

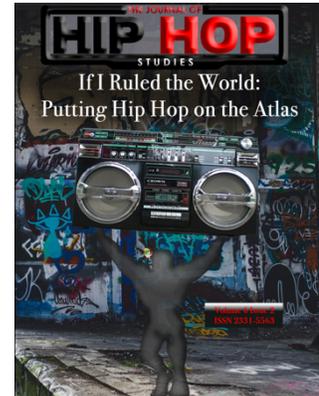
Book Review of Hip Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers

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Book Review

Hip Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers.

By Clark, Msia Kibona. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2018. Pp. xxi, 312. Paperback \$29.95

Based on ten years of interview research in various African countries with African Hip Hop artists, Msia Kibona Clark describes the impact and evolution of Hip Hop culture in urban centers across the African continent. Clark offers a distinct counternarrative of Hip Hop in Africa complicated by the acknowledgement of American Hip Hop culture's influences in Africa and expansive in that it chronicles the diverse local, contemporary, and historical contexts that shaped Hip Hop in Africa to be its own distinct culture.

Clark effortlessly weaves lyrics (in both English and local African languages), interview data presented in narrative form, and full-color photographs of African Hip Hop artists with information on the contemporary economic and political landscape in varying African countries to illustrate an understanding of African Hip Hop as a form of cultural representation that can be used to interpret political institutions, social change, gender, migration, and identity. Clark's narrative writing is committed to honoring the voices of her participants, citing African scholars and the local contexts in which the research took place. For example, the book's title is a mashup of African Hip Hop artist K'naan's album title, *Dusty Foot Philosopher*, and the name of the African Hip Hop group Prophets of da City (POC).

Throughout the text, Clark chronicles African Hip Hop artists' names, albums, lyrics, activist work, and stories as evidence of the deep connection between African Hip Hop and the broader sociopolitical landscapes. For example, she writes about how various African governments use Hip Hop music as propaganda or during elections while at the same time countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have heavily censored or banned Hip Hop music and culture. Nonetheless, artists use multimedia and internet access to share their music and social commentaries. In Kenya, Hip Hop music has been used to both support and criticize campaigns for political office with little impediments to artist. Likewise, in Tanzania Hip Hop and state politics are deeply intertwined. Clark analyzes, for instance, how lyrics from Tanzanian artist Albert Mangwair's lyrics were used as taglines for the 2005 and 2010 presidential elections. Thus, Clark substantiates the significance of African Hip Hop and the responses it provokes as representative of social and political realities in each nation.

Each of the book's six chapters offers an in-depth analysis of one issue and its intersections with African Hip Hop. In chapters one and two, Clark explains the tensions of language use in African Hip Hop and how artists represent their home nations as well

as advance Pan-African dialogues. Chapter Three includes an especially compelling argument Clark offers on the ways African Hip Hop in different countries and historical moments can be read as protest music. Clark employs Frantz Fanon's 1961 theory on national culture surrounding protest literature versus combat literature to examine how African Hip Hop has evolved from protest literature to combat literature, focusing on how the response of the state ranges from support and inclusion in political campaigns to protest music being officially banned. Chapter Four describes feminist issues and the challenges of African women and women emcees who, confronted with religious standards and cultural policing of women's bodies, use Hip Hop to protest for women's rights. Chapter Five is dedicated to the representation of African migrant experiences in African Hip Hop that explains the often misrepresented narrative of Africans that leave the continent for Western destinations. Clark illustrates the tension between leaving and longing for home as well as the intersectionality that African Hip Hop artists navigate as they live outside of the continent but strive to continually preserve and promote their African identity. In the concluding chapter, Clark pays homage to the diversity among African Hip Hop that reflects the diverse local realities and experiences in each country. Clark chronicles the diversity in language choices, code switching and its impacts on identity and appropriations and misappropriations of African culture in Western Hip Hop and African American cultures.

The text is limited in that the continent of Africa offers a vast population to survey. Each example is adequately contextualized by nation-specific analysis of the political and economic conditions that fostered Hip Hop culture in the location being discussed but the text is limited in its analysis of the entire continent and focuses primarily on urban centers in Africa. Nonetheless, the extensive research period of ten years, the specificity of each individual artist mentioned, and the explanations of how Hip Hop has spread in specific regions like Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania clarify the goal of this work to offer a broad overview of African Hip Hop.

In summary, this text does for contemporary African Hip Hop what Jeff Chang and DJ Kool Herc's (2005) *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* did for the study of American Hip Hop in the academy; it documents the power and history of the culture in a comprehensive way for both popular and scholarly audiences. Like the scholars that preceded Clark, this text amplifies the voices, praxis, and significance of a generation of African Hip Hop, its diverse cultural representations, and their meanings.

Dr. Camea Davis is a poet, educator and educational researcher with a heart for urban youth and communities. She earned her doctorate in educational policy studies with minors in curriculum and instruction and educational technology from Ball State University. She currently works as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at Georgia State University in the Department of Middle and Secondary Education. Davis also serves as the national director of the Youth Poet Laurette program, an initiative of Urban Word, an award-winning youth literary arts and youth development organization. Her research interests include culturally responsive teacher education, youth spoken word, youth civic engagement, and youth activism.