Abstract

When walking through the streets of Dakar, hip-hop makes its way through the radios of the city. Hip-hop has been a prominent and influential music genre and culture in Senegal since the 1980s. Hip-hop music has been used by Senegalese to cover the social, economic and political life of the country, and to promote political activism among the youth. Rapping was not born in a vacuum in Senegal but subtly continues the long-standing tradition of storytelling through spoken words and music, griotism. Moving away from hip-hop stereotypes, defined by critics as violent, racist, homophobic, sexist, materialistic, misogynistic and vulgar, my case study focuses on critical and conscious Senegalese hip-hop, which embraces hip-hop social and educational movements utilized to voice societal injustice and challenge the status quo. Senegalese hip-hop is a platform for political activists to denounce institutional racism, Western domination, poverty, and national corruption, with the hope of contributing to a better and just society that recognizes and legitimizes knowledges and voices of formerly colonized Africans. Didier Awadi is one of the most talented, conscientious, influential and revolutionary hip-hop artists and political activists of the continent. His motivation stands in the Burkinabé revolutionary Thomas Sankara, who became an icon for his statement: “dare to invent the future,” the motto for Didier Awadi’s record company Studio Sankara. In 2010, after five years of research, Didier Awadi released his ambitious multidisciplinary project Présidents d’Afrique to recount Africa’s political history and honor the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism, influential thinkers and scholars from Africa and the Diaspora. His timeless album Présidents d’Afrique uses hip-hop as a form of decolonization and public pedagogy that renders the contributions of Pan-African leaders visible to Africa and the world, contributions that have been continuously omitted, ignored, and vilified by mainstream History.
Preface

Guided by African knoweldges and histories, this thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Joanna Daguirane Da Sylva. This thesis is not producing new knowledge per se, but is recovering and reclaiming the histories, knoweldges, words, and messages of African leaders, influential thinkers and scholars, which have been erased from dominant history. The creation of this thesis was made possible by the careful and caring supervision of Dr. Michelle Stack, Dr. André Mazawi and Dr. Hartej Gill. In addition, the participation of political hip-hop artist Didier Awadi was invaluable to this thesis. The interview conducted in chapter 5 was approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate number H15-01714 on July 24, 2015.
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### Glossary

**Afrocentricity**  
Molefi Kete Asante (2003) defines Afrocentricity as “a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate. In regards to theory, it is the placing of African people in the center of African phenomena” (p. 2).

**B-Girl/B-Boy**  
A practitioner of breakdancing.

**Breakdancing**  
A style of acrobatic street dancing performed to rap music characterized by intricate footwork, pantomime, spinning headstands, tumbling, and elaborate improvised movements.

**Eurocentrism**  
The practice of seeing the world from a Euro-Western perspective with the implied belief, consciously or unconsciously, in the supremacy of European culture.

**Hip-hop**  
Hip-hop is a social and musical movement comprised of the artistic elements of: record spinning, also known as DJ-ing or Turntabalism; the delivery of lyricism known as rapping, or MC-ing (emceeing); breakdancing and other forms of hip-hop dance; and graffiti art and writing.

**Pan-Africanism**  
An ideological, political and social movement that seeks to uplift and unify Africans and people of African descent through their common experiences of oppression, colonialism, dispossession, racism and suffering.

**Rapping**  
The delivery of spoken or chanted rhyming lyrics, associated with the hip-hop musical and social movement.

**Sankarism**  
A left-wing ideological and political movement associated with the anti-imperialist beliefs and policies of Captain Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso.

**Turntabalism**  
The art of manipulating sound and creating music using turn tables and a DJ mixer, an activity associated with the hip-hop movement.
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I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to my amazing advisor Dr. Michelle Stack, who has endlessly supported and guided me during the process of my research and study at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Stack welcomed me at UBC and has since been present to ensure the success of my thesis. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to my co-advisor Dr. André Mazawi, whose invaluable and generous feedback encouraged me to unceasingly reflect on my work, creating a more meaningful thesis. I would also like to deeply thank Dr. Hartej Gill for her expertise and for sharing her decolonizing work. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Michelle Stack, Dr. André Mazawi, and Dr. Hartej Gill for sharing their knowledge and for supervising me with care, understanding, enthusiasm and kindness. I sincerely thank them for encouraging and pushing me to be a better political student, researcher and writer, and for further awakening my consciousness.

I would like to extend my wholehearted thanks to Didier Awadi for agreeing to conduct an invaluable interview with me and for speaking his mind and heart. I am enormously grateful to Didier Awadi for continuing to create conscious and political music that speaks the truth, inspires and encourages activism in Africa and across the world. Without Didier Awadi’s hip-hop music, I would not be the political student I am today ready to unveil African subjugated historical truths. Thank you.

I would like to give loving and sincere thanks to my mother, the best mother in the world, for believing in me and my dreams, and for eternally supporting me emotionally, spiritually and financially throughout my studies. My mother’s love and guidance is responsible for my success in school and in life.
I would like to give deep thanks to my husband, Jonathan, for his patience through my long periods of writing and spontaneous dance breaks. I thank my husband for being so supportive throughout my academic journey and beyond.

I owe special thanks to my African ancestors, especially to my father; those who came before us and laid the visions and foundations for an emancipated, strong, proud and unified Africa and African people. Thank you for speaking out for the African community and denouncing the horrors of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and for attempting to redress these injustices with your voices, actions and deep love for Africa and your people. I hope to honor your sacrifices by continuing to spread your powerful messages with the hope of creating a more peaceful, loving and harmonious world where all beings are valued and respected. Jërejëf!
Dedication

Papa, this is for you
1. Introduction

In 2010, to mark 50 years of African independence, Didier Awadi, one of my favorite hip-hop artist and a world-renowned Senegalese political activist and producer, released his much-anticipated album and project Présidents d’Afrique. This five-year project is dedicated to the “founding fathers of black consciousness” but also to the great Pan-African advocates who fought for the creation of a new, respected and united Africa (“Présidents d’Afrique un album de Didier Awadi,” n.d). Didier Awadi created a timeless educational project by weaving together the speeches of leaders like Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Norbert Zongo, with his rapping in collaboration with other conscious African and African American artists like Babani Kone and the Tata Pound from Mali, Maji Maji from Kenya, Tiwoni and Lady Sweetie from the West Indies, Smockey from Burkina Faso, Dead Prez from the U.S., Skwatta Kamp from South Africa, Lexxus from the DRC, etc. The end result is a pedagogical project and musical piece of art that educates, inspires, and promotes African knowledge and African history. This thesis focuses on unveiling subjugated African histories and truths that have been suppressed and ignored by Eurocentric and colonial forces, with the hope of contributing to the inclusion of indigenous, especially African, voices and knowledges in the recounting of human history.

1.1 Significance of the Study

When I first listened to Présidents d’Afrique, I was emotionally moved by the messages transcended through the tracks and accentuated by well-thought out African
beats, rap lyrics and traditional musical instruments. Being able to truly hear the voices, the tones and the statements of our ancestors, the Pan-African and Black (r)evolutionary leaders who dared to reclaim our African dignity and dream of an independent Africa, is powerful and enlightening, and it awakened a sense of urgency, truth and hope in me. The use of African beats and hip-hop makes this knowledge accessible to young people like me who might prefer listening to an African hip-hop song created by an African artist rather than read a historical book about Africa or African leaders most likely written by a Western historian. It is also important to recognize that books may be out of reach for a large part of the African population due to its cost. Charles Larson, an American author of works of literacy criticism and fiction and a professor at the American University in Washington DC, states “books, and particularly literary works, are expensive in Africa, so expensive that Africans cannot afford them (even if they have the ability to read them), though literacy as we approach the end of the century is a lesser problem than cost” (Larson, 1997, p. xii). Buying a CD, listening to a song on YouTube, or going to a concert is more affordable than buying a book in most parts of Africa.

These great songs make these historical speeches memorable and I can now recite many parts of speeches given by Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Cheikh Anta Diop, Norbert Zongo, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, because of this album, which I have continued to listen to for the past six years. This project educated me about a different kind of African history; an African history that includes and embraces the resistant African voices of the continent. It opened my eyes and my appetite to know more, learn more and research more about African history and our forgotten leaders who spread the seeds for an independent, strong, beautiful and dignified Africa. These heroic and courageous human beings are made visible and legitimate by Didier Awadi through his
music, when they have been continuously shunned by mainstream history. This project was able to do for me what formal school was not able to: teach me about African history in a meaningful way. When I realized the impact and influence this musical and pedagogical project had on me, my educational choices and my desire to reclaim and restore resistant African histories, told by our ancestors, I decided to pick this project, this artist, and this cause for the subject of my thesis.

Reclaiming our subjugated knowledge and historical truths: Using Hip-Hop as a form of decolonizing public pedagogy in Senegal, The Case of Didier Awadi is a thesis that came to be after months of reflection and researching. I wanted to write about something that I was passionate about—African cultures and heritage—as part of a larger decolonizing project that in some way restores African histories and knowledges. I have the desire to uncover oppressed voices of African societies and communities and engage with the misrepresentations that have been part of their experiences as victims of ongoing racism. This project is significant because it seeks to contribute to a better approach to an African pedagogy and place African ways of knowing and doing at the center of education. This means learning and teaching from African traditions, like oral literature, that have been used to educate Africans for centuries. This study demonstrates that music, an aspect central to African lives, can play an important role in a decolonizing of education and public pedagogy. Music can be used to teach African knowledges.

According to Biggs-El (2012), rap music and spoken word poetry has prevailed as a “public pedagogy liberated from the confined of school buildings, making the community at large an indispensable classroom” (p. 161). The lyricism of rap music as a form of instruction “helps persons think critically, historically, and socially” (Biggs-El, 2012, p.
Music, especially rap music, uses society—the community, the environment, socio-political issues, and nature—as a platform to learn in a critical way.

I chose hip-hop because I relate to this creative, fearless, honest and raw mode of expression that explicitly and implicitly describes and comments on the social, economic and political conditions of people of African descent. I wanted to write and research with the purpose of decentering Euro-Western thoughts from mainstream academia, and other aspects of everyday life, with the goal of including the experiences, voices, knowledges and epistemologies of formerly colonized populations, including Africans. According to Emeagwali and Dei (2014), “Edward Shiza pointed out that the academy was ‘the epicenter of colonial hegemony, indoctrination, and mental colonization,’ and that the decolonization process entails a process of ‘reclaiming, rethinking, reconstituting, rewriting, and validating’ indigenous knowledge, and by implication, Africa’s history” (p. 1). I want this thesis and these words to stand for justice and to redress false, negative and distorted images and histories of Africa and Africans created and maintained by mainstream academia. I want to denounce the historical injustices—including racism, falsification of African history, land dispossession, systemic discrimination—Africa and Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora have experienced and continue to experience since the inception of slavery.

This thesis is therefore an ethical engagement with research that is inseparable from a truthful understanding of African histories and knowledges. Capturing truth means to grapple with the underlying injustices that continue to trouble human society. Equally, this study seeks to transform in as much as understand. In this sense, this thesis is an intellectual project that attempts to establish truth, not in a positivist statement about what is, but rather by unveiling the injustice that is. My understanding of, and approach
to research is anchored in the ontological assumption that *truth* is not so much a valid fact to be uncovered but a value—understood as the importance of seeking to unpack what stands in the face of a just world, one in which all people and communities live in dignity and peace to be uncovered—to be *recovered*. This study is not positivist but gears towards decolonization and transformation, and it is in relation to that transformative element that the significance of this study should be judged and assessed. I am approaching science and research as an act of decolonizing. Shedding light on the injustices African communities have struggled with for centuries can help humanity have a better understanding of the suffering colonized populations have endured and address and redress some of these collective wounds. This is necessary to create a more humane, united and compassionate world; a world currently in crisis due to ignorance, misunderstanding and fear of the “Other.”

1.2 Structure of Thesis

My thesis is organized in six chapters. In chapter 2, I present Pan-Africanism as my theoretical framework and explain how this developing theory supports my study in a way that challenges dominant knowledge about Africa and its histories. I describe the context that inspired me to choose Pan-Africanism as the particular perspective from which I approach my study. The chapter defines Pan-Africanism and situates it historically and globally, particularly in post-colonial Africa. Furthermore, the chapter shares women’s contributions to Pan-Africanism, which have often been disregarded by the historical literature on Pan-Africanism. Lastly, the chapter draws connections between Pan-Africanism and hip-hop as social movements rooted in African/Black nationalism.
Chapter 3 provides a review of literature related to the cultural politics of music. This chapter demonstrates how music and political movements connect; it explains the role music plays in political mobilization and political activism. In this chapter, I explain the important role music and oral literature play in African civilizations and problematize the negation of oral literature as a valuable source of knowledge. Following, I focus on the politics of Black resistance and liberation and its relation to music, and particularly to hip-hop. This leads to a historical account of hip-hop as a social and musical movement: its birth, its global development and its political messages. I continue by discussing the hip-hop movement in Africa, and more specifically in Senegal, where hip-hop music holds a particular place of importance in political activism and the struggle for social justice. The chapter completes with an introduction to Didier Awadi and his political and musical work.

My methodology is developed in chapter 4. I start by arguing that academic dominant knowledge is centered on hegemonic Eurocentric realities, values and beliefs, silencing the experiences, voices and knowledges of indigenous populations, including Africans. I challenge Eurocentric history by placing African experiences and realities at the center of my research and analysis, introducing Afrocentricity as my epistemic framework. I situate myself as a decolonizing and Pan-African researcher within this epistemic framework. Following, I introduce Reviere’s (2001) five Afrocentric research criteria—ukweli (truth), ujamaa (community), kujitoa (commitment), uhaki (justice), and utulivu (harmony/peace)—and explain how these will ground the analysis of my data, which includes my one-on-one interview with Didier Awadi and two tracks I chose for deeper analysis from his album Présidents d’Afrique. In this chapter, I claim that storytelling, as part of oral literature, is a legitimate source of knowledge; one that has
been degraded by the literate colonizer who values *written* text. I then present Didier Awadi as a storyteller, *telling* a different and important part of African history, one that has been omitted, ignored and distorted by dominant history.

In chapter 5, the results of the data analysis are presented. The data were collected and then processed with the guidance of Reviere’s Afrocentric “canons” in response to the research questions articulated in the literature review. My thesis ends with chapter 6, a conclusion that synthesizes my findings and responds clearly to the research questions that stimulated this research project. I conclude by stating that history as a discipline has the responsibility to restore, include, value and respectfully engage debates about African histories *told* by Africans through songs, poetry and other forms of oral literature.
2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Context

Africa is the cradle of humanity and its history is one of the richest in the world. According to Cheikh Anta Diop, the leading anthropologist and Egyptologist in the world, it is scientifically certain that mankind was born in Africa on the latitude of Kenya, and in the region which comprises Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania, and goes all the way down to South Africa (Diop, 2011). He states, “It is clear that any humanity that had its birth in that sub-equatorial region could not have survived without pigmentation. Nature doesn’t do anything by chance and any humanity born in that region was given melanin to protect its skin” and that is the reason why we can assert that the first human being had to be black (Diop, 2011). Cheikh Anta Diop argues that African history has been falsified and erased by dominant history, a crime perpetrated by Euro-Western historians for hundreds of years to continue exploiting the continent—its resources, its soil, and its people—and to maintain white supremacy and the status quo (Diop, 1974).

Africans’ contributions to the world along with their intricate social, cultural, musical, artistic and economic systems established before the arrival of European explorers, have been removed from history. The Eurocentric understanding of what history is has dominated in formal schooling, news and pop culture, and through this domination, there was no other history. In other words, Africa based on Eurocentric colonial notions was not seen as having history but only a state of nature. Egyptian civilization, which has captured the attention of scholars because of their monumental architectures, hieroglyphs, religion, social and political order, is the only part of African history mentioned in mainstream education. It is imperative to recognize, however, that
“scholars have attempted to negate the ancient Egyptians’ African identity by stating either that race does not exist or that the Egyptians are a race of their own” (Allen, 2008, p. 813). Scholars claiming that race does not exist are in fact correct, as race is a social construct. Race, however, has played a pivotal role in hierarchically classifying people and in giving authority to the dominant colonizer to define and legitimize historical knowledge. As a result, denying the power of race is ignoring the reality of Black people’s oppression. According to Diop (1974), “the birth of Egyptology was thus marked by the need to destroy the memory of a Negro Egypt at all cost” (p. 51). Scholars have actively sought to separate Egyptian civilization from other African civilizations identified as Black, regardless of the fact that Egypt is part of the African continent. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, Cheikh Anta Diop argues, “if the ancient Egyptians were Negroes, then European civilization is but a derivation of African achievement” (Diop, 1974, p. iii). In other words, Black Africans are at the center of human civilization and its development, and this truth contradicts the dominant narrative that accredits Euro-Western descendants for almost the entire world’s historical, scientific, economic and socio-political discoveries. Admitting that a Black, Egyptian civilization laid the foundation for world civilization disturbs the Western narrative that places “superior” Whites of European descent and their narratives at the heart of history.

Colonialism appears to be the starting point of African history, as if before that time, Africans were simply uncivilized savages. In 2007, French President Sarkozy reinforced this belief by giving an appalling speech at L’Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal. He stated:

\[
\text{Le drame de l'Afrique, c'est que l'homme africain n'est pas assez entré dans l'histoire. Le paysan africain, qui depuis des millénaires, vit avec les saisons, dont}
\]

...
l'idéal de vie est d'être en harmonie avec la nature, ne connaît que l'éternel recommencement du temps rythmé par la répétition sans fin des mêmes gestes et des mêmes paroles. Dans cet imaginaire où tout recommence toujours, il n'y a de place ni pour l'aventure humaine, ni pour l'idée de progrès. (Sarkozy, 2007)

Translation:

The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has never really entered history. The African peasant has known only the eternal renewal of time via the endless repetition of the same actions and the same words. In this fanciful reality, where everything always starts over again, there is not place for human adventure nor for any idea of progress. (Ankomah, 2007, p.9)

This statement confirms that Africa remains the “dark” continent; a continent inhabited by peoples that refuse to “evolve” like Europeans. French media did not report Sarkozy’s speech as an overtly racist statement. France 2, for example, stated that “the speech was well-received” by Senegalese when in fact “intellectuals across the [African] continent are still seething over a speech they say may have poisoned a chance for better ties” (Ba, 2007, p.1). Sarkozy’s statement is ignorant and racist and confirms how the Euro-Western world continues to view Africa and Africans as backwards.

The first images history has of Africa and Africans was painted by imperialist explorers who defined Africa as a “dark” continent inhabited by “ape-like creatures” in need of salvation (Hochschild, 1999, p. 6). These racist images monopolized the representation of the continent and its people for a long time. In 1897, a piece entitled “Bloody Niggers” appeared in the English newspaper Social Democrat to denounce colonialism and racism. The article quotes RB Cunningham Graham who questions the existence of Blacks altogether:
Oh Africa! God must have been in a bad mood when He created that continent. Why otherwise fill it with people who are doomed to be replaced by other races coming from outside? Would it not have been better to make niggers white, so that in all good time they could become Englishmen, instead of giving us the trouble of exterminating them? (Lindqvist, 1996, p. 82)

Imperialism led the way for the dehumanization of Africans, and this process established a system of terror across Africa where functionaries saw their victims as less than human, and racial theories provided such foundations (Hochschild, 1999, p. 6-7). Blacks were identified as inferior beings: lazy, uncivilized, and little better than animals (p. 121). These racist beliefs have left aftereffects in modern days. Africa and Africans continue to be viewed in a negative light in comparison to the rest of the world. There is no other continent that is treated as one and as negative as Africa. Racism, based on superficial phenotypes, including skin color and false scientific evidence, is a factor that prevents Blacks and Africans from being fully respected, recognized and considered equal. Pan-Africanism as a social and ideological movement challenges the racist foundations of history by reclaiming African knowledges and African identity.

2.2 Understanding Pan-Africanism

The theoretical framework that grounds my thesis is Pan-Africanism, an ideology and movement that seeks to unify and uplift Africans and people of African descent by recognizing their shared experiences of oppression, dispossession, discrimination and racism over centuries. Pan-Africanism was born—in action and social thought—as a reaction to slavery, Western colonialism, and the continuous mistreatment of Blacks
across the world. According to Walter Rodney, a prominent Guyanese historian and political activist:

Pan-Africanism is something we must define in struggle. What is essential to the African struggle is the common experience of exploitation and oppression and the unity which the slaves forged, a commonality which could only be operative when they moved against European exploitation and oppression…that…is the essence of Pan-Africanism in the period when it was born and it had to be born in a context where a large number of Africans from different social background were thrown into a context in which this necessity would arise. (Eze, 2013, p. 663)

It is from this perspective that I am approaching this study. Didier Awadi identifies himself as a Pan-Africanist and a Sankarist (Awadi, 2010; Awadi 2012; Awadi, 2015; Létourneau, 2012) and his music transcends the hopes and ideas of Pan-Africanism.

There is consensus among scholars and theorists that Pan-Africanism can be broadly defined as “the acceptance of oneness of all African people and a commitment for the betterment of all people of African descent” (Ofuatey-Kodjoe, 1986, p. 368). Contestation remains, however, on the exact definition of the movement, ideology and philosophy as well as its exact period of emergence. Esedebe (1994) states, “there is still no agreement on what it [Pan-Africanism] is all about. Explanations that some African scholars and politicians give often differ from those suggested by African descendants abroad” (p. 30). While the term Pan-Africanism was first invented by Henry Sylvester Williams in 1900, Immanuel Geiss (1969) and Olisanwuche Esedebe (1977) affirm that the writings of Afro-American scholar W.E.B DuBois and the “equally versatile black
West Indian propagandist George Padmore” lay the literary and political foundation of Pan-Africanism (p. 167).

Geiss (1969) states that the Pan-Africanist idea dates back to 1797 when abolitionist movements on both sides of the Atlantic contributed to the liberation of slaves in the Americas, Britain and Sierra Leone. These free slaves are the ones who articulated the concept of Pan-Africanism, which translated into political agitation and action (Geiss, 1969). According to Eze (2013), “other scholars have suggested that the idea goes back to 1783 BC and inclusive of all socio-historical struggles that has occurred within Africa’s geographical world” (p. 663). Ethiopian commentator Kifle Wodajo, on the other hand, states, “in Africa itself, the seeds of Pan-Africanism were implanted the moment the first alien colonizer set foot on her soil” (Esedebe, 1977, p. 168). Eze (2013) argues that the events of the 15th century—the second rise of Europe, the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Western colonialism and the emergence of race theories—are responsible for the birth of Pan-African ideology (p. 663). For the purpose of this paper, I will not elaborate on the different theories developed to explain the beginning of Pan-Africanism. I will focus on Pan-African ideologies articulated and acted upon on African soil by African leaders, thinkers, scholars and artists, in their newly independent countries. At the time, they were the leaders of the Pan-African movement.

Pan-Africanism seeks to restore and reclaim the history, pride, legacy, and image of Africa, Africans and people of African descent for the purpose of intellectual, cultural, social and economic emancipation (Esedebe, 1994; Esedebe, 1977, Eze, 2013, Fosu, 1999; Geiss, 1969). According to Esedebe (1994), Pan-Africanism:
Seeks to generate and unify Africa and promote a feeling of oneness among the peoples of the African world. It glorifies the African past and inculcates pride in African values…It [Pan-Africanism] represented a reaction against the oppression of blacks and the racial doctrines that marked the era of abolitionism. (p. 5, 8)


The focal ideas of unity and oneness entrenched in Pan-Africanism provided a renewed sense of African strength, informed by an anti-colonial history grounded in African experiences.

While some scholars recognize the power of the African imaginary—this sense of oneness and belonging—in encouraging meaningful changes for the African peoples, others like Adolph Reed question the essentialist nature of the political ideology. Adolph Reed (1971) states:

Pan-Africanist political theory begins at so abstract a level that it cannot or does not have to deal with problems of cultural heterogeneity…Africa, a continent with a land area nearly four times that of Europe, is perceived as a monolith, all of whose inhabitants share the same world outlook and methods of experiencing phenomena. (p. 4)

While Reed, an African American scholar, makes a compelling argument, I believe he is missing the point Pan-Africanism embodies. Pan-Africanism recognizes that African regions and their peoples are intricately different, as they have different languages,
cultures, traditions, values and religions. As Africans, however, we have all experienced oppression and dispossession in different ways, and these experiences of domination should unite us with the goal of reclaiming our historical truths, identities and pride for the growth and progress of Africa, Africans and people of African descent. The great Pan-Africanist Julius Nyerere (1997) eloquently explains this sentiment:

For centuries, we had been oppressed and humiliated as Africans. We were hunted and enslaved as Africans and we were colonized as Africans. The humiliation of Africans became the glorification of others. So we felt our Africaneness. We knew that we were one people, and that we had one destiny regardless of the artificial boundaries which colonialists had invented. (p. 32)

The connection we share as Africans through our lived experiences of oppression and those of our ancestors, is greater than our differences. We should be able to put our differences aside to work together for the good of African communities, recognizing that the African philanthropic notions of solidarity, interconnectedness, interdependencies, reciprocity, mutuality, and a continuum of relationships, are central to African people (Moyo & Ramsamy, 2014).

In post-colonial theory, Diasporic scholars overwrite African scholars, who are only touched upon lightly if they are not completely excluded from the conversation. (Tageldin, 2014). According to Tageldin (2014):

The canon of postcolonial theory typically elides continental Africans, favoring non-Africans or diasporic Africans—often we read Edward Said, not VY Mudimbe; Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, or Dipesh Chakrabarty, not Achille
Mbembe; Franz Fanon, not Amilcar Cabral, Stephen Biko, Kwame Nkrumah, or Gamal Abdul Nasser; Aimé Césaire, not Leopold Sédar Senghor. (p. 302)

This study brings Pan-Africanists from Africa to the forefront of the Pan-African discourse, making their visions, ideas and policies visible and important. The main scholars and (r)evolutionary leaders I will be drawing on in my analysis are: Thomas Sankara and Cheikh Anta Diop. These two leaders represent the African voices I chose for deeper analysis from Présidents d’Afrique. I do not seek to be exclusionary of other, great, Black leaders like W.E.B DuBois and Marcus Garvey who are central to Pan-Africanism. I believe, however, that (r)evolutionary African leaders deserve a proper space in academia for their contributions to Pan-Africanism and History. I would like this thesis to be a space for the celebration and recognition of prominent African voices and Pan-Africanism, which continue to influence a hopeful African future. While this study focuses on the Pan-African leaders and enlightened thinkers highlighted in Didier Awadi’s album, who are all men, as a woman scholar, I would like to take the following section to reflect on the role of women in the Pan-African movement.

2.3 Women’s contributions to Pan-Africanism

The history of Pan-Africanism has closely been associated with the struggle of gender equality, as a universal movement resisting all forms of oppression (Reddock, 2007). Like their fathers, brothers and husbands, women have challenged enslavement and colonization, defying the imposed imperialist patriarchal culture (Abbas & Mama, 2014). Women have been part of the Pan-Africanist movement since it inception, but in comparison to their male counterparts, there is a dearth of literature about the role of women in the Pan-Africanist movement. Amy Ashwood Garvey, for example, who was
Marcus Garvey’s first wife and a pioneer of Pan-Africanism, was a co-founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and participated in major Pan-African events from the Pan-African Conference of 1945 to the independence of Ghana in 1957 (Sherwood 2003). The Garveyite wing of Pan-Africanism had a “mass following of women” (Harris, 1996, p. 21) and included women’s sections like the Women’s Universal African Motor Corps and the Black Cross Nurses (Harris, 1996; Reddock, 2007). The U.S. delegation of the Pan-African Conference held in London in July 1900 “led by W.E.B DuBois included well-known African-American activists like Anna Julia Cooper and Anna Jones, who both addressed the 1900 Congress and agreed to serve on its executive” (Reddock, 2007, p. 258). Women’s work in the development of Pan-Africanism has not received the attention it deserves.

Some scholars (Campbell, 1994; Reddock, 2007) argue that Pan-Africanism has been largely theorized without including the voices of Pan-African women. According to Reddock (2007), the Pan-Africanist scholar Horace Campbell argues that the “ideological history [of Pan-Africanism] has tended to focus on the contribution of great heroes—mostly males—an approach which denies the link to a broader social movement and the role of women” (p.257). Pan-Africanism as a social movement stands for the restitutions of social justice values for all women, men and children that have been oppressed, exploited and dehumanized by Western systems. In this sense, consciously or unconsciously excluding women’s voices in the history of Pan-Africanism hinders the movement’s ultimate goal. Harris (1996) states, “the free-Africa goal of Pan-Africanists will never be won unless the unshakeling of women, the producers and reproducers of labour power becomes an absolute priority of all organisers, freedom fighters and would-
be liberation parties” (p. 31). It is important to acknowledge that the absence of women’s voices in the historical record of events and movements is not unique to Pan-Africanism. The intersecting forces of patriarchal, colonial and capitalist forces have resulted in the subordinate position of women in the world. As a result, people have attached different values to women’s work and men’s work, placing more value on men’s work (Reddock, 2007). Gender inequality has been an issue women have fought against for centuries, an inequality that has been reinforced by the hierarchical and androcentric colonial system.

In Africa, colonialism established and at times strengthened forms of gender inequality in societies that had many indigenous traditions of gender equality (Reddock, 2007; Roy-Campbell, 1996). Roy-Campbell (1996) states, “Under colonialism, [central] positions held by women were devalued systematically, especially by Christian missionaries, and this knowledge possessed by women was supplanted by the colonial construction of social reality and forms of knowledge which aided the colonial mission” (p. 45-46). The imposition of a hierarchical classification of human beings by “race,” color and gender was necessary for the colonial agenda, and destroyed many forms of equality present in African societies. Since the beginning of human civilization, African women have ruled kingdoms, and led wars and conquests (Mama, 2005). On the continent, women have significantly contributed to African liberation movements by actively participating in independence struggles (Abbas & Mama, 2014). According to Abba & Mama (2014), an accurate historical account of Pan-Africanism should include women like: Mable Dove Danquah, a Ghanaian journalist and political activist; Adelaide Caseley-Hayford, a Sierra Leonean feminist who dedicated her life to the education of girls (Rogers, n.d.); Bibi Titi Mohamed, a major leader of the Tanganyikan Africa
National Union (TANU) and one of most visible Tanganyikan nationalist in the struggle for independence in the 1950s (Geiger, 1997); Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, the mother of musician and political activist Fela Kuti and “a leading national political figure identified with nationalist, socialist, and feminist causes” (Mama, 2005, p. 811) in Nigeria; Gambo Sawaba, a Nigerian political activist and a “natural champion of Human Rights and a symbol of women (nay, human) liberation” (Kwewum, 2004, p. 7); Muthoni Likimani, a Kenyan veteran of women liberation movement and one of the earliest women to marry across ethnic boundaries (Gekara & Sigei, 2013); Thenjiwe Mtintso, a South African anti-apartheid activist and journalist who occupied many leadership position in the African National Congress (ANC); Djamila Bouhired, an Algerian political and women’s rights activist and a leading heroine of the Algerian war of national liberation (1954-1962) (Clancy-Smith, 2008); Charlotte Maxeke, a South African political activist who “defended the potential of African people, especially women, [encouraging them] to stand up and take control of their own affairs” and who was the first South African woman to earn a university degree (Wells, 2008); Albertina Sisulu, a South African anti-apartheid activist known as the mother of South Africa’s liberation struggle (Bearak, 2011), and many other women who mobilized for Africa’s liberation. Women have been part of the struggle to liberate Africa from its oppressive chains for centuries and I can testify through hours of research that little history has been written about these Pan-African warriors. This absence of historical literature makes it difficult for the new generation, including Didier Awadi and myself, to successfully include African women’s stories in our creative and academic projects. Colonizers have attempted to erase African history and the history of African women.
While this thesis does not focus on addressing the literary gaps of women’s contributions to Pan-Africanism, I want to recognize that the colonial and patriarchal narratives that continue to control the world have played a role in erasing women’s participation in Pan-Africanism and other social justice movements. As Thomas Sankara envisioned, and Didier Awadi expresses in his powerful song *Ma Révolution*, Pan-Africanism should be grounded in “universal humanism” (Eze, 2013, p. 671) and needs to speak on behalf of all “the great disherited people of the world” (Sankara, 2007, p.155). The goal of pan-Africanism is therefore to combat *all* forms of oppression.

According to Eze (2013), “this new ideal of Pan Africanism is not shackled to whites versus blacks, them versus us; it rather adopts an authoritative voice to speak on behalf of all oppressed people in the world, all those discriminated because of their race, religion, gender, or orientation in lifestyle” (p. 671). Pan-Africanism as a social movement has greatly challenged the dominant narrative of the *ahistorical*, dehumanized “being” with a counter-narrative of a proud Black *human* being full of history, beauty and potential, and its messages and policies can be applied across the world to contribute to the creation of a more harmonious, humane, peaceful and equal world.

### 2.4 Pan-Africanism in Africa

The majority of African countries gained their supposed political independence from European domination between 1950s and 1970s through armed struggle and negotiations (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2004). The new African leaders that came to power, namely:

Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d’Ivoire, Kenneth Kauda of Zambia, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Patrice Lumumba of the DRC,

Kwame Nkrumah is known as the pioneer of post-colonial Pan-Africanism and the leader of the African independence movement (Adi & Sherwood 2003; Biney 2011; Chimutengwende, 1997; Forje, 2011; Kumah-Abiwu & Ochwa-Echel 2013; Rahman 2007). According to Biney, (2011), “Kwame Nkrumah was more than a political leader; he was a prophet of independence, of anti imperialism, of Pan-Africanism” (p. 2). After he led Ghana to national independence in 1957, Nkrumah became the first head of state of a postcolonial Sub-Saharan African country (Adi & Sherwood 2003; Oloruntoba 2015;
In his independence speech delivered on March 6, 1957, Nkrumah called for the liberation of the entire African continent: “Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent” (Rahman, 2007, p. x). Pan-Africanism was a request to rise above territorial nationalism and reject African national borders artificially created by colonial powers (Shivji, 2008). Julius Nyerere (1997), who shared Kwame Nkrumah’s vision of a unified Africa but adopted a practical and gradualist approach, states:

I reject the glorification of the nation-state which we have inherited from colonialism, and the artificial nations we are trying to forge from that inheritance. We are all Africans trying very hard to be Ghanaians and Tanzanians. Fortunately for Africa we have not been completely successful. The outside world hardly recognizes our Ghanaian-ness or Tanzanian-ness. What the outside world recognizes about us is our African-ness. (p. 35)

With this powerful statement calling for the unification of African peoples by embracing our African identity, Nyerere was making a plea to the new generation of African leaders and peoples: “work for unity with the firm conviction that without unity, there is no future for Africa” (Nyerere, 1997, p. 35). Like Nkrumah, Nyerere was committed to combat Western imperialism with the goal of creating a strong continent founded on African knowledges and values (Rahman 2007). Unlike Nkrumah who advocated for the immediate political unity of Africa and the formation of an African government, Nyerere believed that “any number of African governments uniting in any form was a step towards African unity” (Shivji, 2008, p. 237). To advance the realization of his vision, Kwame Nkrumah became a founding member of the Organisation of African Unity.
(OAU), which was established in 1963 and later replaced by the African Union (AU) in 2002 (Makinda & Okumu 2008; Oloruntoba, 2015).

The OAU transformed Pan-African ideas into an organizational political body devoted to Nkrumah’s idea of achieving complete economic, political and social emancipation. According to Makinda & Okumu (2008), “the establishment of the OAU may be regarded as an important step in efforts to return Pan-Africanism to its roots” (p. 18). The OAU was established with the goal of uniting the African peoples; intensifying cooperation between African states for the betterment of African lives; defend the sovereignty and independence of African states; completely eradicate colonialism and apartheid; promote international cooperation within the United Nations framework; and harmonize members’ political, diplomatic, economic, educational, cultural, health, welfare, scientific, technical and defense policies (African Union, 2016). The OAU, however, was created and functioned with the assumptions that different African nation-states existed, accepting the colonial artificial borders Pan-Africanism sought to repudiate. The respect given to state sovereignty by the OAU prevented the organization from efficiently addressing and preventing conflict in its member states (South African History, 2015). According to Shivji (2008), the first generation of Pan-Africanist nationalists “sanctified divisive colonial borders in OAU resolutions. At the helm of the state, a few of them, like Nyerere, sought to build nations from the ground up, while others reinvented the same colonial tactics of ‘divide and rule’ by politicizing racial and ethnic divisions to maintain themselves in power” (p. 245). The OAU’s deference to state sovereignty along with the strong presence and influence of Western powers and their roles in funding coups on the continent resulted in: emerging dictatorship, coups and
counter coups, political instability, and the overthrow of OAU’s founding fathers: Kwame Nkrumah, Abubakar Balewa, Sékou Touré and Haile Selassie, who was also murdered while the OAU watched (South African History, 2015). As a result of colonialism, which continues to affect the continent in different ways, the OAU was unsuccessful in achieving African unity due to competing ideological blocs. The OAU, however, “did make significant steps towards identifying socio-economic development issues which racked the continent after independence” (South African History, 2015).

Through the 1990s, African leaders debated whether to amend the OAU in order to address and tackle the challenges of a changing world (African Union, 2016). Furthermore, African leaders wanted to accelerate the process of integrating Africa, which seemed to be an unattainable goal under the OAU. These tensions resulted in the dismantling of the OAU and the establishment of the AU in 2002 (African Union 2016; Muchie, Lukhele-Olorunju & Akpor, 2013). According to Muchie, Lukhele-Olorunju and Akpor (2013):

The launch of the African Union (AU) in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002 heralded significant advances in shifting the paradigm from not only continuing to struggle against the after-effects of colonialism and apartheid, but also for building a strong African Union by integrating the African people, economy, space and society, and by making being African or African-ness a means to open the opportunity for the variety of communities in Africa to self-express, self-define, self-organise and self-determine by prioritizing their development and well-being with both freedom and dignity at the same time. (p. xvii)
The African Union is a political entity and regional bloc of states that manifests Pan-Africanism. The AU encourages African states to unite and work together as a people towards common political, socio-economic, health, education and peace policies that will contribute to the real freedom and the advancement of the African peoples. Similarly to the OAU, the AU continues to face globalization, security and governance challenges, but these challenges are not insurmountable (Makinda & Okumu, 2008). Makinda and Okumu (2008) state, “The AU and its member states need to search for knowledge that is likely to help them achieve human welfare, participatory democracy, peace, and socio-economic justice. Most importantly, they should seek for knowledge that will lead to human emancipation and empowerment” (p. 121). The African community should tap into their African knowledges to tackle and find solutions to African issues; knowledges that place African people, values, cultures and interests at the center of the emancipation discourse, instead of reproducing Eurocentric models that continue to exploit the continent in the name of capitalism.

Didier Awadi brings particular Pan-Africanists to the forefront of his project *Présidents d’Afrique*, the ones that brought a strong Pan-African vision to their newly independent African countries and abroad. Through his album, Didier Awadi is celebrating Pan-Africanism and the forgotten historical event when African leaders were prepared and ready to reverse oppression and colonialism in the interest of their peoples in every sectors of African society. According to Eze (2013), “Pan-Africanism is not just an ideology; it is a historical event in which shared afflictions of black experiences became a moral compass for African unity” (p. 670). Didier Awadi has been particularly
influenced by Thomas Sankara, “the upright man of Burkina Faso” whose “revolutionary principles guided his own life” (Ray, 2007, p. 8), which is reflected in his album.

Thomas Sankara was known as Africa’s “Che Guevara” and the world’s poorest president because his sense of community, solidarity and economic principles extended beyond government policies, and into his life. On August 4, 1983, Thomas Sankara led the August revolution whose primary tasks were to “eliminate imperialist domination and exploitation; and purge the countryside of all social, economic, and cultural obstacles that keep it in a backward state” (Sankara, 2007, p. 91). Sankara was an anti-imperialist revolutionary who re-Africanized his country and in just four years he achieved food self-sufficiency, in a place that suffered from famine; fought against corruption; conducted unprecedented vaccination campaigns and was committed to promoting women’s rights (Awadi, 2015; Harsch, 2013; Létourneau, 2012; Sankara 2007). Sankara pulled his country out of misery but regardless of his outstanding success, France along with the West labeled him as a dangerous man because of his strong Pan-African and Marxist ideas (Shuffield, 2006). France was terrified to lose their grip on their former colony and feared that Sankara’s ideas would spread across Africa (Shuffield, 2006). In 1987, Thomas Sankara, Africa’s Che Guevara, was betrayed and assassinated by French-backed politician Blaise Compraoré, who is now wanted for his murder after being in power for twenty-seven years in Burkina Faso (Al Jazzera News Online, 2015). Thomas Sankara was killed for trying to break the chains of colonialism and exploitation and he was not the first victim.

Patrice Lumumba was the first African head of government to be brutally murdered because of his nationalist positions. Lumumba was democratically elected
Prime Minister of the Congo, the richest territory in natural resources on the African
continent, and took office after independence in 1960 (De Witte, 2001; Létourneau,
2010). He was at the center of the country’s struggle against oppression imposed by
Belgian colonial rule (Awadi 2015; De Witte, 2001; Létourneau, 2010). Lumumba’s
independence speech was a frank, anti-colonial and revolutionary chef-d’oeuvre that
condemned the “cruel and inhuman” treatment of Blacks fueled by racism, and land
dispossession “in a language the Congolese thought impossible in the presence of a
European” (De Witte, p. 3). He claimed that the Congo and its natural resources were for
the Congolese. De Witte (2001) states that his speech was a confirmation that “Lumumba
intended to jettison the dead weight of colonial heritage and combat neo-colonial designs
on the country. It was clear that this nationalist discourse was much more than simple
electoral rhetoric; it would become the central plank of this policy” (p. 6). Belgium, the
US, and their local allies wanted to suppress those political ideals before they spread
elsewhere (De Witte, 2001; Létourneau 2010; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2011). As a result,
Patrice Lumumba was cruelly assassinated. According to author and professor Nzongola-
Ntalaja (2011), “the heinous crime was a culmination of two inter-related assassination
plots by American and Belgian governments, which used Congolese accomplices and a
Belgian execution squad to carry out the deed” (p.1). Lumumba was shot, buried, then
dug up, dismembered and dissolved in acid. Like Sankara, Lumumba was killed because
of his Pan-African ideals and his strong desire to free Africa and Africans from continued
colonial exploitation and dispossession. A free and independent Africa would have put an
end to centuries of servitude, oppression and endless exploitation, which was not an
option for Western powers that wanted their grip on the rich continent to maintain their
dominant and powerful world position. Applied Pan-Africanism terrified the West as it concretely and successfully challenged white supremacy.

Many Pan-Africanists perished at the hands of their former colonizers and colonial puppets for voicing and acting on their Pan-African visions: Amilcar Cabral, one of Africa’s foremost anti-colonial leader and the father of the Guinea-Bissau nationalist party was assassinated in 1973; South African anti-apartheid activist and the founder of the *Black Consciousness Movement* Steve Biko died in 1977 after twenty-two hours of torture and beatings; Norbert Zongo the Burkinabé publisher and editor of *L’Indépendant*, was found burnt in a vehicle in 1998; and many more whose names have not made it into the books (Adi & Sherwood 2003). Other famous Pan-African leaders escaped assassination but were imprisoned or exiled for their action geared towards the social, economic, military and political unification of Africa including, but not limited to: President Nelson Mandela from South Africa who was imprisoned for twenty-seven years (Mandela 1994); President Modibo Keita from Mali, who devoted his life to African unity, and was arrested and imprisoned in 1968 until his death in 1977 (Boilley 2005); Jomo Kenyatta who was arrested in 1952 for allegedly being a member of the *Mau Mau*¹ and was imprisoned for seven years before becoming the first president of Kenya, (Odhiambo, 2008). Pan-African leaders, thinkers, scholars, poets and artists that emerged during the African independence era were vilified, physically and/or verbally abused, and silenced by Euro-Western forces terrified to lose their grip on Africa. Ray (2007) argues, “while malevolent forces have not used the same methods to eliminate each of these great pan-Africanists, they have been guided by the same motive: to keep

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¹ Mau Mau was a militant African nationalist movement that advocated violent resistance against British domination in Kenya.
Africa in chains” (p. 8). Euro-Western forces were determined to keep Africa a subordinate, servant to the West. A truly independent Africa threatens white supremacy and challenges racial, social and political hierarchy, which continues to be the status quo.

2.5 Pan-Africanism and Hip-Hop

Hip-hop and Pan-Africanism are related in their aspiration to artistically and politically challenge white supremacy by affirming Black and African identity in a Eurocentric world that has distorted the images and histories of Black peoples. Whether during slavery or colonialism, Ahmad and Bhat (2013) state, “the ceaseless efforts of the colonialists towards the denigration of African and the distortion of their history ultimately destroyed the basic character of African societies” (p. 2). Hip-hop and Pan-Africanism are racial movements established by Black people with the goal of reclaiming their “Africaness” by telling their stories, realities, and truths, challenging the devaluing histories told by the colonizers (Ahmad & Bhat, 2013; Drame, 2004; Havard, 2001). Hip-hop has become a universal movement used to unapologetically express the lived-experiences of marginalized communities, particularly Black communities, and encourages political activism (Adler, 2004; Chang, 2007; Charry, 2012). While hip-hop is not “essentially” black, the movement continues to communicate a largely “black” discourse of urban marginality (Perry, 2009, p. 232). Pan-Africanism, on the other hand, is an ideological, political and philosophical movement aimed at recognizing, uniting and uplifting Black peoples, the most disenfranchised of the world. Oloruntoba (2015) argues, “pan-Africanism as an ideological and philosophical force has defined the struggle to ensure the collective realization of the destiny of the Black race across the Atlantic by political and intellectual leaders of African descent both at home and in the Diaspora”
In this sense, both grassroots movements were created as a response to black marginalization and oppression, and to resist white supremacy and domination in the U.S., Africa and the rest of the world. Both movements are founded on Black nationalism and seek to unify Black people through their common experiences of racism, oppression, and dispossession.

Pan-Africanism and hip-hop embrace the ideology of African nationalism and Black nationalism, respectively, which advocate for black unity, self-determination and the liberation of the mind (Asante, 2003, Tommie, 2005). Nationalism, in both cases, takes form as a “social corrective” “as it seeks to correct errors, exploitation and oppression on the ideological, political and economic levels,” and as a “collective vocation,” which calls for “the commitment to unified and permanent collective action to achieve self-determination, to defend our [Black/African] interests and develop our potential as free and productive people” (Karenga, 1974, p. 24). Pan-Africanism, African and Black Nationalism and hip-hop are organized around a conception of black identity and blackness, understood as sources of pride (Eze, 2013; Tommie, 2015). According to Henderson (1996), “Black nationalism has structured hip-hop in the past and continues to do so…In the early days of hip-hop in the 1970s, this nationalism developed from the collective ethos of the Black community that spawned this new genre” (p. 315). Perry (2009) also argues that hip-hop “retained a critical capacity to convey a signifying blackness of representational force and emotive meaning” (p. 232). A revival in Black pride through the recognition of Black culture and Black identity, and the underlying sentiment of being marginalized as a people has informed the critical hip-hop movement and Pan-Africanism.
Pan-Africanism encourages African peoples to come back to their cultural and historical roots and African ways of knowing, which has been stripped away through centuries of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. According to the African Union Department of Social Affairs (2013), “Pan-Africanism is also seen as an endeavor to return to ‘traditional’ African concepts about culture, society and values” (p. 1). In this sense, hip-hop goes back to African roots by embodying oral tradition (Aterianus-Owanga, 2015; Banks, 2010). Many African hip-hop artists exploring African traditions in their rap music, like Daara J and Didier Awadi in Senegal, have claimed to be going “back to the roots” (Aterianus-Owanga, 2015, p. 148). While Western scholars Sajnani (2013) and Tang (2012) trouble the idea of rappers as modern griots due to the simplified understanding of griotism and its relationship to rap music, I argue that conscious hip-hop artists reflect the essence of griotism; the essence of storytelling through music.

Hip-hop and musical artists in West Africa have differentiated themselves from traditional griots, griots by birth, by calling themselves modern griots. While Tang (2012) argues that “the griot is usually historically situated, seen as thing of the past, from which the modern griot has evolved over time” (p. 81), Tang is approaching the research with a Western linear understanding of history, ignoring our Afrocentric framework, which situates the past as being part of the present; our ancestors, our griots and our traditions are part of the present. While griots are different from modern griots, because they are born griots and continue to perform traditional functions, such as “singing praises for name-giving ceremonies, marriages and other rite of passage and performing for entertainment,” (Leymarie-Ortiz, 1979, p. 183), their common goal to
pass down knowledge orally using their voice and traditional instruments remain the same. According to Banks (2010):

The emcee (or MC) in Hip Hop culture functions in much the same way as the West African *djeli* (the Mande word for oral artist) or *griot* (a more commonly known term in the West). Like these oral artists, the emcee also tells of his community’s issues, its values, its ancestors, its heroes and heroines, its triumphs, and its struggles—‘impacting lessons of social and political history,’ as scholar Isidor Okpewho writes of the *griot*. (p. 240)

Conscious hip-hop artists in Africa, particularly in Senegal, have identified as modern *griots* (Aterianus-Owanga, 2015; Tang 2012) reflecting the Pan-African aspiration of going back to African roots by using oral traditions to: voice political and socio-economic issues faced by their people, and pass down African knowledges.

In many African countries, particularly Senegal, authentic hip-hop resonates with the Pan-African question of “Africanity,” and the affirmation of an African identity not defined by the West but by Africans. Eze (2013) argues that Africanity “is not dependent on race but on our varying, mutating historical circumstances and its divergent degrees of internal differentiations” (p. 2013). Embracing our “Africanity” does not mean embracing our “race” but understanding and accepting the complexity of our African identities and personalities according to our historical contexts. According to Kwame Nkrumah:

An important aspect of Pan-Africanism is the revival and development of the African personality, temporarily submerged during the colonial period. It finds expression in a re-awakening consciousness among Africans and peoples of
African descent of the bonds which unite us—our historical past, our culture, our common experience and our aspirations. (Makinda & Okumu, 2008, p. 1)

Across the continent, many African hip-hop artists have transcended their African identities through their conscious music (Aterianus-Owanga, 2015; Sene, 2012).

Aterianus-Owanga (2015) claims that famous rappers like Daara J and Didier Awadi in Senegal and the duo Movaizhaleine in Gabon² use “traditional instruments, vernacular languages, and traditional religious symbols to their creations, and they have become, across the whole continent, icons of an ‘Africanized’ and conscious hip-hop” (p. 148).

When hip-hop first appeared in Senegal in the 1980s, it took form with a strong Western and American influence (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008; Sene, 2012). According to Senegalese rapper Xuman from Pee Froiss, in the beginning Senegalese hip-hop artists were wearing American clothes, Nikes, big chains, rapping in English about stuff they didn’t understand (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008). This changed when many Senegalese hip-hop artists—Didier Awadi, Duggy Tee, Xuman & Pee Froiss, Ndongo D, Daara J, Djiby Daddy, Bakhaw, Da Brains, P-Blow & Jah, Tigrim-Bi, etc.—realized that they had a responsibility to respect and represent Senegalese and African cultures by addressing Senegalese realities and staying away from commercial hip-hop glorifying gangster life (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008). Rapper Xuman explains that in Senegal he could never rap about “yeah, I’m a gangster, I kill people” because “in our culture, we must be conscious, we must think about the future” (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008). Ndongo D from Daara J states that Senegalese hip-hop artists became aware that rap was a form of expression that could educate people, and many started to

² Movaizhaleine, composed of Maât Seigneur and Lord Ekomy Ndong, is the oldest and most famous rap group in Gabon.
write radical lyrics in Wolof to communicate with their people and speak on their behalf in their languages (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008). According to Thomas (2008), “Artists such as Daara J, Fou Malade, and Dakar All-Stars, along with Awadi and Radical, make music that mesmerizes, aesthetically and politically, voicing genius, opposition, and pleasure in black resistance to neocolonial and economic injustice” (p. 536). To anchor themselves in their African identity, conscious hip-hop artists use African traditions, languages, religions, values and knowledges, to, as Didier Awadi states, “express what is deeply in their heart and to fight for noble objectives” (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008).

Didier Awadi identifies himself as a pan-Africanist and uses hip-hop music to reflect the histories, experiences and ideologies of the African peoples—understood in a Pan-African perspective (Awadi, 2010; Awadi 2012; Awadi, 2015; Létourneau, 2012). Awadi agrees with Léopold Sedar Senghor’s belief that what binds the African community goes beyond history; it is rooted in prehistory (Awadi, 2010, track 19; Awadi, 2015; Létourneau, 2012). Présidents d’Afrique speaks to the whole African community and encourages the African people to go back to their cultural and ancestral roots in order to completely emancipate themselves from different forms of domination. His album is a testimony to the possibilities of real liberation for Africa and the African people if we adopt Pan-Africanism as a political movement. His historical album embraces Pan-Africanism as a “historical expression of a common consciousness, a shared sense of African/black identity, and a metaphysical core with which to restore the humanity of black people all over the world” (Eze, 2013, p. 670). Hip-hop gives Awadi the space necessary for him to use his voice and the voice of Pan-African leaders in the interest of
3. Literature Review: Hip-hop and political activism

3.1 Music as rebellion and education

History reveals that music has played a powerful role in political activism. According to Branham (2002), “words and melody and harmony and rhythm merge to form shimmering patterns of sound that float across the air, carrying political words that ‘would be death to speak’ in the form of musical messages” (p. 3). For centuries, political activists have created and utilized music to express their political situations with the goal of—directly or indirectly—contributing to social justice. Scott (2003) states, “from ‘The Marseillaise’ to ‘We Shall Overcome,’ there has probably never been a revolution that did not use songs to give voice to its aspirations or rally the morale of its adherents” (P.1). Music has been intrinsically linked to protest movements seeking to end systems of oppression, including but not limited to slavery, colonialism, apartheid and segregation (Abdullah, 2009; Darden, 2014; Denisoff, 1983; Goffman, 2010; Gray, 1999; Hirsch, 2002; le Roux-Kemp, 2014; Monson, 2007; Morant, 2011; Murphy, 2003; Turck, 2009). Communities and individuals across the world have utilized music as an agent for change and as a tool for resistance and liberation, particularly by people of African descent (Abdullah, 2009; Allen, 2004; Darden, 2014; Gray, 1999; Hanson, 1995; Morant, 2011).

Many scholars (Abdullah, 2009; Allen, 2004; Biko, 1978; Darden, 2014; Mbaegbu, 2015; Turck, 2009) argue that music has been a vital part of African life. According to Mbaegbu (2015), “various African writers have highlighted this aspect of the cultural life of the Africans by saying that music has rooted itself in African culture so much so that it has become part and parcel of their everyday life” (p. 177). Africans have used music as a form of communication, education and knowledge transmitter that
privileges African oral traditions. Allen (2004) affirms that in Africa, “communication remains aural and oral as opposed to specular and written,” as in the Western World (p. 2). For centuries, Africans have used oral traditions to educate their children and make sense of the world. According to scholar Patience Elabor-Idemudia (2002), “oral forms of knowledge, such as ritualistic chants, riddles, songs, folktales, and parables, not only articulate a distinct cultural identity but also give voice to a range of cultural, social and political, aesthetic, and linguistic systems—long muted by centuries of colonialism and cultural imperialism” (p. 103). Imperialism imposed Western values and epistemology in education and all aspects of African life, legitimizing the authority of written text over oral literature. Due to imperialism, “African oral literatures were not accepted as genuine and valid forms of social, cultural, political, legal, and economic expression. As such, for the European powers that were in control of African life…only written literature (in colonial languages) was to be regarded as meaningful literature” (Abdi, 2007, p. 43). As a result, African cultures and oral traditions, considered backward and “primitive,” were vilified and degraded with the goal of colonizing not only African lands but also African minds.

Colonialism created a powerful dichotomy by equating written text to the civilized West and oral literature to the “Other” and uncivilized Africa (Abdi, 2007; wa Thiongo, 1998). The selective marginalization of colonized populations positioned the colonized as the “Other,” “those who are not from the West, and who are by extension, deficient in manners, values, cultures, education and development, [and] oral traditions, which mostly characterized these societies, were also relegated to historical non-significance” (Abdi, 2007, p. 42-43). Literacy hegemony has its root in the historical
power relationship between the master and the slave, the colonizer and the colonized, the White and the non-White (wa Thiongo, 1998). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1998), a renowned Kenyan writer and political activist, observes:

The dominant social forces had become identified with the civilized and the written. With colonization the same binary opposition was exported to Africa, with the written and the civilized being identified with Europe as a whole, while rural, the oral, and the ahistorical were identified with Africa. The product of the oral no longer belonged to history because quite clearly the colonizer did not want the colonized to have any claims to any history as the basis of his resistance and affirmation of humanity. (108)

Establishing written text as the legitimate means to know, educate and learn, purposely established Africans as ahistorical beings in need of salvation and of someone “civilized” writing their history to give it significance.

Imperialism gave Whites the authority to write, invent and falsify African history to advance their colonial agenda (Diop, 1974). According to Peterson and Macola (2009), “the metropolitan archives ‘contained the history of European interests in Africa, rather than the history of Africa itself’”(p. 1). As a result, Africans and Africa have been portrayed, identified and described through the colonial, Western and racist eye. Mainstream education, defined as Eurocentric, Western and colonial, continues to reinforce the legitimacy and superiority of written text. I agree with the author of Noise: The Political of Economy, Jacques Attali (1985), when he states, “for twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible”
This work seeks to privilege education, understood as a social and community-based pedagogy, over schooling, defined as colonial conditioning. More specifically, this thesis seeks to reclaim African knowledges and oral literature “to provide some of the missing chapters on the histories and experiences” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 156) of historically oppressed African peoples by demonstrating the power words of the mouth and songs have in educating and encouraging societal change.

Steve Biko, a South African anti-apartheid activist, highlighted the role music has played in the life of Africans and African descendants by stating, “to the African, music and rhythms are not luxuries but part and parcel of their way of communication. Any suffering we experienced was made more real by song and rhythm” (Biko, 1978, p. 60).

Through music, Africans have made sense of their life by voicing who they are through their experiences, “who they want to be, what they believe in and what they want” (Allen, 2004, p.2). Attali (1985) argues, “music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world” (p. 4). When 12.5 million (from which only 10.7 millions survived the Middle Passage) Africans were forcibly removed from their African homeland and taken to the Americas to be slaves, they tightly held onto their musicality (Darden, 2014; Morant, 2011; Shebar, Barrow, Kalikow &Wong, 2009; Turck, 2009). Darden (2014) affirms, “The slaveholders did not destroy the slaves’ music. It was too firmly entrenched in all of Africa’s children, too potent, too much part of their DNA to ever fully eradicate” (p. 3). Music not only connected enslaved Africans to their homeland, but it became a platform for self-expression and resistance to their inhumane suffering and oppression.

The gross institution of slavery stole the dignity and humanity of the African peoples by “completely subjugating slaves physically, mentally and spiritually through
brutality and demeaning acts” (Sullivan, 2001, p. 22). Enslaved Africans used music to retain their identity and humanity, unite as a people and as a form of resilience and resistance (Abdullah, 2009; Darden, 2014; Gray, 1999; Hirsch, 2002; Mbaegbu, 2015; Neuman, 2008; Sullivan, 2001). According to Sullivan (2001), “music became a way to remain connected to their African heritage while protesting the bleak conditions African-Americans faces throughout history” (p. 21). Music was central in the organization of slave uprisings (Sullivan, 2001). As a result, slave masters prohibited the use of drums, which were brought from Africa, and used by slaves to “spread messages in a rhythmic language undeciphered by Whites” and to “orchestrate revolts on land and on slave ships” (Sullivan, 2001, p. 21). That did not stop enslaved Africans from making music. They improvised using their hands to clap and their voices to sing (Neuman, 2008; Shebar, et al., 2009; Sullivan, 2001). Morant (2011) states, “even with restrictions that required the enslaved people to adapt their musical expression, Africans managed to maintain their musicality as a significant cultural expression still visible in all forms of popular Black music” (p. 72). Adapted to reflect the experiences of harsh labor on the plantation, the enslaved Africans’ work songs, rooted in their African heritage, were coded shouts of protests (Shebar, et al., 2009).

Slave songs evolved into a new musical genre named *spirituals* (Shebar, et al., 2009; Turck, 2009). This transformation took place because slaves were obliged to attend church by their masters to hear the message of Christianity, which was carefully tailored to enforce and glorify slavery (Shebar, et al., 2009). According to Dr. James Norris, a professor of music at Howard University and the director of the Howard Choir, the enslaved men and women took this new language of Christianity to create their own
spirituals, which brought hope, visions of escape and carried coded messages for liberation (Shebar, et al., 2009). Neuman (2008) observes:

In circumstances of complete repression and surveillance, the one activity that plantation owners allowed and even encouraged, was singing. From the perspective of the “master,” singing was a sign of the slaves’ contentedness. Music served as an acceptable medium between the dangerous presence of verbal communication and the paranoia inspired by “loud silences”…From the perspective of the slaves, however, singing became a rare vehicle for safe expression, a veneer of obedience that masked deeper politics. (p. 9)

Slave songs and spirituals, which had layered meanings, became the common “shadow language” by which enslaved Africans could carefully communicate their desire for freedom and their plan to gain it (Abdullah, 2009; Darden, 2014). Darden (2014) argues, “Now connected by a common form of expression, something radical as ‘change to the existing order’ could thus be shared from slave to slave, plantation to plantation, state to state” (p. 9). For enslaved Africans, music was a unifying force that challenged the institution of slavery and that had the potential to transform slaves’ collective predicament (Abdullah, 2009, p. 13). Dr. Norris states, “I marvel at how we got through all of this, at how we got through it all by what? Singing.” Singing was to the liberation movement what water is to a plant; it gave it life and sustained it. In addition to being an agent of change, music was also used to lift up spirits and give hope in times of extreme suffering and hopelessness.

Singing as a source of enjoyment when one’s freedom and life is threatened by a violent, oppressive system can be understood as an act of resistance (Allen, 2004).
According to Allen (2004), “to achieve joy and pleasure in a context in which one’s humanity seems not to be recognized is fundamentally to contest the situation” (p. 6). In other words, when an institution is established to purposely oppress, hurt, denigrate and strip individuals from any sense of humanity, joy, self-worth or pleasure, being able to find these crucial sources of life is being defiant to the whole system altogether. Allen (2004) asserts, “in such situations, then, the political power of music lies fundamentally not in the protest anthems or praise songs, but in the space it creates for small personal pleasure and enjoyment” (p. 6). Using music as a source of enjoyment and pleasure was a way for enslaved Africans to reaffirm their humanity by protesting the environment that sought to deny it. The music of the enslaved Africans became the wellspring for generations of musicians who will create the blues, jazz, the protests song of the 1960s and hip-hop.

Music has been recognized as a “universal language” that can be appreciated by anyone that has the ability to hear, regardless of one’s race, gender, cultural background, class, or age (Abdullah, 2009). Peoples from the four corners of the world and over centuries have used music as a source of enjoyment but more importantly as a powerful tool for political activism. According to Gray, “liberation music is not unique to a particular country or century, for as long as inequality between people exists, those who feel oppressed will find strength and inspiration in music” (Gray, 1999, p. 30). Oppressed people have found power and hope in music, which has proven to be crucial in organizing political movements that challenge the oppressive status quo.
3.2 Black resistance and liberation: Beyond music

From blues, to jazz, to highlife, to mbalax, to rock and roll, to folk, to rap, music in its different forms has been used to share, support and change political values (Bennett, 2000; Leung & Kier, 2008; Street 2012). John Street (2012), the author of *Music and Politics*, argues that music “does not just provide a vehicle of political expression, it is that expression” (p. 1). Music, understood as an expression of humanity rather than as an object, comes from the heart and speaks to the heart with the goal of creating emotions that may turn into actions (Higgins, 2012; Stone, 2010; Street, 2012). Higgins (2012) states, “music is an important part of what makes us humans as well as a vehicle for recognizing—and directly experiencing—our humanity. By enabling us to feel our interconnection as human beings, music can help us be more humane” (p. 2). This political statement affirms that music as a universal language can play an important role in connecting humans through emotions expressed in music, creating a world that is more understanding and humane. Many scholars (Cooke, 1959; Higgins, 2012; Juslin, 2013; Njoora, 2015; Stone, 2010) argue that, “music is the language of emotions” (Cooke, 1959). In the West, this phenomenon has received three different explanations: “that music imitates or cognitively represents emotion, that music expresses emotion, and that music arouses emotion in musical participants” (Higgins, 2012, p. 119). In her book entitled *The music between us: Is music a universal language?*, Higgins (2012) makes a strong connection between music and emotions, and the role music plays in politics. In this sense, music goes beyond the simple auditory sense. In the context of critical hip-hop, music is a subversive form of political activism reflected in the lifestyle, clothes, political actions and commitments. In Senegal, hip-hop music is about what is said and
how it engages with political activism. The authenticity of Senegalese hip-hop is measured by the commitment demonstrated to political activism. In sum, music can be a transformative agent for political activism.

According to Michael Broyles, professor of musicology at the University of Maryland, “music in the service of political agenda has been the norm, not the exception” (Taylor, 1995, p. 505). Major political movements—such as the Abolitionist Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panther Movement, the South African Liberation Movement—have identified their purpose to particular genres of music that embodied the cause they were fighting for. According to Street (2012), “Many struggles for independence from imperial rule to other forms of oppressive control have been accompanied musically” (p. 43). Music fed these liberation movements and vice versa. African American spirituals, gospel music and folk played a pivotal role in the struggle to end racial segregation and discrimination against Blacks during the Civil Rights Movement (Darden, 2014; Rose, 2007; Turck, 2009). The Soul and Funk music of the 1960s and 1970s, on the other hand, defined the Black Panther Movement (Miller, 2015). Miller (2015) states, “As the Civil Rights Movement moved into the Black Power Movement, music was very much part of the new sense of black identity that was forming and music played a fundamental role in this transition.” Perhaps the most vibrant testimonial of music’s political power in the quest to end oppression is the South African Liberation Movement.

An increasing number of scholars (Allen, 2004; Charry, 2012; Counsel, 2004; McIlvaine, Herson & Moore 2008; Ogude and Nyairo, 2003; Schumann, 2009; Waterman, 1990) are researching the important role of popular music as a medium for
total political site in Africa because it is the most widely appreciated art form on the
continent” (p. 1). In many African countries, people are engaging their political
circumstances through music. Political music has used everyday life experiences to
challenge dominant ideologies and power structure. According to Mbaegbu (2015),
“Often times African music re-echoes the state of injustice done to any oppressed section
of the Africans, either by the white man or by some wretched and dictatorial African
leaders” (p. 181). South African music during the struggle against apartheid was no
exception.

The South African Liberation Movement would not be recognizable without the
music that drove and identified the movement (Gray, 1999; Hirsch, 2002; le Roux-Kemp,
2014). In 1948, the white government of South Africa established one of the most brutal
systems of segregation the world has ever known. Throughout the struggle, there was
liberation struggle was paramount and in this conflict one of the transformatory forces
which manifested itself was the extensive use of liberation or protest songs” (p. 30).
Music and specific songs became organizers for the liberation movement. Vuyisile Mini,
who was a South African political activist and considered one for the greatest composers
of freedom song, was hanged in 1964 by the government because of his powerful
influence on the struggle against apartheid. The apartheid government felt threatened by
the political music that protested the discriminatory regime, giving it more value,
importance and legitimacy (Allen, 2008, p. 6). Professional musician Mollie Stone,
summarizes music in South Africa as an “incredible tool that people use to create change
in their world. Through singing, they preserve their cultural identity, resist oppression, and fight for freedom” (Turck, 2009, p. 114). While political protest music in Apartheid South African has been widely studied, many other political causes have been articulated through music across Africa (Allen, 2004; Charry, 2012).

In Africa, musicians have commonly been recognized as influential agents of change capable of inciting political activism. Morant (2001) argues, “more than mere entertainers, Black musicians are the village griots, the revisionist historians, and the voice of a people” (p. 71). Many African musicians use music to educate and raise awareness of political and socio-economic issues faced by their population. From poverty, to corruption, to neo-colonialism, musicians denounce and challenge African realities with the hope of encouraging the government to act on these pressing matters. According to Allen (2008), in Africa, “to a certain extent music functions in a politically effective manner because it is expected to do so, by both rulers and subjects” (p. 2). Musicians are expected to represent their people—nationally and sometimes ethnically—and utilize their privileged access to a public platform to speak for the needs and demands of the population. In Senegal, for example, rapper Maxi Krezy affirms that in hip-hop, it became a trend to talk about politics, to the point where when one was not doing so, one was not recognized as a legitimate hip-hop artist (Sene, 2012). While many different genres of music in Africa have fostered political activism—from highlife in Ghana (Agovi, 1989) to zouglou in Côte d’Ivoire (Schumann, 2009; Schumann, 2013)—hip-hop has been recognized as a continental political force that resists the current state of affairs and demand change for Africa and the African peoples.
3.3 The beginning: Hip-hop music, youth and the political message

Hip-hop\(^3\) has become a political force that emerged as a tool of *resistance* to the status quo and to authority (Chang, 2007). According to Dr. Todd Boyd, also known as Notorious Ph. D, “hip-hop is inherently political, the language is political. It uses language as a weapon—not a weapon to violate or not a weapon to offend, but a weapon that pushes the envelope that provokes people, makes people think” (Simon, 2003, p. 2). Hip-hop is often represented as being born in the 1970s in the post-civil rights urban ghettos of the South Bronx, New York, when young African Americans and Latinos expressed their frustrated realities as minorities in a particular historical and economic climate and in a society that perpetuated institutional racism, systemic discrimination and socioeconomic inequalities (Adler, 2004; Chang, 2005; Chang, 2007; Charry, 2012; Clark, 2013; Kitwana, 2002; Malone C. & Martinez G, 2015; Rose, 1994). Later in this chapter, I will discuss the research that points to the African origins of hip-hop. According to author and Journalist Eisa Ulen, “the original hip-hop artists are the children of Caribbean immigrants, African Americans that either participated in the Great Migration or descended from runaway slaves that had escaped to the north and the New York Puerto Rican, or Nuyorican” (Ulen, 2008, p. 568). Forty years ago, race riots; urban renewal, which further disenfranchised African Americans; arson; the government neglect of educational and social services programs; accelerated white flight; and job loss contributed to an urban despair (Chang, 2007, p. 61). As a result, “the poor youth of the Bronx found ways to pass time: rapping in a style adapted from Jamaican reggae with Bronx slang over funky Afro-Latin-influences grooves, dancing widely to the percussive

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\(^3\) This paper reclaims the term *hip-hop* to its original meaning and objective so the term is used throughout this paper to refer to critical hip-hop.
breaks, spray painting their nicknames on walls, buses, and subway trains” (Chang 2007, p. 61). Hip-hop was born.

This thesis, which focuses on critical or original hip-hop, differentiates this form of artistry and self-expression from its controversial cousin, mainstream or commercial hip-hop, which can be violent, sexist and misogynistic (Clark, 2013). According to Clark (2013), “mainstream American hip hop is a product of record corporations that have produced artists and images that are little more than apolitical, stereotypes of what Black culture is supposed to be” (p. 1). Unlike mainstream hip-hop, critical hip-hop is conscious—by this I mean it examines issues of systemic oppression and provides a collective sense of hope—and carries a political message and a desire for justice and change, specifically for those who are part of marginalized and vulnerable populations. The art of rapping, which includes the delivering lyrics, can be powerful, dynamic, passionate and emotional, especially when a reality is exposed in a society that seeks to hide it. Rap refers solely to spoken lyrics while hip-hop encompasses a whole culture (Morgan & Bennett, 2011, p. 177).

Hip-hop is comprised of the artistic elements of: DJ-ing and record spinning or turntabalism; the delivery and lyricism of rapping and MC-ing; breakdancing and other forms of hip-hop dance; and graffiti art and writing (Adler, 2004; Charry, 2012; Kitwana, 2002; Morgan & Bennett, 2011; Reeves, 2009). According to many, including hip-hop DJ Kool Herc (Chang, 2005), who is often referred to as the founder of American hip-hop, and Gangsta Rap hip-hop artist Ice-T (Adler, 2004), hip-hop is a way of life that encompasses more than these four elements and includes “the way you walk, the way you talk, the way you look, the way you communicate” (Chang, 2005, p. ii). Rapping is
therefore the lyrical and musical reflection of the hip-hop movement it its political affirmation. Consequently, within the critical hip-hop movement, a hip-hop artist is someone who embraces the racially-conscious and resistant political mindset of the hip-hop movement within her/his creative work and her/his everyday life.

Hip-hop has become a global phenomenon where groups of marginalized youth have adopted and adapted hip-hop according to their realities and their cultures across the world (Charry, 2012; Chang 2007; Chang 2012; Marsh & Petty, 2011; Morgan & Bennett, 2011; Sajnani, 2013; Saucier, 2011). According to Morgan and Bennett, “as hip-hop’s cultural beliefs became more widely understood, global hip-hop began to take on a character of its own, reflecting the culture, creativity, and local styles of the youth who embraced and produced it” (Morgan & Bennett, 2011, p. 141). Similarly to other social and political movement, hip-hop was propelled by dynamic youth with the goal of provoking societal change.

Youth has been at the forefront of the hip-hop movement and other social movements that are seeking to transform society and contribute to positive changes and social justice. Many scholars (Chang, 2005; Duncan, 1996; Gladney, 1995; Henderson, 1996; Ogbar, 1999; Trapp, 2005; Watkins, 1998) support “the view of hip-hop as a social movement that harnessed the energy of disenfranchised, primarily African American, youth” (Trapp, 2005, p. 1482). Through hip-hop arts, young people have used their own voice to express themselves: what they were going through, what they resented, and the change they needed for the society they wanted. Clay (2012) affirms, “social movement representations of youth suggest that young people have always been at the center of political activism and social change” (p. 3). She continues by stating, “youth have been
characterized as the backbone of the civil rights, feminist, antiwar, and gay and lesbian liberation movements” (p. 3). Youth, with their energy and dynamism, have historically been those inciting change, hoping to transform their society into one they want to live and grow in. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while youth has been on the forefront of progressive movements, youth has also participated in spreading oppressive and racist organizations like Stormfront. Recognizing that contemporary form of activism may be different than previous social justice strategies, young people are using hip-hop to make their voices heard with the intention of stating and affirming their vulnerable life experiences and of opening avenues to discuss important issues that need to be addressed.

In order to understand hip-hop, we need to look at its historical, social, political and economic roots, which informed the conglomerate of artistic forms.

In the 1970s, the government and outsiders characterized the South Bronx as a place of extreme poverty, with blocks of burned-out buildings, high unemployment, street gangs, violence and murder. The “urban renewal” rights of clearance condemned entire neighborhoods and uprooted African-Americans, Puerto Rican, and Jewish families who were forced to relocate to places like east Brooklyn and the South Bronx where public housing was booming but no jobs were available (Chang, 2005, p. 11). By the mid-seventies, South Bronx had lost 600,000 manufacturing jobs, or 40% of the sector, average per capita income dropped to half of the New York city average, and official youth unemployment reached 60%, although youth advocates argue that the true number was close to 80% (p. 13). On October 5th, 1977, President Jimmy Carter walked the desolated streets of the South Bronx, “drawing the world’s attention to the neglect and abandonment that made the borough a symbol of urban decay” (Fernandez, 2007, p. 1).
Three years later, Ronald Reagan visited the South Bronx and was astonished, stating “I haven’t seen anything like this since London after the blitz” (Adler, 2004). Reagan was a man “burdened with racial prejudice on a personal level” (Longley, Mayer, Schaller & Sloan, 2007) and visiting the South Bronx benefited his agenda to toughen up on crimes and cut back on federal spending, maintaining structural inequality and oppression. The South Bronx was a dangerous place where, according to pioneer hip-hop DJ AJ, nobody wanted to come to or live in (Adler, 2004). Jeff Chang, an American journalist and a hip-hop music and culture critic, states, “if Blues culture had developed under the conditions of oppressive, forced labor, hip-hop culture would arise from the conditions of no work” (Chang, 2005, p. 13). It was in this particular, notorious New York neighborhood, where a sense of collective understanding toward structural oppression; in this particular political, economic and racial climate that islands of compassion and freedom were created against all odds. Young artists, invisible to society, turned their experiences of poverty, violence and despair into creativity.

Hip-hop was a creative innovation established by the South Bronx Youth in contexts of marginalization, poverty and racism. Chuck D, a member of Public Enemy and an author and producer, argues that kids made something out of nothing when they used old records and turntables to establish a new genre of music. According to Michael Holman, the creator of the hip-hop based television program Graffiti Rock, “hip-hop was truly a response to these kids being marginalized. This was their way of saying: ‘We are not nobodies, we are somebodies’ and to me, this is really what hip-hop is all about: ‘look at me’” and see me (Adler, 2004). To DJ Kool Herc, who has been credited as the father of hip-hop by pioneers like Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bombaataa, Chuck D, KRS-One,
DJ AJ, DMC, Hammer, Ice-T and hip-hop scholars (Adler, 2004; Carrick Hill 2013; Chang, 2005; La Bennett, 2009), hip-hop says “come as you are” (Chang, 2005, p. i). Hip-hop was about “Keepin’ it Real” (Pennycook, 2007; Watkins, 2012) and “cultural assertion of what the streets felt like—the good, the bad and the ugly” (Malone & Martinez, 2015, p. 7). Hip-hop was about recognizing and affirming the presence of young Blacks and Latinos in American society.

Hip-hop started with DJ-ing (Adler, 2004) and DJ Kool Herc, a Jamaican born American, became a legend in the South Bronx when he came out to parks with his big sound system provided by his father to work his turntables for 3000 people who jammed to his tunes. According to Fab 5 Freddy, a hip-hop pioneer and a member of the Brooklyn-based graffiti group The Fabulous 5, “the aspect of the park jams, smashing open the base of the street lights and plugging into the city’s power was like ‘yeah.’ The fact that we were taking the power was hot!” (Adler, 2004). These parties were about living and having fun, an alternative to hanging out on the streets characterized by violence, drugs and gangs. Hip hop was also a way for youth to mark their presence in a society that treated them as second-class citizens, through the loud music, the dancing, the rapping and graffiti, when painters would “steal into the subway system, do incredible works of art and get out” to assert: “yeah, we are here!” (Freddy Fab 5 in Adler, 2014).

Afrika Bom bataaa, who was an MC, a DJ, a graph writer, a B-Boy and a member of the Black Spades gang, took hip-hop to a new level when he introduced the concept of peace, love and unity through his music and the creation of the Universal Zulu Nation (Adler, 2004). He consciously attempted to re-direct the energy of gangsterism into hip-hop. According to Morgan and Bennett, Afrika Bom bataaa “founded the community-
based organization in the 1970s to promote peace, unity, and harmony among battling
gangs and peoples. The Zulu Nation utilized black liberation ideologies to bring to its
many global followers a mantra of interplanetary humanism” (Morgan & Bennett, 2011,
p.184). Because of Zulu Nation’s parties, instead of fighting each other with guns and
fists, one’s crew would battle another crew on the mic, with records and with dancing,
and people would gather around as if a fight was happening (Adler, 2004).

When music entrepreneur Sylvia Robinson released the first hip-hop record
*Rapper’s Delight* by Sugar Hill Gang in 1979, the music industry realized the potential
power rap music could have and everything changed (Adler, 2004; LaBennett, 2009;
Malone & Martinez, 2015; Rose, 1994; Watkins, 2006). Hip-hop, which was once
invisible to the wider public, became visible and a new era of hip-hop began. According
to Malone and Martinez, “while the song exemplified the cultural recognition of hip hop
as a community-based ‘block party,’ it also opened this new form of self-expression up to a
wider commercialization” (Malone & Martinez, 2015, p. 8). In 1982, Grandmaster Flash
and Furious Five released *The Message*, with the push from Sylvia Robinson, which
publically transformed hip-hop from a more party sound to social and political
commentary (Adler, 2004; Henderson, 1996; Stewart, 2005). By definition, hip-hop was
political from its inception because it emerged in resistance to a particular political and
socio-economic climate. Robinson, however, made hip-hop’s political message explicit to
the public eye with the words of *The Message*. When the song came out, KRS-One felt
like “finally, someone is telling the world how we live and what we’re going through”
(Adler, 2004). Wonder Mike from the Sugar Hill Gang states that *The Message* was a
lyrical portrayal of what was happening in the inner city and it was “the first prominent
song to provide lyrical social commentary. It took rap music from house parties to the social platforms later developed by groups like Public Enemy, N.W.A and Rage Against the Machine” (Adler, 2004). Hip-hop was slowly transforming into a more political genre of music.

Public Enemy, rap’s first super-star group, was more than a hip-hop group. These rappers were politically minded activists encouraging Black people to know about themselves and their situations (Adler, 2004; Chang, 2005; Morgan & Bennett, 2009; Rose, 1994). Public Enemy was trying to elevate Black youth with their powerful words, political stance and music. According to Malone and Bennett, as “one of the most influential groups to uncover injustice and encourage activism,” Public Enemy “shaped the early overt politicization of hip-hop music and culture in the United States and elsewhere” (Morgan & Bennett, 2009, p. 183). Chuck D articulated that times were much too serious to be saying “throw your hands in the air like you just don’t care” (Adler, 2004). They were racially and politically conscious and were able to embody an era of confrontation with their music and lyrics.

In 1988, after Ice-T opened to the door to West Coast Gangsta Rap, N.W.A followed Public Enemy’s path. N.W.A, however, was more explicit and aggressive in their content when they expressed their sustained anger and addressed the issue of power, which appealed to the marginalized youth. KRS-One states that N.W.A was not their group name, “Niggaz With Attitude was. Can you stomach that America? It was saying ‘yeah, we niggaz, so you don’t have anymore power’” (Adler, 2004). It was the first time that a hip-hop group was using the word nigga from a position of empowerment. According to journalist Cheo Hodari Coker, their album Straight Outta Compton was
much more in the spirit of the Black Panthers than what Public Enemy was doing because it was all about re-claiming power with their language. Straight Outta Compton, which some would argue (Adler, 2004) was the most influential album in the history of hip-hop, was highly political. After the release of “Fuck the Police,” expressing how Black people were tired of being harassed and beaten by the police, N.W.A was placed on the F.B.I watch list (Adler, 2004; Gray, 2015). From Grandmaster Flash to Public Enemy to N.W.A, these politically, racially, and socially conscious hip-hop groups influenced hip-hop culture in the United States and across the world, including Senegal and Africa. Female MCs, including Queen Latifah, Sha Rock, MC Lyte, Missy Elliot, have also made their marks in the male-dominated hip-hop culture.

3.4 Women in hip-hop

Although hip-hop has been recognized as a movement that challenges inequity, it is at the same time a male dominated and patriarchal industry. Since its creation, however, women have been innovators, making important and powerful contributions to the four essential elements of the genre (Ulen, 2008, p. 568). It was after all because of Sylvia Robinson, a female visionary bold enough to record the first rap song and encourage Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five to create The Message, a lyrical social commentary, that the breadth of hip-hop is what it is today (Adler, 2004). She has, nevertheless, received less attention in the history of hip-hop than her male counterparts. Kool Herc is known as father of hip-hop, so why isn’t Sylvia Robinson recognized as the mother of hip-hop? Women have and still continue to be rappers, graffiti artists, DJs and breakers (Pough, 2007, p. 79). Women MCs like MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, Sha Rock, Lauryn Hill, Missy Elliot, Foxy Brown, Salt-N-Peppa, TLC, Rah Digga, Mia X, Da Brat
and more, have been responsible for changing hip-hop and bringing Black women’s voices and experiences to the forefront of the movement. Skillful female MCs “devour and set to rhyme black women’s history, social life, and dreams of being treated with respect as women in America” (Morgan, 2005, p. 428). Through their music, women MCs have addressed issues of social justice, gender equality and respect for women, adding and transforming hip-hop into a more inclusive culture. One of my favorite female rapper Queen Latifah, “can be judged by her songs and her words to be an exceptional leader committed to fomenting social change by prodding her community to change behaviors and address pressing problems and by encouraging African American women to develop high self-esteem” (Trapp, 2005, p.1490). With their lyrical skills, female MCs have made a conscious effort to “provide full assessment and critique of racism and sexism, while offering alternatives that explicitly explore social class as well as desire, emotion, power, and patriarchy” (Morgan, 2005, p. 435). Women MCs have created hip-hop music with the same persistence and creative power as men, “promising to free the black community, using hip-hop to reach the masses with songs of liberation that celebrate the lives of Africans in the Americas” (Ulen, 2008, p. 571-572). The voices of women MCs have been central to the hip-hop genre in reflecting the lived experiences of black women (Morgan, 2005; Ulen 2008).

3.5 Black voices: Hip-hop as a reflection of lived experiences

Hip-hop is based on the life experiences and socio-economic realities of the young, primarily African American and Latinos kids, who had the desire to be heard, respected and understood by their society (Adler, 2004; Rose, 1994; Stewart, 2005). According to Dr. Tricia Rose (1994), author of *Black Noise: Rap music and Black culture*
in contemporary America, “rappers speak with the voice of personal experience, taking on the identity of the observer or narrator” (Loc. 197). Rap music takes a stand and places Black experiences and Black culture at the center of its art form, prioritizing “black voices from the margins of urban America” (Rose, 1994, Loc. 185). Using their language and their voice, rappers communicate how they live daily as racialized youth in America and more broadly in the world. When speaking from your truth and experience, it is difficult for others to dismiss your reality. Christopher Malone and George Martinez (2015), authors of The Organic Globalizer: Hip hop, political development and movement culture, agree with Arlene Tickner who argues:

What makes hip-hop unique among popular musical genre is the way it relates to everyday life. In reflecting on poverty, inequality, exclusion, and discrimination; claiming a positive identity based on those conditions; and offering musical, linguistic and corporal tools for commenting on them, it transcends the bounded sites where it is practiced and participates in a symbolic network that circulates globally. (p. 5)

Hip-hop, rooted in real experiences rather than fiction or research, has locally and globally grounded social and cultural movements geared toward social justice (p. 5). For example: in the United States, hip-hop is a social movement that “examines post-civil rights African Americans and their struggles to assimilate” in an oppressive American society; in Burkina Faso, hip-hop pioneer Smokey and reggae artist Sams’K Le Jah founded Le Balai Citoyen (the Citizen’s Broom), a political grassroots movement part of the opposition against Blaise Compaoré, which continues to grow as a major youth social movement challenging corruption and neo-colonialism; in Senegal, hip-hop was at
the forefront of the *Y'en a Marre* movement that continues to fight for socio-political and economic changes and rights; in Japan, hip-hop has become an avenue to “challenge government whitewashing of the WWII military atrocities, question racism in Japan, criticize the nation’s sex industry, rap about teenage bullying-victims-turned-schoolyard-murderers” and question global issues such as the Iraq war (Condry, 2006, p. 2-3). Across the world, hip-hop has been a tool for people on the margins of society to speak up and speak out about issues that matter to them and to society. Rose (1994) states that hip-hop has been successful in legitimizing and rendering Black voices significant. According to Rose (1994), “Rap music is a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America” (Loc. 184). Rose (2008) also contends that the commercial success has been partial due to male dominance in a movement engrained in a patriarchal and imperialist society that tends to silence the voices of women and particularly women of color. Hip-hop has challenged racism while at the same time being patriarchal, revealing the tensions in the movement. Patriarchy and racism, however, are connected forms of oppression.

For centuries, Blacks have been silenced by slavery, white supremacy, colonialism and neo-colonialism. While the Civil Rights Movement “employed the polite and nonconfrontational discursive style of the middle class in order to construct the image of the equal worth citizen,” the Black Power movement created a new discourse style that emphasized black presence and confronted white supremacy (Morgan, 2005, p. 431). Dr. Todd Boyd states, “I think what Black Power did and what hip-hop would pick up on later, was move away from the sort of passive sense of suffering, ‘We Shall Overcome.’ Hip hop is much more active, much more aggressive, much more militant.”
According to Morgan (2005), “as a result, African American speech in white-dominated contexts went from childlike, feminine, overly polite, and self-effacing to aggressive, impolite, direct, and in-your-face threatening” (p. 431). Hip-hop artists embody that discourse by using their own, unique and confrontational language assertively. Nelson George states that everything about Public Enemy, for example, scared white people: what they talked about, what they wore and what they were saying (Adler, 2004). Instead of being compliant with White America, critical hip-hop groups resisted and denounced the continued racism and socio-economic inequalities that persisted for Black people with their voices and their own language.

Hip-hop gives a legitimate space to voices that have often been disregarded, ignored and omitted. Chang (2012) states, “although hip-hop is mainstream in many places today, it is still considered a voice for the oppressed” (p. 62). Young people across the world are using hip-hop as a tool for self-expression in order to question and critique conventional aspects of society while promoting political activism with the goal of transforming and contributing to a better and more just society (Chang 2007; Clark 2012; Clark 2013; Fredericks 2014; Marsh and Petty, 2011; Watkins, 2006). Marsh and Petty (2011) states, “hip-hop continues to be a constructive and contested space in which marginalized young people around the world ‘both resist and challenge social ideologies, practices, and structures that have caused and maintained their subordinate position’” (p. 135). Hip-hop is a form of rebellion to colonial structures. Furthermore, “global hip hop has emerged as a culture that encourages and integrates innovative practices of artistic expression, knowledge production, social identification, and political mobilization” (Morgan & Bennett, 2011, p. 177). While the culture has spread all over the world, hip-
has recently become one of the most important musical and cultural movements in Africa (Clark, 2012, p. 23).

3.6 African traditions of musical resistance

While Herson (2011) claims that hip-hop is part of Western music and culture and has been appropriated by other cultures, mainly in Africa, other scholars (Charry, 2012; Clark, 2013; LaBennett, 2009; Persley, 2014; Turck, 2009) argue that hip-hop, particularly the art of rapping, has its roots in African traditions and has been borrowed by the West. According to Clark (2013), “hip hop’s origins are rooted in African storytelling and musical traditions and built on African American society and political resistance” (p. 1). Music has been an important part of African and African American culture for centuries as a “source of socialization, social change, political thought, and expression of desire, religious belief and love” (Morgan, 2005, p. 427) During the slave trade of Africans in the Americas, African-Americans created distinct music, which sank deeply in their oppressive realities as slaves while rooted in their African heritage (Sullivan, 2003). Sullivan (2004) states, “Music became a way to remain connected to their African heritage while protesting the [oppressive and cruel] conditions African-Americans faced throughout history. Musical protest took on assorted forms and functions as Blacks strove to advance their social station while simultaneously retaining their cultural heritage” (p. 21). Music has been used by African-Americans as a form of rebellion and protest against their inhumane treatment under the hands of Whites during slavery. From Negro spiritual to Jazz and Blues to Hip-Hop, music has been a powerful and creative tool for self-expression and resistance for people of African descent (Sullivan, 2004).
Hip-hop’s presence in Africa dates back to the 1980s and 1990s and has had an important influence in countries like Senegal, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda (Charry, 2012; Clark, 2012). According to Clark (2012), “when hip-hop arrives in Africa in the 1980s it swept across the African continent like a tidal wave, starting with smaller segments of the youth population and by the 1990s becoming firmly implanted in almost every country on the continent” (p. 23). Hip-hop has provided African youth with the opportunity to participate in social, political and economic discourse on a national and global level (Clark, 2012, p. 23). Clark states, “this participation is seen in the lyrical content emanating from hip hop music all over the continent, providing for rich social commentary in the form of socially conscious hip hop” (p. 23). In Africa, socially and politically conscious hip-hop has taken particular roots in Dakar, Senegal, where hip-hop called for social justice and change since its inception in the late 1980s. Clark argues, “some of the more politically charged African hip hop scenes are found in Dakar, Senegal and Cape Town, South Africa, where socially conscious artists have been at the force of both the hip hop scene as well as social movements” (Clark, 2012, p. 36). Conscious hip-hop has not only received popular support in Senegal but it has become a crucial platform for socio-political engagement (Bassene, 2013; Bryson, 2014; Charry, 2012; Enz & Bryson, 2014; Fredericks, 2014; Gueye, 2013; Herson, 2011). According to Gueye (2013), “Senegalese Hip Hop has evolved as a platform for young people to be politically engaged and socially active” (p.22). In Senegal, rappers have used their lyrics accompanied by traditional musical instruments to: create movements against politicians who have abused their power; encourage Senegalese youth to vote; advocate against female genital mutilation; fight for
access to basic healthcare, education, water, electricity and food; condemn neo-colonialism; reflect the harsh socioeconomic realities experienced by people; expose the continued grip of the continent by Western powers; and restore and reclaim an African identity. Through the artistic mediums like hip-hop, young Senegalese have confronted the stagnant political culture by expressing their concerns with social ills (Enz & Bryson, 2014).

3.7 Hip-hop in Senegal

Rap music surfaced in Senegal in the 1980s with the emergence of *Positive Black Soul* (PBS), the first African rap group to gain international success, of which Didier Awadi was part. Hip-hop exploded onto the Senegalese music scene in the 1990s (Bassene, 2013; Charry, 2012; Fredericks, 2014; Oumano, 1999; Sene, 2012). In Senegal, the environment created by unfavorable socio-economic circumstances, unemployment growth, acute economic crisis, political stagnation, and the crisis of the education system, was the perfect climate for the birth of rap music (Wane, 2012). Hip-hop provided young artists with a platform to passionately express their frustrations and desire for change.

The year 2011 proved crucial for the recognition of hip-hop as a political force in Senegal. As president Abdoulaye Wade announced his intention to run for a third term by changing the constitution, which limits the presidency to two terms, Senegalese youth stood up against this unwanted situation (Bassene, 2013; Bryson, 2014; Fredericks, 2014; Gueye, 2013). Angry citizens took the streets in protest and were violently struck back with arrests, tear gas and violent dispersal. In response to what was perceived as unjust and corrupt, “a group of rappers and journalists, calling themselves *Y’en a Marre* (We’re Fed Up) [Enough is Enough], succeeded in arousing dormant social consciousness of
Senegalese society through community organization, written manifestoes, social media, thundering oratory, striking visual imagery, and unifying hip-hop anthems, attracting enough followers to ensure Wade’s defeat and his peaceful exit from office” (Bryson, 2014, p. 33). Y’en a Marre played a vital role in defeating Abdoulaye Wade and has sustained tremendous momentum by continuing to create and produce music that denounces and condemns the harsh socioeconomic and political issues faced by the Senegalese population (Bryson, 2014). In September 2014, Y’en a Marre united over fifteen hip-hop artists and singers to create a Senegalese song and video mixing Mbalax⁴ and rap for the fight against ebola, urging the population to take precautions to prevent the spread of the epidemic.⁵ Hip-hop has developed a notorious, even self-perpetuating reputation as a spectacular cultural movement committed to defying the cultural and political mainstream (Watkins, 2006, p.5).

Hip-hop has been committed to attack the status quo, and as a result it has been viewed as a malign and disruptive movement. Ironically, however, predominantly White institutions, like Yale and Princeton, now have hip-hop studies classes. It is interesting in that political hip-hop that challenges colonialism and White privilege is actually in many ways a critique of these very schools now offering hip-hop studies classes. Hip-hop based education is not new and has been incorporated in a number of New York City public high schools since the 1990s, as witnessed at El Puente Academy in Brooklyn (Hall, 2009). Classes on hip-hop are presently offered at Berkeley, Stanford, Michigan, Yale, MIT, NYU, Princeton, University of Massachusetts, and Columbia (p. 86). Within the hip-hop literature, critical African hip-hop has been overlooked by academia because it is

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⁴ Mbalax is the national and popular dance and music of Senegal and the Gambia.
⁵ The video can be watched on youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2tARLMyyJc.
a relatively new phenomenon but also because, sadly, most things coming from Africa are ignored by mainstream Eurocentric focused academia. *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, edited by Eric Charry, is one of the few books that explores how Africans are contributing to the hip-hop movement and how the youth are creating politically engaged music that aligns with African cultures. In Senegal, specifically, while few scholars have published papers focusing on the *Y’en a Marre* movement and its positive role in building a new civil society, no one has academically written about Didier Awadi, who has a powerful international voice and continues to create politically engaged music that educates and seeks to reclaim the vision of the African fathers of independence.

This thesis contributes to the existing literature of hip-hop by focusing on how hip-hop in Senegal has been used as decolonizing public pedagogy that reclaims Pan-Africanist visions, histories and truths, which has not been explored to date. There is a dearth of academic work about hip-hop in Senegal, yet it is central to political public pedagogy in Senegal and throughout the continent. As an international African revolutionary presence, Didier Awadi uses rap accompanied by African beats to awaken the youth to their histories, their realities, their position in this world, and the power they hold in changing their situations. His efforts to reveal the richness, histories, beauty, and potential of Africa and its peoples as well as his determination to contribute to a better Africa through hip-hop should be recognized in hip-hop literature.

### 3.8 Didier Awadi: A hip-hop artist with a political message

Didier Awadi was born in Dakar, Senegal in 1969. His parents were primary school teachers and his Beninese father was a talented musician who played the organ
According to Radio France Internationale (RFI), “Didier shared his father’s passion for music, but in the early ‘80s, the young teenager was drawn to a totally different sound: rap” (Radio France Internationale). Inspired by American hip-hop artists—including Grandmaster Flash, Public Enemy and Afrika Bambaataa—Didier Awadi formed his first hip-hop group in 1984, Le Syndicate. It was in 1989, however, that Didier Awadi and his friend Doug E. Tee founded PBS. As the first hip-hop group in Senegal, PBS struggled to get their new genre of music heard and be respected by elders, who thought they were trying to be American (Oumano, 1999, p. 30). “When we started to rap in our own language and talk about what was going on in our country” states Awadi, “their visions of what we were doing changed, and people listened—not just the youths, but also the elders” (p. 30). PBS’s politically engaged lyrics and beats spoke to the Senegalese population because the group addressed important issues of poverty, corruption and education, which related deeply to the everyday life of Senegalese peoples, especially the youth.

In 1992, one of France’s most internationally popular and influential hip-hop artist McSolaar picked up on PBS on a trip to Dakar and invited the duo to perform a series of gigs in Europe (Radio France Internationale). In 1994, PBS released their album Boul Falé—which directly translates to Don’t Follow—which catapulted their international music career. Since the beginning, PBS was committed to create politically engaged music that encouraged political activism (Sene, 2012). After seven albums and thirteen years of collaboration and music tours, Didier Awadi started his solo career in 2001 with his first album Parole d’honneur, without ever officially bringing PBS to an end, (Radio France Internationale). Radio France Internationale states, “right from the start of his
career, Awadi used his rap as a vehicle for his protest message, raising his voice in support of the anti-globalization cause” (Radio France Internationale). Awadi argues that his music has a good, noble and worthy objective, and that “musical activism is what I do. I will not be a politician. I go everywhere with my music and say ‘this is the situation and we want this to change’” (McIlvaine, Herson & Moore, 2008). For the 50th anniversary of African independence, Awadi released his much anticipated project *Présidents d’Afrique*, which resulted in a documentary entitled *The United States of Africa* produced by Yanick Létourneau, and important discussion with organizations like UNESCO concerning the issues of learning and teaching about African history.

*Présidents d’Afrique* re-positions important African and Black leaders—including Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, Malcolm X, Norbert Zongo, Nelson Mandela, Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Cheikh Anta Diop, Aimé Césaire, Samora Machel and more— within History, since they along with their meaningful messages have been politically and physically eliminated by Western powers. This repositioning is crucial in reclaiming an African identity. In *Présidents d’Afrique*, Didier Awadi chooses to include the speeches of Diasporic Black influential leaders like Martin Luther King and Malcom X because as an identified Pan-Africanist, Didier Awadi believes that their messages and legacies are not only important to African Americans but have also influenced and impacted the Black community globally, beyond borders. Eze (2013) argues, “these stories and historical events that we memorialize as people of African origins share equal constitutive character worthy of pan-African status insofar as they offer a contemporaneous historical memory for African peoples” (p. 678). Historical events and stories that speak for and to Black experiences can be powerful for the
recognition and the fight of all people of African descent who share a similar history of dispossession, oppression, and racism.

To situate Didier Awadi in the wider context of music and political activism, it is important to understand Awadi’s Pan-Africanist political views and how he links them to music. Didier Awadi’s music is unapologetically political as he uses thought-provoking themes, words, and sounds to create specific political messages, which condemn colonialism, neo-colonialism and racism and embrace Pan-Africanism and African cultures, knowledges and epistemologies. Didier Awadi has publically and musically denounced the policy of many African leaders, who continue to follow their former colonizer and their capitalist agenda, instead of breaking the chains of colonialism and embracing Pan-Africanist ideologies—like those of Thomas Sankara. This condition of dependence prevents Africa from moving forward in a way that respects, privileges and aligns with African ways of life. Awadi’s songs link music, thoughts and actions. His music “embodies political values and experiences, and organizes our response to society as political thought and action” (Street, 2012, p. 1). His music articulates a particular political message to awaken and organize the youth for the purpose of changing the current state of Africa’s politics, economy and colonial residual mindset. With his music, Awadi encourages the new African generation to act with their political will, power and rights.

Today, Didier Awadi is undoubtedly the most visible Francophone African rapper (Gomis, 2011). His critical music, and specifically his album Présidents d’Afrique, has inspired me to continue unveiling the economic, political, social and cultural contributions Africans have made to the world and the persisted efforts from Western
powers to erase them in order to maintain their control on the continent. This study addresses a gap in the literature—the connections between hip-hop and political education and activism in Senegal and more broadly in Africa.

The objective of this thesis is to examine how hip-hop has been used in Senegal by Didier Awadi to educate the youth about African histories as well as current socio-political realities, and to encourage political activism. The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. How does Didier Awadi’s critical Senegalese hip-hop address sociopolitical tensions in decolonizing educational work in Senegal?

2. What aspects of African histories and knowledges is Didier Awadi’s work, particularly *Présidents d’Afrique*, restoring and reclaiming, how and for whom?

3. What are the dominant perspectives included and legitimized in Didier Awadi’s work *Présidents d’Afrique* and what are the impacts of this inclusion?

4. What are the pedagogical/educational underpinnings of Didier Awadi’s art?

This study addresses the political, educational and decolonizing aspects of critical hip-hop in Senegal, which have not been addressed by the academic hip-hop literature.
4. Methodology

4.1 Challenging Eurocentric knowledge: Afrocentric decolonizing methodology

For centuries, knowledge has been generated by the colonizer, creating an imperialist, taken-for-granted history that ignores and erases indigenous histories and knowledges. The history of Indigenous peoples has been silenced with the hope of erasing the memory of their realities, and creates a Eurocentric history recognized as the legitimate and normative narrative, which maintains white supremacy. According to Smith (1999), “imperialism frames the indigenous experience. It is part of our story and our version of modernity…Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly” (p. 19). Many researchers (Asante 1987, Asante 1987, Chilisa 2012, Collins 1990, Mkabela 2005, Reviere 2001, Smith 1999) have sought to challenge the hegemonic Eurocentric approach to research and the creation of knowledge in order to include and recognize the experiences, realities, histories and knowledges of Indigenous peoples. Smith (1999) states, “having been immersed in the Western academy which claims theory as thoroughly Western, which has constructed all the rules by which the indigenous world has been theorized, indigenous voices have been overwhelmingly silenced” (p. 29). This thesis seeks to de-center Europe from research and affirms that Africa—the land, the peoples, African cultures and knowledges—should be placed at the center of analysis when conducting research about or for the African community. In other words, this thesis seeks to decolonize and Africanize research by “examining all data from the standpoint of Africans as subjects and human agents rather than as objects in European frame of reference” (Mkabela, 2005, p. 179). This thesis affirms that indigenous populations—populations that have been colonized and oppressed for
centuries—possess invaluable knowledges that can shed light on the past, the present and the future, while positively contributing to the advancement of the global community.

My research is grounded within the decolonizing perspective and commits to “rewriting and reright our [indigenous] position in history” (Smith, 1999, p. 28). This thesis is a testimony to the history of the colonized peoples; the story that has been distorted, falsified and erased, a crime that has yet to be recognized by the West (Diop, 1974). According to Chilisa (2012), “decolonization is thus a process of conducting research in such a way that the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalization are given space to communicate from their frames of reference” (p. 14). The decolonizing epistemic framework stands for those who suffered slavery and European colonial rule, the disposed and disfranchised, to allow Indigenous peoples to reclaim what is rightfully theirs: their histories, their experiences, their knowledges, their languages, their arts and their minds.

Within the decolonizing perspective, I choose Afrocentricity, as opposed to a colonial science, to counterpoint the Eurocentric epistemic framework. Afrocentricity challenges the perpetuation of white supremacy in Africa and the rest of the world with the goal of re-asserting African peoples’ agency (Asante 1987, Asante 2003, Mkabela 2005, Reviere 2001). According to Molefi Asante (2003), “Afrocentricity is a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location, and actualization of African agency within the context of history and culture. By agency is meant an attitude toward action originating in African experiences” (p. 3). Afrocentricity recognizes the value of knowledges generated by African civilizations that independently accomplished significant cultural, historical, scientific, artistic, technological and socio-economic
achievements and developments. Furthermore, this paradigm encourages African peoples to tap into these knowledges to exercise their human agency. Dr. George Dei (2010) stresses, “the teaching and learning of Africa by contemporary students and educators of African culture, history, language, religion, political economy, and development must approach the subject matter through an Afroscopic lens or an African-centered perspective” (p. xviii). As students and teachers, we have the responsibility to see what Africa has to teach us and approach her teachings from our African experiences.

Afrocentricity locates African interests and cultures at the center of research and analysis, normalizing the African point of view instead of marginalizing it. This decolonizing epistemic framework argues for the importance of including and cherishing the knowledges generated by the lived experience of the African peoples. Molefi Asante (2003) argues, “to the degree that it [Afrocentricity] is incorporated into the lives of millions of Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora, it has become revolutionary, attacking the very falsifications of truth and attitudes in self-hatred that have oppresses a great many of us” (p. 2-3). Afrocentricity allows for the rejection of the feelings of inferiority that may have been internalized or accepted by the colonized African after centuries of mental and physical torture. This perspective calls for the liberation of the colonial mindset—the liberation of false beliefs implanted by slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism—and the reappropriation of the African mindset, one untarnished by colonial and Eurocentric ideals.

In order to do this decolonizing work, as a researcher I have the responsibility to examine myself and recognize how my identity as a black, woman scholar in the Western world has shaped how I view the world. My upbringing, my lived experiences, and my
position in society have affected how I conduct research. I recognize that as an academic trained in traditional Eurocentric schools, I have been engrained in Western epistemology, ontology and axiology, which limit the extent of my ability to fully decolonize my work, even though that is my intention. I am nevertheless committed and welcome the challenge of creating a decolonizing thesis that embodies African knowledges.

4.2 Situating myself and my role as a decolonizing and Pan-African researcher

As a student, a researcher and a member of Euro-Western society and the African Diaspora, I have continuously questioned the taken-for-granted truths and knowledge present, normalized and legitimized by Western society. From an early age, my father expressed the importance for me to be proud of my African heritage and my dark skin, which bluntly contradicted what I had learned, or purposely not learned, in Belgian society. I was schooled, socialized and educated in Belgium, where the normalization of Belgian colonialism is apparent in different sectors of society. Through this normalization, Belgian education—in Belgium and the colonies—promoted mental colonialism, an act determined to create a sense of inferiority within the colonized Other to keep her/him in a state of subordination. In other words, through education, Belgian colonizers reinforced the fabricated belief that Africans were “savages” and “uncivilized” and needed to follow the White man’s way in order to become “fully” human, rejecting their own African cultures and themselves as a result (Fanon, 1967). According to the Martinican revolutionary philosopher Frantz Fanon (1967), “the more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. The more he rejects his blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become” (p. 3). Mental
colonialism is the most damaging form of colonialism as its chains are invisible and transmitted across generations. In school, I never learned about Leopold II’s colonial and genocidal horrifying acts in the Congo or any form of colonialism in Africa. Informally, however, Tintin in the Congo, one of Belgian’s most famous comic book, supposedly reflected the colonial era in the Congo. This controversial comic book is racist not only because the drawings represent Africans with jet-black skin and huge lips, but it also portrays the “natives” as infantile and stupid. In social settings, I cannot tell you how many times I have heard racial jokes and comments that were offensive but seemed accepted. The colonial point of view is everywhere. Belgium has bathed in colonial ideals for centuries and it will take time and consciousness to eliminate not only the residues of the colonial period but new forms of colonization that has emerged as a result—as seen in the DRC.

My father led by example and I remember so many instances when he stood up to racist comments and actions, which was sadly common when we lived in Belgium. One time, we were driving in Brussels and a car pulled up next to us with four young Caucasian men who rolled down their windows and screamed “Go back to the Congo, you Monkey.” I remember the feeling of shame I felt and the knot in my stomach, which quickly disappear when my father said: “Let’s get them.” He started racing behind them and I was scared of what would happen next. At the next red light, he got out of the car, walked up to the young men’s car with intention and the boys started to panic and closed their windows. My father start hitting the car window hard and screamed: “you racist pricks, trying to diminish me…” whatever he said next, I forgot, but I will never forget
how my father was determined to keep his dignity. Nobody was going to rob him of his dignity.

My father taught me how to love Senegal and Africa. I admired my father and he admired the leaders of African independence: Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Haile Selassie, Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, etc. who fought for the restoration of African dignity. Keeping in mind that these leaders are all men, due to the lack of opportunities for women across the world to participate equally in the political sector, these men nevertheless embraced and spread the Afrocentric values of truth, or ukweli; community, or ujamaa; harmony/peace, or utulivu; commitment, or kujitoa; and justice, or uhaki through their leadership roles. My father talked about these leaders often with passion, and told me how they fought to reclaim their countries, continent, cultures, traditions and economy. His stories awakened a desire in me to fight for justice, for pride and for Africa and Africans. My father embodied Pan-Africanism: he wore his dread locks with pride along with his military pants like Lucky Dube⁶, who wore them until 1994 to show his support for the fight for freedom in South Africa; he wore his Che Guevara hat; and drove in his pickup truck painted with figures of Che Guevara, Nelson Mandela and Bob Marley. He was not afraid to speak publicly about corruption and neo-colonialism in Senegal and Africa. After 20 years away from his home country, my father returned to his roots in Senegal in 2005. My critical consciousness was developed with influences from: my parents and upbringing, my position in Belgian and North American society, and the higher education I received, and

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⁶ Lucky Dube is the pioneer of African reggae, a Rastafarian and an anti-apartheid activist who fought the apartheid regime with his strong socio-political music.
these molded me into a Pan-African woman determined to unveil history and honor the contributions of Africans and the continent to the world.

As a researcher, I position myself as a transformative healer, which “involves self-reflection and self-questioning about the researcher’s responsibilities as well as relationships with others, the living and nonliving” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 189). I am conscious that in order to be a good researcher, I need to engage in a self-reflexive process with the goal of recognizing, examining, and understanding how my social background, location, and assumptions can influence my research (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.3). According to Chilisa (2012), “these multiple positions require knowledge production approaches that are multiple, interconnected, and sensitive, engaging researchers with ethical issues that position them as healers who need to heal themselves before they can assist others to heal” (p. 190). As a researcher and ultimately a human being, I need to deeply understand myself and examine how my position in society, my cultural background, my “race,” my experiences, and my upbringing have shaped and affected my understanding of the world. Furthermore, I need to engage in a process of self-healing that will allow me to approach my research from a compassionate and level-headed mind and heart rather than from a place of hurt.

As a transformative healer, I am committed to research and work for the colonized Other who has suffered continuous marginalization and whose voice has been ignored, disregarded and omitted. I challenge and resist “the blind Euro-Western application of methodologies across all cultures” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 191). This means conducting research that is decolonizing and opens the horizon to new concepts, theories, research methods, and standards founded in the different knowledges of the colonized Other,
rather than perpetuate “self-serving Western research paradigms” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 7). Instead of approaching research in a “Euro-linear” view, which “seeks to predict and to control,” (Asante, 1987, p.18) I approach this thesis with an “Afro-circular” perspective with the goals of interpreting and understanding (p.18). By entering the field, I am consciously leaving my preconceived notions and beliefs behind in order to open my mind and heart to the knowledge and information presented to me based on the lived experiences of my participant. I position myself as a student in relation to Didier Awadi, ready to learn and critically understand his musical, political and pedagogical work. This thesis places the experiences and ways of knowing of the Senegalese peoples, including Didier Awadi, at the center of research and it is from this perspective that Awadi’s music is contemplated. In other words, it is from my African mind, heart and soul that I want to write this paper rather than from my Western mindset, which can limit how I research, analyze and disseminate my findings. I am aware of my bias in choosing Pan-Africanism as my theoretical framework and Afrocentricity as my epistemic framework because of the influences of my Pan-African father. I also recognize the limitations of Pan-Africanism and Afrocentricity in addressing issues of gender, contrary to Anti-Colonialism. In my future work, I would like to rethorically look more at intersections to include issues of gender by engaging with a discursive framework. Furthermore, in order to truly decolonize and Africanize my work as a scholar, I need to engage with African frameworks and perspectives articulated on the continent. According to UNESCO (2015), “the idea of Pan-Africanism was thus driven initially by black Americans and West Indians seeking to establish contact with Africa after slavery in their respective countries.”
In order to understand, celebrate, recognize and share African knowledges, I need to look at the knowledges developed on the African continent instead of outside of it.

I am evaluating the findings of my research by using Reviere’s (2001) five research criteria, which are based on the African principles of Ma’at and Nommo. Ma’at is an African concept that dates back to the Egyptian civilization and was a fundamental part of their life. In ancient Egyptian religion, Ma’at was “the personification of truth and the cosmic order” (Doniger, 2006, p. 674). Nommo, means “the productive word” (Asante, 1987, p. 88) and “describes the creation of knowledge as a vehicle for improvement in human relations” (Reviere, 2001, p. 711). Molefi Asante (1987) uses and expands on these notions to demonstrate the ways in which African concepts can inform the foundation of knowledge. While I am using Reviere’s (2001) five “canons” or research criteria, I was informed by a professor at the University of British Columbia, who is a Kiswahili native speaker, that some terms were incorrectly translated. According to the Swahili-English dictionary (1968) and McGrath and Marten’s course for beginners in Swahili (2003), the definitions of the principles utulivu and uhaki have been reversed and mistranslated. As a result, I am using the definitions provided by the English-Swahili dictionary (1968). The five Afrocentric criteria are:

- **Ukweli**: defined as the groundness of research and the concept of truth. According to Chilisa (2012) ukweli “require researchers to establish whether the conclusions reached are representative of only their own position or whether they represent a consensus of the researched and other opinions” (p. 191).

- **Ujamaa**: which calls for the recognition and maintenance of the community (Reviere 2001).
• **Kujitoa**: a concept that emphasizes the need for the researcher to recognize how “knowledge is structured and used over the need for dispassion and objectivity” (p. 716).

• **Utulivu**: “requires a research procedure that is fair to all participants” (p. 720).

• **Uhaki** (also spelled Haki): is the concept of justice required for legitimate research (p. 717).

These meaningful criteria of research evaluation serve as counterpoints to the Eurocentric notions of objectivity, validity and reliability. Chilisa (2012) states, “the five canons speak to procedures and strategies for establishing rigor in research and establishing credibility, truthworthiness, dependability, validity and reliability as commonly known in quantitative research” (p. 191). They ground the authenticity of analysis within the Afrocentric epistemic framework.

This work seeks to provide space and legitimization to other ways of knowing and understanding the world. In order to engage in knowledge production that is decolonizing and ethical, a researcher needs to engage with “imperialism, colonialism, and globalization to understand the assumptions and values that continue to inform research practices that privilege Western thought and the resistance of the majority two-third of the world’s population to this privileged knowledge” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 48). I need to be aware of taken-for-granted notions of history and global knowledge in order to question, disrupt and bring to light the influence Western thought has had on setting up global norms, research and academia. On a practical level, it means engaging with different, indigenous ways of producing and transmitting knowledge. This thesis argues that
storytelling is a valid form of knowledge that delves into the lived experiences of people to make sense of the world.

4.3 Storytelling as methodology

Storytelling, as part of oral literature, has always been part of African cultures. According to Chilisa (2012), “stories are central to the lives of the colonized Other. They have been used to collect, deposit, analyze, store, and disseminate information and as instruments of socialization” (p. 138). This conveying of events in words, sounds and images has created the historical narrative of most oral and indigenous societies. Vansina (1985) states, “No one in oral societies doubts that memories can be faithful repositories which contain the sum total of past human experience and explain how and why of present conditions” (p. xi). In short, storytelling is part of history. Vansina (1971) argues, however, that members of the hegemonic Euro-Western, “literate societies find it difficult to shed the prejudice of contempt for the spoken word, the counterpart of pride in writing and respect for the written word” (p. 442). Written history has been given the authority to tell the stories of all societies through the eyes of the victorious colonizer. Reviere (2001) states, “Eurocentrics have continuously assumed the right to tell their own stories and everyone else’s—and from a solely one-dimensional perspective” (p. 717). Schooling, which I differentiate from education, is directly related to the maintenance of written and colonial knowledge. According to Smith (1999), “We have often allowed our ‘histories’ to be told and have then become outsiders as we heard them being told. Schooling is directly implicated in this process” (p. 33). This thesis attempts to tell part of Africa’s story through the African eye, mind and heart.
Written history has erased oral history, and therefore the history and memory of Indigenous peoples. Smith (1999) argues:

Writing has been viewed as the mark of a superior civilization and other societies have been judged, by this view, to be incapable of thinking critically and objectively, of having distance from ideas and emotions. Writing is part of theorizing and writing is part of history. (p. 28)

By writing one’s story down, however, one gives oneself permission to forget. With oral tradition, people have the responsibility to remember and retell their story to keep the (hi)story alive. According to Vansina (1985), “the mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation” (p. xi). More than that, however, in indigenous cultures it is important to share your knowledge with your family and community. According to Archibald (2008), “Sharing what one has learned is an important Indigenous tradition. This type of sharing can take the form of a story of personal life experience and is done with a compassionate mind and love for others” (p. 2). This thesis challenges the notion of history as written and reclaims oral literature as a legitimate way of knowing and of recounting, teaching and learning history.

Storytelling is about making connection between values and social organizations, and understanding the way people make meaning in a particular context. Storytelling, therefore, reconfigures history. Mucina (2011) states, “knowledge is the codified essence of experience after communal discourse about its meaning with a specific worldview while using specific language symbolism” (p. 1). Storytelling is about making meaning; getting to the meaning of life through stories. Chilisa (2012) states:
Stories reflect the values of society, are socialization instruments, are data sources and analysis tools, and provide the missing chapters on the history, philosophies, theories, concepts, categories of analysis, and interpretation in research that invokes a postcolonial indigenous perspective. (p. 139)

The stories of the colonized Other bears testimony to the lived experiences of the indigenous and marginalized populations. According to Chilisa (2012), “stories enable writers to get away from the abstraction and rules that are dictated by the Western academic discourse and allow listeners to gain life lessons and draw conclusions from their personal perspective” (p. 149). Storytelling, in a way that approaches data, is the best approximation to narratives, land, space, history and culture as it reflects the values of a society.

Indigenous Professor Jo-anne Archibald refers to storytelling and its application to education as storywork to “signify that our stories and storytelling are to be taken seriously” (Archibald, 2008, p. 3). Storytelling is different from narrative inquiry, as it is not solely based on lived experiences. Stories can be based on lived experiences or they can be myths, legends, and created with the help of one’s imagination. Stories—whether real or created—can be powerful educational tools that teach valuable life lessons too often disregarded by mainstream education. For example, “The Trickster stories remind us about the good power of interconnections within family, community, nation, culture, and land” (Archibald, 2008, p. ix). Stories based on indigenous knowledges can teach us about ethics, history, interconnectedness, love, etc.; things we need to learn in order to grow and develop as human beings. According to Archibald (2008), “The Elders taught me about seven principles related to using First Nations stories and storytelling for
educational purposes, what I term storywork: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy” (p. ix). She continues by stating, “I learned that stories can ‘take on their own life’ and ‘become the teacher’ if these principles are used” (p. ix). Stories grounded in indigenous ways of knowing and told with great awareness and care can touch the heart of its listeners, awakening the emotional being to new knowledge. Archibald (2008) argues, “Stories have the power to make our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits work together” (p. 12). In this sense, stories have to power to educate through human senses that go beyond the intellect and the cognitive, celebrating and recognizing our humanity.

The Eurocentric notion of history clearly distinguishes between the past and the present, creating two separating entities. According to Smith (1999), “writing or literacy, in a very traditional sense of the world, has been used to determine the breaks between the past and the present, the beginning of history and the development of theory” (p. 28). It is a way of stating, “this happened in the past and we are now in the present.” In Africa, however, where the philosophy of Ubuntu—or interconnectedness with others, nature and the spirit world—takes precedence, stories frame the past as part of the present. According to Vansina (1985):

Oral traditions are documents of the present, because they are told in the present. Yet they also embody a message from the past, so they are expressions of the past at the same time. They are representations of the past and the present. (p. xii)

Ancestors and past events have their rightful place in the present. I embrace the indigenous approach to history as a combination of the past and the present that will inform the future. By approaching history this way, I am forced to reexamine how the
history written by the colonizer *deformed* (Smith, 2007, p. 67) the history of Indigenous peoples. Didier Awadi uses rap and music to *retell* the story of our past—our resistant past—through the African frame of reference and knowledges. He uses music to change the dominant narrative of African history.

### 4.4 Didier Awadi as a storyteller

Didier Awadi is a rapper and I am arguing that rapping and singing are forms of storytelling. Being a rapper is a way of telling a story. Chilisa (2012) argues, “songs, dance, and poems are an integral part of the oral literature that communicates historical information on events, public experience, and practice, especially experiences of the formerly colonized” (p. 145). Awadi’s songs should not be merely looked at as musical pieces but as forms of storytelling, carrying important messages of history and hope. His music provides some of the missing chapters of the history of the colonized African. According to Chilisa (2012), “there are countless missing chapters on what the world needs to know about the postcolonial and indigenous people’s histories and their resistance to colonizing ideologies of the former colonizers” (p. 146). Awadi’s songs share the stories of Africans who resisted colonial actions and principles, a chapter of history that has been erased by the dominant historical narrative.

Songs, like stories, are a form of narrative that delves into people’s lives, educating the researcher about how people make sense of the world. Chilisa (2012) states, “songs are also a commentary on people’s lives” (p. 146). She continues by quoting Alagoa (1968) who argues that songs are “capable of supplying subtle insights, local colour and details beyond what archives and other forms of oral traditions can provide” (p. 16). This thesis acknowledges that a song, which is not recognized as a
viable form of knowledge within the Eurocentric epistemological stance, is a form of storytelling and a vehicle of meaning making. Songs have the capacity to focus on particular issues, messages and events important to the colonized Other while creating *emotions* through voice, tone, musical instruments and harmonious melody.

Didier Awadi’s album *Présidents d’Afrique* awakens the heart and particular emotions of resistance, sadness, action and hope, while giving factual and educational information that should be included in history. For the Senegalese youth, his songs play a role in teaching about Pan-African values, established by our ancestors and important to the growth of our people. According to Chilisa (2012), “the social function of a song goes beyond the aesthetic as it also has a didactic role to play in teaching about social morality, societal values, and customs” (p. 146). Awadi maintains African oral tradition by using songs. In his songs, he also includes the native language of each Pan-African leader he dedicated this album to. *Présidents d’Afrique* tells a story of Africa, experienced and seen by Africans. His songs reexamine, retell, reclaim and restore a part of African history.

### 4.5 The data

The data I am using includes the interview that I conducted with Didier Awadi and my analysis of two of his tracks from *Présidents D’Afrique*, which I chose because they best exemplify how his storytelling narrates notions of African histories ignored in Eurocentric and dominant notions of history. In other words, I chose two tracks that best demonstrate how Awadi connects the past to the present to create *history*. His refusal to disconnect the past and the present is a statement of resistance against Eurocentric history and dominant knowledge. It is a way of stating: “yes, we have a history that was denied,
here it is, and it is not something of the past but of the present as well.” History is an interaction of the past, the present and the future. According to Smith (1999), “indigenous groups have argued that history is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization” (p. 30). In sum, knowing the past is an important component to the struggle for self-determination to understand the present and plan for the future.

My data sources are:

a) One-on-one interview with Didier Awadi.

b) Two tracks of Présidents d’Afrique,

   namely Track 11 Oser Inventer l’Avenir and Track 12 Une Seule Origine.

In these songs, I am not just looking at the printed words, but the way in which they are sung and rapped, including the tones, the traditional instruments used for the musical harmony, and what those instruments and words mean in the context in which they are combined. I look at how the rhythmic and lyrical combination of these musical components interconnects with the past, the present and the future. Furthermore, it is not just anybody singing these lyrics, it is Didier Awadi, a Pan-African, Black man from Senegal who affirms in his song Ma révolution: “je suis un activiste musical, rebel et marginal, Awadi super radical,” which translates to “I am a musical activist, a marginalized rebel; Awadi is super radical.” Didier Awadi embodies Pan-Africanism by: wearing his camouflage jacket, which is understood as a form or resistance—like my dad—; his Che Guevara hat; and throwing his fist in the air during concerts, a symbol of Black solidarity and support. The political context in which these songs are rapped and sung are important in understanding the whole meaning of the stories told and narrated by
Didier Awadi. The music he creates goes beyond the words he raps, but encompasses the way he tells different histories as forms of decolonizing public pedagogy.

I will examine the stories told in Didier Awadi’s songs by analyzing the themes, the lyrics, and the emotions awakened through the combination of oral literature—rap—and music. The one-on-one interview will enlighten how Didier Awadi’s background, education, Pan-African ideologies, history and passion informed Présidents d’Afrique and how he became a political activist with a pedagogical goal.

4.6 The politics of translation

In my analysis, I am not giving a word-for-word English translation of the words spoken by Didier Awadi during the interview and of the rap lyrics in his songs as a decolonizing act. To translate the words and phrases word-for-word would mean changing the actual meaning of Awadi’s intricate account and songs, which can only be understood as a whole with its language, cultural context and rhythm. According to van Nes, Abma and Jonsson (2010), “to capture the richness of experience in language, people commonly use narratives and metaphors, [which] vary from culture to culture and are language specific” (p. 314). Endeavoring to translate an experience word-for-word while retaining all of its richness, meaning and complexity is an impossible task. As a result, I will instead give the best approximate interpretation of the meanings conveyed by Didier Awadi by engaging with Paul Ricoeur’s concept of linguistic hospitality, “whose predicament is that of a correspondence without complete adhesion” (Ricoeur, xvi, 2006). Ricoeur (2006) states:

Just as in a narration it is always possible to tell the story in a different way, likewise in translation it is always possible to translate otherwise, without ever
hoping to bridge the gap between equivalence and perfect adhesion. Linguistic hospitality, therefore, is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one’s own home, one’s own dwelling.” (p. xvi)

Instead of trying to give an exact or perfect translation of the data in the English language, I will attempt to carefully and consciously tell Didier Awadi’s stories in my English words and with my own understanding of the world. Keeping in mind, however, that as a mixed Senegalese, Francophone woman part of the Pan-African community, Awadi and I share a similar vision and perspective. I am receiving Didier Awadi’s words with my Senegalese and African mind and my heart, and attempt to express it back in the language that will be understood in North America with the goal of sharing African knowledge.

In order to translate text or songs, the researcher engages in a process of negotiation: choosing words, taking up and letting go, and welcoming the other while using one’s own words. I am acknowledging that translating is a conflicting act when engaging with decolonizing work. To demonstrate the difficult negotiation that takes place when translating text, Chilisa (2012) quotes Xiaobo Yang in her book Indigenous Research Methodologies, “When you translate every sentence, you feel so guilty because you lose so much information, which can only be expressed and understood with one’s own language and cultural tacit knowledge” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 156). I acknowledge the cultural and linguistic limitations of my research by presenting it in English and French, rather than in Wolof.
Euro-Western languages have controlled and dictated how research has been conducted and the text written. Chilisa (2012) argues the following:

Postcolonial theories critique the dominance of Euro-Western languages in the construction of knowledge and argue that indigenous language can play a significant role in contributing to the advancement of new knowledge, new concepts, new theories, and new rules, methods, and techniques in research are rooted in former colonized societies’ ways of knowing and perceiving reality. (p. 57)

I am conscious that through my own limitations I continue to produce, communicate and disseminate research knowledge in dominant languages instead of creating a study that is fully decolonized and embraces Senegalese cultures, languages, and knowledges. Nevertheless, I believe that this research project is important and addresses issues faced by students trying to produce decolonizing work in a Eurocentric educational institution. I am not requesting a solution, but I am simply encouraging a larger discussion concerning the issue of translation and appropriation.

4.7 The one-on-one interview

After receiving the approval of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) in July 2015, I contacted Didier Awadi by email, which I found on his website, with the hope of asking him for an interview. I did not expect a response because as an international artist, I knew he had a busy schedule touring, producing, traveling and giving talks. To my surprise, Awadi responded the same day. He gave me his phone number because he preferred communicating by phone rather than by email. When I called him, he told me that he was in Montréal to celebrate the 25th anniversary of his
hip-hop group with Duggy Tee, *PBS*. Awadi was very nice and told me that if I could get to Montréal while he was staying there, I could interview him. I immediately went online, booked my ticket and flew to Montréal to meet and interview Awadi.

I had the honor and privilege of conducting a face-to-face interview with Didier Awadi. The interview was audio-recorded, which is effective in documenting conversations and interviews as well as music (Murchison, 2012). The interview was conducted in French, as Didier Awadi grew up speaking French, the national and colonial language of Senegal learned in school. While I wish I could have conducted the interview in Wolof in an effort to challenge the dominance of Euro-Western languages in the construction of knowledge, I am not completely fluent. Furthermore, and most importantly, like every student attending formal education in Senegal, I did not learn how to write Wolof. French, the colonial language, is the only language of instruction in Senegalese schools, treating Wolof as a second-class language. Therefore attempting to translate the research from Wolof to English would be a daunting task resulting in the loss of meaning conveyed in Wolof words and phrases.

Interview as a method allows researchers to ask direct questions and gain access to personal thoughts and experiences (Murchison, 2012; Chilisa, 2012). A semi-structured interview is guided by a set of questions that are focused on issues that need to be covered but allows room for the participant to elaborate, interject or add anything they see fit (Murchison, 2012; Chilisa, 2012). The guiding questions that informed the semi-structured interview with Didier Awadi can be found in appendix A. The interview with Didier Awadi, who is an expert in his field, added an irreplaceable voice to this thesis.
4.8 The analysis

Didier Awadi’s album *Présidents d’Afrique* is constructed to present stories that create the unicity of an African story. My argument is to look at these songs as part of an African narrative that lies in the understanding, cultures, ideologies, values and knowledges of the African peoples. This album demonstrates how stories and history are complementary in understanding the past through the lived experiences of ancestors. I examined the album in its entirety to determine the themes, characteristics and tensions voiced in Didier Awadi’s songs. By examining the entire album as a cohesive pedagogical project telling a particular story, I answered the following questions: (a) which story is told (b) whose story is told (c) for whom and (d) by whom? Out of this collection of songs, I will extract a smaller group of songs that particularly delve into the intricacy of African history. In other words, the stories attempting to tell history differently within an Afrocentric framework that connects the past to the present will be chosen for deeper analysis. I will also examine Awadi’s stories integrated in his interview and draw on the interview to develop my analysis of his songs. I am not analyzing his work like a “traditional” researcher but am I seeking to *capture* the lived experiences and realities of the African peoples.

Reviere’s five principles of *ukweli, utulivu, uhaki, ujamaa,* and *kujitoa,* rooted in African philosophy, will be used as tools of analysis to examine the data and guide my findings. By using these five Afrocentric principles, I am taking a stance as a researcher in the legitimization of African knowledges. Reviere (2001) states, “there is an undeclared assumption that only White authorities and experiences are legitimate. Afrocentric research counters this by asserting the legitimacy of African and other non-
European ideals, values, and experiences as a valid frame of reference for intellectual inquiry” (p. 719). Reviere’s Afrocentric canons reflect the values important to African peoples: truth, commitment, justice, community and harmony, and I will conduct my analysis in a way that uses and highlights these ethical principles. According to Reviere (2001), this Afrocentric approach to research “will push the inquiry into higher realm where the methodology and the process of knowledge construction cease to take precedence over the well-being of the people being researched” (p. 709). The well-being of the community being researched is more important than the construction of knowledge. I am not approaching this research with the goal of producing knowledge at any cost, but in unveiling African voices, experiences and knowledges and giving them a legitimate space in academia.

In order to have a better understanding of these African values and how I engage with them, I provide an explanation for each criteria. Following, I clarify how I will use these concepts as a tool for analyzing Didier Awadi’s work Présidents d’Afrique with the goal of creating a robust and consistent Afrocentric research study. Ukweli is what constitutes truth in Afrocentric research, truth defined as “intellectual inquiry or the verification of knowledge claims” (Reviere, 2001, p. 713). In Afrocentric research truth needs to be grounded in the community. The community’s way of knowing has the authority to determine what is true. Ukweli requires me to look at Didier Awadi’s songs and stories as knowledge rooted in Pan-African truth, emerging from a particular context and a specific place. African values are therefore the final “arbiter[s] of the validity of the research,” as it is about African communities. In this thesis, the African voice has the authority. In practice, this means that I have the responsibility to state that I am entering
the process of analysis with an interest to value and to validate African and Pan-African knowledges. My analysis will focus on revealing and presenting African historical truths in Awadi’s Pan-African songs.

In order to produce a *truthful* thesis that unveils the injustices experienced by African communities, I need to explicitly state that my: background, values, perspectives, race, lived experiences and knowledge will affect the way I approach the data and the outcome of this thesis. I resonate with Reviere (2001) when he states, “as a Black academic, I do have a tremendous personal stake in the manner in which Black intelligence is theorized” (p. 714). I have the responsibility to include the personal as it affects every aspect of my research, including the analysis process. Reviere (2001) argues, “one’s life experiences influence all aspects of the research process: the topics one chooses to research, the kind of research one chooses to do, how one interprets the data collected, and even the conclusions to which one comes” (p. 714). The data is not approached with scientific objectivity but with truth, fairness, and honesty, “which are more reasonable criteria on which to judge the creation of theory” (p. 715).

Kujitoa requires a commitment to determine how “knowledge is structured and used over the need for dispassion and objectivity” (Reviere, 2001, p. 716). I need to understand how knowledge is organized; how things and locations are named and work in a particular way. Objectivity, defined in a Eurocentric way as the lack of bias or judgment, does not frame this study. According to Reviere (2001), “the Eurocentric concept of objective, dispassionate, and value-free research is invalid operationally because what often passes for objectivity can be regarded as a sort of collective European subjectivity” (p. 716). *Objectivity* is not objective as the concept has been defined in a
way that places Euro-Western thoughts at the center of knowledge. Because of who I am, I cannot realistically approach a study with objectivity; nobody can. Reviere (2001) states, “I believe that a straightforward declaration of kujitoa puts the onus on the researcher to place his or her working assumptions in the foreground of the research activity and to validate these assumptions by engaging in continuous self-reflection and self-criticism” (p. 716). Kujitoa is essential to Afrocentric research and as a scholar, I need to release the idea of producing objective truth, as reflected in positivism, but focus on uncovering African knowledges through my analysis rooted in African epistemology.

I am strongly aware that listening, transcribing, analyzing and disseminating are not neutral acts, but processes informed by one’s political and social background. I am conscious that I influence the study and that I have a responsibility to create a truthful and transformative thesis that reflects African knowledges.

In Afrocentric research, the concept of justice, or *uhaki*, is essential to produce meaningful and legitimate research. Justice requires “that the researcher actively avoid creating, exaggerating, or sustaining divisions between or within communities but rather strive to create harmonious relationships between and within these groups” (p. 717). I need to approach the data from a place of compassion rather than anger or hurt, which could further encourage division between Whites and Blacks. Whites just like Blacks have been denied the opportunity to learn about their own history because dominant history is written, told and interpreted by Eurocentric discourses. Many scholars (Ahmad & Bhat 2013; Asante, 1987; Diop 1974; Chilisa 2012; Oyebade, 1990; Reviere 2001) argue that Eurocentric stories have presented an incomplete, distorted and falsified history by what is purposely included and excluded. Dominant history, therefore,
maintains an unjust relation of power that continues to oppress non-white communities. Reviere (2001) states, “the skewed power relations that have resulted from the past 500 years of European and African contact have resulted in a one-dimensional perspective of the human story” (p. 717). Bringing justice means rectifying and restoring history by troubling the one-dimensional perspective academia has accepted as history. On the practical level, it means focusing on Didier Awadi’s songs that seek to restore a part of African history that has been left out of textbooks. More specifically, within these songs I will examine the Pan-African speeches he chose to include and weave in his music, and determine the pedagogical messages he seeks to convey. Uhaki is about bringing justice to the African peoples and other communities that have been colonized and oppressed, by acknowledging that Eurocentric notions of history have dictated what is considered history. Furthermore, bringing justice means rectifying this crime by unveiling and legitimizing African notions of history.

Ujamaa requires the researcher to be informed by the interests and aspirations of the community rather than by Euro-Western theories and practices (Chilisa, 2012; Reviere, 2001). Ujamaa is achieved when the researcher rejects the separation between the researcher and the participant, often associated with Eurocentric research. According to Reviere (2001), “this concept of community mandates that Afrocentrists reject the researcher/participant separation because this rejection is a natural consequence of the African cultural environment, which encourages communalism rather than individual separation” (p. 719). I am not examining the data from my individual perspective but I am recognizing that I am part of the African community and that African values, knowledges and philosophies will validate my research. Didier Awadi is a modern griot,
telling the story of our people through the African eye. As the father of African cinema Ousmane Sembène states, “the artist must in many ways be the mouth and the ears of his people. In the modern sense, this corresponds to the role of the *griot* in traditional African culture. The artist is like a mirror. His work reflects and synthesizes the problems, the struggles and hopes of his people” (Larson, 1997, p. 41). Sembène also argues, “If Africans do not tell their own stories, Africa will soon disappear” (Gadjigo & Silverman, 2015). Sembène is saying that regardless of Euro-Western efforts to *silence* and distort the histories of Africans, we have the right and responsibility to learn about our history and tell *our* African experiences with conviction. These stories contradict dominant history and have the potential to re-establish a truthful image of Africa as a result. I need to analyze Didier Awadi’s songs as a communal call for the re-writing of African history and the restoration of African dignity. I decided to write this thesis because I wanted to learn about my history; the history of my peoples, and I am therefore an active participant and student in this educational research project.

The concept of *utulivu*, translated as harmony or peace, is closely related to the Afrocentric notion of community. *Utulivu* “requires a research procedure that is fair to all participants, especially to those being researched, and one whose applications are mindful of the welfare of all the participants” (Reviere, 2001, p. 720). This concept requires me to look at the data with a Pan-African lens that pursues to unite the African peoples instead of dividing them along religious, regional, ethnic and national lines. I am approaching the data with the assumption that Didier Awadi’s songs and language reflect the common African experience of dispossession and oppression and the strong desire to reclaim and educate the world about *our* African history.
The Afrocentric and axiomatic principles of *ukweli, utulivu, ujamaa, kujitoa* and *uhaki* will be used as tools of analysis to examine the data and guide research findings. I will first analyze and determine whether these five African principles are reflected in the songs I chose for deeper analysis—at the level of lyrics and musical composition. I will examine whether the central concepts of truth, commitment, justice, community and harmony are echoed and talked about in Didier Awadi’s songs that seek to give a different African narrative, one rooted in African knowledges. Focusing on these specific songs and how they reflect *ukweli, utulivu, kujitoa, ujamaa* and *uhaki* will be useful in looking at *Présidents d’Afrique* as a whole, coherent pedagogical project to determine whether the album is grounded in African ways of knowing. Furthermore, an analysis informed by Reviere’s five Afrocentric canons will help me answer the research questions posed in the theoretical framework.
5. Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This section will analyze the one-on-one interview with Didier Awadi with the goal of locating and understanding him as a conscious and political artist, a pan-Africanist and a Sankarist. This interview sheds light on the birth, development and objectives of his project Présidents d’Afrique. I will use Reviere’s five Afrocentric “canons” to determine how African values are reflected in his stories, his work and his project. Following, I will focus on two tracks of Présidents d’Afrique, which present a different African history than the one found in mainstream textbooks; one grounded in African experiences and African knowledges. By using the Afrocentric principles of ukweli, utulivu, uhaki, ujamaa, and kujitoa, I will determine the dominant historical perspectives legitimized by Didier Awadi. I will also determine which aspects of African histories and knowledges Didier Awadi seeks to restore and reclaim, and for whom.

5.2 One-on-one interview

5.2.1 Situating Didier Awadi

Didier Awadi was born on August 11th 1969 in Dakar Senegal, nine years after Senegal became supposedly independent on April 4, 1960. Didier Awadi grew up in a Pan-African environment with his Beninese father and Cape-Verdean mother. Due to his diverse background, Awadi was naturally drawn to students coming from different West African Francophone countries. As a result, he befriended students of different African nationalities that became his grands frères, and discussions with these grands frères, who identified as anarchists, communists, and refugees, further awakened his Pan-African consciousness. With their guidance, Awadi started reading the words of Malian writer
and ethnologist Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Cheikh Anta Diop, Franz Fanon and more. In his senior year of high school, Awadi had an English teacher who introduced him to the speeches of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, which broadened his horizon of Pan-African ideals across the ocean. Awadi expresses that all these Pan-African leaders, from Sankara to Diop to Senghor to Malcolm X, speak to the same *emotions* felt by all people of African descent across the world, forging a sense of African unity. These deep *feelings* of hurt and hope are present because, as Senghor stated, they are engrained in the memory of our genes and connect us to one another and to our ancestors, who lived through slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

In 1989, while Senegal was going through an acute economic crisis and socio-political tensions, Didier Awadi and Duggy Tee founded their rap group *PBS*. According to Awadi, in 1988 and 1989, students lost a year of school due to strikes, and another year because the government did not validate that academic year. This challenging time for Senegalese youth gave birth to hip-hop in Senegal with the creation of *PBS* (Sene, 2012). Awadi states, “in the beginning *PBS* was rapping to please the ladies; smooth-talking in approximate English” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). *PBS* soon became popular and realized the impact they could have by addressing important issues faced by the Senegalese population. As a group, they had a choice to make: either continue to create popular, English music following their American counterparts, or make a conscious decision to use their musical platform to educate the youth. With the guidance of their *grands frères*, *PBS* chose the latter, embarking on a musical journey that would speak *to* and *for* the African masses in a musical language that resonated with the African community.
Didier Awadi’s personal journey transformed him into a politically-engaged artist. Awadi claims, “I did not choose to be a politically engaged artist, no. I became one through my personal journey” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi’s process of growth allowed him to define his Pan-African and political values and beliefs more clearly. This consequential change was naturally reflected in his music, forging his political identity as an artist. Awadi states, “what you’re thinking and feeling is reflected when you make music” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). The music one produces reflects what is in one’s mind and heart, and as a result, Awadi’s music can only be conscious and politically charged considering that is who he is as an African citizen and a human being. By reading, listening to his elders, and learning from Pan-African leaders, Awadi educated himself and wanted to share this knowledge with African youth in Africa and across the world. One person that truly influenced Awadi on his personal and musical journey is the “upright” man of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara.

Even though Didier Awadi was a teenager when Thomas Sankara became the president of Burkina Faso, he witnessed how a man changed a nation with his Pan-African ideals, which he put into practice. Before Sankara, Burkina Faso was known as the Upper Volta, and when he took power in 1983, he changed the country’s name to Burkina Faso- The Land of the Upright Men (Sankara, 2007). For Awadi, Sankara embodies the upright man and the Pan-African ideal, which gave him hope that the Pan-African model was possible and works in the interest of African peoples. According to Awadi, “Sankara put his ideas into practice and when you look at his achievements, you understand that it is possible” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Sankara’s vision of Pan-Africanism extended to all the oppressed people of the world. In his famous
speech delivered at the United Nations in 1984, he states, “I wish to speak on behalf of all those left behind for I am human, nothing that is human is alien to me” (Sankara, 2007, p. 165). When one witnesses how Sankara lived as the poorest president in solidarity with his people; achieved self-sufficiency in just four years; created a mindset of community and unity among the people; intelligently and passionately spoke to the international community with African pride against colonialism and neocolonialism; revitalized the local economy; esteemed and re-inserted African values; rejected nepotism; dramatically improved health care; promoted women’s rights, education and vaccination, and was genuine while doing his work, one can only recognize the greatness of this man who believed in his country and most importantly who believed in Africa. Awadi expresses, “when you see the projects he created and the mindset he created among his people, you tell yourself that it [the Pan-African ideal] is possible” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Sankara promoted peace and argued, “the quest for peace goes hand in hand with the firm application of the right of countries to independence, of peoples to liberty, and of nations to an autonomous existence” (Sankara, 2007, p. 169). Sankara called for the self-determination of Africa, a belief reflected in Awadi’s musical work.

Awadi states that by principle, he does not want to idealize a man, but to him Sankara was an almost flawless political leader and man. Sankara stayed true to his principles and lived, spoke and worked accordingly. Awadi states, “He [Sankara] really lived like he said he would. So much so that some of his family members were saying ‘you guys are idealizing him, but we struggled you know. Our brother was president but we didn’t get anything, we didn’t benefit’” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Sankara’s family did not receive any special treatment because of his position of power.
Sankara was deeply committed to serve and respect the people of Burkina Faso and understood the responsibility he had as a leader. According to Awadi, “it takes sincere political and courageous will to create revolutionary triggers like Sankara did” (personal communication, August 6, 2015) in the midst of neo-colonialism when Europe continued to control Africa politically and economically. Awadi expresses that Sankara proved how the reconstruction of Africa with Pan-African policies was possible, and “he gave us our pride back” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). When Awadi speaks of Sankara, he is passionate and expressive with his hands and his tone, which reflects his reverence and appreciation for Sankara. Awadi reveals, “it is Sankara’s will and mindset that I attempt to instill in the youth with my music” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). His music encourages every African to do what they can to contribute to the liberation and transformation of Africa.

I really appreciate how Awadi speaks his mind, which takes courage for a public figure like him. He refuses to stay silent, like many, and chooses to unveil the continuous injustices that are perpetrated against Africa and its population. When he goes to Togo or Gabon, young artists tell Awadi, who is known as *vieux père* (old father), “we would love to do what you do here but *grand*⁷, it’s complicated” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Young Togolese and Gabonese wish they could speak out like Awadi does, but they are afraid of the consequences. Awadi denounces the fact that the world community has persisted to vilify our African heroes, preserving a false and distorted African history. In our discussion, Awadi condemned France’s role in the removal of Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d’Ivoire and the placement of Alassane Ouattara as the head of state. According to

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⁷ *Grand* literally means *big* in French, and it is used in West Africa as a sign of respect, often towards elders.
Awadi, “Gbagbo came to power without blood. He is a historian, a professor, a merry reveler and he’s not bloodthirsty, but we brought him to the The Hague and the same colonial power just bombarded his country and gave it to the rebels” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). The West has painted Gbagbo as a dangerous and bloodthirsty leader that needed to be removed. French Forces backed up Alassane Ouattara, bombing the country with the UN’s accord, and essentially conducting a coup d’état in Côte d’Ivoire “in the name of democracy” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi states, “our silence has made us accomplices to these violent European manipulations, which persist to serve European interests” (personal communication, August 6, 2015).

Awadi affirms that ten years after Zimbabwean independence, England has failed to respect the deal of land restitution. Awadi states, “When England, after ten years of Zimbabwean independence does not respect the deal concerning land restitution, Mugabe suddenly becomes the worst dictator” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi travelled to Zimbabwe many times, and he states that the president’s character the international community has portrayed is not the same as the one he discovered in Zimbabwe. In Libya, “we create a rebellion in Benghazi, we show this on TV claiming that Gaddafi is firing at his people and we destroy a country” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). According to Awadi, “ ‘In the name of democracy,’ Libya was destroyed even though Gaddafi provided free education, free water, and many other free services. But, ‘in name of democracy,’ however, the West ironically continues to deal with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and China” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi also condemns Belgium’s responsibility in the brutal murder of Lumumba. These
examples demonstrate that once the West had decided to negatively paint a leader, the vilifying machine is unstoppable. Awadi argues that if Africa had a unified army, government and economic system, Africa could be strong and defend herself against exploitation and violent attacks. Awadi is committed in creating music that will reveal the truth; the truth of the African people, embracing ukweli.

5.2.2 Présidents d’Afrique explained by Didier Awadi

In my interview with Awadi, he explained that the purpose of the album was educational and pedagogical. According to Awadi, “Présidents d’Afrique is a pedagogical project with the objective to educate” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Présidents d’Afrique is comprised of twenty-one songs, all presented as musical settings of important Pan-African speeches. These songs express the Pan-African dream and address social, political and economic injustices. A detailed profile of the CD with the name of each song and the collaborations made to honor the different Pan-African leaders, can be found in appendix B. While Présidents d’Afrique is a hip-hop album and uses rap as its main musical form, the album largely exceeds the trend and is anchored in the musical traditions of the continent. Each song is dedicated to a particular Pan-African leader and Awadi collaborated with artists from the particular country they came from to create songs that reflect not only the leader in question, but his language and his people as well. One notices that Thomas Sankara holds a particular place in this album. Awadi dedicated three songs to Sankara and chose to introduce the album with his famous words: «L’esclave qui n’est pas capable d’assumer sa révolte, ne mérites pas que l’on s’apitoie sur son sort. Cet esclave répondra seul de son malheur s’il se fait des illusions sur la condescendance suspecte d’un maître qui prétend l’affranchir. Seul la lutte
libère!” (Intro, Awadi, 2010). [Translation: The slave who is not able to take charge of
his own revolt deserves no pity for his lot. This slave alone will be responsible for his
own misfortune if he harbors illusions in the dubious generosity of a master pretending to
set him free. Freedom can be won only through struggle (Sankara, 2007, p. 162)]. This
statement sets the tone for Awadi’s album, which calls for a revolution in which Africans
stand up for their rights and fight to put an end to their oppression. This statement calls
for an African struggle for Africans by Africans. This is the powerful message Awadi
chooses to present Présidents d’Afrique.

As a student enrolled in formal education in Senegal, I asked Awadi if he learned
about African history and African (r)evolutionary leaders and he responded: “never”
(personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi never learned about African history or
Africa’s enlightened thinkers. Awadi states, “in fact this is the reason why we created this
album Présidents d’Afrique, because there was nothing about African history” (personal
communication, August 6, 2015). While students in Senegal learn about Charlemagne,
Bismarck, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, WWII, etc. they do not learn
anything about their own history and their own revolutions. Awadi states, “who cares
about the Russian revolution [in Africa], we have our own revolutions which affect us”
(personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi believes that without knowing your
history, you cannot develop and grow. Awadi’s motivation behind Présidents d’Afrique
is therefore to educate the youth about African history, understood, expressed, written
and told by Africans; histories that continue to be ignored by dominant history, with the
goal of contributing to Africa’s transformation. He believes that in order to take our
African independence, it is crucial for young Africans to learn about the ideas developed
and acted upon by African leaders, particularly in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. According to Awadi, these Pan-African ideals are what will liberate and strengthen Africa and its community for the future.

Awadi was conscious that to appeal to the new generation—a Facebook and social media generation—he needed a playful project in which \textit{sound} and images would speak for themselves. Awadi argues, “our generation needs proof, we are a Facebook generation who needs immediate proof, and proof is image, proof is \textit{sound}” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). With his album, Awadi wants to contribute to the reconstruction of a proud African identity by revisiting the history of Africa through marking speeches that \textit{reclaim} African histories, values and beliefs. Awadi is exceeded by the fact that so many young Africans are ready to die at sea, enduring a treacherous boat trip, to go to Europe, and accept degrading underemployment if needed, rather than stay in Africa and build their rich countries and continent. Awadi says, “when your struggles make you lose everything, all the way up to your dreams, nothing is left so you tell yourself ‘I have nothing to lose. If I stay, I can’t do anything for my family or I die’” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). According to Awadi, this desire of many Africans to leave Africa at all cost to “make it” in Europe is the result of a loss in African pride and dignity (in addition to socio-economic realities), after suffering centuries of mental and physical abuse. It is crucial to recognize, however, the impact of gross uneven resource distribution between Europe, which continues to exploit the African continent, and Africa, and the political role colonial powers have played in this migration process. According to Kohnert (2007):
The European Union shares dual responsibility for the continuing migration pressure: First, because it fostered over decades corrupt and autocratic regimes with dire disregard to principles of ‘good governance’. The aftermath of these regimes is still felt today and constitutes one of the underlying factors for politically motivated migration. Second, the EU contributed to Africa’s economic misery due to its selfish external policy. (p. 3)

In 2011, Didier Awadi produced a documentary film entitled Le Point de Vue du Lion, to give voice to Africans regarding the painful issue of immigration. The documentary starts with Awadi saying “tant que les lions n’auront pas leurs historiens, les histoires de chasses tourneront toujours à la gloire du chasseur” [Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter] (Awadi, 2011), which affirms the importance for Africa to have its own historians committed to tell the stories of Africans. Through the words of powerful Pan-African leaders, Awadi encourages the transformation of the colonial mentality with the hope of regaining a proud African mind, body and soul.

Awadi wanted this playful and pedagogical project to motivate young people to want to learn about African history and become the writers and tellers of their history; to become witnesses of their history. According to Awadi, “young people are the majority, so we needed a sexy project, one that was ludic and pedagogical and with that, supply people’s mind with knowledge” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi took over five years to complete Présidents d’Afrique and he, himself, learned a lot about African history and its leaders during this process. He wanted to share all the knowledge he acquired with as many people as possible by making this knowledge available through
music. Awadi expresses that if the Senegalese ministry of education or an organization like UNESCO decided to use his project to teach students about African history, he would have succeeded in life. Awadi affirms:

My ultimate dream is for an institution like UNESCO to use my work with the goal of motivating young people to go to the knowledge of their history, to become the writers of their history, and even become witnesses of their history.

(Personal communication, August 6, 2015)

In his interview, Awadi repeated many times that *Présidents d’Afrique* is first and foremost an educational and pedagogical project aimed at teaching the African youth about African histories in a playful and musical way that touches the heart of its listeners.

During the interview we organically came back many times to discuss Sankara, a man we both hold in great esteem. Sankara was committed to promote women’s right because to him “the condition of women is at the heart of the question of humanity itself…The question is thus universal in character” (Sankara, 2007, p. 339). He rightfully equates women’s domination to colonial rule. Sankara (2007) states:

This is the same method used elsewhere by men to rule over other men…They used their origins, or arguments based on their skin color, as a supposedly scientific justification to rule over those who were unfortunate enough to have skin of a different color. (p. 344)

He condemned women’s domination and urged women to embark in a struggle, with his support, to emancipate themselves from this everyday state of subordination. On 8 March 1987, Sankara delivered his speech *The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women* in honor of International Women’s Day. In his address, he
affirms, “the Burkinabé woman still remains the one who comes after the man, rather than alongside him…The final goal of this great undertaking is to build a free and prosperous society in which women will be equal to men in all spheres” (Sankara, 2007, p. 354-355). While Sankara was in power, he implemented a policy of rest for women on International Women’s Day, forcing men to go to the market—which is usually the woman’s role—and cook, to show men the reality of women’s life, while honoring the Burkinabé women. Sankara also outlawed female genital mutilation and fought to break away from cultural traditions—such as forced marriage—that hurt women. Sankara wanted women to get involved in the Burkinabé Revolution and invest in their country because he believed that “there is no true social revolution without the liberation of women” (Sankara, 2007, p. 372). According to Marie Roger Biloa, Sankara was the first head of state in Africa to appoint women to political positions of power in the government and the military (Shuffield, 2006). This conversation led us to the fact that in Présidents d’Afrique, there are no songs dedicated to women Pan-African leader.

The leaders highlighted in Présidents d’Afrique are men, but Awadi states that this fact is not due to his negligence. Awadi states, “when I was working on Présidents d’Afrique, it really bothered me that I couldn’t find information on Pan-African revolutionary women” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi affirms that he did his research in order to include women in his project, but did not find women leaders who attained the caliber of leaders like Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, etc., at least not in dominant history. Awadi states, “I looked for them but there were no women that attained Sankara’s level, or the others. But we also live in a macho society” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi acknowledges that the lack of
knowledge on women leaders may be due to the fact that we live in an androcentric society in which men’s voices remain the dominant ones. In this sense, not only is dominant history based on the knowledges and perspectives of the West, it is also informed by a patriarchal standpoint, established and strengthened through colonialism, in which men continue to be superior to women. Awadi states that while he was not exposed to famous Pan-African women leaders during the process of creating *Présidents d’Afrique*, he recognizes the role women had in supporting and influencing the great leaders he honors. He states, “women were always surrounding and supporting leaders like Amilcar Cabral, Nelson Mandela—notice the role of Winnie Mandela—and if women took their power, they could change the political game” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi quoted Sankara, saying that it is time for women to take *their* power, especially in Africa. According to Awadi, in Africa, women have a special role in the family, more accentuated and valued than in Euro-Western countries. Awadi argues that even though men pretend to control the household and family, women are the ones wearing the pants. Awadi says “*les hommes font les fous mais c’est la femme qui gère la maison*” [Men act out but know that the woman manages the home] (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi believes that if this silent majority stood up with a unified African voice, women could change Africa.

Like his Pan-African heroes, Awadi believes that a United States of Africa is possible. With more Africans acknowledging and recognizing the injustices that have been perpetrated against the continent and its peoples for centuries due to slavery, imperialism and colonialism, the idea of a unified and strong Africa reclaiming its rights, history and knowledges is considered a needed goal. Furthermore, the truth about many
injustices are *slowly* coming out after endless efforts by the West to keep them hidden: in 2001, even though Belgium failed to link their government directly to the killing of Lumumba, the Belgian parliamentary committee recognized their “moral responsibility” in Lumumba’s brutal assassination (BBC News, 2001); in 2014, after the Burkinabé uprising, Thomas Sankara’s body was finally exhumed for DNA testing and to determine the reason of death, which Compraoré’s government determined was natural, suppressing the truth that he was shot several times; and African leaders are questioning the death of Gadaffi and his family. Awadi states, “most African countries agree that there has been many injustices” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). West African countries are finally saying that in a few years, they will move to their own currency, getting rid of colonial money, which was unthinkable in the past. Awadi states, “If West Africa is in the process of saying ‘in a few years, we will move to our own currency’ whereas before there was no discussion, we had to use the colonial currency,” one can see that progress is happening (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Furthermore, Awadi argues that things can accelerate due to attacks carried out by extremist groups. Awadi argues, “things can happen quickly because with the overall aggression of extremist movements, we know that we need one concerted response in relation to defense forces, we obviously need a unified army or at least a unified command” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi believes that to successfully tackle extremist aggression in Africa, Africa needs a unified and concerted military. Like Pan-African leaders, Awadi believes that security is Africans’ responsibility.

Awadi argues that the United States of Africa will be born with the efforts of a strong civil society, who speaks the Pan-African language. Awadi states:
I think that there are a lot of signs that demonstrate that we are moving forward. But we are advancing slowly because many people leading our countries are not legitimate. We sense, however, that the illegitimates are in the process of falling one by one because today civil societies are strong. (Personal communication, August 6, 2015)

Through his musical work, Awadi attempts to spread Pan-African messages to civil society with the goal of encouraging them to act and impose these visions on their leaders. He believes that African political musicians, scholars, and thinkers, need to politicize and educate the masses. With this acquired knowledge, the youth will be less likely to agree to certain conditions that are imposed upon them, and resist the policies of colonial puppets and of neo-colonialism, which impede the development and growth of Africa. Our generation has the opportunity to use social media and forums to mobilize and share ideas, creating mass movements. We need people like Didier Awadi and other activists to educate the masses on African histories, African knowledges and African conditions across the continent.

5.2.3 Embracing Ukweli, Ujamaa, Kujitoo, Uhaki and Utulivu through music

Awadi identifies himself as a Pan-Africanist and Sankarist, and uses songs to spread the messages of those that came before him with the dream and ideal of creating an independent United States of Africa. According to Awadi, “what Nkrumah said 50 years ago is so obviously topical today that we are forced to simply repeat what has been said” (Personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi overtly refers to other texts, the forgotten texts of his ancestors, to bring back Pan-African ideologies that call for African unity and the eradication of colonialism. Through songs, Awadi does this with the hope
of encouraging new generations to engage in the struggle for Africa’s liberation. He states, “I often say that I frankly have no merit. I am repeating things leaders thought, strategized and have led paths to,” paths we need to get on. His songs tell the truths of his Pan-African ancestors, which reflect the hopes and dreams of the African peoples: to be independent, to be free, to prosper as a continent and as a people, to be allowed to develop according to their civilization, to be happy, and to be respected by the global community. Awadi’s music is grounded on these African historical truths as opposed to dominant historical truths. He challenges the Eurocentric understanding of Africa as an ahistorical place, by making his audience rediscover African political history through the voices and messages of African leaders from archival records. Awadi makes these truths, which contribute to the reconstruction of African pride and African consciousness, accessible to the public in a more humane and authentic way. The voices of these leaders make African history real. If it was not for Présidents d’Afrique, I would not be aware of many of these significant African speeches, and more importantly about the Pan-African legacies left behind by African leaders, scholars, and (r)evolutionaries. In this sense, Didier Awadi embodies ukweli in Présidents d’Afrique. As a modern griot, he is speaking the truth on behalf of and to the African peoples and to the world community, urging us, Africans, to stand up for our continent, for our people, for our dignity, for our right to prosper, and for ourselves. Awadi is committed to tell the truths that were not taught to him as a young man in school. He challenges the dominant history he learned, which talked about Africa not having a history by situating Africa as a place rich in histories, cultures, and traditions, that is the cradle of humanity. He is educating his listeners about an African history that places Africans at the center of knowledge.
Through his hip-hop music, understood as a political statement delivered through sharp lyrics accompanied by traditional African instruments, Pan-African speeches and African languages, Didier Awadi seeks to strengthen and unify Africans, calling for an African *ujamaa*, or community. Awadi speaks on behalf of the oppressed African community, and his position is informed by the interests and aspirations of the African peoples and their Pan-African ancestors. The Pan-African understanding of community goes beyond national borders, and includes not only the global Black community, but all communities that have suffered at the hands of Euro-Western systems. Didier Awadi’s music is a reflection of this understanding of community.

While *Présidents d’Afrique* speaks particularly to the African community, the messages transcended in Awadi’s music speak to the lived experiences of historically oppressed communities in general. The powerful and emotional messages shared by (r)evolutionary African leaders, influential thinkers and scholars, were felt by communities around the world and by leaders like Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and many others. In his music and in his interview, Didier Awadi speaks as an African part of the African community, not as an outsider, rejecting the division between himself and his African brothers and sisters. More than attempting to maintain the African community, Didier Awadi wants to create stronger, more unified and harmonious bonds among the African community, by embracing our *Africanity* and our African knowledges. In this sense, not only does Awadi reflect the concept of *ujamaa* in his musical achievements, but also *utulivu*, the concept of harmony. The ultimate goal of Pan-Africanism is to create a more harmonious world that respects, recognizes, values and legitimizes the lived experiences and knowledges of Africans and other historically oppressed communities.
In my understanding, Didier Awadi does not seek to produce objective truth, as positivism encourages, but focuses on revealing and uncovering African historical knowledges through the voices and visions of our ancestors, reflecting *kujitooa*. Awadi reveals how Eurocentric global systems have dictated the oppressive fate of African peoples. In this sense, I argue that Awadi challenges and rejects the idea of Eurocentric objectivity altogether, supporting Reviere’s argument that objectivity is essentially a “collective European subjectivity” (Reviere, 2001, p. 716). Historical objectivity is an impossible goal when history, as a study of the past and a discipline, is written and recounted by the victorious colonizer, who purposely leaves out the voices and experiences of the historically oppressed Other. As a revealer of African historical truths, Awadi embraces *kujitooa* and shows through his transformative songs that he continues to engage in a process of self-reflection and growth.

*Présidents d’Afrique* is founded on the concept of *uhaki*, or justice. *Présidents d’Afrique* is *uhaki*, as it seeks to bring justice to Africans by addressing and exposing the injustices Africa and Africans continue to endure as a result of slavery and colonialism, and the need to redress these injustices. Awadi strongly believes that the concept of justice, or *uhaki*, is absolutely necessary for the realization of a new Africa that stands strong and serves its peoples. He uses extract of powerful speeches that reject and condemn the actions of Europe’s colonialism on the continent. For example, he includes: Thomas Sankara’s address to the United Nation in 1984, when he upholds that “it is our blood that fed the rapid development of capitalism, that made possible our current state of dependence, and that consolidated our underdevelopment” (Sankara, 2007, p. 172);
Lumumba’s speech of independence in 1960 when he spoke with dignity in presence of the Belgium government stating:

We have known sarcasm and insults, endured blows morning, noon, and night, because we were ‘nigger’…We have seen our lands despoiled under the terms of what was supposedly the law of the land but which only recognized the right of the strongest. We have seen that this law was quite different for a White than for a Black: accommodating for the former, cruel and inhuman for the latter. (De Witte, 2001, p.2)

Sankara’s speech *A united front against the debt* delivered 29 July 1987 at the OAU, which addresses the unjust issue of debt, “We cannot repay the debt because it’s not our responsibility. We cannot repay the debt because, on the contrary, the others owe us something that the greatest riches can never pay—a debt of blood. It is our blood that was shed” (Sankara, 2007, p. 376); Norbert Zongo’s speech *Le silence des gens bien,*

*Ce n’est pas vrai que la France veut notre bien, ce n’est pas vrai. Bien la raison, parce-que notre situation actuelle profite à ses interets, c’est humain. Notre bonheur ne peut pas venir de ceux qui ont profité de notre esclavage, de ceux qui ont profité de notre état de dépendance, ce n’est pas vrai.* (Awadi, 2010, track 21)

[Translation: It’ not true that France wants what is good for us, it’s not true. The reason is that our current situation benefits France’s interests, it is human. Our happiness cannot come from those who have taken advantage of our state of slavery, from those who have taken advantage of our state of dependency, it’s not true]; Aimé Césaire’s speech against colonialism, in which he states, “*Si ce n’est que partout où la colonisation s’est manifesté, des peuples entiers ont été vidé de leur culture, vidé de toute culture*” (Awadi,
2010, track 7). [Translation: where colonialism manifested itself, entire nations were emptied of their culture, devoided from any culture]; and many more. Awadi’s lyrics alongside original Pan-African speeches spoken by African leaders and (r)evolutionaries in Présidents d’Afrique condemn the economic, racial, social and political injustices established by colonialism, and seek to bring uhaki by redressing these injustices through the act of telling our historical truths. Présidents d’Afrique demonstrates that, like our ancestors, we, Africans, have the power to fight for our continent by “daring to invent the future,” as Sankara said. We have the power to re-establish uhaki for the African peoples. As demonstrated above, Présidents d’Afrique as an educational and musical project engages with the Afrocentric principles of ukweli, utulivu, ujamaa, kujitoa and uhaki.

5.3 A focus on Présidents d’Afrique: Locating the Afrocentric values

5.3.1 Track 12: Une seule origine, honoring Cheikh Anta Diop

Une seule origine is a powerful song that challenges and condemns the role of Western historians in falsifying history, and in erasing the important role Africa has played in the creation of human civilization. A transcription of the song can be found in appendix C. I did not attempt to write the Wolof verse included in this song considering I cannot write Wolof. Didier Awadi’s lyrics along with Cheikh Anta Diop’s statements tell the story of a different Africa than the one told in dominant history; one that places Africa and Africans at the center of human civilization. In this sense, this song is grounded in ukweli, or truth, and asserts the legitimacy of histories grounded in African experiences, replacing Europe as the center of all history. The song begins with the powerful voice and words of Cheikh Anta Diop: “L’humanité a une seule origine, ceci doit nous permettre de nous rapprocher les uns des autres au lieu de nous éloigner, et de
nous haïr les uns les autres » (Awadi, 2010, track 12). In my own words, Cheikh Anta Diop’s declaration can be translated to: “Humanity has one single origin and this should allow us to get closer to one another instead of driving us away from each other and hating each other.” Une seule origine cultivates the idea that as human beings, we all come from one African root, one origin, and one source. According to Cheikh Anta Diop, this historical fact, which is grounded in scientific proof, cannot be ignored, omitted or changed for the purpose of a colonial agenda. Otherwise history becomes fiction invented by Euro-Western creative writers.

This connection that is shared by all human beings that Dr. Diop addresses, speaks to the Afrocentric principle of ujamaa, or community and utulivu, harmony and peace. Dr. Diop does not seek to create fragmentation or division among “races” by placing Africa at the heart of civilization, but is confirming a historical fact, which should unite us instead of separate us. He encourages human beings to tap into their sense of connection and unity by acknowledging that we all come from the same source. Dr. Diop depicts Africa as the beautiful source of humanity. He mindfully invokes uhaki by presenting a history that is true and representative of all human beings.

Following the voice of Cheikh Anta Diop, the traditional Senegalese drum, the djembe, comes in before the strong hip-hop beat sets the musical tone. Interestingly, the first thing the listener hears is the African voice, followed by the African traditional instrument and lastly the hip-hop beat along with Didier Awadi’s rap. Before Awadi raps, the space is given to Cheikh Anta Diop once more, honoring his knowledge:

| Au moment où l’imperialisme, n’est ce pas, atteint son apogée, en quelque sorte, | At the moment when imperialism reached its peak, |
L’Occident découvre que c’est l’Égypte, et une Égypte Noire qui a apporté tous les éléments de la civilisation à l’Europe.
Alors, c’est bel et bien cet Afrique noire qui lui a donné tous les éléments de la civilisation, aussi extraordinaire que cela puisse paraître.
Et cette vérité, tous les savants n’étaient pas également disposés à l’exprimer sans nuances.

The West discovers that Egypt, and a Black Egypt at that, brought all the elements of civilization to Europe.
So, it is indeed this Black Africa that gave all the elements of human civilization, as extraordinary as it may seem.
And scholars were not willing to express this truth without nuances.

With the exceptions of a few Western historians, like Martin Bernal the author of *Black Athena* and scholar Jan Assman who has connected the origins of social justice to the African principle of *Ma’at*, most historians trained in the West have refused to accept their close historical link with Blacks, which they worked so hard to dehumanize and demonize through different disciplines. Not only did Eurocentric scholars refuse to recognize the historical ties that connect Blacks, Whites and the rest of the world, but Western historians completely rejected the possibility that Blacks could be responsible for the foundation of their civilization. This would make Blacks the ancestors of Europeans, an unconceivable idea for the racist colonizer. For the sake of colonialism and imperialism, Eurocentric historians had to continue to build on their version of history to ensure Blacks and Whites remained fundamentally and hierarchically different. To make his point, Diop essentializes Western historians, but it is important to acknowledge that within the discipline of history, there are different schools of historiography with different aims. For example, historical revisionism is committed to the continual process
of re-interpreting historical records that have maintained accepted views of historical events as a result of new findings (Tucker, 2008).

Dr. Diop speaks with confidence and conviction, touching the heart of the African *ujamaa*. His touch of sarcasm when he states “aussi extraordinaire que cela puisse paraître” [translation: as extraordinary as it may seem] reflects the deep ignorance the West continues to have regarding African history and how Western lies have constructed a deeply negative image of Africa and Africans; one that portrays Africans as savages unable to contribute to world civilization. Thank God colonialism was here to save us, Amen. Smith (1999) accurately depicts how we, Indigenous peoples, have been intellectually constructed through the deformed, colonial eye:

One of the supposed characteristics of primitive peoples was that we could not use our minds or intellects. We could not invent things, we could not create institutions or history, we could not imagine, we could not produce anything of value, we did not know how to use land and other resourced from the natural worlds, we did not practice the ‘arts’ of civilization. (p. 25)

The colonizer constructed the colonized Other as a “being” that was not fully human and did not possess imagination and/or intellectual capacity (Smith, 1999). Diop’s sarcasm is a response to this long-standing belief that Africans are incapable of contributing to history. Through his sarcasm, Diop demonstrates that the West has internalized its narrative to the point that it seems extraordinary, if not impossible, that African men and women could play a major role in the birth and development of civilization in Europe and across the world.
After Cheikh Anta Diop speaks, Didier Awadi comes in with fiery lyrics, asking a rhetorical question to his audience: “it’s weird when we tell you Africa is number one, right?” Africa and Africans have been historically theorized in a way that has always defined them as “backwards.” This song not only acknowledges this injustice, evoking uhaki, but challenges this dominant narrative by giving historical and scientific fact that locates Africans and their discoveries at the center of history. Awadi raps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Française</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ça fait bizarre qu’on te dit l’Afrique est number one,</td>
<td>It’s weird when we tell you that Africa is number one,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ça fait bizarre qu’on te dit l’Afrique est championne,</td>
<td>It’s weird when we tell you that Africa is a champion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ça fait du mal d’humilier tous ces « milliames »,</td>
<td>It hurts to humilate these « thousands of souls »,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Même « milliames » qui te donnent pour que tu rayonnes.</td>
<td>The same « thousands of souls » who give so you can shine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On nous a dit qu’on est pas civilisé,</td>
<td>You have told us us that we are no civilized,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appelle la Libye pour venir coloniser.</td>
<td>Came to Lybia to colonize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On nous a lié le rôle principal qu’on a joué le berceau de l’humanité,</td>
<td>They have tied us to our primary role,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’est bien là on n’va pas dévisser</td>
<td>Being the cradle of humanity,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loin de nous « val. » et rétro</td>
<td>That’s exactly what we’re gonna hold onto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La « vanité », quelques vérités</td>
<td>Far from us, « val » and retro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaisances avec humilité</td>
<td>Vanity, some truths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faut le dire, pas l’faire à l’humanité.</td>
<td>Rebirth with humility,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y’a trop de quolibets que l’Afrique n’a pas mérité.</td>
<td>We have to say it, not do it to humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are too many gibes that Africa doesn’t deserves.</td>
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Awadi opens his rap rhymes by telling his audience that it’s weird when we’re told that Africa is number one and that Africa is a champion and a winner, as if it rung hollow.
Awadi provokes his audience to reflect on these statements, which trouble the long-standing belief that Africa is inferior in comparison to the rest of the world. Awadi seeks to bring justice, or *uhaki*, to the African people by challenging the demeaning location of Africa and Africans in history. His verse continues by stating, “it hurts to humiliate these thousands of souls,” who have contributed to the “success” of the West. The West has built its wealth by exploiting and abusing Africa and Africans. Awadi then firmly states, “We [Africans] have been told us that we’re not civilized” so they came to colonize, forgetting the primary role Africa played as the cradle of humanity. He argues that a humble renaissance based on these historical truths needs to take place so that we can correctly re-locate the important place Africa holds in history. This song is a clear call for *uhaki*, understood as the restoration of African histories and African knowledges.

After Didier Awadi’s commanding verse, Cheikh Anta Diop’s voice reappears with one powerful statement that probably ruffled the feathers of many Western historians:

```
Il y’a eu des falsificateurs de l’histoire.
Ils ont créé, commis ce que j’appelle
Et je pèse bien mes mots,
Un véritable crime contre l’humanité.
Il y’a des générations entières de spécialistes occidentaux qui on été coupables de ce crime à l’égard de l’humanité.
Et ils le savent ! Et ils le savent.
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Il y’a eu des falsificateurs de l’histoire.</th>
<th>There have been falsifiers of history.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ils ont créé, commis ce que j’appelle</td>
<td>They created, committed, what I call,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et je pèse bien mes mots,</td>
<td>And I weigh my words carefully,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un véritable crime contre l’humanité.</td>
<td>A true crime against humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il y’a des générations entières de</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spécialistes occidentaux qui on été</td>
<td>There have been generations of Western</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coupables de ce crime à l’égard de</td>
<td>scholars who have been guilty of this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l’humanité.</td>
<td>crime against humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et ils le savent ! Et ils le savent.</td>
<td>And they know it! And they know it.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Dr. Diop affirms that there have been falsifiers of history, otherwise known as Eurocentric historians, who have committed a dangerous crime *against humanity* by
fabricating history. Diop affirms that he weighs his words well in making this accusation. He says that entire generations of Western experts have been guilty of engaging in this crime against humanity and they know about their actions. These criminals are aware of the role they played in contributing to the suffering of Africa and Africans. Dr. Diop seeks to bring uhaki to his African people by courageously denouncing the criminal actions of Western historians. I appreciate and am inspired by the way Dr. Diop addresses the gravity of this distortion and its very negative impact on the African community physically, culturally, emotionally and spiritually.

After Dr. Diop’s reflective message, Keyti and Naby come in and rap in Wolof. They start their verse with “Xam sa bopp, yai kan”, which means “know yourself, know who you are,” which lay the foundation for their verse. This call for self-reflection, which goes beyond the intellectual, taps into the African value of kujitoa, which first seeks to understand. The rappers revere Cheikh Anta Diop for telling the truth and for encouraging them to take actions by writing their own story. Keyti and Naby express that as a community, we should be proud of our past and our legacies. After their verse, the refrain of the song, spoken in Wolof, is sung and rapped. The refrain says:

| Je suis en pleurs, | I’m crying, |
| Tout mon savoir dégouline telle pluie. | All my knowledge is dripping like rain. |
| La richesse est derrière moi malgré les moqueries, | Wealth stands behind me despite the mockery, |
| Je suis l'abreuvoir ou ils viennent s'abreuver en laissant leurs souillures. | I'm the drinking trough where they come to drink, leaving their filth. |

By including the refrain in Wolof, which is the native language of Cheikh Anta Diop, Awadi connects this song to the people of Senegal. He makes this song accessible to
everyone that speaks French, but gives a particular place to the national, rather than the colonial, language of Senegal. This makes this song also accessible to the Senegalese youth who was not given the opportunity to attend school and learn French. With the help of my cousin, whose first language is Wolof, I translated the refrain from Wolof to French and then from French to English. This process made more sense in order to capture the meaning through my native language and my cousin’s language of instruction French, before translating it into English. These moving words and the way they are sung and rapped truly awaken emotions of injustice and sadness in me. The refrain is powerful and states that the West takes the wealth of Africa by exploiting its land, its peoples and its cultures, and leaves its material, political, economic, and social filth behind.

Cheikh Anta Diop’s voice comes next and says: “la connaissance directe, l’Afrique doit être capable de saisir une vérité, de savoir qu’elle est en possession d’une vérité... Et de se maintenir au niveau de cette vérité, en prenant des mesures conservatoires, jusqu’à ce que, l’on sache que la supercherie, c’est fini!” In this statement, Cheikh Anta Diop argues that Africa must grasp a truth, resulting from its direct knowledge, and know that she is possession of a truth. Africa should then take protective measures to ensure the legitimacy of its truth. He maintains that Africans need to arm themselves with scientific knowledge so that no one can deny or ignore their truths. As Africans, we have a responsibility to restore our history by acquiring knowledge about our continent and our people, and tell our truths and our realities.

The songs end with Cheikh Anta Diop stating:

| La nature n’a jamais créé deux fois la souris, | Nature did not create the mouse twice, |
| Deux fois le chat ou deux fois l’espèce | Or the cat twice, or the human species twice. |
La nature au passage crée une espèce et puis ensuite, cette espèce se différencie, Evolue, s’éteint ou se développe, se fragmente. Mais la nature ne revient pas en arrière pour créer trois fois l’homme ou deux fois l’homme. Elle a créé une fois l’homme en passant et elle l’a fait en Afrique, c’est tout!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>humaine.</th>
<th>Nature created one species and then, this species differentiates itself, evolves, dies or grows, or breaks.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La nature au passage crée une espèce et puis ensuite, cette espèce se différencie, Evolue, s’éteint ou se développe, se fragmente. Mais la nature ne revient pas en arrière pour créer trois fois l’homme ou deux fois l’homme. Elle a créé une fois l’homme en passant et elle l’a fait en Afrique, c’est tout!</td>
<td>But nature does not come back in time to re-create two or three times the human species. She created the man, and she did it in Africa, that’s it!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The way Cheikh Anta Diop says this proclamation makes me laugh, because he dares to ridicule the thousands of scholars who have attempted to legitimize the existence of different human races. Dr. Diop states that nature did not create two different kinds of cat or mouse species. Similarly, nature did not create two different human species. Species, which comes from Latin and means “appearance, form, beauty” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016), basically means that while things look different in their forms and beauty, it does not mean that they are different in essence as they possess common characteristic. Nature creates one species, which changes, moves and adapts according to its environment, evolves, dies or grows, or breaks, but nature does not come back in the past to create two or three times the same species. The truth is that nature once created the man, she did in Africa, and that’s it!

This song embodies kujitoa by presenting a truthful history of our human past that disrupts dominant historical “objectivity.” Une seule origine reveals how Eurocentric historical objectivity is grounded in Western imagination. What is interesting, however, is that Dr. Diop uses science, and encourages Africans to arm themselves with scientific
knowledge, to prove African historical facts. As a Senegalese scholar educated in France, Dr. Diop learned the way of the colonizer: how he thinks, what he values, what he considers knowledge, and uses this information to challenge dominant history. Dr. Diop learned the way of the White man to challenge Western understanding of knowledge in a language the colonizer considers legitimate. In this sense, Dr. Diop uses positivism, the existence of one truth about the birth of humanity, to condemn the lies of mainstream history.

By combining the inspirational words of Cheikh Anta Diop with his rap lyrics, Didier Awadi creates a powerful and emotive song that touches the African heart by its commitment to unveil Western historical manipulation, and by reclaiming Africa’s role in history. This song tells the story of Africa’s past in a way that values and respects the crucial role Africans have played in the establishment and evolution of human civilization. This commitment to the principle of ukweli disrupts the Eurocentric narrative that has been accepted as history, and invokes uhaki, or justice, for Africans and their ways of knowing. Through this song, Didier Awadi gives Africans their rightful place in history by placing African experiences and knowledges at its center. At the same time, this song condemns the heinous crime of historical falsification, which has erased African: history, contributions, realities, experiences and truths.

5.3.2 Track 11: Oser Inventer l’Avenir, honoring Thomas Sankara

_Oser Inventer l’Avenir_ is a song that troubles the image and understanding of Africa as “backwards” by presenting a modern Africa experienced by Africans, not distorted through dominant media. A transcription of the full song can be found in appendix D. This song highlights the intellectual and imaginative ability of Africans to be
inventors, innovators, and creators in their African future. Furthermore, it affirms that Africans participate in the new global era as active agents of change. The song starts with the celebrated words of Thomas Sankara spoken at the United Nations General Assembly on October 4, 1984:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons choisi de risquer de nouvelles voies pour être plus heureux.</td>
<td>We chose to risk new paths to be happier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons choisi de mettre en place de nouvelles techniques.</td>
<td>We chose to apply new techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons choisi de rechercher des formes d’organisation, Mieux adaptées à notre civilisation rejetant de manière abrupte et définitive toutes sortes de diktats extérieurs, pour créer ainsi les conditions d’une dignité à la hauteur de nos ambitions.</td>
<td>We chose to look for forms or organization better suited to our civilization, Flatly and definitively rejecting all forms of outside diktats, in order to lay the foundations for achieving a level of dignity equal to our ambitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuser l’état de survie, desserrer les pressions, libérer nos campagnes d’un immobilisme moyenâgeux ou d’une régression, démocratiser notre société, ouvrir les esprits sur un univers de responsabilité collective pour oser inventer l’avenir.</td>
<td>Refusing to accept a state of survival, easing the pressures, liberating our countryside from medieval stagnation or even regression, democratizing our society, opening minds to a world of collective responsibility in order to dare to invent the future.</td>
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</tbody>
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Awadi chooses to open the song with Sankara’s powerful words that radiate a true sense of hope and African pride. Sankara, Awadi’s hero, states that the people of Burkina Faso took the risk of creating their own path “to be happier,” a different path than the one forged by colonial powers to maintain Africa in a state of servitude. His first words speak
to our humanity and to our desire, as Africans and consequently as human beings, to find happiness in Africa through our own ways. Sankara continues by stating that the Burkinabé people chose to apply new techniques that are better suited to African civilizations. This statement affirms the need for Africans to develop their continent by adopting policies, form of organizations and ideas that are grounded in African knowledges, cultures and values. At the OAU Conference held in Addis Ababa on July 29, 1987, Thomas Sankara argued that, “nous devons accepter de vivre Africain, c’est la seule façon de vivre libre et de vivre digne” [translation: “we should undertake to live as Africans. It is the only way to live free and to live with dignity” (Sankara, 2007, p. 381)].

In order to live freely and happily with dignity and pride, as Africans, we have to embrace our ways of living and knowing. This is the only way to liberate the motherland from its colonial chains and allow her and her peoples to prosper.

In the song, Thomas Sankara continues by affirming his commitment to “flatly and definitely” reject dictatorial commands from colonial powers in order to attain African dignity that equally represents African ambitions. This statement negates the colonial image of the African “man/woman” as “lazy,” “stupid” and “infantile,” and restores it by defining the African as an intelligent man/woman possessing great knowledge that will propel Africa on her rightful path. Sankara then states that Africans refuse to live in a state of survival and emergency and instead seek to prosper through democracy and innovation. He argues that we, Africans, need to open our minds and our spirits to the African principle of ujamaa, or community, by accepting and embracing a collective responsibility that will give us the power to invent the future in a way that respects and honors African ways of living. Sankara asserts that it is the effort of the
community, or the African *ujamaa*, that will contribute to the liberation and prosperity of Africa. By using this particular speech to open his song, Awadi takes an important anti-colonial and anti-imperialist stance that troubles the Eurocentric understanding of Africa and reclaims African identity by asserting our ability to transform Africa’s future by adopting African knowledges.

When Thomas Sankara utters his first words, he is soon accompanied by the *kora* of born *griot* Noumoucounda Cissoko. Noumoucounda Cissoko is a *griot* vocalist and *koriste* and the son of world-renowned *griot* Banna Cissoko, *le baobab*, and *balafon* player Fatoumata Goundou Kouyaté (Cissoko, 2016). He is known as a revolutionary *griot* who has used the essence of his magical kora to weave his traditional music with hip-hop beats (Le Gros, 2013). Noumoucounda Cissoko has collaborated with PBS and Didier Awadi for over twenty years, creating music that connects traditional African sounds with modern ones (Le Gros, 2013). Within African contexts, traditional instruments are an extension of the musician and are more than material objects, frequently taking on human features and attributes (Stone, 2010). According to Stone (2010), “for many musicians, these material objects possess human and spiritual attributes. They serve to connect the various worlds that people inhabit at one time as well as to denote objects that are not simply material culture in nature” (p. 18). Instruments possess a voice in African traditions that connect peoples with their ancestors, spirits and African histories. Stone (2010) states “Sound in much of Africa are voices—not only of humans but also of instruments” (p. 15). Instruments then connect the historical past to the present.

The *kora* is the West African instrument of the *griot*. Stone (2010) argues, “the *kora*, a harp lute, is the personal extension of the West African *griot*, the itinerant praise
singer, genealogist, and social commentator of the Mali and Senegal area of Mande, West Africa” (p. 20). By choosing to include the *kora* played by Noumoucounda Cissoko in *Oser Inventer l’Avenir*, Awadi connects worlds that may seem separated: the past and the present; the ancient and the contemporary; *griotism* and *modern griotism*; and African traditions and modernity. Through voice—instrumental and human—Awadi reflects the essence of Afrocentric notions of history, which interconnect the past with the present, through the re-appropriation of African knowledges, ancient and new, and oral literature.

After Thomas Sankara’s speech, Noumoucounda Cissoko sings in Bambara, a language part of the Mande family spoken across West Africa by the Mandé peoples (Stone, 2010). Listening to Cissoko’s strong voice brings me back to the land of my ancestors: Senegal. As a listener, his singing evokes in me an urgency to “come back” to my African roots as he transmits oral tradition to modern civilization. Following Cissoko, Awadi comes in and raps, speaking *on behalf* of Africans to Euro-Western peoples, whose single view of Africa has been a negative one. He raps:

| Mon Afrique, c’est pas rien que des cases,       | My Africa, it’s not just huts,                          |
| Elle est loin des images qu’on peut voir dans  | She is far from the images we can see in your          |
| tes films nazes.                                | stupid/outdated movies.                                 |
| Mon Afrique, elle est à l’aise dans ce         | My Africa is at ease in this millennium,                |
| millénaire,                                    |                                                        |
| Ici, on parle web, on parle net, on parle de   | Here we speak web, we speak net, and we                 |
| cellulaire.                                    | speak about cell phones.                                |
| Mon Afrique, elle a des bases plus que         | My Africa has age-old foundations,                      |
| séculaires,                                    |                                                        |
| Mais l’avenir se conjugue en révolutionnaire.  | But the future will be revolutionary.                   |
| C’est pas que j’idéalise,                      | It’s not that I’m idealizing,                           |
| Je suis un missionnaire, fils de Sankara, mon  | I am a missionary, son of Sankara, I have the           |
The first words Awadi raps are “mon Afrique” or “my Africa.” By using the pronoun “my,” Awadi is identifying himself as an African, giving himself permission to speak about his continent on his terms. The use of “my Africa” is a way for Awadi to speak about the Africa he knows and has experienced; an Africa different than the one portrayed in “stupid” Eurocentric movies. By using “my Africa” Awadi is differentiating his Africa from “your,” a Euro-Western idea of Africa depicted as poor, damaged by war and miserable. He continues by saying “my Africa is at ease in this new century. Here, we speak Internet and about cell phones.” Awadi challenges the “primitive” Africa associated with Eurocentric history, arguing that Africans are fluent in the language of the Internet and technology. Africa is not stuck in the past, as Euro-Western powers may
think, but she is up to date with different forms of technological innovations and fluent in their languages.

Speaking “as the son of Thomas Sankara,” Awadi articulates that he takes on the role of a visionary and missionary, like Sankara, and claims that Africa’s future will be built on its revolutionary will. Awadi continues by stating, “My Africa, it’s not war, it’s not famine. My mines are full of gold, diamonds and uranium. My Africa, it’s not death, it’s not misery, look around you, it’s the sun and the sea.” Awadi’s Africa is not defined by wars, famine, death and misery, characteristics often associated with Africa in Euro-Western media. On the contrary, his Africa is rich in natural resources and is a place surrounded by the light of the sun and the richness of the sea. By saying, “My mines are full of gold, diamonds and uranium” in his verse, Awadi is embodying Africa and speaking on her behalf, the rich motherland that has plenty to offer. Awadi then speaks to Africa’s modernity by saying: “My Africa, you can see her on the streets. She drives a Cadillac, and in the city, she takes the scooter. My Africa, you can see her on my streets, she lives life at 100%, and in the countryside, she takes the Hummer.” First, it is important to note that Africa is recognized as a she, a feminine power that holds African civilizations. Africa has often been portrayed as a place where women are subordinate and men savages because some stories have been ignored and left out; histories where women (and men) have fought against patriarchy and colonialism. Awadi’s Africa, just like Europe, the US or Asia, drives Cadillacs, scooters and Hummers, expensive cars, not chariots like some may think. A Hummer symbolizes luxury and in my understanding, this statement is saying “Yes, we are in Africa and just like in the West, we have money and we can also buy luxurious items if we wish.” I have often heard people condemning
Africans for having luxurious items when other Africans are suffering from poverty. But in the U.S. or Canada, don’t people also buy luxurious items while others live in poverty? Isn’t there poverty in the West as well? Awadi is challenging this double standard imposed on Africa by the Euro-Western world. Subtly, with this verse, Awadi restores a just image of Africa, embracing uhaki, by demonstrating that Africa is not culturally, socially, artistically, technologically and even economically poor, but is rich in many different ways, regardless of forces that continue to define Africa as the poorest and most backward continent. In other words, Awadi wants to bring Africa justice by presenting a different history that characterizes the continent in a positive, more authentic light.

Noumoucounda Cissoko follows Awadi and sings the refrain in Bambara before Awadi starts his second verse:

| Mon Afrique, elle raffole du KFC,  | My Africa, she adores KFC, |
| Mais à midi, elle veut du mafé.     | But at lunch, she wants mafé. |
| Mon Afrique, après le tiep, nous on prend le thé, | My Africa, after tiep, we have tea, |
| Guerté kemb, café Touba, je peux t’y inviter. | Guerté kemb, Touba coffee, I can invite you. |
| Prends ça dans la face !          | Take that in your face! |

Awadi states that Africa loves KFC, but at lunch she prefers her traditional Senegalese dish mafé, composed of a creamy peanut paste and fish or meat. Awadi is saying that while Africa knows about and likes Western fast food like KFC, Senegalese prefer to eat traditional dishes at lunch, the most important meal in Senegal. He continues, «My Africa, after tiep, we take the tea, guerté kemb, or café Touba, I can invite you ». After eating traditional tiep—short for the national Senegalese dish thieboudienne, a dish made
with fish, rice, tomato sauce and vegetables—Senegalese like to eat their Senegalese peanuts (Guerté kemb) and drink their traditional café Touba—a coffee drink flavored with pepper or djar as we call it in Wolof. Awadi offers an invitation to the outsider to take part in these traditional customs, demonstrating the potential for Africans and Europeans to have a harmonious, instead of unequal, relationship, embracing utulivu. It is an invitation to get to know Awadi’s culture, his traditions, his country, and his continent seen through his eyes. It is an invitation to learn about the real Africa through the real experiences of Africans. After he finishes rapping, the refrain comes in and then Awadi ends with, “Take that in your face!” Awadi finishes his song by “slapping” colonial powers in the face by saying “we are just as good, we are just as advanced, were are just as aware and we are just as educated.” He slaps them in the face with ukweli.

A single story has been told about Africa through dominant history, and by presenting a different truth about Africa, Didier Awadi is committing to kujitoo. He is committed in providing a different history that unveils his African experience. His song is a narrative in which the main character is Africa, a feminine power that is rich, beautiful, confident, and that takes advantage of everything life offers her, “she lives at 100%.” Awadi is teaching the outsider that Africa is complex and comprised of different histories, often ignored in Eurocentric media, history, pop culture and news. Yes, Africa has and continues to experience wars, hunger and poverty, but these challenges do not define her. She is much more than that, which is a fact that needs to be addressed in order to have a more humane understanding of Africa. In Western countries, people are also experiencing war—with terrorism—, poverty and hunger (differently), but these countries are nevertheless not defined by these unfortunate realities. This song, which
weaves together the traditional *kora*, the voice of *griot* Cissoko, and hip-hop beats with the rapping of Awadi, is powerful in providing a positive and harmonious story of Africa, which connects the: past, traditional customs and languages, with: the present, modernity and globalization. As Africans, we have the responsibility to serve our beautiful Africa by daring to invent the future with the guidance of our African knowledges that have been used by our ancestors for centuries.
6. Conclusion

For centuries, Eurocentric knowledge and notions of history have dictated what is considered history. As a result, many Euro-Western historians have given themselves the authority to distort, write and tell the histories of all peoples with—consciously or unconsciously—an imperialist mindset, silencing the voices of Indigenous peoples, especially Africans. According to Smith (1999):

This collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about Indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized. (p.1)

As Africans, in order to liberate ourselves from colonial mentality and find our ways in the world, we need to re-write and re-right (Smith, 1999) our history by placing our experiences, our perspectives, our knowledges and our realities at the center of the research process. We have to rediscover our African past according to the African principles of ukweli (truth), ujamaa (community), kujitoa (commitment), utulivu (harmony) and uhaki (justice), in order to understand the present and inform a future in which we can prosper as a people. Paulo Freire (2010) states, “Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they [formerly oppressed peoples] are so that they can more wisely build the future” (p. 84). By rediscovering and reclaiming our history, we are also reclaiming our sense of agency, realizing that we have the power to create our history instead of endure it.

Présidents d’Afrique gives life to African history through human and instrumental voices, lyrics and powerful hip-hop and traditional African beats, creating strong
emotions in the heart of its listeners. With his album, Didier Awadi seeks to break the cycle of ignorance about African history by retelling our stories through the voices of our strong ancestors. Awadi reclaims and restores resistant aspects of Africa’s historical past when African leaders actively and definitely rejected colonial and imperialist policies imposed by Euro-Western forces. As an African and Pan-African (r)evolutionary figure, Awadi reclaims histories as an African for Africans, and as a revolutionary act that can and should be taken up by all oppressed and indigenous populations.

Awadi’s critical hip-hop music addresses the sociopolitical tensions between dominant history taught in school, which remains colonial, and an authentic account of African histories centered on African experiences. Didier Awadi shares the African knowledge he received from his grands frères, his family and his Pan-African ancestors, to create a pedagogical and musical project that completes and contests schooling in Senegal, understood as the “exercise of domination [that has] the ideological intent to indoctrinate [students] to adapt to the world of oppression” (Freire, 2010, p. 78). Awadi is using the creative and artistic medium of music and spoken words to informally teach African youth about resistant African histories. Through music, Awadi is making African knowledges publicly accessible through sound, legitimizing oral literature as a valuable form of knowledge.

As an educator, Awadi works through the medium of music to translate African teachings. Through his songs, he engages with political conscientization and encourages mobilization. Like Paulo Freire, Awadi advocates for a critical pedagogy that awakens the consciousness of young Africans so that they question and challenge their global position and posited domination, and understand how colonialism has impacted their
everyday lives. In this sense, both Didier Awadi and Paulo Freire engage in critical and conscious educational work but their means in translating knowledge is very different. Paulo Freire is a scholar that uses academic platforms and language to communicate his knowledge on behalf of the “oppressed people” (Freire, 2010). As a result, his work is accessible to those who can (1) read and (2) understand the academic language. Freire’s work is mostly accessible to those working in academia rather than all people, especially those on the margins of society. Awadi, on the other hand, uses music, something accessible and appreciated by many people in the world, to communicate indigenous knowledges. Awadi presents pedagogy with a holistic approach that is rational and also emotional, rebuilding on indigenous knowledges, which includes songs, dance, and musical instruments. He is not limiting his work to the cognitive, but draws on the heart and emotions—sentiments of community, culture, courage, compassion, pride, freedom and unity—to teach. Awadi’s music connects the mind, the heart and the body, recognizing education as a process that goes beyond the intellect to include the emotional being. His music advocates for the need to know oneself outside of the colonial paradigm. As a result, the musical medium through which Awadi works becomes important and pedagogical.

Awadi’s creative and emotional music is innovative and grounded in the words and ideas of his Pan-African ancestors. In terms of intertextuality, Awadi overtly claims that he uses the texts of his conscious and proud African ancestors to formulate his Pan-African arguments reflected in his hip-hop songs. In Présidents d’Afrique, more than his ancestors’ texts, he meaningfully uses their actual voices to create powerful history lessons delivered through conscious hip-hop music mixed with traditional sounds. As
socially-conscious scholars, artists and individuals, we unavoidably refer to other texts that have influenced and nourished our intellect. As a result, intertextuality is inevitable. Awadi deliberately uses the words and ideologies of Pan-African leaders like Césaire, Senghor, Nkrumah, Mandela, and Sankara, to honor their knowledges and strong messages, and to legitimize the value in their texts. Awadi is not creating new knowledge but he is creating musical, revolutionary pieces that put Pan-African knowledges from the past and present into songs; into forms that are appealing and accessible to West African youth. This is a different approach to the Eurocentric notion of knowledge, where scholars always seek to provide new knowledge. Awadi is arguing that the knowledges necessary to heal and restore Africa, after centuries of abuse, are the ones of Pan-African leaders, thinkers, scholars and (r)evolutionaries. He is proudly using the words of his ancestors, which does not mean that is plagiarizing or being less innovative, but that he is respecting African knowledges. And in retrospect, through his music, he is educating his audience about African knowledges that value and celebrate Africaness and Blackness. He wants to bring African knowledges forward because he believes in their power to transform Africans into powerful and independent agents of change able to defeat colonialism, which continues to destroy and underdevelop Africa. For Awadi, Pan-Africanism, the creation of a unified, strong, proud and anti-imperialist Africa, is the remedy to the full social, economic, political and environmental emancipation of Africa.

Awadi’s music addresses the detrimental and continued effects of colonialism, and celebrates his African brothers and sisters who continue to fights against it, and engage in the revolution with the hope of transforming Africa (Awadi, 2012, track 1). Colonialism
attempted to destroy humanity in Africa through its policies of capitalism, exploitation and genocide. This history is often distorted by accepted historical literature that disguises colonialism as a process that contributed to the progress of Africa through colonial and religious schooling. During colonialism, however, “some indigenous peoples (‘not human’), were hunted and killed like vermin, others (‘partially human’), were rounded up and put in reserves like creatures to be broken in, branded and put to work” (Smith, 1999, p. 26). As a Pan-African hip-hop artist, Awadi restores the humanity of Africans by sharing an African past defined by agency and resistance; a time when fighting back against oppressive forces was a desired norm. Awadi hopes that by telling African youth about African histories characterized by strong anti-imperialist and anti-colonial efforts, he can inspire them to unify and act for the full liberation of Africa, knowing that it has been done in the past. Présidents d’Afrique sparks and stimulates the imagination so that new generations can “dare to invent the future” (Sankara, 2007, p. 160). Instead of accepting how things are, Awadi is presenting African youth with an alternative, asserting that things can be different and at a point in time—in the time of Sankara, Lumumba, Nkrumah—they were!

Awadi’s album gives homage to the truthful testimonial of Pan-African leaders who sacrificed themselves in the name of Africa’s liberation with the hope of encouraging new generations to adopt Pan-African ideals and policies to create a strong, united and free Africa. The dominant perspective that is included in Présidents d’Afrique is a Pan-African one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all Black and African peoples and calls for their unification. In the Euro-Western world, as a brown body my Blackness has powerfully influenced my lived experience. Racism has affected my mind and my heart,
but so has sexism and the intersection of two. The album highlights male voices, which does not undermine the importance of the Pan-African voices and messages of hope, conceived and articulated by (r)evolutionary Black leaders, but it suggests that there is room to explore the intersection of gender and colonialism. As a Black woman scholar, I would love to see the voices of Pan-African women included in Awadi’s future work. According to Terborg-Penn (1990), “From the beginning of civilization, resisting oppression has been a manifestation of women’s experience throughout the culture of the world” (p. 151). It would be interesting if Didier Awadi went beyond archives, which is a Western institution, to acquire information on Pan-African women leaders. He could explore different African oral traditions on the continent, like storytelling, to discover and learn about the histories of strong Pan-African women who fought for the liberation of Africa and have been left out of Western institutions and mainstream history. As a scholar seeking to celebrate Présidents d’Afrique, I am not undermining Awadi’s work but simply suggesting that by reclaiming African oral history, the voices of women can be included and matriarchal African knowledges embraced to further challenge the intersections of patriarchy and colonialism. It is also important to remember that Didier Awadi is a hip-hop artist and not a scholar, and he engaged in a powerful research process to create a meaningful album, which I deeply appreciate. Through this process, he realized that many parts of African history have been erased from mainstream history, and this can be an opportunity for scholars, artists, political leaders and revolutionaries to look at African ways of acquiring African knowledges. Like Sankara, Awadi’s work is grounded in universal pan-Africanism, which recognizes the struggles of all oppressed populations, including women. In his song Ma Rêvolution, Awadi affirms that his
revolution makes sense to all communities who have suffered the injustices and cruelty of colonialism: from the peoples of the Congo to the Aboriginals of Australia. He is embracing universal humanism and freedom. Including the voices of women through oral literature would only further manifest the ultimate goal of Pan-Africanism. According to Eze (2013), “the project of Pan-Africanism doubles as both a historical and metaphysical project; it is a project not provincialized to racial consciousness but on the shared universality of human experience” (p. 671). Présidents d’Afrique articulates the visions of Pan-Africanism and humanism, expressed and articulated by African ancestors and this album has educated, inspired, and uplifted me.

Didier Awadi carefully weaves the past and the present together to deliberately tell the stories of Africa according to African notions of history. He consciously connects: voices of ancestors and new artists; traditional African instruments and contemporary hip-hop beats; colonial languages and African languages, to create an educational project founded on multi-generational African epistemologies and experiences. In my interview with Awadi, I asked him what was the key message he wanted to convey with his album, and he responded, “If there is one message, it is daring to invent the future, that to me says it all” (personal communication, August 6, 2015). Awadi is providing us with the knowledge of a different African past than the ones recorded in dominant history textbooks; one defined not simply by slavery, suffering and helplessness, but one defined by resistance, agency and achievements that can inform a different African future. While my father introduced me to Pan-Africanism, he passed away when I was still too young to fully understand what it was all about. Présidents d’Afrique exposed me to important principles and voices, like the one of Norbert Zongo or Julius Nyerere, who I knew nothing about. I became interested in learning more about my ancestors like Patrice
Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah. Furthermore, it is because of this album that I discovered the Upright Man of Burkina Faso, Sankara. A man that truly deserves a place of honor in world history for his visions, achievements, policies and love for Africa. This album made me want to learn about my past, about my history, about my ancestors, and it is this album that made me want to write this meaningful thesis. In 2003, at the Launch of Mindset Network in Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela stated, “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Mandela, 2003). In the form of music, Awadi created a revolutionary project that continues to educate the young African masses with the hope creating a free continent in which African women and men are proud, respected, patriotic, strong and unified. Awadi proves that learning is a process that can take place beyond the restrictive walls of a school. In order to live in our humanity and contribute to human civilization and knowledge, we have the responsibility to develop our sense of compassion, and I would argue empathy, through our common histories, in order to understand and fully respect all people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, “race,” and social class, and recognize the value and wisdom of indigenous knowledges.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guiding questions

1) Growing up in Senegal, what and who influenced you to become or identify yourself as a Pan-Africanist and a Sankarist?

2) As a student in formal school, were you exposed to African revolutionary leaders and African history in general?

3) How did you start rapping and was your music politically engaged from the beginning?

4) Why did you choose rap rather than a more traditional genre of music like Mbalax as a medium to share your political messages?

5) Which aspects of the hip-hop music drew you in?

6) Who and what influenced you to become a political activist?

7) What was the motivation behind the creation of Présidents d’Afrique?

8) Is your music, particularly Présidents d’Afrique, created to appeal to a particular audience? If yes, to whom and why?

9) What are the main messages you attempt to convey in your music, particularly Présidents d’Afrique?

10) Présidents d’Afrique is a historical piece of art, through this work, are you attempting to teach a different kind of history, a part of African history perhaps “forgotten” or ignored in formal school?

11) Are you speaking on behalf of someone or a particular group of people? Or are you speaking for yourself?

12) What was your main goal in creating Présidents d’Afrique?
13) Do you believe that a United States of Africa is possible and something we will witness in our lifetimes?
Appendix B: Tracks of the album *Présidents d’Afrique* and their dedication

1. *L’esclave*, **Thomas Sankara**.

2. *Dans mon rêve*—honoring **Martin Luther King** and **Barack Obama**, in collaboration with Doudou N’Diaye Rose, a master Senegalese percussionist who recently passed away in August 2015.

3. *Comme Nasser*—honoring **Gamal Nasser**.


5. *Woye*—honoring **Thomas Sankara**.

6. *The Roots*—honoring **Malcolm X**, in collaboration with American rapper and activist M-1 from Dead Prez and Senegalese artist Bouba Kirikou.


8. *We must unite*—honoring **Kwame Nkrumah**.


10. *On a plus le choix*—honoring **Modibo Keita**, in collaboration with Malian hip-hop group Tata Pound, Malian singer and griot Babani Koné and Senegalese singer and kora player Noumoucounda Cissoko.


12. *Une seule origine*—honoring **Cheikh Anta Diop**, in collaboration with hip-hop artist Keyti and Naby.
13. *We also praying*—honoring *Julius Nyerere*, in collaboration with one of the founders of hip-hop in Tanzania Sugu Mr. II, Bongo Flava artist Afande Sele and Tanzanian singer K-Lynn.


17. *Non*—honoring *Sékou Touré*, in collaboration with Guinean hip-hop artist Phaduba.

18. *Cabral*—honoring *Amilcar Cabral*, in collaboration with Balloberos, Daniel Gomes and Paul Oliviera from Guinea-Bissau.

19. *Ce qui nous lie*—honoring *Léopold Sédar Senghor*, in collaboration with Yandé Codou Sène, a Senegalese singer and the official *griot* of Léopold Sédar Senghor who passed away in 2010.


Appendix C: *Une seule Origine* by Didier Awadi honoring Cheikh Anta Diop

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<tr>
<th>Cheikh Anta Diop:</th>
<th>Cheikh Anta Diop:</th>
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<tr>
<td>L’humanité a une seule origine, ceci doit nous permettre de nous rapprocher les uns des autres au lieu de nous éloigner, et de nous haïr les uns les autres.</td>
<td>Humanity has a single origin and this should allow us to get closer to one another instead of driving us away from each other and hating each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au moment où l’impérialisme, n’est ce pas, atteint son apogée, en quelque sorte, L’Occident découvre que c’est l’Égypte, et une Égypte Noire qui a apporté tous les éléments de la civilisation à l’Europe.</td>
<td>At the moment when imperialism reached its peak, The West discovers that Egypt, and a Black Egypt at that, brought all the elements of civilization to Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alors, c’est bel et bien cet Afrique noire qui lui a donné tous les éléments de la civilisation, aussi extraordinaire que cela puisse paraître. Et cette vérité, tous les savants n’étaient pas également disposés à l’exprimer sans nuances.</td>
<td>So, it is indeed this Black Africa that gave all the elements of human civilization, as extraordinary as it may seem. And scholars were not willing to express this truth without nuances.</td>
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<th>Didier Awadi:</th>
<th>Didier Awadi:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ça fait bizarre qu’on te dit l’Afrique est number one, Ça fait bizarre qu’on te dit l’Afrique est championne, Ça fait du mal d’humilier tous ces « milliames » Même « milliames » qui te donnent pour que tu rayonnes. On nous a dit qu’on n’est pas civilisé, Appelle la Libye pour venir coloniser. On nous a lié le rôle principal qu’on a joué le berceau de l’humanité,</td>
<td>It’s weird when we tell you that Africa is number one, It’s weird when we tell you that Africa is a champion, It hurts to humilate these « thousands of souls », The same « thousands of souls » who give so you can shine. You have told us us that we are no civilized, Came to Lybia to colonize. They have tied us to our primary role, Being the cradle of humanity,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C’est bien là on n’va pas dévisser  
Loin de nous « val. » et rétro  
La « vanité », quelques vérités renaissances avec humilité,  
Faut le dire, pas l’faire à l’humanité.  
Y’a trop de quolibets que l’Afrique n’a pas mérité.

**Cheikh Anta Diop:**  
Il y’a eu des falsificateurs de l’histoire.  
Ils on créé, commis, ce que j’appelle  
Et je pèse bien mes mots,  
Un véritable crime contre l’humanité.  
Il y’a des générations entières de spécialistes occidentaux qui on été coupables de ce crime à l’égard de l’humanité.  
Et ils le savent! Et ils le savent.

**Couplet en Wolof**

**Refrain en Wolof:**  
Je suis en pleurs,  
Tout mon savoir dégouline telle pluie.  
La richesse est derrière moi malgré les moqueries,  
Je suis l’abreuvoir ou ils viennent s’abreuver en laissant leurs souillures.

**Cheikh Anta Diop:**  
La connaissance directe, l’Afrique doit être capable de saisir une vérité,

That’s exactly what we’re gonna hold onto  
Far from us, « val » and retro  
Vanity, some truths  
Rebirth with humility,  
We have to say it, not do it to humanity.  
There are too many gibes that Africa doesn’t deserves.

**Cheikh Anta Diop :**  
There have been falsifiers of history.  
They created, committed, what I call,  
And I weigh my words carefully,  
A true crime against humanity.  
There have been generations of Western scholars who have been guilty of this crime against humanity.  
And they know it! And they know it.

**Verse in Wolof**

**Refrain in Wolof:**  
I’m crying,  
All my knowledge is dripping like rain.  
Wealth stands behind me despite the mockery,  
I’m the drinking trough where they come to drink, leaving their filth.

**Cheikh Anta Diop:**  
Africa must grasp a truth, resulting from its direct knowledge, and know that she is possession of a
De savoir qu’elle est en possession d’une vérité, quel que soit le domaine d’ailleurs.
Ce n’est pas seulement dans le domaine culturel,
Et de se maintenir au niveau de cette vérité, en prenant des mesures conservatoires, jusqu’à ce que, l’on sache que la supercherie, c’est fini!
Par conséquent, il n’y a qu’un seul salut, c’est la connaissance directe
Et aucune paresse ne pourra dispenser de cet effort.
Il faudra absolument acquérir la connaissance directe, a formation égale, la vérité triomphe.
Formez-vous,
Armez-vous de Sciences jusqu’au dents,
C’est ce que j’ai dit à Obenga et arrachez votre patrimoine culturel.
Ou alors, traînez-moi dans la boue si, quand vous arriverez à cette connaissance directe,
Vous découvrez que mes arguments sont inconsistants. C’est cela, mais il n’y a pas d’autres voies.

**Refrain en Wolof**

**Cheikh Anta Diop:**
La nature n’a jamais créé deux fois la souris
Deux fois le chat ou deux fois l’espèce humaine.
La nature au passage crée une espèce et puis ensuite, cette espèce se différencie,
Evolue, s’éteint ou se développe, se fragmente,
Mais la nature ne revient pas en arrière pour créer

truth, in whatever field.

It should not only be in the cultural domain,
And to maintain this truth,
By taking protective measures, until the confidence trick is over!
Consequently, there is only one salvation, direct knowledge, and no laziness can help in this effort.

We absolutely need to acquire direct knowledge, through education, because truth triumph.
Educate yourself,
Arm yourself to the teeth with Sciences,
That’s what I told Obenga, and snatch your cultural heritage.
Or, drag me through the mud, if when you arrive at this direct knowledge,
You realize that my arguments were inconsistent, that’s it, but there is no other way.

**Refrain in Wolof**

**Cheikh Anta Diop:**
Nature did not create the mouse twice,
Or the cat twice, or the human species twice.
Nature created one species and then, this species differentiates itself, evolves, dies or grows, or breaks.
But nature does not come back in time to re-create
| trois fois l’homme ou deux fois l’homme.  
Elle a créé une fois l’homme en passant et elle l’a fait en Afrique, c’est tout. | two or three times the human species. She created the man, and she did it in Africa, that’s it! |
**Appendix D: *Oser Inventer l’Avenir* by Didier Awadi honoring Thomas Sankara**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thomas Sankara:</th>
<th>Thomas Sankara:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Extrait de son discours à l’ONU 4 Octobre 1984</em></td>
<td><em>Extract from his speech at the UN 4 October 1984</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons choisi de risquer de nouvelles voies pour être plus heureux.</td>
<td>We chose to risk new paths to be happier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons choisi de mettre en place de nouvelles techniques.</td>
<td>We chose to apply new techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous avons choisi de rechercher des formes d’organisation, mieux adaptées à notre civilisation rejetant de manière abrupte et définitive toutes sortes de diktats extérieurs, pour créer ainsi les conditions d’une dignité à la hauteur de nos ambitions.</td>
<td>Better suited to our civilization, flatly and definitively rejecting all forms of outside diktas, in order to lay the foundations for achieving a level of dignity equal to our ambitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuser l’état de survie, desserrer les pressions, libérer nos campagnes d’un immobilisme moyenâgeux ou d’une régression, démocratiser notre société, ouvrir les esprits sur un univers de responsabilité collective pour oser inventer l’avenir.</td>
<td>Refusing to accept a state of survival, easing the pressures, liberating our countryside from medieval stagnation or even regression, democratizing our society, opening minds to a world of collective responsibility in order to dare to invent the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Didier Awadi:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, c’est pas rien que des cases, elle est loin des images qu’on peut voir dans tes films nazes.</td>
<td>My Africa, it’s not just huts, she is far from the images we can see in your stupid/outdated movies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, elle est à l’aise dans ce millénaire, ici, on parle web, on parle net, on parle cellulaire.</td>
<td>My Africa is at ease in this millennium, here we speak web, we speak net, and we speak about cell phones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, elle a des bases plus que séculaires, mais l’avenir se conjugue en révolutionnaire.</td>
<td>My Africa has secular foundations, but the future will be revolutionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’est pas que j’idéalise, je suis un missionnaire, fils de Sankara, mon</td>
<td>It’s not that I’m idealizing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Text</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regard l’oeil du visionnaire.</td>
<td>I am a missionary, son of Sankara, I have the eyes of a visionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, c’est pas la guerre, c’est pas la famine,</td>
<td>My Africa, it’s not war, it’s not famine,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De l’or et du diamant, de l’uranium, j’en ai plein les mines.</td>
<td>My mines are full of gold, diamonds and uranium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, c’est pas la mort, c’est pas la misère,</td>
<td>My Africa, it’s not death, it’s not misery,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarde autour de toi, c’est le soleil et puis la mer.</td>
<td>Look around you, it’s the sun and the sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, tu peux la voir, elle est dans les rues.</td>
<td>My Africa, you can see her, she drives in the streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle roule en Cadillac et en ville, elle prend le scooter.</td>
<td>She drives a Cadillac, and in the city, she takes the scooter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, tu peux la voir, elle est dans ma rue,</td>
<td>My Africa, you can see her on my street,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle vit à 100 à l’heure, à la campagne elle prend le Hummer</td>
<td>She lives at 100%, and in the country, she takes the Hummer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, elle raffole du KFC,</td>
<td>My Africa, she adores KFC,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mais à midi, elle veut du mafé</td>
<td>But at lunch, she wants mafé.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon Afrique, après le tiep, nous on prend le thé, Guerté kemb, café Touba, je peux t’y inviter</td>
<td>My Africa, after tiep, we have tea, Guerté kemb, Touba coffee, I can invite you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prends ça dans la face!</td>
<td>Take that in your face!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>