar." The study of Cabral and his contemporaries shows us how the African intellectual debate of the time ultimately led to independence.

The life, ideology, and struggles of Amilcar Cabral are critical in understanding the story and purpose of the movement *Y'en A Marre*, for it is from Cabral's revolutionary discourse and action, and the nationalist movement of anti-imperialist mobilization, that the members of the movement *Y'en a Marre* draw their inspiration. Cabral was not Senegalese, yet the fact that he stands as an inspiration for *Y'en a Marre*, shows how the fight for independence and ultimately the struggles of *Y'en a Marre* today reach beyond Senegal, and that the message of the movement defies state lines, rejecting the colonial creation of divided nation states in Africa and reclaiming the unity described by the early nationalist thinkers. Wearing his famous hat in honor of Cabral's anti-colonial legacy, activist, investigative journalist, and founding member of *Y'en a Marre*, Fadel Barro, proudly told me, "We pay homage to someone who has fought for independence, while we continue to fight on" (Fadel Barro, pers. comm.). *Y'en a Marre*

continues Cabral's struggle for independence in that it stands to critique and resist the very processes of imperialism that Cabral so accurately named in his theories. They strive to reclaim their culture, to separate from the French neocolonialism that is ever present today, and to incite the Senegalese people, not only the bourgeois elite, to be politically engaged and civically active.

Conclusion:

Reconstructing a sense of African identity from which movements such as *Y'en a Marre* arise is about understanding how the narratives, put forward by these revolutionary leaders, weave together. It is about looking back at history to those who truly engaged in the struggle, basing actions on a sense of responsibility to fight for freedom, a responsibility to bring their words to action. Today, when the fight is far from over, *Y'en a Marre* finds its place.

Today, African Scholars such as Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr think critically and theoretically about what this next step would look like and about how to realize a world where Africans have control of the production of their own narratives, control over their own resources, and control over their participation in the world, independent of imperialist agendas. In chapter four, I address the ways that *Y'en a Marre*, through its community action initiatives engages with this project, while meeting the barriers and challenges of the neoliberal political system.

The central message we can take away from these visionaries is their stress on an independent Africa that is beyond constructed borders. In Felwine Sarr's words, "Africa is a continental project" (TV5Monde, 2016). This project identified by Felwine Sarr, as I will discuss in the subsequent chapters, is at the core of the movement *Y'en a Marre*. Perhaps what Felwine Sarr brings to the conversation, which echoes the Sentiment of Thomas Sankara, is the idea that there is no one and nothing to which Africa must catch up. For Felwine Sarr, the African project

is about escaping the cultural and intellectual interdependence and domination described by Cabral, and “pluralizing the archives with the African perspective” (Sarr, 2009).

The movement *Y'en a Marre* is a space where the discourse of these revolutionary thinkers is brought into action in a time when African citizens feel that their governments are not best serving interests of their people. It is to the discourse that emerges from deconstructing the myth of Senghor as father of the nation, and the myth of “independence,” that movements such as *Y'en a Marre* hold themselves responsible to rebuild their society, and it is out of this discourse that, in the face of oppression, which is ever present nearly 60 years post “independence,” they find their agency to mobilize in a multi-generational fight for independence.

Chapter II
Expressing Responsibility Through Rap:
Creating Urban Spaces of Resistance

“Nous sommes des agents de conscientisation de masse. Nous sommes des artistes, et le hip hop c’est un discours artistique sur l’actualité ”⁴ - Malal Tall (Gallet 2014)

Introduction:

Plage de Mermoz is the crescent shaped beach of the *Baie de Mermoz*, on the westernmost coast of Dakar. The Mermoz neighborhood—named after the French aviator Jean Mermoz—is a middle class neighborhood in the center of the Dakar peninsula and the neighborhood I would call home. I often frequented the beach for quiet observation and contemplation. The beach was a space from which to witness many aspects of society, as it was both a place of action and a place of rest for many young Senegalese. At four o'clock every evening, the beach would fill with young men working out and playing soccer. Kids would show up to play in the water, and young couples would come sit on the rocks to watch the sun set. One of the most interesting groups to frequent the beach was a group of young singers, possibly *Baaye Falls*, the servants of Ahmadou Bamba who worship Allah through work and song. They would come to sing and worship singing out to the ocean and the setting sun. As the *Baaye Falls* sing on the beach, they become the cultural soundtrack to daily life. No one there takes special notice; their song was part of daily life. Music is heard everywhere in Dakar, from the religious songs played in taxis, to rhythmic singing and clapping that drives commerce in markets. In these spaces, where song combines with daily life, rappers in Dakar find their inspiration and

⁴ Translated as: “We are agents of mass awareness. We are artists, and hip-hop is an artistic discourse on the news.”

weave their life experiences into their lyrics, engaging critically with their communities through the rebellious nature of activist rap. Drawing upon the power of engaged rap to challenge the status quo, the movement *Y'en a Marre* derives power through music of resistance. Through the art of rap, with their engaged lyrics referencing responsibility to pan-Africanist struggles of leaders before them, Senegalese rappers create a space of resistance that is both historical and current, creating an engaged population.

Hip Hop and Rap in Senegal:

Known for its origins in the US, born out of a response to social, political, economic, and cultural marginalization, hip hop is defined as a culture comprised of rap, various genres of hip hop dance, including breakdance, and even graffiti. From the US, it has expanded across the world, has been reshaped and reinvented in local contexts, and has resonated as a mode of resistance and rewriting of marginalization for disenfranchised populations. Fredericks (2013, 136) argues that hip-hop culture allows for a discursive space for self-expression, where discourse, ideology, and art meet to create a forum from which a narrative of resistance can emerge. For the purpose of this study, when discussing rappers in Senegal, given that rap is encompassed by hip-hop, I often use the words hip-hop and rap interchangeably; primarily this is because my informants often identified themselves as rappers, but also called their music hip-hop.

Eric Charry (2012), in his book *African Expressive Cultures: Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, points to travelers between France and Senegal as responsible for originally bringing rap to Senegal. He argues that the relationship between France and Senegal and the number of Senegalese living in France due to colonial history was key in

hip-hop's journey to Africa. Other scholars point to the US—in response to the closing of borders in France—opening its borders to Senegalese migrants in the 80s, which in combination with cheap flights between Dakar and New York, facilitated travel and exchange between the two countries, resulting in an increase of the Senegalese population in New York City. By 1997, the Senegalese population in New York had rapidly increased.

In 1982, hip-hop was spreading to France when a NYC rap tour reached Paris where it met a relatively small fan base (Charry 2012, 10). In France, the genre of hip hop grew rapidly in popularity, and by 1984, HIP HOP became the first French TV show to be hosted by a black person and the first TV show to be fully dedicated to hip hop, greatly contributing to the growth of rap in France. After the US, France became the second largest market for US rap music. MC Solaar, perhaps the best-known French rapper, originally born in Senegal in 1969 to parents from Chad, began rapping almost exclusively in French, breaking away from the fad of replicating American music, and personalizing his songs to fit the French immigrant context (Charry 2012, 15).

In France, hip hop and rap eventually made their way from radio and TV to the streets in the *banlieues* of Paris, neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city and home to many immigrants. The rapper Sidney participated in tours between France and Africa, where he brought with him videocassettes (Charry 2012, 6). Through the sharing of records, hip-hop has rapidly spread across the world and gained popularity in Africa. I would argue that for the emergence of hip-hop in Senegal, the existence of the internet and forums such as YouTube have provided relatively inexpensive vehicles for sharing music across the world, allowing for more voices to be heard. Anyone with a recording device can produce content for the world to see.

Rap in Africa grew in popularity in the 90s and into the 2000s. There were public rap competitions in Da es Salaam, Tanzania, in Cape Town, South Africa, and in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. In Senegal, the group Positive Black Soul (PBS), the band of activist and rapper Didier Awadi, who often speaks out at press conferences with *Y'en a Marre*, was beginning to be played on the radio and their songs addressed the economic hardships and political injustices of the time. French rapper MC Solaar expressed his support for the Senegalese group, and PBS opened for MC Solaar at the French Cultural Center in Dakar. Much of the commercially successful rap in the 2000s came from France, from African-born artists who had lived or grown up in France (Charry 2012, 18-19). Serigne Mbaye, also called Disiz la Peste was born in France to a Senegalese father and Belgian mother. He sang about his African origins. Mokobe Traoré from Malian origins, born in France to a Malian-Senegalese father and a Mauritanian mother, released an album in 2007 entitled *Mon Afrique*. Abd al Malik was born in France of Congolese origins and grew up in Strasbourg. He doesn't collaborate much with African musicians and rarely references Africa. However, he does take a critical approach to social issues (Charry 2012, 20).

There are fewer African rappers in the US, but we have Akon, Chamillionaire, and Wale, all of whom have assimilated and become Americanized so that their music has very little to do with Africa. If they do mention Africa, as Tang (2012, 82) argues, African-American musicians such as Akon, son of Senegalese griot Mor. Thiam, Kanye West, and Afrika Bambaataa use language that creates an imagined Africa, situated in a remote past. In addition, Hawke Dorsch, 2004, argues that hip-hop from the African diaspora often creates representations of Africa that are idealistic and ahistorical (Tang 2012, 82). Senegalese rappers challenge this notion by grounding their lyrics in local realities with historical references.

Rap wasn't the only form of Hip Hop to reach Africa. Hip-hop dance became popular as well. Youth from Bamako, Dakar, Abidjan, and Cape Town, began forming their own troops of break-dancers (12). The hip-hop dance scene has grown rapidly. During my time in Senegal I attended dance battles that incorporated various forms of hip-hop dance, from break dancing to popping.

Charry (2012, 3) argues that while rap may have originated in the US, it was not necessarily the same cultural and historical circumstances that caused Africans to embrace it. Rap did not develop in the same ways across Africa, but it is fair to say that it serves as a tool for mobilization throughout the continent today. In Senegal, as Mwenda Ntarangwi argues, rap mobilization emerged in the 1990s out of dissatisfaction with the presidency of Abdou Diouf and on the heels of the economic structural adjustment programs of the IMF and the World Bank (Ntarangwi 2010).

Once African rappers began shedding American influences, African rap began to stand out on its own. Rappers in Senegal started rapping in their local languages, and politicizing their messages. They began writing lyrics that moved past the materialistic, misogynistic flashy popular rap, to address local issues that were relevant to their populations. The move to begin rapping in local languages was also political in that it can be seen as a rejection of imperial authority by reclaiming African identities through the use of local language in song.

Initially, it was a westernized elite, those who had access to commercial records, that first embraced rap in Senegal, yet Senegalese rap gained the status it's known for today through the ways in which it was used to centralize a discourse for one of the most disenfranchised and neglected populations in Senegal: urban youth.

A Forum for Disenfranchised Youth:

Engaged rap took off in Senegal. It became an outlet of self-expression and engagement amongst the disenfranchised youth. When I say youth, I mean the younger generations under 30 years old. Many think of youth as teenagers, but though my research I've found that Senegalese activists in their late twenties refer to themselves as *la jeunesse*, meaning "the young population" and "the younger generations." Fredericks (2013) calls youth the "makers" and "breakers" in postcolonial society. Senegal, and Africa as a whole, has an extremely young demographic, with around 80 percent of the population under 25 years old, and youth in Senegal are faced with severe unemployment and lack of opportunities. This demographic is only expected to increase, as Africa's population is only expected to keep growing. Predictions estimate Africa's population to grow by 8.3 percent, while that of North America is only supposed to grow by 0.4 percent and 3.2 percent in Asia by 2050 (Ntarangwi 2009, 3).

During my time in Dakar, I experienced friends, family, professors, and informants describe in length the difficulties facing youth in Senegal. Youth in Senegal are disenfranchised by their government, but also by traditional societal powers and Senegal offers very few pathways for its youth entering adulthood. Local industry, including cotton production, fishing, and peanut cultivation, has significantly diminished as fishing rights are being sold to international companies and primary resources are being exported at prices dictated by foreign banks. As a result, there are very few jobs available in the formal sector, but also local means of subsistence, such as fishing and agriculture, have become less profitable. Traditions of respect for elders put little faith in the young population to take over positions, and many people keep working past the expected age of retirement. Additionally, what is called clientalism; the passing

of power through patronage relations is pervasive in Senegal. As Rapper Djily Bagdad states in the film *Quitte le Pouvoir*:

That's the Senegalese system. Who do you know? Who recommends you? You arrive with your diploma, looking for work, next to you there is someone who is less educated and qualified than you, but who knows the director or who knows the aunt of the uncle of the niece of the cousin of the director. They choose him instead of you! ⁵ (Grovestins 2014).

Djily's words speak to the importance of family and connections. As they say, *il faut avoir des bras longs*, meaning you have to have “long arms,” connections, to obtain positions. In Senegalese society, family connections are what make for strong communities, and in an economy that is moving away from family business to formal employment, many young, educated Senegalese find themselves without those connections to salaried positions. I have even been told that in some companies, people continue to receive their salary after they no longer work there or are deceased. Whether or not this assumption is true is irrelevant, since it speaks to the exasperation of Senegalese youth with their systems of employment.

Senegal's young population is visible in the streets of Dakar. Many children are sent to Quranic schools where they end up begging in the streets to support their *Marabouts*, and teenagers and young adult men work long hours as *apprentis* (passenger scouts) in the country's informal transportation system. Many of Senegal's youth drop out of high school to work in the informal sector to support their family, and with many young men—traditionally the breadwinners of the family—out of work and searching for employment, it is often the women who end up taking on more informal jobs to supplement their household income.

Many young men and women are students at the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar, the only public university in the region and one of the only in the country aside from the

⁵ Translated as: C'est ça le système Sénégalais. Tu connais qui, c'est qui, qui te recommande? Tu viens, tu as ton diplôme, tu cherches un boulot, à côté, y'a quelqu'un qui a fait moins d'études que toi, mais connaît le directeur ou bien qui connaît la tante de l'oncle de la nièce du cousin du directeur. On le prend à ta place.

universities in Saint-Louis, the previous colonial capital, in Thiès about an hour and a half away from Dakar, and in Ziguinchor, in the southern region of Casamance. People I met spoke about the importance of education, and even if they weren't currently enrolled at the university, they still considered themselves to be students. Internships are rare, and young Senegalese are likely to have their first formal job experience well after completing their masters degree. One of my favorite Professors would often talk about a lack of intellectual life in Senegal, due to what we call the brain drain, where the highly educated leave the country for a more profitable career. He told me that many of his colleagues teach abroad in universities in the United States and France. The same principles apply to other job sectors, such as medicine. The university hospital in the Dakar neighborhood of Fann is known for its quality and many Moroccans move to Dakar to study. With skills in medical professions, many Senegalese then immigrate to Europe or the US to find salaried jobs that will support their families back home. While these Dakar-educated doctors are now able to support their families living abroad, many Senegalese communities suffer from a lack of quality medical care.

The University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar—with a population of at least 60,000 students and estimates I heard ranged from 80,000 to 100,000—is not meant for such a large number of students, and the infrastructure of the school is in severe decline. The university is often subject to frequent strikes both on the part of students and faculty who often wait weeks before receiving their pay. It can take years to finish a degree, and most of all it takes incredible persistence. I have met students who have completed a year and a half, but have had to drop out to work and have no foreseeable plans to return. Nevertheless, these individuals stressed the importance of higher education. Entry fees are low compared to those in the United States, but are still out of reach for many Senegalese. Those who achieve a good score the first time they take the

Baccalaureate exam at the end of high school are eligible for a scholarship from the state of a mere 50 dollars a month.

Students from wealthier families may attend one of the many private universities, where tuition is expensive, but classes are smaller, the education is more focused, and strikes don't interrupt the academic year. However, even with an expensive university degree, the informal sector remains more profitable, and job offers in the formal sector are extremely limited. Low salaries make life difficult, and most families are required to supplement their salary with other forms income. The phrase, *c'est l'entrepreneur qui réussit*, meaning, "it's the entrepreneur who succeeds," a refrain I heard repeated many times, resounds in my head when I think of the informal sector, and illustrates how the often-considered-marginal informal sector is in fact extremely central to the economy and the livelihood of the majority of Senegalese. The phrase also speaks to the fact that a salaried career, something we hold with such importance in the U.S., due to extremely low salaries for large extended families, means little in Senegal. *Y'en a Marre's* song "Diogoufi," meaning, "nothing has changed," speaks to this high numbers of unemployed university graduates frustrated by the lack of possibilities.

Marginalized youth find themselves moving into adulthood with very few possibilities for the future. Fredericks (2013, 133) argues that it is a fed-up attitude with the economic situation that results in youth attempting dangerous migration or in turning to violent extremist organizations. He continues to argue that others who choose to stay and refrain from violence find themselves engaged in democratic movements such as the movement *Y'en a Marre*. Fadel Barro, investigative journalist and founding member of *Y'en a Marre*, described this concept for me in an interview, referring to the crisis of irregular immigration in recent years, where young

Senegalese set off on dangerous journeys towards Europe in artisanal fishing boats, risking their lives in search of a better life.

I think that the youth who take to the sea or the *pirogues*, you see, all that, it's *Y'en a Marre*. They're looking for something else. They cross the desert; they take to the sea. It's the state of mind itself. The same way that youth join radical religious extremist movements, who join Boko Haram, who bomb... because they too, they are fed up, and they want something else. (Fadel Barro, pers. comm.)

The state of mind of which Fadel speaks, the state *Y'en a Marre*—of being fed up or having enough—he says is what causes youth to become radical and turn to extreme outlets as migration or terrorism, and is the same process, he concludes, that drives youth to turn to *Y'en a Marre* and to other democratic citizen movements. He calls out the Senegalese government for the marginalization and abandonment of these youth who have nowhere else to turn. It is no wonder that *Y'en a Marre* and engaged rap is so appealing to the young Senegalese. Rap offers an outlet to express frustrations through protest and music.

Rap in Dakar serves to give youth a voice as a way to engage with their local communities and become the spokespeople on issues that matter to the population. *Y'en a Marre's* program Citizen Mic invites young rappers to participate in a competition, where they work on their music, attend workshops on writing engaged lyrics, and learn about the political process in Senegal. The program is focused on supporting young engaged rappers throughout Senegal in order to strengthen participation and interest in the political process. By creating a network of rappers engaging with their community through active lyrics, their movement gains a presence throughout the country. As Didier Awadi articulates in an interview with France 24, the existence of such a high number of young engaged rappers speaking out on the same issues creates a social movement of its own. It is through organizations such as *Y'en a Marre* that this social movement of engaged rap in Senegal is transformed into action.

Reclaiming Space and Challenging Marginalization:

Scholarship on rap often creates dichotomies between underground rap and commercial rap. Commercial rap is characterized as mainstream, highly produced, and widely known. Underground rap is more often characterized as being the opposite of commercial rap, having low levels of production, being relatively unknown, existing outside the mainstream, and searching to challenge the status quo. Proponents of the underground rap scene, as in many other artistic genres, point to the underground as a space of authenticity. Without the pressure to be mainstream, these rappers are free to express a more unique message. The word authenticity is dangerous and must be used carefully, as it has the power to validate and discredit aspects of society and culture. However, the Dakar underground rap scene can be seen as authentic in that, for rappers, it represents the real frustrations with their government through lived experience. The danger with the category of underground youth rappers in Senegal is that it further perpetuates the marginalization, of disenfranchised youth, but by challenging their marginalization and reclaiming terms such as underground and marginal, rappers express their agency.

Fredericks (2013, 138) argues that Senegalese rappers challenge ideas of marginalization by “claiming space between the ghetto and the globe.” Many high-profile rappers, including those I interviewed, come from the poorer areas of Dakar, such as Pikine, Guediawaye, Medina, and Kaolack. Djily Bagdad comes from Medina, Fou Malade (Malal Tall) comes from Pinkine, and Thiat and Kilifeu, come from the more rural commune of Kaolack. These rappers share identity with the populations from those areas, which they reclaim as the “ghetto,” creating a space of solidarity. The public relates to the rappers and their lyrics that address issues in their own communities and that bring their neighborhoods out of a marginalized sphere and into the

political conversation. These spaces of solidarity, created through self-identification with rappers and their message, ultimately give the population a sense of power. As rappers reclaim the word “ghetto,” a word adopted from the United States, they represent a greater struggle of fighting against marginalization and oppression, not only in Senegal, but also throughout the world.

Havard (2013, 75) discusses how urban public space becomes a space of resistance, asserting that the walls of the city stand as a space of contestation. Street art, stickers and flyers on taxis, slogans of resistance, and images of African leaders of independence become writings and images of resistance throughout the city. Graffiti slogans about the Mouride founder Cheikh Ahmadou Bamaba, such as “*Bamaba Fep*,” meaning “Bamba everywhere,” and “*Bamba, Merci*,” meaning “Bamba, thank you,” and graffiti depicting portraits of the former visionary benevolent dictator of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, and defaced images of corrupt political leaders color the walls of the city. Tributes to their spiritual leader make reference not only to the religious identity associated with the Muslim, Sufi, leader, but also pay tribute to Bamba’s message of African freedom and independence. These tributes, combined with images of other leaders of the continued struggle, transform the walls of the city into a space where the anti-imperialist struggle becomes intricately intertwined with cultural identity.

Rappers as Griots:

Scholars such as Tang and Fredricks (2012; 2013) make comparisons between engaged rap and African oral history by suggesting that the rapper takes the form of a modern-day griot. They argue that in writing lyrics that critique what is happening in the current political environment and in society, rappers, like griots, are the keepers of oral history.

The tradition of communicating information through song is historically important in Senegalese society. Senegalese griots are musicians and oral historians, genealogists, and storytellers. They use a variety of musical instruments, and of course their voice, to entertain their kings and sing the stories of their people, keeping history alive through song. Although societal structures have changed, the griot continues to play an important role in Senegalese society. As a friend of mine once said while angry at his family, “They would rather give thousands of dollars to a griot, than a dollar to a family member” (pers. comm). Whether or not this statement is true—Senegalese are known for their hospitality and caring for their community—it goes to show how the griot is a part of society that the Senegalese hold with utmost importance. In this case, for my friend, the griot becomes the go-to example of an authority more worthy than one’s family.

The singer Youssou N’Dour, the “king” of the popular music Mbalax, sees himself as a modern-day griot. Similar in style to the music of the griots, Mbalax combines Senegalese percussion rhythms with a ballad-like vocal component and is present almost everywhere at gatherings in Senegalese society, from weddings and baptisms to wrestling matches, soccer games, markets, and *Sabar* dances. Along with the religious Sufi music played in taxis, it becomes the background to city life.

Despite the importance of the griot in Senegalese society, many Senegalese rappers today criticize Mbalax for lacking in socially conscious lyrics, a criticism that may also be linked to Youssou N’Dour’s involvement in the government and control over popular media outlets (Tang 2012, 79). Didier Awadi and Thiat argue that today, griots lose their legitimacy because they sing for money (Tang 2012, 84). In today’s society the griot has in fact lost some status, as it has become a form of begging. A similar comparison can be made with the *Baaye Falls*,

disciples of the Mouride brotherhood who express their loyalty through work and song. Because their devotion comes through their dedication to work, they are permitted to engage in activities that are forbidden in Islam, such as smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol, and are exempt from prayer, as their prayer comes in the form of song. I am told that the real *Baaye Falls* live in Touba, the Mouride spiritual center, and those whom I would encounter on a daily basis are the *Baaye faux* (*faux* meaning “false”), begging and profiting from the privileges of being a *Baaye Fall*. Obviously not all real *Baaye Falls* only live in Touba, but like the griots, the *Baaye Fall* has also lost some legitimacy, due to the same occurrences of corruption rejected so strongly by Awadi, Thiat, and their fellow rappers.

Based on Awadi and Thiat’s critiques of the griots, I would argue that their rejection of what they see as an opportunistic social structure is part of their desire for a more equitable society, and is an example of how these rappers, through their music, not only oppose governmental and imperialist oppression, but also the systems within their own society and communities that impede progress and contribute to the marginalization of certain populations.

Some scholars go as far to suggest that the origins of rap may be traced back to Africa through slavery. For me, this argument is a stretch, and offers little to the analysis of the role of rap in Senegalese society, as rap music emerged out of specific historical circumstances in the United States. Instead, I would argue, that as times are changing, the cultural importance of music has shifted, and a new form of music, rap, has been adapted as a music of resistance for the young generations. Suggesting that rappers are griots, and that rap came originally from Africa, paints the rise of rap in Senegal as simply a cultural phenomenon rather than the result of political processes not unlike those in the United States where the art form was born.

Eric Charry (2012, 3) also contributes to this comparison, arguing that rap is easily accepted due to its connection to traditions of poetry, storytelling epic recitation, chanting, percussion, and performance. However, I would argue that rap is in fact not well accepted in society. Rap is known for the power of its lyrics to go against what is considered conventional, and in a cultural environment where speaking out against elders is considered rude and almost taboo, rap today is rejected by many who see it as the source for rebellion amongst youth. As an alternative, I propose that it is precisely the rebellious nature of rap that allows for resistance both to marginalization from the government and to societal norms, by creating an opposing power within society. What is similar about griots and rappers is their ability to tell a story. While griots sang about history, rappers address history to engage in political critique.

In Tang's book *African Expressive Cultures*, Didier Awadi discusses the differences between griots and rappers. Unlike many scholars, he does not see rappers as modern-day griots, but he does acknowledge a connection. He says that the role of the griot is to sing for kings and tell the history of Senegal "like a history book, like a journalist." According to Tang, "Rappers have taken the journalist aspect from the griots, a journalist engaged in his society" (2012, 84). I agree with Awadi, that it is the journalistic aspect that likens the rappers of today to griots, but for me, the distinction is that they are not only telling stories of actualities; the message they are sending with their words has a motive and a purpose. As much as their songs are documentation of the political scene, they are also a critique, and in that critique, these rappers are engaging in a process of creating a space of representation for the voices that otherwise go unheard.

In its active journalism and political critique, engaged rap may be more similar to other art forms of resistance, such as the films of Ousmane Sembene, a Senegalese film maker known for films such as *Camp de Thiaroye* and *Xala* (Tang 2012, 81), and the Negritude poems of

Senghor discussed in chapter one. As the poems of the Negritude served to promote black culture and black pride, Sembene, through his vivid talent for storytelling, addresses “taboo” societal and religious issues, including homosexuality. Most notably, Sembene is infamous for his drastic critiques of colonialism, so powerfully conveyed through his use of film. Sembene died in 2007, but his work will forever be documentation and a reminder of the horrors of the colonial occupation. Through their critiques of systems of oppression, what Sembene and the authors of the Negritude movement have accomplished is not unlike the impact of engaged rappers today. As rappers address systems of both societal and political oppression, they use art to tell historically informed stories about society and politics.

Independent Political Actors: A Personal Revolutionary Identity

Rappers in Senegal are highly political, but they often take pride as independent agents of political critique. Some rappers in past movements of mobilization, such as the set/setal movement have been involved in political campaigns. For example, Daddy Bibson supported Ousmane Tanor Dieng and Makhtar le Cagular supported Ibrahima Fall in their campaigns (Fredericks 2013, 135). However, many engaged rappers, like Thiat, stand to maintain their reputation and integrity as independent political critics. Rapper Fou Malade (Malal Tall) has been an activist throughout his life, speaking out on the corruption and inadequate conditions of the Senegalese prison system. Speaking for *Y'en a Marre* against criticisms that the movement members were looking to be appointed to positions in government, he insisted, “Our role is not to be deputies. Power doesn’t interest us. We are agents of social mobilization”⁶ (Gallet 2014). With this statement, Fou Malade is asserting that the role of the movement *Y'en a Marre* and

⁶ Translated from: Notre rôle c’est pas d’être député. Le pouvoir ne nous intéresse pas. Nous sommes des agents de mobilisation sociale.

engaged rappers in society is to mobilize the discourse of the rap scene, and to invite the population to engage with that discourse actively alongside them.

Thiat often speaks about the inherent revolutionary nature of hip-hop, and how his role as an independent political actor is deeply personal. In Lo (2015, 36), Thiat is cited as saying, “Hip hop is not my job. It is the instrument I use to give my message. I’m not a rapper, I’m not an artist; I’m an activist. You are born with it, it’s in your blood.” In the documentary *Boy Saloum*, he expresses this same sentiment, saying, “I was not born to be commanded, I was born to be directly involved in public affairs, to have my role to play” (Gallet 2014). Thiat’s words show that his activism is part of his identity to speak out and be heard, an identity cultivated from a very young age.

Thiat credits his mom for inciting his interest in political activism. Reflecting on how he first came to rap and politics, he enthusiastically told me the story of his first moment in the spotlight: “I was seven years old when my mom came home and went straight to her room. I said to my sister, ‘What happened?’ I went to see my mom and she was lying on her bed and I asked her, ‘What’s going on?’ She said, ‘Blaise killed Thomas.’ I said, ‘What?’” (Thiat, pers. comm.) Thiat’s mother was referring to Thomas Sankara, a visionary nationalist of Burkina Faso who was killed in a coup d’état by his close friend, Blaise Compaoré, who had originally helped him come to power. As president, Thomas Sankara, in an effort to erase the French colonial legacy, changed the country’s name from Haute Volta to Burkina Faso, meaning “the country of upright men” in two of the local languages spoken in Burkina Faso. In changing the name, Sankara rejected the colonial name, embracing a new African name. Sankara refused international aid and sought to separate the country from the control of foreign banks. In 1987, in a coup d’état, Blaise Compaoré overtook power, restoring relations with France and western banks. Though he began

to lose popularity towards the end of his presidency, Sankara is revered by pan-Africanists today and is considered to have had the true interests of Africa at heart.

Thiat continues his story: “The next day I was at school and I raised my hand, and asked the teacher, ‘Have you heard that Blaise killed Thomas?’ And he said, ‘How did you know that?’ And I said, ‘My mom told me,’ and he said, ‘Can you come to the front and explain to us about it?’ and I went to the front and I explained about it” (Thiat, pers. comm.). This moment was Thiat’s first moment of fame. He continued to describe the feeling of telling stories, having people listen, and being the center of attention: “Everyone was surrounding me, asking me more questions, and I liked it. I knew something, and everyone was interested. Even the girls I wanted were there” (Thiat, pers. comm.). Excited, Thiat went back to his mom and asked for more stories, and each week at school he had a new political historical story to tell. He told stories of other African revolutionaries, from Patrice Lumumba to Amilcar Cabral. “So let’s say my mom gave me the virus,” he said, referring to his love for the combination of political stories and the spotlight. It was through these small moments in the spotlight, Thiat explained, that he came to realize he had the power to make a difference and the power to make people listen.

As a young student, Thiat began rapping and participating in strikes and acts of civil disobedience. “We were standing on the table saying, ‘Yes, we need the school to be clean! We don’t have chalk, the professors are smoking in the classroom, the professors are late, we don’t have enough professors’” (Thiat, pers. comm.). Thiat and his friends’ protests went from the classroom to streets, and eventually grew to lead in the mobilization of thousands.

Thiat’s charisma plays an important role in his success. He is defiant in character. As we talk, he smokes a cigarette and spreads out in his chair. He wears a hat in homage to Amilcar Cabral, a woolen ski-type hat that is in no way fitting for the hot temperatures in Dakar. The hat

sits perched slightly sideways on top of his head. He too, like Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, and Amilcar Cabral, is a revolutionary. He owns his space, and lets you know not to mess with him. He's tough, but not mean. When he speaks of *Y'en a Marre*, you can tell he's proud, and when he tells his stories, he elaborates with specifics and details. As a rapper, he is a storyteller, and, as he would say, a storyteller who speaks the truth.

Through Thiat's story of his personal relationship to rap and activism, he makes it clear that rap offers a space where the younger generation in Senegal can express a revolutionary discourse informed by their lived experiences and that becomes part of a personal identity. His story also shows that engaged rap is a platform where young Senegalese can become activists and spokespeople for their communities and societies, and highlights how telling stories through rap is part of an important process of validation for a marginalized generation, giving individuals a sense of agency.

Global Black Identity: Creating a Pan-Africanist Revolutionary Discourse

Senegalese rap has also come to embrace a pan-African identity. Rappers Keyti and Xuman are the founders of Journal Rappé (rap news), an independent YouTube channel dedicated to addressing, through rap, news stories that are important in the world, taking an activist lens. Keyti speaks about the influential nature of the Internet and its power to spread knowledge: "The internet is an open door to the world. Everything the government is trying to block, in reality we can put on the Internet for the world to see" (Creative Time 2016). Keyti is referring to the power of the Internet to spread their message not only in Senegal, but also to the international community. Unlike some Senegalese rappers who only rap in Wolof as a way of reclaiming their local language, Keyti and Xuman often choose to rap in French, embracing pan-

African principals by making their channel more accessible not only to Senegalese, but to French-speaking people across Africa and in the African diaspora. For this reason, Keyti and Xuman say that they intentionally don't own any copyright to the format because they believe in the potential of Journal Rappé to challenge power across state lines. The format of Journal Rappé has now been adapted by other artists in other countries, and has been established in Jamaica, Madagascar, Vietnam, and Côte d'Ivoire. As Xuman says, "Our main goal is to give back to the world, to the people who deserve to talk" (Creative Time 2016).

Just as Keyti and Xuman spread their message across Africa and into the world, marking their movement as not simply Senegalese, but one that defies colonial borders, the rappers of the movement *Y'en a Marre* wear Amilcar Cabral's hat to embody a notion of African unity as a way to surmount imperialist oppression. As Ntarangwi argues, "Hip hop is a form of cultural expression that defines containment of the state and limitations by national boundaries" (Ntarangwi 2010, 3). Movement members and engaged rappers alike make reference to revolutionaries across Africa and the world, embracing a pan-Africanist message. Many engaged rappers even make reference to African-American leaders such as Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X. In my experience, many Senegalese feel a strong connection to Barack Obama. For them, it is proof that a black man can become president of one of the most powerful countries in the world. For them, it is proof that the black voice can be heard.

While the Senegalese identify with the personage of Obama as not only a president for the United States, but also as a president for them, his visit was symbolically more complex. The story of the day president Obama visited Senegal was told to me multiple times throughout my stay. During Obama's visit, I was told, an enormous American naval ship was stationed off the

coast of Dakar. Given the military presence on the continent, his visit also came to symbolize the imperialist relationship of power, even military power, between the West and Africa.

By including the voices of African-American leaders, rappers engage in a pan-Africanist discourse and embody a notion of African unity, defying the lines of the nation state. As Appert (2016, 241) argues, through rap, youth in Africa use their “lived experience to reformulate the relationship between Africa and the West.” By unifying through a transnational discourse, they address the dynamics of domination between the West and Africa, challenging the idea of Africa as marginal.

Didier Awadi’s song “Dans Mon Rêve” (“In My Dream”) from his album *Presidents d’Afrique* is an example of how rappers create a pan-Africanist discourse. His song speaks of a dream for change. He uses the words of Barack Obama and Martin Luther King Jr. to connect his dream to one that is not simply African, but for the world. The song begins with the voice of Barack Obama, who says, “We know the battle will be long, but always remember that no matter what obstacles stand in our way, nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions; voices calling for change” (Awadi 2010). The song then transitions to the voice of Martin Luther King Jr.: “I have a dream, that one day, this nation...” (Awadi 2010). Drawing on the voices of black leaders outside of Africa, Awadi addresses the topic of race and racial oppression. He then begins to rap in French: “I have a dream, that the people will stand up, In my dream, all is full of color, In my dream, no man is dominated, no people is dominated, no land is dominated, hatred is dominated” (Awadi 2010). By referencing a world where “all is full of color,” Awadi imagines a world where people of all races can exist together without domination. He imagines a world where the people unite and stand up for diversity and against oppression. His track is clever, as it draws upon the discourse of world-acknowledged symbols of resistance to support his vision for

an Africa that is not pushed to the sidelines but considered as equal and central to the world. Here, Awadi himself defines the struggle of race in terms of hierarchy and domination by imagining beyond the constructed colonial borders of “Senegal” to embrace global black unity.

In Senegal, where rap has emerged as a vehicle for political and social critique, Awadi, in his song “Ma Revolution” (“My Revolution”), declares a revolution of a conscious generation. His lyrics show a sense of pride in being part of a revolution that “carries the name of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Malcolm X, Martin Luther [King]” (Awadi, 2012). Along with other rappers, Awadi claims his identity as a revolutionary next to those who have fought before him. He sings, “I am a musical activist, rebellious and marginal, Awadi, I’m super radical!”⁷ (Awadi 2012).

Conclusion:

As Thiat tells us, in Senegal, “there is a generation that finds itself within hip hop, because it is a music that speaks the truth. The new generation has taken the mic, thanks to rap” (Appert 2016, 247). Rap has provided a platform for a disenfranchised generation to find a voice and bring attention to the pertinent issues facing them. They construct a revolutionary space built upon the discourse of pan-Africanists before them and within a culture rooted in knowledge passed down through song. In this way, rappers become the journalists of their society and rap becomes a platform upon which the younger generations of Senegal challenge their status as marginal, by asserting their discourse. As this generation of young rappers reclaims their space in society, they find a purpose, something to turn towards instead of turning to violence or dangerous migration, and adopt an identity as the spokespeople for their societies. Through

⁷ Translated from: “je suis un activiste musicale, rebelle et marginal, Awadi super radicale!”

embracing a pan-Africanist discourse, rappers in Senegal embody a global black identity of resistance, and it is from this discourse, expressed through rap, and made accessible to many, that the movement *Y'en a Marre* finds its strength to fight for true independence and democracy.

Chapter III

Responsibility to the Constitution: Maintaining Democracy through Mobilization

“Quand on dit qu’on ne peut pas changer le monde, là je ne suis pas d’accord. Là c’est de la passivité. C’est du fatalisme”⁸ –Malal Tall (Grovestins 2014)

Introduction:

In 2010, Senegal celebrated 50 years of “independence” from the French colonial power. While, in 1960, through decolonization, Senegal gained full control of its new democracy, there are still many ways in which the country continues to maintain ties to France. In 1960, Senegal elected its first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, a politician and poet of the Negritude movement, and one of Senegal’s deputies to the French National Assembly in Paris. During the 1950s, Senghor played an active role in discussions around decolonization, and as a Senegalese politician committed to a strong partnership between France and Senegal; he unsurprisingly became the first president. What might be surprising is that he, a Catholic, was democratically elected president of a 95 percent Muslim majority country, where cultural and religious ties are deeply integrated within politics. Multiple Senegalese have stressed to me how Senghor’s election at that time is demonstrative of Senegal’s tradition of religious tolerance.

Throughout Senegal’s four subsequent presidencies, Senegal’s relationship to France would shift, yet France would maintain economic influence over the Senegalese economy and would continue to have significant sway in the political sphere as well. During Senghor’s

⁸ Translated as: “When we say we cannot change the world, I do not agree. That is passivity. It’s a fatalism.”

presidency, which lasted two decades, from 1960 to 1981, when he resigned from the position, he continued to support a strong relationship with France, both culturally and economically. In 1981, Abdou Diouf, of the same political party as Senghor—The socialist party (PS)—was elected president. Within a movement that would span the continent and mark the 80s with major social movements and shifts of political power, Diouf opened up the country to a multiparty democratic system. Diouf, like Senghor, would remain head of the country for the remainder of the century, another 20 years, until, in 2000, youth mobilized for the election of Abdoulaye Wade of the Democratic Socialist Party (PDS), who promised *sopi*, meaning “change” in Wolof. Aside from corruption scandals, one of the main markers of Wade’s presidency was a shift in Senegal’s relationship to France. Although Senegal still maintained economic ties, Wade opened up Senegal’s economic market to other countries, such as China and the U.S. In 2012, thanks once again to youth mobilization, the country finally saw a significant change in political party with the election of Macky Sall, Wade’s former prime minister of the Alliance for the Republic (APR), the liberal republican party. As Keyti and Xuman of Journal Rappé informed us in their explanation of the Senegalese political system at the creative summit in Washington D.C., many political actors in Senegal have been involved in the governments of former presidents, despite difference in political party and ideology (Creative Time 2016).

In this chapter, I look to the pivotal moment in 2011, when the Movement *Y’en a Marre* emerged, mobilizing the country to prevent Abdoulaye Wade from being elected to an unconstitutional third term, engendering faith among the populous in the democratic system and the ability of the voice of the people to create change. I tell the story through the lyrics of *Y’en a Marre* songs such as “*Faux, Pas Forcé,*” and the experiences of movement members, in order to highlight the goals and values of the movement. I argue that it was their sense of responsibility to

their democratic constitution, which generations before them fought to uphold, that made their massive mobilization and success in 2012 possible.

Responsibility and the Birth of the Movement *Y'en a Marre*:

The story begins years earlier in Kaolack, Senegal, a “commune” south and inland of Dakar, and home of Thiat and Kilifeu of the rap group Keur Gui—meaning “the house”—and founding members of *Y'en a Marre*. As young rappers, they were rebellious youth in Kaolack, defying their parents’ desires for their material success. Both Thiat and Kilifeu tell stories of breaking onto the scene and gaining popularity as respected rappers and activists. Their stories parallel each other and illustrate how a sense of responsibility to the revolutionary figures before them drives their work.

Kaolack is the hometown of Valdiodio Ndiaye, a Senegalese politician who was imprisoned along with Mamadou Dia and other government officials after a false accusation of a *coup d'état*. Valdiodio Ndiaye is considered to have been instrumental during the time of decolonization, and given that he was imprisoned for acting against the wishes of Senghor, he is seen to represent the fight for true freedom. Thiat and Kilifeu express a certain loyalty to the region of Kaolack and to the fight of Valdiodio Ndiaye.

In the movie *Boy Saloum*, rapper Kilifeu recounts the group’s big break in their hometown of Kaolack. The group was not yet widely known amongst the hip-hop community, but one day, they insisted on performing for just a few minutes. They told the manager of the venue that even if they had to pay their entrance, they wanted just two minutes on stage.

In Kilifeu's words:

We said to the crowd, you don't deserve to be from Kaolack, as the sons of Valdiodio, as the sons of the Saloum [the region of Kaolack]. To be from Kaolack is to be a true revolutionary. You are being scammed by those groups who come singing about love. Really, you don't deserve to say you are from the Saloum. (Gallet 2014)

"We insulted the public!" (Gallet 2014) Kilifeu Said. He called them out for listening to music about love and cars, and evoked a sense of responsibility. "And the people reacted!" he continued, explaining that their call to responsibility in the name of Valdiodio Ndiaye brought out a positive reaction from the crowd.

Following their debut, they began to directly engage against the mayor of Koalack through their discourse and music, and as young rappers, they began to experience the tyranny of authoritarian government. One night after a concert, they were beaten by president Diouf's men, and subsequently spent weeks in the hospital only to be arrested and imprisoned for rapping shirtless at their concert (Gallet 2014).

From the early years of the band Keur Gui, inspired by a responsibility to the anti-colonial fight for independence, the story jumps to 2011 when, fed up with Wade's governance, Thiat and Kilifeu joined forces with other rappers and journalists to form the Movement *Y'en a Marre*. By 2011, Abdoulaye Wade of the *Partie Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS) had been in power for almost twelve years, and with evidence of his role in manipulating his re-election in 2007, his most recent years in office had been ridden with corruption scandals. Knowing that based in Kaolack their voices would never be heard, Thiat and Kilifeu moved to Dakar, where they met journalist Fadel Barro in 2010. They studied at the university, continuing to participate in strikes, protesting the deteriorating university infrastructure and lack of organization. By the end of 2011, with economic realities worsening, it became clear that Abdoulaye Wade was

preparing to run as president for a third term. It was in this environment that the movement *Y'en a Marre* was begun.

Thiat, described to me the day they decided to create the movement *Y'en a Marre*, by using their art—expressing their personal opinion through engaged rap lyrics— as a vehicle for creating concrete change and action through mobilization. It was one night in Parcelles Assainies, amidst a power outage that had lasted over a day. Thiat and Kilifeu were heading out on tour and needed Internet to prepare their phones for the trip. Tension was building, and Fadel said, “Hey, you claim yourselves to be activists, or revolutionaries, but you just talk about it in your songs. This is not activism, this is slacktivism. You need to do more!” Thiat responded, saying, “Hey man, you are a journalist, but nobody reads you, so... ” (Thiat, pers. comm.).

In the film *Boy Saloum*, Kilifeu describes the same scene. He remembers Fadel’s words: “But you, don’t you believe that we’ve had enough? [referring to complaints about the power outage] You aren’t embarrassed to leave a battle that is yours to an older generation? It doesn’t bother you, just sitting here, waiting for the power to come back on, only for it to go out again in a few days?” (Gallet 2014).

Both Thiat and Kilifeu’s recollections of that night reflect a sense of responsibility, a responsibility, that was not only individual, but also one that that was multi-generational. In their eyes, their responsibility to continue to fight in the name of their region, Kaolack, and in the name of Valdiodio Ndiaye, represented a fight of a postcolonial generation. Both of their recounts of the story express accusation that they were not doing enough and that they needed to do more. This sense of responsibility to themselves, their generation, and their ancestry, was not only true for Thiat and Kilifeu, but also the general public in Senegal. The way the crowd reacted

so strongly, that first time on stage in Kaolack goes to show the extent to which the call to responsibility resonated with the Senegalese population.

Abdoulaye Wade's presidency can be characterized by initial investments made in infrastructure, but also by the lack social services provided to support the people. While it made changes, Wade's government grew to adapt authoritarian practices, and through Wade's frequent manipulation of the constitution for his own interests, the democratic base of Senegal's government began to weaken. Wade's authoritarian strategies to stay in power went beyond changing the constitution to include violations of civil liberties and crackdowns on opposition. He made efforts to suppress journalists who dared to speak out, infringing on the newly-instated freedom of the press, a democratic initiative promoted by Wade after his election in 2002. Throughout the latter years of his presidency, opposition meetings were blocked by police, journalists were beaten for reporting on high living costs and arrested for writing about Wade's purchase of a limousine, and a newspaper was shut down for publishing stories about Wade's son Karim Wade's involvement in corruption scandals. Wade's regime did not refrain from violence. The author of a book criticizing the regime received death threats, members of Wade's party were accused of a violent assault on activist Talla Sylla, and the current mayor of Thiès, a city about an hour outside of Dakar, who had criticized Wade in a radio interview. The investigations into those acts of violence were never concluded, as the Ezzan Amnesty Law of 2005 pardoned all politically motivated crimes between 1985 and 2004 (Kelly 2012).

Wade's presidency also tempted to undermine the democratic nature of the Senegalese government by seeking to eliminate and fragment opposition. Wade worked to splinter the opposition by helping to finance political campaigns, and the number of political parties tripled to 174 by 2010 (Kelly 2012, 125). This tactic of splintering opposition would appear again in the

2012 elections with the candidacy of Amsatou Sow Silibe. Wade is recorded in a video interview jokingly taking credit for helping finance her campaign (Grovestins 2014). As Thiat highlighted in the film *Quitte le Pouvoir*, “In a democracy, there needs to be a state, an independent judicial system and a strong people” (Grovestins 2014). Through Wade’s authoritarian practices of silencing the press and fragmenting the opposition, he directly undermined what Thiat identifies as the core elements of democracy: opposition and a strong public opinion.

In their song “Hipolitic,” the group Wageble speaks of the hypocritical nature of Wade’s presidency and the contradictions of his promises:

You said you were an attorney, but why do you ignore the laws?
The voice of the voiceless is here to take back what belongs to the people...
With the power of hip-hop, we got you elected
And with the same power, we will bring you down
You worshipped us to get the power, but you betrayed us
Wade you go against your own people
And lied about your policies
(Lo 2014)

Wageble not only addresses the unfulfilled promises of Wade’s presidency, but also stresses how hip-hop exists to hold Wade accountable. The song stresses how the role of hip-hop is to always stand on the side of the people regardless of shifting power. Their song states that just as hip-hop was there for the election of Wade because of his promises of *sopi* (change), it will still be there to critique him when he doesn’t come through on his promises.

Fadel Barro of *Y’en a Marre* remembers clearly the moment when he lost his faith in Abdoulaye Wade. In the documentary *Quitte le Pouvoir*, he tells the story of when, as a young student in Kaolack, he first met and was impressed by Wade. He and fellow students had organized a strike, blocking the highway. When Wade came by, they were prepared to let him pass, but he stopped and asked them what they were doing in the road. When they told him they were on strike, he encouraged them and gave them some money to encourage their protest. Fadel

said, “Abdoulaye Wade cultivated much hope in us. He brought hope to life in us” (Grovestins 2014).

Fadel’s story continues in 2001 when he arrived in Dakar to continue his political action through organizing strikes. When a student at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop by the name of Balla Gueye died from a police bullet, Wade made a public statement on TV denouncing acts of civil disobedience. He told the public that he did not understand or condone boycotting classes, and he said that if you wanted to strike, instead, you should wear a red scarf to class. Fadel took this statement as a betrayal: “I, who met Wade when I was young, Wade who had encouraged me, and a few years later, he had changed his discourse. I immediately saw him as a liar.” For Fadel, the statement undermined Wade’s integrity as a president: , “Either he lied when he was with the opposition, or he lies when he’s in power. It was that moment that we lost faith in Wade.” (Grovestins 2014). From then on, Fadel began to actively combat Wade through his work in journalism.

Founded on their desire to take responsibility and hold their government accountable, not to foreign interest, but to the people, Thiat, Kilifeu, Fadel and other rappers who shared the same sentiment of Y’en a Marre such as Fou Malade (Malal Tall), Djily Bagdad, and Simon launched the movement through a press conference at the *Place du Souvenir* on January 18th 2011. At the launch of the movement, when police were sent to shut down the press conference at the *Place du Souvenir*, they experienced Wade’s oppressive tactics first hand. The justification was that they had no authorization to mobilize in the public square, especially not to launch what was seen as a campaign against the president. “So we launched it ten meters over in the street, and that was okay!” (Thiat, pers. comm.). Thiat’s description of the launching of the movement expressed a sense of accomplishment for having exposed the limits of Wade’s power. He seemed

to take pride in the fact that even though they were pushed out, they still managed to launch the movement, mocking Wade's attempts to prevent their mobilization. In Thiat's words, "It was funny!" (Thiat, pers. comm.).

Y'en a Marre began to prepare for the upcoming election season by encouraging mass voter registration. Using the slogan "*ma carte, mon arme*," meaning, "my voting card, my weapon," they called for the public to represent themselves *en masse* through the core democratic method of using their power as citizens to vote. Through their advocacy throughout the country, *Y'en a Marre* was instrumental in the registration of 350,000 new young voters, and the election of Macky Sall at the beginning of 2012 would prove the power of the people's voice.

Y'en a Marre's focus on the democratic process and voter registration and turnout was also an exercise in expressing responsibility to their constitution and to the democracy which that constitution represents. Through mass mobilization, *Y'en a Marre* was able to unify and engage their country over a shared task of holding themselves, as citizens, accountable for their constitution, that, in its democratic nature, is a constitution of the people. In the words of *Y'en a Marre* member and rapper Fou Malade (Malal Tall), "The country is a good of the people, and the task of *Y'en a Marre* is to make of the population a people"⁹ (Grovestins 2014), and it is the duty of the population to unite as one people to uphold that responsibility.

⁹ Translated from: Le pays est un bien du peuple, et le travail de Y'en a Marre c'est de faire de la population un peuple.

An Unconstitutional Third Term:

On June 18th, as he had done throughout his presidency, Abdoulaye Wade announced a proposed amendment to the constitution. He proposed a ballot that included a president and a vice president and that would allow the sitting president, after only the first round of voting, to win the election with only 25 percent of the vote (Kelly 2012, 127). The constitutional court, made up of five members, who would come to be known throughout Senegal as “the five monkeys,” would later vote on the amendment. Wade’s potential candidacy could easily obtain 25 percent of the vote, and Senegal feared Wade was preparing the vice president seat for his son Karim Wade, who would succeed him when he passed. This proposed change to the constitution was seen as posing a threat of monarchy.

On June 22, the day before the constitutional court was scheduled to vote on Wade’s proposed amendments, *Y’en a Marre* met with members of the civil society. Thiat recalls this meeting, claiming that the conversation was focused on appealing to the U.N. to ask for international support. He responded, “The time for talking is over. France endorses what Wade is doing!” (Grovestins 2014). Thiat is referring to the ways in which France is invested in the Senegalese economy. For him, France is not invested in the well being of the people, but simply in its economic relationships with the Senegalese government. He argued that they, the civil society, couldn’t keep asking for help. What they needed to do was show that they were helping themselves. “We need to be in the streets!” he said. This meeting that Thiat discusses was the beginning of the M23 movement, where *Y’en a Marre*, in partnership with the civil society and other organizations, united to mobilize *en masse* the next day on the 23rd of June to protest Wade’s proposed changes to the constitution. Their mobilization was successful, and Wade repealed his proposal.

Mid-July of 2011, Abdoulaye Wade once again proposed changes to the constitution, announcing his intention to run for a third term. Wade, who had originally been elected in 2000 with the support of youth mobilization throughout the country, was now the target of youth mobilization. Throughout his presidency, Wade had made multiple amendments to the constitution, including, in 2002, limiting the president's time in office to a five-year term, renewable once through re-election (Kelly 2012, 129). In 2007, after serving a seven-year term, Wade was elected for a subsequent five-year term, which was set to expire in 2012. Wade's supporters argued that since he was elected for a seven-year term in 2000, he had the right to finish that term and then pursue two consecutive five-year terms, the logic upon which Wade based his candidacy.

At a press conference, Wade responded to critics with his now famous phrase, "*Ma waxoon waxeet*," meaning, "I said it, I retract it" (Papa Njaay 2009). "If someone says that it was your president who promised you, tell him he can't prove it and that it's not true. Tell him he cannot prove it, it's not written in any magazine, it was never said on TV" (Papa Njaay 2009). What is comical about Wade's statement is that there is footage of him originally explaining why he would not run for a third time. When asked if he planned to run, he had said he wasn't allowed to: "I blocked the number of terms to two terms. It's not possible for me to run" (Papa Njaay 2009). In Senegal, his words "*ma waxoon, waxeet*" have become a running joke for hypocrisy.

For support, Abdoulaye Wade turned to the leader of the Mouride brotherhood, Bethio, hoping to secure the votes of his 3,000,000 *talibes*, or followers. As leader of the largest, most influential brotherhood in Senegal, Bethio would be crucial in Wade's election. Seated on an enormous armchair, surrounded by a crowd of followers, Bethio mobilized his *talibes*, saying,

“We are still the majority, what does this mean? That the president Abdoulaye Wade will be president as long as we want him to!” In response, on stage, his *talibes* tore up *Y'en a Marre* t-shirts” (Grovestins 2014), proof of the power and influence of the religious leader.

The newly-founded movement *Y'en a Marre* responded to Wade’s assault on the constitution by organizing a group of rappers including Keyti, Kilifeu, Simon, and others to create a song called “Faux! Pas Forcé,” opposing Wade’s unconstitutional candidacy for a third term. The title of the song is a play on words with a double meaning. The phrase *il ne faut pas forcer* means “you must not force,” while the word *faux* means “false” or “wrong.” In addition, the word *faux pas* means wrong step, and *forcé* means forced. The double meaning of the song’s title conveys that Wade was wrong, that he made a mistake forcing his candidacy, and that he shouldn’t have done it. They sing, “Abdoulaye, don’t force! For heaven's sake, don’t force! Abdoulaye, as a man of honor, for heaven's sake, don’t force!” (*Y'en a Marre Officiel* 2012). The song expresses the sentiment of being fed up and tired of the Wade regime. The lyrics address some of the glaring problems with his presidency, and the song stands as a statement that the people of Senegal, the youth, are aware of what he is doing, and that they are prepared to fight and stand up for what is right at all costs. They assert that no matter what, they will not back down. Essentially, the song posits Wade as being in the position of making the decision between the life and death of his people. They warn him not to force his candidacy, because the people will stand up, and the blood will be on Wade’s hands.

The rappers of “Faux! Pas Forcé” call Wade an embarrassment of a president and exclaim their disappointment. They reference the sinking of the *Joola*, a ferry that transported passengers between Dakar and the Ziguinchor region of the Casamance, southern Senegal, in one of the greatest maritime disasters in history. On September 26th 2002, the *Joola* capsized off the

coast of Gambia, killing 1,863 people, many of whom were Christian. At least 2,000 tickets had been sold for a boat with a 500-person capacity. The cause of the accident was identified as the overcrowding of the ship, in addition to mechanical deficiencies. There had been promises by the government to support children orphaned by the accident; however, they have not followed through on their promise (AFP News Agency 2012). The captain was named solely responsible for the sinking of the ship, but many critics point to the greater systemic problems of neglect during Wade's presidency. The rappers reference the tragic incident with the lyrics, "You made the church cry/those tears will fall back on you." The song serves as a warning, cautioning him to not go too far: "The anger of a people cannot be contained by an old thug/You ate all the meat and you want to shoot with the last bone/We will stop you before it's too late" (Y'en a Marre Officiel 2012).

The lyrics of "Faux Pas Forcé" continue to address Wade's declaration of his candidacy for a third term. They rap: "Juggling with the charter of our motherland/We won't let you get away with it/We have to deal with an old liar/We'll make you swallow your errors" (Y'en a Marre Officiel 2012). They call Wade out as a liar, an incredible insult in Senegalese culture. That has been criticized many times for being too tough and for using such insulting language. In reaction to Wade's decision to run again, *Y'en a Marre* launched their slogan, "*Ne touche pas a ma constitution!*," meaning, "Don't touch my constitution," which was subsequently adopted by the civil society and other opposition campaigns.

Didier Awadi's music video for his song "Mame Boye" clearly illustrates how Wade's decision to modify the constitution was an assault on Senegal's democratic system, but also takes it further to imply an assault on Senegalese tradition. The song references Wade's unconstitutional candidacy through a scene depicting an old man representing Wade, dressed in

blue, and a group of young Senegalese men sitting around making *attaya* (tea). On the Wall behind them is what they call the *attaya* constitution, the last article of which clearly states that no third round of tea is allowed. The young men prepare the tea, and give the Wade character his first round. The Wade character compliments the man who made it. Awadi begins to rap, making reference to the famous words of Wade: “*Ma waxoon ma waxeet.*” Later in the video, they hand Wade his second glass. At the end of the video, they return to the scene of the *attaya*. When Wade asks for another round, he’s told he has already been given his second. Wade responds that the second is even better than the first, then asks, “Where is my third?” His young hosts say that he doesn’t have the right to a third and point to the constitution tacked against the wall. Wade removes the constitution, puts it on the ground, and steps on it. The young men respond by standing up, singing as they leave, “We want you to know that this country belongs to everyone!” (Didier Awadi, 2013).

In his song, Awadi both rhetorically and visually depicts Wade’s assault on not only the constitution, but also on the Senegalese sense of community. The cultural practice of making tea, commonly referred to as *ataaya ak waxtaan*, meaning “tea and discussion,” is like many other Senegalese traditions, embodying concepts of sharing, hospitality, and community, all of which have democratic connotations. Through the use of the metaphor of *ataaya*, Awadi’s video implies that Wade’s disregard for the constitution and democracy also disregards Senegal’s cultural traditions.

Echoing the theme of undermining cultural integrity, the lyrics of Thiat and Kilifeu’s song “Coup de Geul,” by their band Keur Gui, resonate with this sentiment of cultural assault: “I don’t even feel Senegalese anymore” (Touba Guyey 2010). *Y’en a Marre* asserts that Wade’s

politics distanced him from his population and uprooted a national embracing of democracy, which I was told, is a concept fundamentally African at its core.

Nonviolent action and Civic Resistance:

Waiting for the verdict from the constitutional court on whether or not Wade would be allowed to run for a third term, *Mbalax* (the popular music of Senegal) singer Youssou Ndour, affiliated with presidential candidate Macky Sall's party, encouraged people to march towards the presidential palace, even though he knew it was illegal and not allowed by the constitution. Out of a desire to work within their democratic system, *Y'en a Marre* countered that motion with a different impulse: "If you want to march to the palace go, but we say to all true Senegalese to sit down, because we are nonviolent" (Grovestins 2014).

As *Y'en a Marre* considered its methods of mobilization, they saw that they wanted them to be based on principles of nonviolent action and working within a democratic system that should theoretically uphold itself. Fadel quotes Gandhi in a scene of *Quitte le Pouvoir*: "An eye for an eye makes the world blind" (Grovestins 2014).

Y'en a Marre considers the lyrics of "Faux! Pas Forcé" as speaking to the integrity of their pacifism: "Don't Force! Our fight is stronger than yours/You won't understand right away/ Stop playing with fire, before you burn your fingers." (*Y'en a Marre Officiel* 2012). They assert that their peaceful protest is stronger than Wade's violence. They couch their lyrics as a warning to Abdoulaye Wade, basically, that it is a difficult game he's playing, that they will not enter his game, and that the game, a game of violence and lies, will have its consequences.

Social movements are often held together by what is referred to as collective action. Benford and Snow argue that collective action frames emerge when members of a movement

have a shared understanding of an economic, social, or cultural condition, which they collectively see as in need of change (Thompson and Tapscott 2010, 13). The collective desire of individual rappers to form the movement *Y'en a Marre* can be seen as an example of collective action.

Prominent examples of nonviolent action in American history can be found in the Civil Rights Movement, with actions such as the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, and mass resistance in Birmingham, Alabama. Civil resistance, nonviolent action, nonviolent resistance, and people's power, are all terms for collective action that rely primarily on non-violent methods. Mahatma Gandhi coined the term "satyagraha," meaning "truth force" or "soul force," rejecting the wording of the anthropological concept of "weapons of the weak"—a term used to explain how the oppressed often exercise small acts of defiance to claim agency—to describe the determination to resist violence (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 22).

While civil resistance is often seen as a pacifist method that results rarely in concrete political or social change, studies have shown that it is perhaps a more effective method of resistance and an alternative to the use of force and violence (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 22). However, while movements may be promoted as nonviolent, they are often entangled with armed rebellion, civil war, and other forms of violence. Nonviolence may be romanticized as the optimal and universal solution to the world's problems; however, this view ignores certain levels of violent oppression in socio-political spheres. Some authors argue that nonviolence can be futile in heavily oppressive situations, and violence becomes a necessity. While nonviolence shouldn't be romanticized, Kurt and Schock argue, it is worth not misunderstanding or underestimating its importance (Kurt and Schock 2004, 16).

Questions arise about the ultimate way to overthrow power. Is it ultimately through nonviolence, or are there cases where the use of force becomes a necessity? Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were both strong proponents of nonviolent action. Yet, while they always advocated first for nonviolent methods, they both recognized the necessity for use of force in certain situations. Gandhi once said, “Taking life may be a duty... suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about, sword in hand, killing anyone who comes his way, no one dares to capture him alive. Anyone who dispatches this lunatic will be regarded with gratitude by the community as a benevolent man” (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 31). After his house had been bombed in 1956, Martin Luther King even applied for a gun permit (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 31).

To imply that nonviolence is always an option ignores factors in places of particularly intense political and military situations (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 38). Discussion of civil resistance in the developing world, and in Africa in particular, refers to a vast variety of political and social struggles. These struggles include decolonization, democratization, racial inequality, religious and indigenous rights, and lastly, the defense of cultures and political systems against foreign encroachments (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 21). It is important to note that in Senegal, nonviolent action is possible due to the reasonably advanced state of their democracy. In other countries, where there are tighter laws prohibiting protest, social mobilization is much more complex, with instances of abuses of power aimed at undermining the democratic right to protest.

Authoritarian leaders have often framed nonviolence movements as a foreign plot by outside governments to overthrow their power. The governments of China, Russia, and Zimbabwe, have all made public statements to this point, noting the Western influence in social

mobilization aimed at political change (Roberts and Garton Ash 2011, 22). While this argument may seem as an oppressive tactic by authoritarian governments to control their population and prevent democratic development, I think it brings up important conversations about the nature of democracy and its western origins. This claim of a Western plot seems in many ways quite absurd, yet it is a sentiment that often resonates with populations due to the common sentiment regarding the intrusion and adoption of Western values. Through the process of engaging in a discourse of anti-colonialism, many African leaders such as Mobutu of the Congo, at that time called Zaire, rely on anti-colonial narratives to consolidate their power. By promoting a misplaced anti-colonial discourse, and unifying his country under a construct of *Zairian* identity that glorified and deified the figure of Mobutu, he found tactics that allowed him to remain in power for nearly 30 years.

Y'en a Marre has found, as in the case with Wade's proposal that would have allowed the sitting president to proceed to another term with just 25 percent of the vote, that though their civil resistance, they were able to capture the attention of the government. Yet, despite *Y'en a Marre's* mobilization, the constitutional court validated Wade's Candidacy for a third term. *Y'en a Marre* concluded that the court's decision marked a weakness in Senegal's democracy, and the movement stood to correct this weakness and reinforce the democratic process through working within the democratic system. It is believed that Wade, famous for paying off his deputies and the constitutional court, had given them each of the five members of the constitutional court an expensive new car. *Y'en a Marre* called these judges "the five monkeys," and Wade "the baboon," for the judges, bought out by Wade, they said, approved his unconstitutional third candidacy (Thiat, pers. comm.).

After the first round of votes, Abdoulaye Wade was in the lead with 34.82 percent of the votes. Macky Sall, the opposition obtained only 26.57 percent. While Wade was in the lead, he did not have a wide enough margin to automatically win the election in the first round of votes, and a second round was required. Had *Y'en a Marre* and other activists not turned out on the 23rd of June and challenged Wade's proposed amendment that would have allowed him to win the election with a mere 25 percent of the vote, he would have won the election in the first round.

Heading into the second round of votes, *Y'en a Marre* continued to mobilize, using nonviolent actions. Unfortunately, as is common in many instances of governmental oppression, *Y'en a Marre's* mobilization was met with violence from authorities, complicating the initial desire for nonviolence. While movement leaders did not respond violently, individuals, as in many cases of mass mobilization, responded with violent methods, such as throwing stones or setting fire in the streets, exacerbating the violent responses from their government. Following the first round of votes, Wade's party became more and more violent, and movement members received death threats. The song "Faux! Pas Force" criticizes Wade in response to the violence following *Y'en a Marre's* mobilization: "If you love your people, don't cling to power until men die" (*Y'en a Marre Officiel* 2012). Following the death of Mamadou Diop—a student run over by a truck during the protests—Djily Bagdad expressed his frustration with Wade's oppressive violence in the documentary *Quitte le Pouvoir*, calling into focus an aspect of his cultural identity, which is inherently peaceful: "This violence hurts me, *dafa ni meti*. This is our country, Senegal, a country of peace! *Dëkk jamm la sunu pays Senegal!*" (Grovestins 2014). Djily's phrase *dëkk jamm la* (country of peace) is a phrase that resonates in Senegal. Senegalese take pride in the peaceful nature of their country, and they point to the dominant religion, Sufi Islam,

as the driver of that peace. Wade's violence directly undermined this notion of cultural identity grounded in peace and *teranga*, hospitality.

In the film *Boy Saloum*, Sophia, an integral member of the movement responsible for social media outreach, addressed the violence: "He [Wade] says he loves the people. If he really loved his people, he would not have sacrificed lives this way He would not have killed all those people. He would not have accepted it." (Gallet 2014). Sophia's commentary shows the risks Wade was willing to take to maintain power; however, *Y'en a Marre* held a firm belief that if the people stayed together, Wade would be forced to back down. In Fadel's words, "If Wade opposes our violence with violence, we must still remain not violent" (Grovestins 2014).

Y'en a Marre once again focused on the power of the vote: "The alarm has rung, we are at the point of success/ We are almost finished/ Go fast, and get your card, that's all that's left to do/ Go vote, your card will be part of those responsible for his elimination." (Grovestins 2014). These opening lyrics of *Y'en a Marre*'s song "Doggali" came out after the first round of voting, and were promoted during the final stage of elections. "Doggali," meaning "*achever*" in French and "to finish," "complete," or "follow through" in English, encourages the population to continue what they had started: using their voting cards to cast their vote, their weapon against Abdoulaye Wade, to finish him off! (GFK Productions 2015).

As in previous years, there was concern about election fraud. Wade had been criticized for buying votes from people in the rural villages, and it was said that they never received their money. *Y'en a Marre* mobilized through a countrywide tour to spread the message of "Doggali": "We don't have a price, and we are not for sale/ your care is your voice, prepare yourself to attack and liberate the people" (Grovestins 2014).

The slogan *daas fananal*, meaning “sharpen your weapon or sharpen your blade,” was instrumental as a tool of nonviolent action in the campaign “Doggali.” In our interview, Thiat explained the logic behind the slogan, “For example, if there was a Jay Z concert in Senegal a week before, if we met somebody, we would say, hey, do you have your ticket, and he would reply, *daas fananal sama ticket* meaning “I’ve got my ticket ready” (Thiat, pers. comm.). *Y’en a Marre*’s choice of slogans resonate with the population and unite their movement, grounding it in language with cultural legitimacy.

Conclusion:

Y’en a Marre’s campaign was successful and the voice of the people was finally heard. Macky Sall was elected president with 65.80 percent of the vote, and Abdoulaye Wade only received 34.20 percent. As movement members often say, on that day the people understood that they had the power to play an important role in their democracy.

In the final scene of the documentary *Quitte le Pouvoir*, the narrator Cheikh Diarra brings the film to an end with moving words:

The combat in reality has just begun, because it is a revolution of consciousness and of mentality. We will not fall asleep anymore. We will stay as an opposing power no matter what happens. Because the Senegal of tomorrow belongs to us. (Grovestins 2012)

His words reflect the broader goals of the movement *Y’en a Marre*: to take charge of their situation and do something about their discontent, and to hold themselves accountable for the future of their country and their generation.

The mobilization of *Y’en a Marre* in 2011 into 2012 was a short snapshot of the work of the movement, but was an extremely important moment in terms of the movement’s credibility and foundation. Through their mobilization, they established themselves as a movement of the

population that belongs to the population, a movement of civic mobilization and civic responsibility. Not only did they establish themselves as a movement of mobilization, but they established themselves as a movement with a discourse that challenged the status quo narrative of the poor and marginalized, particularly the younger generations, and their mobilization was an active expression of that discourse, a discourse upon which they would later build and transform into community action. Their power stemmed from the strong conviction of responsibility of the founding members such as Thiat, Kilifeu, Fadel, and Malal, and their determination to lead their people and their communities in a fight that was based on community unity. They united the country through a culture of rap, drawing upon community identity for mass mobilization and successfully mobilized their country to hold themselves accountable and responsible as individuals and community members to maintain their democracy through upholding and exercising democratic principles.

In the chapter that follows, I will explore how today, *Y'en a Marre* continues to take charge under a new president, and how they exercise their responsibility to true liberation, a pan-Africanist objective, through direct community action. As Fou Malade stated at the celebration of Macky Sall's election, "*Y'en a Marre* stands with the citizens no matter who is president" (Grovestins 2014).

Chapter IV
Pan-Africanist Responsibility Today:
Civic Action in the Face of Neocolonialism

“I think the most important thing is to bring the people to a point where they have self confidence and understand that they can, at last...be the authors of their own wellbeing.”

–Thomas Sankara (Dembele, 2009, 2)

Introduction:

The Mermoz beach (*plage de Mermoz*) looks out across the bay, the *Baie de Mermoz*, and out onto the vast Atlantic Ocean. I would frequently visit the beach to sit on the rocks, watch the kids play in the water, and stare out across the ocean to relax and clear my mind, and my friends and I would often head there after class to talk about our experiences in our classes and with our host families over chocolate bars that we had bought at the supermarket to make change from a *dix-mille*, a 16 dollar bill.

The *Baie de Mermoz* is a little crescent enclave carved out of the cliffs of the western-facing coast of Dakar. It is a steep walk down to a small but neat beach, which serves as a place of recreation, and especially as an outdoor gym. If you go anytime past four o'clock, the beach fills with young men working out in groups or playing soccer. To the right of the beach, there is a rocky shoreline. To the left of the beach is the Radisson Hotel, known by all in Dakar as the haven for white tourists, French, American, and Chinese. On the outside, the Radisson looks almost like any other building, nothing extraordinary, but inside, with its infinity pool, palm trees, elegant waiting staff, and lounging chairs, with its view out over the ocean, it becomes a paradise removed from the reality of Dakar, a touristic, idealized representation of Senegalese life. The stark contrast between the Radisson hotel and the daily life on the beach shows the blatant disconnect between the tourist experience and the Senegalese people. The tourists will

profit from a cheap vacation, and bargain their taxi driver down a dollar, for him the difference of being able to put food on the table for his family or not. This relationship, so evident in this simple setting of the *Baie de Mermoz*, is an example of how the colonial process has created an imbalanced relationship between the developed world and Africa.

Behind the beach a new apartment building is going up; by the time I left it was nearing completion. Investors are building everywhere in Senegal. New high-rise buildings are emerging, displacing the poor. The wealthier section of Mermoz is home to the politicians of Senegal and high-placed expatriate workers, the heads of multinational corporations often exploiting Senegal's resources, and the ones most likely to rent these newly built apartments. The logos of French companies are prominent throughout the city.

The apartment I lived in during the last two months of my stay was next to what the Senegalese call *les baraks* ("the barracks"), an area of the city where people live in makeshift houses in tightly-knit communities. Each day I would walk past them towards my little fifth-floor new apartment, past my favorite fruit stand, past the women washing dishes or clothes outside, past the unfinished buildings that some of these people had made their temporary homes. In a few months, they will no longer inhabit those buildings. The apartments will be sold for prices far beyond their reach.

One day when I returned to visit my host family in Mermoz, they asked me what area I had moved to. When I described the area, my host mom said "Oh! Next to the *baraks*! I know that area. They were in the newspaper. Their houses are being torn down for the construction of new apartment buildings, but those who are still there refused to leave. So now some will be allowed to live in the bottom floor of the buildings. Because they won't leave!" (pers. comm.). She said this lightheartedly, and my host father laughed. I think they took some pride in the fact

that those people were going to be allowed to stay because they couldn't be bought out and forced to be displaced. Unfortunately, those who stayed are only a small portion of the population facing displacement, and many from that area had already been forced out. The *baraks* are an example of the beautification projects described by Mike Davis in *Planet of Slums*: a neoliberal political process that systematically favors capitalist investment in real estate over the real needs and cultural preferences of the population.

Every day, I was confronted with difficult choices: Should I take a more expensive taxi or ride public transportation? Brave the slightly smelly market across from where I lived, or retreat to the comfort of the City-Dia, the Western-style supermarket a few blocks away? As time went on, I became more comfortable with the more informal life of the market, and I grew to appreciate the relationships I formed across these small interactions of commerce. I grew to rely on the man who sold me eggs and knew exactly how many I wanted each time. I looked forward to my daily conversation with the vendor at my fruit stand on the way home from my internship. There was a certain intimacy and sense of community about daily life that gets removed when you go to the supermarket and are unlikely to see the same cashier twice. As I noticed the choices I was making on a daily basis, choices between resorting to the neo-colonial presence that was familiar to me, or following the examples of my host families and other Senegalese friends, I was constantly intrigued by the contrasts of Western culture, neocolonial presence, and the daily lives of the average Senegalese. In a position of privilege, where I moved freely between those spaces—from the market to the supermarket, from the beach to visit a friend at the Radisson hotel—I asked many questions about the neocolonial experience that led me to look into the ways in which the movement *Y'en a Marre* addresses the neocolonial state. What does it mean to a country that there are such stark contrasts between spaces? It became clear to me that

the neocolonial Western presence only further stratified the population. Those Senegalese with money could participate in the Westernized experience, while those of lesser means were excluded. What does it mean for a country when politicians are focusing resources on expanding that Westernized experience?

It was during one of these afternoons on the beach, while contemplating these contradictions, that my friend and I met Pape Étudiant. When reminiscing about my experiences in Senegal, I always say you cannot have a conversation in Senegal without talking about three things: Peace and religion, love, and *taranga* (the Senegalese word for hospitality), and the day I met Pape Étudiant was no exception. He was wearing flashy workout gear, complete with special gloves for working out on the bars of the outdoor gyms along the coast, and shiny headphones. He explained that he comes there often. In the afternoons, he runs up and down the Corniche, the road that follows the coast of Dakar, stopping at the outdoor gyms and the beaches to work out. We call him Pape Étudiant as he instructed us, because he identified himself as a student (*un étudiant*) at the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar. He spoke of the difficulties he experienced as a student, and his hopes to one day finish his studies. He asked about our newly-elected president, Donald Trump, questioning how our country could elect someone who would set us back so many years. He said that the U.S. is an example of democracy, and that in this moment we were failing to set the example. He spoke about how it was up to us, our generation, to make the change.

He mentioned his distaste with Trump's anti-immigrant, racist rhetoric, and passionately countered it by expressing his pride in Cheikh Anta Diop, the namesake of the university and an archeologist and physicist committed to the study of human origin. Cheikh Anta Diop was instrumental in formulating our current understanding of human origins in Africa and the ways

our species evolved and migrated across the world, adapting to changes in environment. He is considered to be a key figure in promoting African pride, and countering Western imperialist constructions of “the uncivilized barbarian” by turning the argument on its head, and pointing to Africa as the origins of civilization.

Sitting on the rocks, watching the waves crash around us, contemplating the contradiction of the Radisson hotel, an emblem of neocolonial presence in Dakar so close, yet so separated from the daily realities of Senegalese life, I was moved by the way Pape spoke about having a role in society as an active citizen. Through Pape’s words I was able understand that despite these contradictions in the post-colonial, neocolonial society, Pape found a certain agency that came from naming himself as a revolutionary and an active citizen. I met Pape way before I met the members of *Y’en a Marre*; however, the sentiments he expressed in our long conversation reflect precisely the motivations and values that motivate *Y’en a Marre* to move past protest, and engage in their communities, using their agency to take responsibility of their own destiny. As the watchdogs of society, *Y’en a Marrantes*—those who affiliate themselves with the movement—and even those who don’t, such as Pape Étudiant and other engaged rappers—create spaces of resistance in the city. Through their presence, the movement engages in community action initiatives, moving their discourse into a space of durable action beyond protest, taking matters into their own hands, rebuilding their communities and taking on the challenge of building community-based initiatives outside of the Western framework for development and the way that those initiatives encompass pan-Africanist discourse through engaging with the struggles of other countries.

Neocolonialism in Senegal: Distance Between the People and the State

To understand the neocolonial state of Senegal today, it is necessary to explore the relationship between Senegal and France, one that is long and complicated. France's imperialism is a project that goes back to slavery, through colonization, and continues today in the form of neocolonialism. As neocolonialist, France and other Western powers continue to control the Senegalese economy through the presence of multinational corporations, control over the price of important primary resources, economic structural adjustment programs, and neoliberal policies. Since decolonization, the relationship between Africa and France, and more broadly Africa and the West, has been based on the notion that Africa is emerging in the world behind and after the West, and the discourse of France's leaders with regard to Africa has continued to be based on this narrative. Furthermore, it is this narrative upon which the neo-liberal politics of development are based.

France's former president Nicolas Sarkozy is famous for his phrase, "*l'Afrique n'est jamais entré dans l'histoire*," (Nicolas Sarkozy) meaning, "Africa has never entered into history." Sarkozy's statement is colonial in that it is from the perspective of the colonizer. On one hand, he is right in the sense that in history books about Africa, the narratives are always of conquest and imperial expansion. The African stories are not told. However, Africa has always been in history. As Cheikh Anta Diop would argue, it has been in history longer than any other civilization. The narrative that Sarkozy puts forward is Eurocentric in that he is speaking of a narrative that has systematically ignored Africa, a history based on the elimination of the African narrative. Africa has been left out of the Western construction of history.

Today, the newly-elected French president Emmanuel Macron continues a familiar discourse on Africa. In anticipation of Macron's trip to the continent, *Y'en a Marre* and other

African activists spoke out, criticizing his visit and asserting that “Africa doesn’t need his discourse” (Y’en a Marre 2017). On November 28th 2017, Macron visited Burkina Faso. His visit was met with protests and unrest. His trip highlights many of the issues in the relationship between France and Africa and exposes how, still today, France wields enormous influence. When Macron spoke at the University of Ouagadougou, during the question and answer period, rowdy students asked an array of questions that were met with distaste from their fellow students, and Macron seemed to be like a flustered parent trying to control his children (France 24 2017).

In a response to this question and answer sequence, a Burkinabe blogger claimed it as an embarrassment for Africa. He encouraged students to reflect on the questions they asked, shaming them for failing to ask the truly pertinent questions. He pointed out how comfortable Macron was on their soil, and said that this should have been an opportunity to show the world and the French president how the youth of Africa are able to carry, create, and present a discourse of their own.

Encouraging the population to engage in a well-formulated pan-Africanist discourse is part of the project of *Y’en a Marre*. Their mission is to inform the population in such a way that it can become politically literate. Unfortunately, as many news outlets and bloggers have pointed out, it was a missed chance to show Macron and France that Africa has its own intelligence and doesn’t need to be told what to do from France. *Y’en a Marre* serves today to encourage the Senegalese population to ask the pertinent questions, and, rather than blindly blaming France, understanding the intricacies of the historical and economic relationships between African leaders and Western imperial systems of power.

With Senegal's resources exploited and their industry and welfare systems declining, the role of the state has been assumed by International NGOs, funneling money to make up for the lack of responsibility taken by the state. In recent years, the number of NGOs in Senegal has exploded. International NGOs fall into a Western framework based on the neoliberal policies that focus on privatization and the retreat of the state, which according to neoliberal economic logic generates capitalist participation and eventually revitalizes the economy. However, the retreat of the state results in a loss of public services, which necessitates the intervention of NGOs, resulting in a growing industry of non-governmental organizations, further perpetuating dependence on foreign aid.

Many of the efforts of international aid address wide global goals of eradicating poverty by bettering the daily lives of those living in poverty; however, they often fail to address the systematic processes that contribute to the production of inequality and poverty. With the election of a new president in Senegal, many hoped that Macky Sall would bring attention to the population that had fought so hard in favor of his election. However, despite his public praise for *Y'en a Marre's* work in 2012, his presidency has severely lacked any effort to fulfill his campaign promises. In Thiat's words, "He said so many things that were not true. As you can notice, nothing has changed, and that is the title of the song of my band Keur Gui: Diogoufi." (Thiat, pers. comm.) *Y'en a Marre's* song "Diogoufi," meaning "nothing has changed," expresses their discontent with the new administration's inaction in addressing the needs of the general population. They sing, "Same cats, same dogs, same here, same there, same electoral promises, same sellouts" (Biglayekb 2014). The video depicts frustration with the lack of resources, and the degraded states of Dakar neighborhoods; it depicts *Y'en a Marre* members pointing out the lack of improvement to government officials. Through their video, they show

that in addition to political critique, there must also be engagement with local governments in order to create any form of sustainable change.

Since his election, instead of creating social safety nets and basic infrastructure for the general population, Macky Sall has continued his support for the neoliberal top-down approaches to economic growth. In response to the rapid urbanization and congestion of Dakar, Macky Sall has launched a plan to decentralize Dakar by building a new city called Diamniadio inland of Dakar. The city will feature an industrial area and a residential area. However the residential area is planned to consist of luxury apartments designed for the high-paid workers of Diamniadio. It is unclear how this project will play out, but it is my opinion that it serves only to further create a distance between socio-economic classes. Those workers who are building this future city will not be able to afford to live in those buildings and are frustrated with the high-end nature of the construction, while they, in their villages next door, lack simple essentials, such as electricity and running water (Darna Television 2017).

Part of the decentralization process has also included building a new airport, Blaise Diagne, outside of Dakar. The old airport, Léopold Sédar Senghor, will now be used only for military purposes. Given the distance of the new airport from the central peninsula of Dakar, Macky Sall's pride project is bringing the French SNCF train the *Transport Express Régionale* (the Regional Express Train or TER) to Senegal. This train will connect Dakar to the new airport, and there are plans to expand it across the country. This train has two main implications that concern *Y'en a Marre*. The first is that the train, while new, is expensive and will only serve those who can afford to travel. Secondly, the TER is a French train, continuing Senegal's reliance on France. These actions taken by Macky Sall are representative of the neoliberal policies of his government. This model is a top-down approach to development that relies on the

assumption that creating this new city will offer space for companies to hire more people. The city of Diamniadio is designed to attract tourism and international investors. While tourism may be good for the county, offering more clients for those engaged in tourism services, it does not address the major structural problems that impede Senegal's development. Additionally, the structure of the new city, with office space and expensive residences, will allow for more multinational companies to take root in Senegal, continuing along a neocolonial, neoliberal, and free-market capitalist model for development. Addressing issues of unemployment or irregular employment, stigmatized as undesirable in the informal sector, requires not simply providing more jobs, but creating an economic environment where endogenous industry in Senegal can be revitalized, and sources of livelihood practices, viable for centuries, such as Senegal's local fishing industry, cotton production, and peanut industries, become profitable. These are all industries that have been taken over and bought out by multinational companies, undermining or eliminating direct sources of livelihood for much of the Senegalese population.

The building of new infrastructure is not unique to Macky Sall's presidency. The Keur Gui song "Coup de Gueule" (what does it mean) speaks out about some of the major infrastructural changes towards the end of Abdoulaye Wade's presidency, for instance, about the paid highway system that is no longer accessible to the average Senegalese (Touba Guyey 2010). These are the highways leaving the city that pass over the poor suburbs of Pikine and Guediawaye. Those who live in those areas cannot afford to take advantage of the new highway system. Scholars point to cases such as this as an assault on public space previously accessible to most Senegalese (Lo 2014).

I distinctly remember one afternoon on the way back from a trip to Thiès, an hour or so drive outside of Dakar. I was in a *sept-place*, a seven-seat taxi that goes long distances. I

remember a passionate argument in our car as the other members of the car fought over whether or not to take the *route à payage* (toll road), which would have cost each passenger an extra amount that we had not anticipated paying. This was a difficult decision, as the toll road was much faster, and the argument became quite heated. This experience highlights the Senegalese reliance on the informal, affordable methods of public transportation.

Macky Sall's top-down approaches to policy have resulted in furthering the distance, described by Dianne Davis (1999), between the people and their government. It is in response to this increased distance that the movement *Y'en a Marre* has chosen to move past simply speaking out and mobilizing against political leaders. As Thiat told me, "Instead of focusing on Macky Sall like we focused on Abdoulaye Wade, we should focus on the population. Because Macky Sall will be gone soon and the next one will come and we'll focus on them and so on. It's not smart" (Thiat, pers. comm.). He continued saying, "Politicians are just clients, they get in the bus at one stop and get off at another. We need to fix the bus" (Thiat, pers. comm.). In his words, Thiat is addressing the fact that, despite a change in power, the issues run deeper. The issues are systemic and need to be addressed outside of a corrupt political system of politicians controlled by money and the pressures of international debt. They are acting out of a desire, in Fadel's words, to "take destiny in their own hands" (2STV Senegal 2017).

The Senegalese currency, the CFA franc, formerly named the franc of the *Colonie Française d'Afrique* (the currency of the French Colonies of Africa), is another marker of the colonial legacy and the ways that France still has a substantial hold on the Senegalese economy. The CFA franc symbolizes the neocolonial relationship between France and Senegal, and is considered to be one of the greatest barriers to Senegalese development. *Urgences Pan-Africanistes* is an African NGO working towards African independence. On August 29th, 2017, a

French and Beninois citizen, Kemi Seba of *Urgences Pan-Africanistes* was expelled from Senegal after burning a 5,000 CFA bill (about 8 dollars) in a symbolic gesture of protest. Ndeye Nogaye Babel Sow, the international spokesperson of *Urgences Pan-Africanistes* in Senegal, in light of what she calls the deportation of Kemi Seba, encourages youth in Senegal to take charge of their own destiny, calling on a responsibility to a revolutionary mission of breaking free of neocolonial rule:

To stay at home is to betray one's mission. To say that other will do it for you is to betray one's mission. And to betray one's mission is to not invest oneself to fight for the liberation of one's people, as our ancestors have done, so that today, I can speak in front of a video camera.¹⁰ (TV1 Africa 2017)

Ndeye's words point to how in history, her people, through slavery and colonialism, were not permitted to speak or express themselves. She insists that "today," in 2017, standing silent is a betrayal of the struggles of their ancestors before them who fought for the rights and freedoms they now have. She points out that their fight is one that was begun years before, in the time of slavery, and that their fight continues on.

At a press conference following Kemi Seba's exile, activists called out the government for a lack of responsibility. "He [Kemi Seba] represents what the government should have represented" (Y'en a Marre Officiel 2017). Thiat calls the president Macky Sall the last *tirailleur Sénégalais*, referring to the Senegalese soldiers who during colonial occupation were recruited to fight on the front lines for France in WWI and WWII. His statement suggests that Macky Sall is still fighting for the French, this time out of his own will, neglecting his responsibility in the fight for African independence. For Thiat, the deportation of Kemi Seba symbolized an assault

¹⁰ Translated from: "Trahir sa mission c'est rester chez soi. Trahir sa mission c'est de dire que les autres vont le faire, et trahir sa mission c'est de ne pas s'investir maintenant pour la libération de son peuple, comme nos ancêtres l'ont fait, pour que aujourd'hui je puisse parler devant une caméra."

on the cultural values of Senegal, originally “*le pays de teranga*,” (the country of hospitality), and that Senegal risked becoming an unwelcoming country; *le pays non-grata*” (Y’en a Marre Officiel 2017). Thiat asserts that by exiling Kemi Seba, the government abandons its traditions of hospitality for foreign interest.

In a video statement posted on the *Y’en a Marre* website, rapper Fou Malade, explains what is at stake in light of the deportation of Kemi Seba. He said that, for *Y’en a Marre* it was about defending democratic principles. He says that this time it was Kemi Seba, next time it would be another standing up for human rights. Ultimately, he says, what is at stake is the very nature of democracy (Y’en a Marre Officiel 2017).

While, as Fou Malade makes clear, the case of Kemi Seba is an example of authoritarian oppressive tactics of the government against opposition, what it has shown is how, despite repression, in Senegal, through organizations such as Y’en a Marre and *Urgences Pan-Africanistes*, disparate elements of the civil society unite for the same goal: the search for independence. As Didier Awadi reflects, “All the movements are together. We can have different agendas, but historically, there are moments when we have exactly the same tasks” (Azactu 2017).

Community Action Initiatives: Forming a *Contre Pouvoir*, and Moving Discourse into Action

Felwine Sarr is a professor of economics at the University Gaston Berger in Saint Louis, Senegal. He is a writer and philosopher known for his ideas about how Africa can begin to really think for itself and produce a discourse that places itself in the world outside the imperialist narrative that so many have critiqued.

Sarr answers the poet Wole Soyinka's critique of the Negritude Movement for not going far enough, though at its time, the concept of black empowerment and cultural integrity was revolutionary and laid the foundation for critical thought about race today. For Soyinka, it's not enough now to keep critiquing. Famously, he has said, "The tiger doesn't proclaim his tigritude, he leaps on his pray and devours it" (Soyinka 2010). Felwine Sarr's imagination for how Africa can become the master of its own destiny is a way to begin to imagine a "*voie de développement*" (a "path of development") that is on Africa's terms. Through my analysis of the movement *Y'en a Marre*, I argue that through their community action initiatives today, they participate in this new anti-imperial project by directly engaging their communities, shrinking the distance between people and government, and through their transnational networks unite with other movements in other countries under the same struggle for independence.

I see Felwine Sarr's visionary ideas at work in *Y'en a Marre*'s program *Nouveau Type de Sénégalais* (NTS). NTS seeks to think critically about the ways that the people have become separated from their systems of governance and have come to feel as if there is no use in engaging with the system because it is not made for them. NTS counters this notion by imagining a population, conscious of its position in relation to its government, that takes charge of and holds itself accountable and responsible to and for the future. In Felwine Sarr's words, "There must be a vision for where we want to go, what type of society we want to put in place, what type of individual we want to produce" (TV5 Monde 2016).

Y'en a Marre takes this vision for the type of Senegalese society they envision and works to construct it by creating their own initiatives around community engagement, civic engagement, and dialogue between the population and the government. In doing so, they actively

exercise the democratic process, as they have done through non-violent action in 2011 and 2012, but this time becoming a politically active “*contre-pouvoir*.” As Felwine Sarr suggests:

The participation of all in the management of the political sphere and the possibility to control and create an opposing power, and especially to articulate a counter-social around that for me is fundamentally democracy. ¹¹ (TV5Monde 3017)

Through these actions, *Y'en a Marre* works to actively create democracy that was previously absent.

In order to build their conscious population that is involved in their communities and government, *Y'en a Marre* has established several community action initiatives. The program *Wax ak sa Député*, meaning “talk with your deputies,” is their program most directly related to shrinking the distance between the people and their government on a local level. It aims to enable the populace to convey what it wants and needs in order to create compromises on the best ways to move forward to address specific issues. It is about empowering people to no longer feel alienated from the political process, and to encourage changes in policy that support the people.

The lyrics of the *Y'en a Marre* song, in Wolof, “*Dox ak sa Gox*,” (Walk with your community), incite the population to engage in their neighborhoods to be active participants. Rappers sing, “Me and you, we work we work, walk with your community, walk with your community.” The song is a promotion for their program *Dox ak sa Gox*, a program designed to inform and increase awareness among Senegalese citizens, particularly the young population, with the goal of constructing a dynamic citizenry in the wake of Macky Sall’s election, in order to hold him responsible to his campaign promises. The program is about citizen participation in

¹¹ Translated from: “La participation de tous à la gestion de la chose politique et la possibilité de contrôler, et de contre pouvoir, et surtout articuler un contre sociale autour de cela pour moi c’est ça fondamentalement la démocratie.”

society. It is in response to major challenges, including patrimonial practices in the public sphere, the lack of respect for the principles of democracy, and especially the weakness of state institutions (Y'en a Marre 2018). As in the video for the song “Diougoufi,” the video of “Dox ak sa Gox” shows the citizens engaging in conversation with their elected officials.

The more recent program Sunu Gox (Our Community) is like *Dox ak sa Gox* in that it is about engaging within the community. In many ways, the program is also similar to the *set/setal* movement in the late 90s into 2000, devoted to promoting urban solidarity in neighborhoods considered peripheral in the region of Dakar. The program is about reinforcing citizen movements by building their capacity to work for the betterment of the environment and basic services. The program seeks to ameliorate the degradation of the urban environment, specifically in the suburbs on the outskirts of Dakar. The program has been instituted in six areas: Darookhane, Wakh Inane, Guediawaye, Pikine Nietty Mbar, Dalifort and Malika in Pikine, and Bargny. The program's goal is to advocate for sustainability in the urban landscapes of Dakar, promoting citizenship and environmental consciousness. The program works on multiple levels. First, it focuses on the process of what they call collective diagnosis, the process of identifying issues. Secondly, it focuses on the implementation of environmental cleanliness actions by local organizations. Thirdly, the program advocates for monitoring and promoting awareness-raising action to strengthen urban citizenship and mobilization. In the song entitled “Sunu Gox,” they sing, “Senegalese, take care of your community, stop throwing garbage in the road. Everyone mobilize so that together we can take care of the streets.” They continue, “Let's be proud of our community... Cleanliness is a duty of each and every one of us” (Y'en a Marre Officiel 2017). In this song, the themes of duty, responsibility, and pride once again emerge.

These community action initiatives all work hand in hand to challenge those distances between people and their government and to engage the population with their communities, to actively challenge marginalization of communities previously pushed to the side. They work to create a conscious citizenry that takes charge of issues in their own communities, and work to engage that citizenry in active dialogue with local governments to create concrete action. By engaging their local governments to be responsible towards their population, these community action initiatives are working outside the NGO model for development, by holding their government accountable.

However, *Y'en a Marre* members face a major barrier to their mission. Given the lack of government support for such initiatives, many of their community action programs are funded by international aid organizations, continuing along a neoliberal model for international development. The program Citizen Mic is funded by the Ford Foundation, the program Sunu Gox is in partnership with the French NGO GRET and financed by the European Union, and the program Wax ak sa Deputé is funded by USAID. Despite their reliance on international aid, the movement *Y'en a Marre* does participate in the project of Africa thinking for itself outside of the Western framework to reimagine the society they want to put in place. While sponsored by international NGOs, these programs still seek to become less reliant on international aid and create change through engaging local governments.

Creating Spaces of Resistance in Senegal and Across the World

As *Y'en a Marristes* become active members in their communities, they build a sense of pride within them. General Diaz, a rapper and member of *Y'en a Marre*, expresses a sense of pride and unity with his community. With confidence, he said to me, “I’m a ghetto boy!”

(General pers. comm.). In this statement, General reclaims a word that is generally used to suppress and marginalize communities. In 1974, with the support of the World Bank, Senegal built Parcelles Assainies, spaces for the urban poor outside of the commercial center of *Plateau*, Dakar, in an effort to decentralize Dakar in the face of mass urbanization. While they were built in an effort to supply the urban poor with more affordable housing, as they are decentralized, Parcelles Assainies and other neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, such as Pikine and Guediawaye, have become ignored by their governments and lack necessary infrastructure and resources. *Y'en a Marre* provides a platform by which Senegalese identify strongly with these neighborhoods and proudly claim their “ghetto” origins.

My first trip to Parcelles Assainies was to meet Thiat at the *Y'en a Marre* headquarters. They have two headquarters, one near where I lived at the time that serves as an office space, and another, the original headquarters, in Parcelles Assainies, which they call the house of the people. It was originally Fadel’s house and the site of the founding of their movement.

When I walked into the headquarters, no one but Thiat was there. The room was neat and the table took up almost the whole space. Thiat asked permission to smoke and proceeded to sprawl in his chair wearing the famous hat of Amilcar Cabral. He was relaxed. He could talk about his movement all day, and when he got into a story, I could hear the excitement in his voice as he remembered the moments of accomplishment. As Thiat described the day the movement was founded, he pointed to places in the room where specific people sat. He pointed with pride to the pictures on the walls and smiled and laughed at the one of Fadel talking to Obama. As he talked, he gave a sense that this was not only Fadel’s home, but also his home, and as he told me, the home of all Senegalese.

As we left the building, I asked Thiat to hail me a taxi in an effort to avoid the *Toubab* price (the high price for white people) and I wasn't quite sure where I was going, or how much it cost. On our way towards the paved road to find a taxi, we walked past women in their doorways, and children in the streets. As we passed, they waved to Thiat, greeting him simply. This was his neighborhood. In Senegal, Thiat is a celebrity, yet here, in Parcelles Assainies, he is like any other young man walking through the streets. To me, his casual interactions with the people in his neighborhood showed his accessibility to the public. It showed how the struggles and issues he raps about are not simply his struggles or the imagined struggles of a people or of the poor, but a shared struggle that is relatable. Thiat's presence in the neighborhood is that of a brother, a cousin, a son. The neighborhood becomes a larger extended family based on common lived experiences.

The day I met General Diaz, I traveled once again to Parcelles Assainies. This time, I was directed to the Corniche, not the famous Corniche, the modern highway that runs up the western coast of the peninsula, but the dirt road along the northern coast. At the corner, was the food stand of Anna, a young woman involved in the *Y'en a Marre* movement. It was dusk, and Anna was preparing to close down her stand for the night. Around her were seated General and his fellow *Y'en a Marristes*. Anna was the first woman I met who was affiliated with the movement. When I asked her about her role as a woman in the movement, she explained that her parents were strongly opposed to her involvement. Women, she said, aren't supposed to rebel. She told me that not only did her parents feel that her role in the movement was not feminine, they also objected to the esthetic of rappers such as Thiat and Kilifeu, a sentiment I heard in my conversations with other women. They found the image of the bare-chested, angry rapper—an image meant to challenge societal norms—off-putting. Despite her parent's disapproval, due to

her belief in their message, Anna affiliated herself with the movement. In doing so, she challenges the societal power structures that confine women to a space of passivity.

As I sat talking to Anna and General Diaz, I took interest in the corner of Parcelles Assainies. This street corner became the place where General, Anna, and their rapper friends would sit and talk. As one of them told me, “We’re always here!” (General Diaz pers. comm.). Their presence at this corner created a space where they became figures of resistance in their neighborhood. Just as graffiti depicting slogans of *Bamba Fep* and *Bamba Merci* create writings of resistance on the walls of the city, the presence of these rappers, stationed at Anna’s tent, create a human map of resistance throughout the “ghetto” neighborhoods.

Y’en a Marre extends its pan-Africanist message of resistance through transnational networks with movements in other countries, such as Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By building networks across Africa and extending their *Y’en a Marre esprits* (sections) across the world via the Senegalese diaspora, *Y’en a Marre* and their affiliated social movements across the world, like rappers on the streets of Dakar, form a network of resistance, that through the strength of its connections and its unifying discourse derives its power. In this way, just as engaged rappers such as Didier Awadi extend their message to embrace a global black identity, the movement’s struggle becomes pan-Africanist.

Based off of the revolutionary discourse of Thomas Sankara, the social movement *Balai Citoyen* of Burkina Faso relies on the revolutionary identity constructed during Sankara’s benevolent dictatorship, where within a period of only four years, he was able to move the country towards full food sovereignty and autonomy. In 2014, movement members sang the slogan “Bye-bye Compaoré” protesting the dictatorship of their president, Blaise Compaoré, who succeeded Sankara, reestablishing dependence on Europe (Le Balai Citoyen 2015). As a result of

massive mobilization, Blaise Compaoré resigned after twenty-seven years of dictatorship (Skinner 1988). *Balai Citoyen* has similar goals to *Y'en a Marre*. As a Burkinabe insists, the people of Burkina Faso experienced “twenty-seven years of corruption, twenty-seven years of personal power, and most of all, twenty-seven years of treason towards the people” (Balai Citoyen 2015). Like *Y'en a Marre*, they credit revolutionary activists before them. As a Burkinabe says in a video of Balai Citoyen, “First and foremost, it is a thought of Sankara, who allowed us today to understand, because he achieved in four years, what today is also possible” (Balai Citoyen 2015). Motivated by the discourse of Thomas Sankara, *Balai Citoyen* fights alongside *Y'en a Marre* with the collective goal of finally achieving full independence.

Filimbi is a similar social movement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Unlike Senegal, the Congolese face a much more oppressive government, which makes mobilization difficult. However, despite difficulties, they organize forums and stand for democratic principles and the rights of the people. *Y'en a Marre* and *Filimbi* share slogans and symbols to unite their causes. *Filimbi* uses the slogan “Un peuple en a Marre,” meaning “the people have had enough” and “L’avenir du Congo est entre nos mains” (“The future of the Congo is in our hands”) (Filimbi 2018). All are sentiments that *Y'en a Marre* actively embraces. Both organizations use the symbol of a red card to signify their resistance. On the *Filimbi* Facebook page, they claim that their fight is “not simply the people of the DRC, but all the people marginalized and oppressed by their governments” (Filimbi 2018). In this statement they extend their solidarity beyond their partnership with *Balai Citoyen* and *Y'en a Marre* to all oppressed people.

Y'en a Marre members often speak out in support of these other organizations or physically join in their mobilizations. In 2016, the organization *Filimbi* invited members of *Y'en a Marre* and *Balai Citoyen* to the DRC for a series of workshops and events. They were

subsequently arrested on unclear charges. Their arrest is indicative of the power that simply the presence of these activists has, but also of the clear abuses of power by the government. Despite government retaliation, *Y'en a Marre*, *Balai Citoyen*, and *Filimbi* unite in resistance across Africa and the world. As Thiat described to me, “We want an African passport and African currency, we want a rate of our currency high and ask the rest of the world to do business with our currency, with our own languages, we want to develop a concept called ‘the resources belong to the people.’ Bring back the resources to the population. So no more multinationals just coming in and taking everything and go” (Thiat, pers. comm.).

Conclusion:

Rap and community action initiatives work hand in hand, reinforcing each other. *Y'en a Marre* continues to create songs that encourage community participation and accompany their campaigns, supporting their struggle. Through community action initiatives, *Y'en a Marre* creates internal development through popular mobilization so that Africa can be as Thomas Sankara would say, the master of its own destiny. By engaging directly with their communities, *Y'en a Marre* works to transform the *état d'esprit* (state of mind) of *Y'en a Marre* into real results. Throughout their mobilization and through their songs, they stress the idea of collective struggle. As Didier Awadi stresses in his song only through struggle can one be liberated. This struggle, embodied by a network of rappers and *Y'en a Marrantes* throughout Dakar and a network of social movements across Africa, in the name of those who have fought before them, fight to create conscious populations through programs such as NTS in Senegal that globalize their struggle to a struggle of liberation and to as Thomas Sankara said, “dare to invent the future” (Thomas Sankara).

Conclusion

April fourth, 2018, marked fifty-eight years of “independence” in Senegal. As I scrolled through Facebook that day, looking at the posts of my Senegalese friends, none of them acknowledged the day. When I asked a friend if he was celebrating, he said no. When I asked why, he responded frankly, “We are not independent.” The struggle for independence is still continuing today, and it is small acts of resistance like my friend’s denial that contribute to a conscious society working towards achieving independence. From my analysis of the movement *Y’en a Marre* within an historical framework, I find that it is through a sense of civic and personal responsibility to the fight for independence, in the name of revolutionary pan-Africanist visionaries before them, that Senegalese rappers formulate their discourse, and that the movement *Y’en a Marre* derives its power to move discourse into concrete action.

Today, the movement, along with other organizations, is part of a project of thinking outside the Western framework of development to rebuild community and work from the bottom up through civic engagement. Themes of responsibility emerge as rappers across Senegal engage in a discourse that supports the principles of a truly democratic system, continuing a multi-generational fight to achieve full autonomy, sovereignty, and independence. By challenging the status of disenfranchised populations as marginal, rappers and activists create a revolutionary narrative that invites full participation in the democratic process. By carrying a discourse that favors pan-Africanist identity, rappers unite the struggle of the oppressed across Africa and throughout the world. Within a culture rooted in knowledge passed down through song, rappers become the journalists of their society, and rap becomes a platform for the younger generations in Senegal to talk about real issues in their community, challenging structures of power.

Through nonviolent action in 2012, the movement *Y'en a Marre* strengthened systems of democracy by proving the power of the vote when a population unites for a collective goal. By working within the democratic system, *Y'en a Marre* was able to hold that system accountable and protect against the threat of monarchy and authoritarianism. Faced with a neocolonial state, where former colonial powers still exploit and control the economy, Senegalese activists seek to move away from the neocolonial process of relying on foreign aid, and while they meet financial constrictions, the community-based initiatives of the movement *Y'en a Marre* work directly to engage their local governments, shrinking distances between the population and their elected officials and systems of governance.

In defiance of the global systems of hierarchy and inequality, *Y'en a Marre* across Senegal and in the diaspora carry this discourse, engage in their communities, and in the words of Thomas Sankara, “dare to invent the future” (Skinner 1988). By unifying their struggle and deconstructing the myth of Senghor as father of the nation, they defy the colonial borders of the nationstate of Senegal and rebuild a narrative of African unity, shared governance, full participation and cultural and economic autonomy.

As I am writing this conclusion, I leave *Y'en a Marre* at the beginning of 2018, heading into a new election season. Macky Sall has been president since 2012 and has hopes of being elected for a second term. Some Senegalese blame *Y'en a Marre* for the election of Macky Sall, which they say has set their country back years in terms of moving towards autonomy and independence. Others claim that the movement has been co-opted by international NGOs, corrupting their message. Despite criticisms, the movement is still strong and holds high aspirations. In the Western world, the peaceful transition of power is often taken for granted. Even though Macky Sall has not brought the change necessary, what was accomplished by *Y'en*

a Marre in 2012 was important for the integrity of the Senegalese democratic system. As they head into the new election season, it remains to be seen how *Y'en a Marre* will be active, in what ways they will fight against Macky Sall, and in what ways they will remain focused on building a conscious civil society in order to break the cycle of passing from one corrupt president to another. How will the movement work to re-establish credibility amongst those who criticize them, and how will they work with other civil society actors and movements and organizations such as *Urgence Pan-Africanist* in Senegal, across Africa, and into the diaspora?

Looking forward to further research, I would like to follow Senegalese rappers and the movement *Y'en a Marre* throughout the campaigns leading up to the 2019 elections to analyze how they adapt their discourse to the new situation, and how they choose to discuss topics of responsibility and accountability. I would like to look further into other ways that the Senegalese are rethinking theories and frameworks for development in line with the philosophy and imaginings of Felwine Sarr. I would also like to look into the extensions of the movement *Y'en a Marre* in the Senegalese diaspora to further discuss the pan-Africanist discourse of the movement, and how those living in the diaspora identify and engage with their discourse.

Most interesting, however, might be to look into the limitations of the revolutionary discourse of Senegalese rappers and their ability to mobilize. I have been told that *Y'en a Marre* was not in support of pro-LGBTQ+ legislation, which poses questions as to the extent to which their message truly serves the population. It also raises questions about the limits of challenging power and oppression within societal and cultural contexts where issues such as homosexuality are extremely taboo. *Y'en a Marre*'s goal is to strengthen democracy, and if they were pro-LGBTQ+, in Senegalese society, they would not gain the support necessary for mass mobilization. As I have been told, and as Macky Sall has been quoted saying, Senegal is not

ready for such a movement. But one can ask, when is a country ever going to be ready for such a movement? And how can one achieve full democracy without including the narratives of everyone in the population?

I look back to my motivations for telling this story and the questions about the relationship between myself, my identity, and Senegal, a relationship that symbolizes a complex history of imperialism and dehumanization. It was through my research and because of the historical complexity of the message of Senegalese rappers and the movement *Y'en a Marre* that I became more interested in and aware of the pertinent questions posed by Senegalese rappers about the global relationships of inequality and oppression, those relationships that I first began to study by reading Mike Davis's *Planet of Slums*. And mostly, it was through reflecting upon their historically-informed discourse, that I began to think more critically about my personal identity and positionality as a researcher. I find myself seeking to identify my role in relation to Awadi's revolution and *Y'en a Marre's* mission, and thinking about how I can address my privilege and work to undermine systems of oppressive power such as those against which *Y'en a Maristes* mobilize. *Y'en a Marre* has identified their responsibility; how do I now find my place within this fight against oppression as an active global citizen? What I hope to have shown through this study, is that Senegal is not poor, but rich in resources, culture, and ideas, and that the Senegalese are actively fighting to strengthen their systems of governance, ultimately to challenge systems of power, specifically the unequal distribution and abuse of power. As Ndeye Nogaye Babel Sow tells us, the oppressed cannot be liberated, they liberate themselves (TV1 Afrique 2012).

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