

# Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement *Y'en a Marre* and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal

by

Marame Gueye

*Marame Gueye* is an assistant professor of African and African diaspora literatures at East Carolina University. She received a doctorate in Comparative Literature, Feminist Theory, and Translation from SUNY Binghamton with a dissertation entitled: *Wolof Wedding Songs: Women Negotiating Voice and Space Through Verbal Art*. Her research interests are orality, verbal art, immigration, and gender and translation discourses. Her most recent article is “*Modern Media and Culture: Speaking Truth to Power*” in *African Studies Review* (vol. 54, no.3).

## Abstract

Since the 1980s, Hip Hop has become a popular musical genre in most African countries. In Senegal, young artists have used the genre as a mode of social commentary by vesting their aesthetics in the culture's oral traditions established by griots. However, starting from the year 2000, Senegalese Hip Hop evolved as a platform for young people to be politically engaged and socially active. This socio-political engagement was brought to a higher level during the recent presidential elections when Hip Hop artists created the *Y'en a Marre Movement* [Enough is Enough]. The movement emerged out of young people's frustrations with the chronic power cuts that plagued Senegal since 2003 to becoming the major critic of incumbent President Abdoulaye Wade. *Y'en a Marre* was at the forefront of major demonstrations against Wade's bid for a contested third term. But of greater or equal importance, the movement's musical releases during the period were specifically aimed at “bringing down the president.” This article looks at their last installment piece entitled *Faux! Pas Forcé* [Fake! Forced Step or Don't! Push] which was released at the eve of the second round of voting. The song's title conveys several meanings and articulates the artists' skills in using language as a medium of contestation. The title is also the only part of the song that is delivered in French. The remainder is in Wolof the local lingua franca and the language in which most Senegalese Hip Hop artists choose to perform in. Using Wolof proverbs and sayings, the song effectively delivers a satire of Abdoulaye Wade and his regime. This song can be considered the speech that toppled Wade's throne. By playing with words and meaning, the song presents an image of Abdoulaye that not only led young voters to realize that he was a wrong choice, it also communicated to the regime that the young people were determined to get rid of them and that there wasn't room for negotiation.

## Introduction

In 2012, the Senegalese hip hop community garnered international media attention when the grassroots movement *Y'en a Marre* (“Fed Up!” or “Enough is Enough!”), defiantly stood up against incumbent octogenarian Abdoulaye Wade as he ran for a widely contested third presidential term. This politically unaffiliated coalition of rap musicians and journalists engaged in a war of both words and activism against Wade and his government. However, the movement’s musical releases during the period are marginalized in accounts of the role rap music played in Senegal’s socio-political landscape. An example of such oversight is Baye Makébé Sarr and Vieux Savané’s book *Y’ en a Marre: Radioscopie d’une jeunesse insurgée au Senegal* [*Y’ en a Marre: Radioscopy of a Rebelled Youth in Senegal*] (2012), which focuses primarily on the genesis of the movement and its lead role during the demonstrations that unfolded in the wake of the elections. Though this activism is significant, the movement is grounded in verbal art where texts were used to create tangible change. The three songs being examined; *Faux! Pas Forcé!*<sup>1</sup> (“Don’t push!”), *Daas Fanaanal* (“Sharpening one’s weapon the night before”), and *Doggali* (“Finishing up a killing”), are manifestos that employ a culturally grounded oral narrative, in order to wage a war against President Abdoulaye Wade and reclaim the nation. Adam Nossiter writes in the *New York Times*:

It is not that Senegal lacks established politicians, political parties or even newspapers opposing Mr. Wade, often with torrents of incendiary if not wide-of-the-mark verbiage, a Senegalese tradition. The rappers, however, have struck a nerve because they cut to the chase. Their language is direct, sometimes crude and quite unambiguous.

Although rap artists have been extremely vocal in Senegal, *Y'en a Marre* took their activism beyond words, especially after the events of June 23, 2011 during which several of their members were arrested. Although these events were a major turning point in *Y'en a Marre*’s physical activism, they also sparked the start of a verbal war against Wade’s government. Situating the songs within the movement’s goals and strategies, this essay will demonstrate that African hip hop can create social change beyond the aesthetic space of enunciation. To that effect, I follow Karin Barber (2007) and Mwenda Ntarangwi’s (2009) approaches to texts as sites of social changes, to show that within the context of contemporary Senegalese politics, these three songs allowed rap artists to use language in order to frame and ground their socio-political fight. In *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Public* (2007), Karin Barber reminds us that “Texts are social facts. Texts are used to do things: they are forms of actions” (3) and that “As well as being social facts, however, texts are commentaries upon, and interpretations of, social facts” (5).

Texts are also products of specific socio-political contexts, and as such, are responses to larger debates. In *East African Hip Hop* (2009), Ntarangwi focuses primarily on lyrics to document the ways in which rap artists from Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, position themselves within local and transnational debates. As suggested by Barber, “Words are not the only form of representation or expression. People establish and convey meaning through clothing, dance, music, gesture, and though complex rituals which often defy verbal exegesis” (3). *Y’ en a Marre*’s three songs and the widely distributed video of the first one, were “used to do things.” As “actions,” they were war weapons against President Abdoulaye Wade. These songs fostered socio-political change in the country as well as within individual citizens. *Y’ en a Marre*’s unique style of activism shows the potency of texts, not just as reactions to specific events, but also as agents of social change. The movement used what its members call “Urban Guerrilla Poetry,” revolutionary rap music performed in public spaces, to bring down Wade and achieve their ultimate goal of creating a New Type of Senegalese (NTS), which according to Fou Malade, is a citizen who claims his/her rights and is aware of his/her civic responsibilities. All three songs were released at different stages of the election period and constitute responses as well as strategies within the general fight to oust Wade and reclaim the nation. *Faux! Pas Forcé!* is a reaction to the events of June 23, 2011. It frames Wade as the nation’s common enemy and exhibits the youth’s resolve to get rid of him. As propaganda, *Daas Fanaanal* exhorts masses to vote against Wade after he was declared eligible for a third term, and *Dooggali* turns him into an agonizing enemy who must be finally eliminated during the run-off. *Y’ en a Marre*’s non-violent motto pertained only to their physical activism. Their songs used a violent narrative to undo Wade and to delineate the movement’s aggressive action plan.

## **Background of Senegalese Hip Hop**

Senegal has one of the most vibrant hip hop communities in Africa. One of its first and most notable rap collectives, Positive Black Soul (PBS), was formed in 1989 by Didier Sourou Awadi aka Dj Awadi and Amadou Barry aka Duggy-Tee and has since gained international acclaim. Like most early African rap music of the 1980s and early 1990s, PBS’s first recordings were in European languages such as French and English, with mixes that imitated American rap music. Following PBS’s lead several hip hop groups formed in Dakar and around the country. By 2000, Senegal had over 3000 collectives<sup>2</sup>. Earlier groups were youth from the upper middle class whose families could afford subscriptions to overseas music channels, as Senegal had only one television station. From the mid-1990s, the Senegalese hip hop landscape shifted when youth from the suburbs of Dakar and the rest of the country entered the scene.

In the beginning, rap music had negative connotations in Senegalese popular culture. Rap musicians were not taken seriously and were humorously likened to madmen because in Wolof, especially among the sub-group of the Lebou, the term *rap* means a spirit that inhabits someone’s body and makes the person sick or mentally ill.

Rap music was understood as an escapist form for idle youth who were overly fascinated with the West. Despite this inauspicious beginning, rap music gained a positive image when the emcees began to culturally ground the art form by rapping in Wolof and other local languages<sup>3</sup> and addressing the everyday concerns of the masses.

Scholars have established that African youth have overwhelmingly utilized rap music to advocate for social change in their various communities (Perullo 2005). They have embraced the genre as a medium for identity formation as well as a way to participate in “local and global debates “ (Ntarangwi, 2009). In Senegal, rap music has allowed a vocally marginalized youth to gain visibility and representation. The documentary *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar* (2007), chronicles how rap artists unsuccessfully tried to use their music to prevent Wade’s re-election for a second term in 2007. But at the start of the 2012 election season, rap musicians moved beyond musical denunciation to become physically involved in the re-shaping of the nation by creating the grassroots movement *Y’en a marre*, a French expression which denotes that a person has had it with a specific situation, in this case, Abdoulaye Wade’s twelve year presidency.

### ***Y’en a Marre***

The movement *Y’en a Marre* was co-founded in January 2011 by Cheikh Omar Cyrille Toure aka *Thiat* [the last born]<sup>4</sup> and Mbessane Seck aka *Kilifeu* [the authority/elder]<sup>5</sup> from the rap group *Keur Gui* [The House] of Kaolack, and activist journalists Fadel Barro and Alioune Sané. They were later joined by Malal Tall aka *Fou Malade* [Crazy Sick]<sup>6</sup> from the group *Bat’haillons Blin-D* [Armored Beaten Rags or Armored Battalion], and many other rap artists. According to Fadel Barro, the creation of the movement was a cathartic idea, which emerged as they sat in his living room waiting for electricity to return after a twenty hour blackout.

We were tired of criticizing without being physically involved. We wanted to do something that would show that we were fed up, but also, we wanted to let the Senegalese people understand that it was time to end this fatalism, this habit of keeping one’s hands folded and doing nothing. It was time to be involved in the running of the country. (TotasprouD)

The movement can also be taken as a materialization of Keur Gui’s single *coup 2 gueule* [Shouting Session] released in 2010, in which they called for rap musicians to act on their words.

We must act on our shouting session!  
Us and them like Hitler and De Gaulle!

The comparison implied that like World War II, a physical confrontation between the Senegalese people and the government was inevitable because the masses were fed up and needed to take action. Djily Baghdad, a rapper who joined the movement, expressed this general sentiment: “The *Y’en a Marre* thing, everybody was *Y’en a Marre* inside their chest. Everybody had that *Y’en a Marre* feeling. Everybody was fed up” (NPR). Because the term *Y’en a Marre* is a state of mind, the movement established *Esprits* [States of minds], neighborhood units with the goals of finding solutions to local problems. As its first order of business, *Y’en a Marre* drafted a document entitled *Les Mille Plaintes Contre le Gouvernement du Senegal* [One Thousand Complaints against the Senegalese Government] in which they enumerated the people’s major frustrations. They held their first press conference on the symbolic date of March 19, paralleling the annual celebration of The Day of the Alternation, the date Abdoulaye Wade was sworn in as president after opposition parties rallied behind him and facilitated his victory over Diouf in 2000. This celebration was traditionally a political parade and *Y’en a Marre*’s wanted to reclaim it as “The People’s Day” and also use the media exposure to introduce their newly formed movement. The press conference was attended by thousands, especially the youth who were ready for a movement that communicated a message they could identify with.

## **Senegal’s Political Landscape from 2000**

In 2000, after 40 years of single party rule under the Party Social (PS), established by Senegal’s first President and poet, Leopold Sedar Senghor, who handed power to his then Prime Minister Abdou Diouf in 1980, the Senegalese people elected longtime opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade of the *Parti Democartie Senegalais* (PDS). Wade’s election was facilitated by other opposition parties who rallied their electorate to vote for him, since he was the only candidate who garnered enough votes to face Diouf for a second round. When he was first elected, Wade carried out his promise to change the presidential term from seven to five years, and limited it two terms. But in 2003, he changed it back to seven, extending his first term until 2007. Wade also recruited his son Karim and endowed him with considerable clout within the government. By the end of Wade’s first term, many Senegalese had become disillusioned in his ability to remedy the chronic unemployment and solve the many economic challenges the country was facing such as the continuous power outages that started in 2003. Rap artists were the first to voice such discontent. Despite their efforts, Wade was re-elected in 2007.

Many Senegalese assumed Wade would step down at the end of his second term since he had publicly stated that he would not seek a third term. However, in 2009, he announced his intention to run for a third term on the premises that the constitutional amendment establishing a two-term limit for the presidency, did not apply to him because it was added during his first term. Protests were held in Dakar but the matter was left to the Constitutional Court to decide. On June 16, 2011, as the Senegalese waited for the Constitutional Court to deliberate on his eligibility for a third term, Wade proposed a constitutional amendment that would reduce the percentage of votes required to avoid a runoff from 50% to 25%.

He also proposed an American-style post of Vice President, which many understood to be a veiled attempt to place Karim as second in line for the presidency. These proposed amendments led to the creation of the civil society M23 movement, which organized a massive demonstration on June 23, 2011. Crowds gathered in front of the National Assembly chanting “Do not touch my constitution!” They threw rocks, burned tires, and attacked the residences of some members of the government. The riot police retaliated with tears gas and water cannons. A few people were killed and many were jailed, including Alioune Tine, the President of the human rights organization RADDHO (*Rencontre Africaine de Defense des Droits de l’Homme*), and Thiat, one of the founders of *Y’ en a Marre*. Although Wade withdrew his propositions after the demonstrations, June 23, 2011 remains a crucial moment in the political history of Senegal and constitute for *Y’ en a Marre*, the beginning of a war against Wade and his government.

## Urban Guerrilla Poetry

*Y’ en a Marre’s* activism was not just limited to physical grassroots organizing. As a movement created by rap musicians, songs were central to their strategic plan of action. Guerrilla poetry is a recital of short poems where the audience is often unprepared for the content of the texts. As explained by Fou Malade, the term “urban guerilla poetry” is also inspired by “urban guerilla warfare,” a concept referring to guerilla attacks on government officials in dense cities, which provided quick hideaways<sup>7</sup>. Therefore urban guerrilla poetry can be the use of rap lyrics to attacks government officials throughout cities and getting away with it. Wade’s tenure was a period when the outspoken press as well as rap musicians were censored and even physically attacked<sup>8</sup>. This censorship curtailed the level of engagement of some artists. *Y’ en Marre’s* “urban guerrilla poetry” challenged this intimidation by using texts as war tactics against a President that was considered an “enemy of the nation.” They produced violent lyrics and distributed them to artist members whose mission was to use stereos and play the songs in public areas. They also improvised concerts across major cities in order to awaken the masses. When Wade’s government banned peaceful demonstrations, rap musicians hopped on buses singing and distributing flyers. The texts served as hideouts from the riot police and constituted “unruly” places beyond Wade’s reach, as the following lyrics from *Faux! Pas Forcé!* emphasize:

Our fight is out of your control  
It is not today that you will realize it  
Smuggle what you are playing with before the war heats up

However, *Y en a Marre’s* fight did not just aim to topple Wade’s regime. Urban Guerrilla poetry also targeted the mindsets of individual citizens. The movement’s ultimate goal was to create a New Type of Senegalese (NTS). Senegal is seen as a beacon of democracy in the region because it has never had a coup and has a history of peaceful presidential transitions.

But within the country, this stability can be credited to the fatalism of the Senegalese and to their tendency to seek compromise as understood in the Wolof term *maslaa*. *Maslaa* denotes people's ability to repress frustrations in order to cohabitate with one another. *Y' en a Marre* stoked the frustrations of people who had exhausted their capacity for *maslaa* and were ready for action. According to Alioune Sane, *Y en a Marre* defines NTS, as a citizen who claims his or her rights but also understands his or her civic duty (UNRIC). This includes finding ways to solve local problems before asking for government assistance, respecting public property, fighting corruption, and most importantly, understanding the power of one's voice through the vote. The first song *Faux! Pas forcé* shows this shift in the attitude of Senegalese people, especially the youth because it was released as a response to the demonstrations of June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011.

## **Do Not Push!**

As the longest and most elaborate song, *Faux! Pas force!* was written by Simon and Kilifeu and released together with a video in December 2011. The title, which is pretty much the only part of the song that is in French, was adopted by the youth during rallies as they shouted *Faut pas forcer! Faut léguer le pouvoir!* [Don't push! You must hand down power!] The song addresses President Wade directly and implies that the proposed amendments were the ultimate test of the Senegalese people's patience and constitute offenses to national values represented by the constitution:

I swear, you were a role model  
Until you turned our constitution into your toy

*Faux! Pas Forcé!* constitutes a heated argument with Wade. Because it was the first time in Senegal's modern history that the youth showed such determination, the riot police were overwhelmed and the army was brought out as back up. Wade clearly underestimated the will of the youth and later stated that he was shocked by their behavior:

You said we surprised you  
Wade likened the members of *Y' en a Marre* to drug addicts who were inciting the youth to acts of violence. The lyrics reply:

Take a good look at us.  
We were not drunk, we did not smoke (pot) on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.  
It was us outside the National Assembly on June 23<sup>rd</sup>!

The song presents a counter discourse that discredits Wade's attempts at re-instating the old stereotype that rap artists were mad and irresponsible youth. In the video clip, the rappers sport their iconic black shirts with the words "*Y en a Marre*" printed in white. They show bandaged wounds as badges of authenticity that show that they sustained the injuries inflicted by the riot police, and stand defiantly in a block, as if offering their bodies to shield the nation. This defiance dominates the song.

The title of the song intentionally violates French grammar rules and underscores rap music's subversive essence. It also demonstrates how rappers play with words in order to create multi-layered meanings within one text. By simply hearing the song, the most common meaning given to it is: "Don't push!" However, if one considers how it is written on the group's Facebook page, the literal translation would be "Fake! Forced Step!" since the correct French term for "don't push" is *Faut pas forcer*! From the beginning, the song identifies Abdoulaye Wade as the addressee and takes the tone of an angry argument which is later reinforced by the finger pointing in the video:

Abdoulaye!  
Do not push!  
I swear!  
Abdoulaye!  
A noble person should honor their word  
I swear!

These two stanzas open the song and are repeated throughout with interjecting sounds of someone vomiting. The song frames Wade as a nuisance to the country as communicated through the sounds of vomiting. It emphasizes Wade's inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the nation's heightened frustration with his government. The direct addresses reinforce defiance and clearly identify Wade as the interlocutor. In Wolof culture, calling an addressee's name before speaking directly to the person is a practice used to garner the latter's attention. Repeating the name several times before delivering a speech establishes the importance of a message. It is used in panegyric forms where a praise singer wants to bear witness and acknowledge the presence or deeds of the addressee. In situations of conflict, it denotes a speaker's frustrations and serves as a warning to the person named. Also, as a sign of respect, a young person should not call an older person by their first name without first adding a term of respect such as uncle, father, sister, aunt, etc. The lyrics subvert this notion and suggest that Wade, addressed by his first name, Abdoulaye, is not worthy of this respect.

The lyrics also break the cultural taboo against calling an older person a liar:  
We are dealing with a liar  
A noble person should respect his word.

When questioned by a journalist about his earlier promise to not seek a third term, Wade famously retorted: *Maa waxoon, waaxeet* [I said it, now I am unsaying it.]. This statement was used by rap artists and other musicians as a refrain in satirical songs in order to emphasize the president's poor character. *Faux! Pas force!* highlights President Wade's alleged hoarding of the country's resources:

You have our horse, yet you cannot ride  
Our money, yet you have no pockets  
You and your relatives are hoarding it

The nation is represented as a victim of Wade, whose incompetence is driven by his thirst for power and self-enrichment<sup>9</sup>. Because of his refusal to relinquish power, Wade embodies a glutton who feeds on the nation and will not stop unless forced to:

You have had a huge handful, and another,  
Yet you still want to take the last bone from the cow  
We are the ones who will force it out of your hands  
Before the inevitable happens!

The term *foxati* [To force something out of someone's hands] conveys tension as it communicates the determination of the person who is trying to take the object, as well as the holder's tight grip. Using the Wolof proverb: "What is crawling is heading to the pile," the lyrics underscore the necessity to stop Wade before he destroys the already agonizing country and shows the resolve of the movement.

## **Non-violent but Capable of Violence**

However, as the Arab Spring<sup>10</sup> was unfolding, *Y' en a Marre* was not interested in a movement modeled after the revolutions that were happening in various North African countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. *Y' en a Marre*, deemed these uprisings unsuccessful and wanted to avoid such bloodshed in Senegal. According to Fadel Barro:

From the start we chose the path of non-violence. We have said that we are not going to let others destroy our country. Our ancestors have left us a peaceful country, a country that is quasi stable. We do not have the right to put it in flames. Today, Tunisia is in flames. They have gotten rid of Ben Ali, but have they changed the fundamental system? We think the system is still there and they are in a dead end. It is the same thing in Egypt, and now look what is happening in Libya. Y en a Marre does not want this kind of solution. (TotaproD)

*Y'en a Marre* understood that Wade, like the dictators in the Arab Spring, was not going to step down without any bloodshed. They organized peaceful demonstrations where members would sit on the ground in silence. They wanted to utilize Senegal's history of peaceful political transitions in their favor by rallying the masses to exercise their right to vote. It was clear to them that the people's high levels of frustration would ensure Wade's defeat in the upcoming elections.

Despite this non-violent philosophy, however, *Faux! Pas Forcé!* suggests that the movement was prepared for physical violence if warranted. The song warns Wade:

Laye<sup>11</sup>, do not look for alibis  
Don't be like Gaddafi  
If you do not want us to be like the people of Libya

President Abdoulaye Wade had urged Gaddafi to step down. Wade also went against the African Union and was the first head of state to visit Benghazi, the stronghold of the Libyan uprising. Wade appeared on news outlets such as Al Jazeera, boasting about the good advice he gave Gaddafi, including telling the Libyan leader to bring back the billions of dollars he had in European banks. Wade declared that by refusing to relinquish power, Gaddafi was heading to a brutal end. Gaddafi went into hiding and was later found and killed by militants. Ironically, Wade did not draw useful lessons from Gaddafi's experience and the lyrics imply a similar fate for him.

The youth that showed up in front of the National Assembly on June 23<sup>rd</sup> were resolved to die in order to protect the constitution. The Wolof term *ma naaq sama* [I swear], literally translates to [May I lose...] and communicates a sentiment of determination coming from someone who is ready to put everything in the line to achieve a goal:

You can bring out the army and the police  
Here are the bodies we are willing for you to turn them into steaks!  
We will bear the clubs  
Dare to deny it [the presidency] to you.  
Blood flows  
We lick it!

The language of the song portrays an enraged and defiant youth. That conveys this sentiment:

We have reconciled the issue of fear. Fear, retreat, hesitation, do not exist in our vocabulary. Whatever happens, we have done our share. If death is the price to pay, so be it. One dies only once and might as well die for a cause that is worth it. (June 28, 2011)

This resolve for martyrdom illustrates level of frustration of the Senegalese youth who suffered the direct consequences of Wade's presidency in high unemployment and lack of opportunities.

## **We Are Not Making Any Concessions**

Senegalese culture gives precedence to seniority; the young must respect the old, and this includes not challenging the integrity of an older person. As Fou Malade remarks: "The imperfection of older people in Senegal is that they believe the youth do not have the right to talk" (*Grand Rendez-Vous*, December 2011). This gerontocracy makes it difficult for young people to have representation in important debates. The song makes a statement about the youth's resolve to embody the ideals of NTS that *Y' en Marre* strives to create by leading the fight to reclaim the Senegalese people's rights. As Ntarangwi states: "[...] I see youth agency through hip hop as a means of retaining autonomy and the ability to act on their own behalf while influencing other people in political discourse and even economic activity in spite of the global forces of inequality and exploitation that they face" (3). This determination echoes throughout the song:

If an eye is not ashamed it bursts

This Wolof proverb denotes that if one does not know one's limit, they should be told off. The expression conveys that the speaker has run out of patience and that the addressee has pushed the boundaries far enough to trigger reaction.

The song creates a united front of all Senegalese people against a common enemy. Through unifying words such as "we," "us" "our", the song frames Wade as the enemy of the nation:

Get ready for a face to face with us  
We will face your shadows  
We will fight until the end  
Anything you gather we will spill  
Us and you until the river dries out.  
We will be present wherever you summon us  
A revolted nation is not a match for an old thug.

For *Y' en a Marre*, in order for the nation to move forward, it must get rid of Wade. As Thiat suggests in after being released from jail on June 28, 2011, "We must get rid of the monster." Framing Wade as Senegal's number one enemy allows the people to come together to fight him regardless of their ethnic, religious and gender affiliations.

This narrative also appears in the video and conveys this attempt at creating a union of all Senegalese, especially by incorporating the historically marginalized voices of young people and women. In the beginning of the clip, a young man receives a phone call informing him that Wade has been allowed to run for a third term. As he rushes from his house, he takes care to go to an older female (possibly his mother) for her to pray for him. This suggests that the youth have the blessing of the older generation, especially women who have been previously left outside the political debates. As the young man goes to meet his friends who decided to start a demonstration, the woman yanks the veil that covered her head, ties it around her waist, and leaves to join the protestors. She is later shown leading the young people as they go from house to house rallying more demonstrators. In Senegalese culture, the practice of tying a head wrap or a veil around one's waist conveys a woman's resolve to fight. It also delineates a shift from humble (the covered head), to determination (the support and foundation provided by the tie around the waist.) Her blessing and participation recall the demonstration held in Dakar in February 2012 by hundreds of women wearing white. The women displayed banners that read "Enough!" and "Stop the killing of our children!" As mothers they took to the streets to defend the young people against the riot police, and aligned themselves with a cause they thought was legitimate. The video ends with an elderly woman pleading to Wade to not push it because she is dying of hunger. This powerful conclusion strategically suggests that the most vulnerable are the older generation and that it is the youth's duty to defend them. The video makes the point of omitting the presence of older male figures. Historically political parties, intellectuals, and labor unions were the major critics of the government and the only voices of the nation. By featuring only the often politically marginalized, women and young people, the video highlights the failures of patriarchy and gerontocracy by implying that Wade cannot be fought without the combined efforts of all Senegalese.

The lyrics suggest that the nation would prevail against Wade who was already a trapped enemy due to his unpopularity among religious leaders:

You have pit the Muslim brotherhood against each other  
Where are you going to call for help?  
You have made the church cry  
It will come back to haunt you

Historically, Muslim brotherhoods influence the outcome of presidential elections, as their leaders would endorse certain candidates. During the 2000 and 2007 elections, Wade had benefited from support from the Mourid and Tijaniyyah, the two major Muslim brotherhoods. But in 2012, few religious leaders voiced support for him, mainly because Wade had publicly declared that he was a Mourid, therefore distancing himself from other brotherhoods. Also despite his affiliation with the Mourid brotherhood, Wade had a hard time garnering support for its leadership, as Mourid followers who are predominantly farmers and business owners, felt the severe economic repercussions of Wade's tenure<sup>12</sup>.

Wade also offended the minority Senegalese Catholics by publicly stating that they worshipped Jesus Christ who was not a God (Agoravox.fr). Senegalese Catholics held demonstrations and their Archbishop demanded that the president issued a public apology, which Wade later did.

On the political front, Wade had alienated himself from important constituencies and had created enemies within and outside his party:

When you clean dishes you put holes in them  
Your boat never gets to shore  
That is why those who followed you are turning back!

Six of the presidential candidates were former ministers or prime ministers in Wade's government, including Macky Sall who ended up winning the elections. During his mandate, Wade changed prime ministers several times and created camps within his party. Idrissa Seck, another strong candidate, was a former protégé and also served as Prime Minister from 2002 to 2004<sup>13</sup>. The lyrics suggest that the President's numerous *faux pas* would make him vulnerable. Such framing allowed voters to consider Wade a weak choice whose fate was already determined while at the same time emphasizing the power of a united vote against him.

### ***Daas Fanaanal: The Voter Card as a Weapon***

In January 2012, the Constitutional Court announced Wade's eligibility to run for a third term. *Y' en a Marre* shifted its rhetoric of refuting Wade's candidacy to a strategy of elimination based on the vote. The song *Daas Fanaanal* was released by *Keur Gui* and featured *Fou Malade*. The Wolof term *daas fanaanal*, which is also used as a refrain in *Doggali*, means to sharpen a weapon such as a knife or a machete in order to get ready for a slaughter (often of an animal). It figuratively conveys one's early preparedness for a conflict or a challenge. The song focuses primarily on the importance of the vote and reiterates the call for all Senegalese people to participate in the reclaiming of the nation:

Senegal is for everyone  
It includes everyone  
The minister and the porter both have the same rights

*Y' en a Marre* understood that the power of the vote would be the people's strongest weapon.

The voter card gives you power  
Choose and see where to go  
In 2012 shoot a bullet to the thug  
Wake up you are sleeping  
Register for your card  
Move to another level  
Dare to impose your charter.

*Daas Fanaanal* aimed at sensitizing the masses and exhorting them to be prepared to exert their civic right should the court confirm Wade's eligibility for a third term:

This is the sound of the alarm  
Sharpen my weapon the night before!  
My voter card is my weapon  
Sharpen my weapon the night before!  
It is what is going to wipe my tears!

This dynamic allowed the movement to empower Senegalese voters by framing the voter card as the weapon against Wade. Under the framework of being ready ahead of time, *Y' en a Marre* initiated a voter registration campaign also entitled *daas fanaanal* with themes such as *Ma carte mon arme* [my card my weapon] and *junni junni votes* [sharpen the weapon the night before: thousands and thousands of votes] aimed at registering as many voters as possible. The campaign was geared toward preparing the voters early enough in order to make sure they got the chance to exert their civic duty. The song begins with the emcee imploring people to go register:

Not registering is part of the problem  
*Y' en a Marre* is a state of mind  
Senegalese people  
This is a matter of a voter card  
It is a piece of paper  
If you do not have it  
You are done for  
You are done for!  
Give me my card so I can vote  
Don't fool me  
He is 18 and of age of vote  
Give him his paper  
He does not want blood to flow in his country  
He knows where he is going!

The process of acquiring voter cards was historically complicated and discouraged the majority of voters. *Y'en Marre* reframed this rhetoric and used lyrics to reshape the meanings of the voter card by infusing it with power and reminding people that *Y'en a Marre* is a state of mind that requires actions. At the same time, the lyrics send a message to the future president by reiterating the birth of a New Type of Senegalese who has control over elected leaders through the vote:

Accept my charter  
I will give you my card

The song exhorts voters to make conscious choices by determining which candidate had the national interest in mind. The movement used their texts to emphasize the potency of the vote and managed to reverse the indifference that most Senegalese had about their civic duty:

The card elected you  
Give me my card so I can un-elect you

Many credit Wade's victory in 2000 to young people who overwhelmingly voted for him. The lyrics emphasize the power of the vote because it can be used for or against politicians. By composing lyrics that particularly focused on acquiring a voter card early, rap musicians destabilized the pre-established rhetoric which framed the voter card as a privilege that government officials granted some citizens, and re-instated it as a civic right for every Senegalese of age to vote. To that effect, *Y'en Marre* contacted the offices in charge of issuing the voter cards in order to inquire about the process. They went door to door exhorting citizens to register:

Everyone is awake in this country  
We are no longer in a monarchy  
Where rulers ask you to drink water they used to clean their hands with.

The next part of the campaign, *Juni Juni votes* [thousands and thousands of votes] aimed at registering as many citizens as possible in order to have a massive impact at the polls. *Y'en a Marre* targeted young people by organizing a televised mini reality series during which the person who registered the most voters got to be the star. They also used their concerts to alert the masses about the importance of registering early. The song ends with the MC calling out the question: "What are you going to do now?" To which a woman responds: "Go vote!" This dynamic of early preparation advocated by the lyrics of *Daas Fanaanal* proved that the movement's urban guerrilla poetry was effective in rallying the masses to vote. During the first round of voting in February, 2012, Wade came out first but garnered only 34.81% of the vote, thus warranting a run-off, in which he faced Macky Sall who had received 26.58%, the second highest number of votes (Associated Press Senegal).

## **Doggali: Finishing the Enemy Off!**

A Few days before the run-off of March 25, 2012, *Y'en Marre* issued another song *Doggali* [finishing up a killing], which carried out the symbolic representation of the voter card a weapon. *Doggali* was a collaboration between Simon Bibsi, Djily Baghdad, General and many other rap artists. The lyrics reiterate the united front against Wade in previous songs. At the beginning, a soloist uses a speaker to call on citizens to not vote for Wade:

Greetings people of Senegal  
We are heading to the second round  
Let nobody vote for Wade  
Because he is not good for the nation  
And he is not a candidate.

Although Wade had been confirmed eligible for a third term, *Y'en Marre* continued their protest against his candidacy. As they went to cast their votes, members wore gloves in order not to touch his ballot. By continuing to refute Wade's candidacy, the lyrics attempt to send the message that a vote for him is void and wasted. The song represents Wade as an enemy who needs to be finished off:

Sharpen the weapon the night before  
He is already dead  
What is left is to finish him off!

*Y'en Marre* was aware of the possibility of voter fatigue and used this song to reinvigorate the masses by showing that Wade was almost done for. As Macky Sall was likely to garner the support of other defeated opposition leaders, *Doggali* emphasizes that Wade's defeat is imminent and advocates the importance of supporting Macky Sall by massively voting during the second round. The song reminds voters of the many reasons why they should vote Wade out by re-enumerating the precarious conditions in which the nation had lived during his mandate:

It is hope that elects a leader  
But it is disillusionment that un-elect them.  
Let us take a moment  
Hear the sufferings in the hearts  
The nation is suffering  
It is hard in the fields  
The sweat keeps flowing  
There is nothing in the bowls.

The vivid description of the socio-economic conditions of the masses shows a continued focus on the collective goal of toppling Wade's government. To that effect, the lyrics advocate an ideological shift within Senegal's political culture:

You have completed your term  
The whip must strike you  
The country needs other minds  
You must make way for them.

Senegal's political arena was essentially dominated by the same people and generation since Senghor. The lyrics suggest that the change in leadership should include a change in political ideology. At 52, Macky Sall was younger than the other candidates and though he had been a Prime Minister under Wade, after resigning in 2007, he had completely distanced himself from the regime.

The lyrics also show that the movement was conscious of Wade's final attempts at clinging to power:

Resist the 10000 francs they are paying you for your card

*Doggali* addresses rumors concerning allegations that Wade's militants were offering voters 10.000 CFA<sup>14</sup> (roughly \$20) to buy out their cards in order to prevent a big turnout in favor of Sall<sup>15</sup>. The song lyrics compliment *Y'en Marre's* campaign to counter this as the movement distributed flyers with the message *Jaay sa carte, jaay sa askan, jaay sa ngor* [Selling you card is selling your nation and your dignity]:

We don't have a price  
We are not for sale

The strength of *Y' en Marre* during the elections was in its ability to stay true to their mission by embodying the values of the New Type of Senegalese:

You are the hero, he is the villain  
You must kill him for the movie to be over!

The inevitable end of Wade's regime is likened to an action movie where viewers go in knowing that, no matter what happens, good prevails over evil. In the end, when democracy prevails, it is the people that should be congratulated but in order to achieve such democracy, they must achieve the foremost step, which is getting rid of Wade. The song ends by framing the masses as those who will facilitate the birth of a new nation:

Kill and step over  
We will support the one who crosses over!

A triumph over Wade signifies that power would be returned to the people who themselves are re-invented because they understand their right and recognize their duty. This conclusion sustains a continuous push for democracy and suggests that the fight was not just limited to eliminating Wade. The Senegalese people are now more conscious of their power over elected leaders. They are a New Type of Senegalese (NTS).

## Conclusion

The movement *Y' en Marre* had a major impact in the socio-political landscape of Senegal during the 2012 presidential elections. But their activism went beyond physical demonstrations and grassroots organizing. Rap musicians have been major critics of President Abdoulaye Wade's government and used their songs as aesthetic platforms to bring awareness about the major challenges Senegalese masses faced during Wade's presidency. Under the framework of Urban Guerrilla Poetry, *Y'en a Marre* used songs to help topple Wade's government and to create change within individual Senegalese citizens. The lyrics of *Faux! Pas Forcé!*, *Daas Fanaanal* and *Doggali*, delineate a step by step war plan against Wade that later allowed the nation to triumph. This outcome is suggested in the video clip of the song entitled *Senegal* in the new album entitled *ResistaNTS* released by Fou Malade's group in 2012. The video shows representations of Senegal's major ethnicities dancing in celebration of a unified nation which nonetheless faces many challenges. Therefore, Urban Guerrilla Poetry remains an important tool in *Y' en a Marre*'s continued goal of creating a New Type of Senegalese.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> All translations unless stated are mine.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the history of Senegalese rap music see Eric Charry's introduction to *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World* and the video documentary *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar*.

<sup>3</sup> See Eric Charry's introduction to *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music for a Globalizing World*, Indiana University Press, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> In Wolof culture, the last born is often viewed as a spoilt child because he is the youngest and parents tend to be less strict with him. This allows the child to say certain truth and act in ways that the older siblings are not allowed do. The collective *Keur Gui* is known for its incendiary lyrics and *Thiat* is viewed as the "spoiled boy" of the group.

<sup>5</sup> *Kilifeu* refers to a person with charisma and wisdom. It is used to refer to a person who is in a position of responsibility such as the head of the family, a husband, a parent, an older sibling, etc.

<sup>6</sup> *Fou Malade* plays with the term "a crazy person says whatever they like" and that certain truths come from the mouth of the mentally ill. Under this rap pseudo name, Malal Tall is known as one of the most "truthful" rap artists.

<sup>7</sup> For more on guerrilla warfare see Charles Townshend's *The Oxford History of Modern War*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Following the assault of two journalists by police in 2008, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) sent President Wade a letter denouncing the multiple attacks on journalists and the intimidation of the Senegalese press, which was viewed as the most outspoken in the region.

<sup>9</sup> In 2010, a controversy arose when Wade allegedly bought a piece of land in Dakar for a hefty 2 million dollars, that many thought were taken from the national treasury.

<sup>10</sup> The waves of demonstrations that unfolded in many North African countries and parts of the Middle East which started in Tunisia in December 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Short for Abdoulaye

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the role of religious leaders in Senegalese politics, see *New Perspectives on Islam in Senegal: Conversion, Migration, Wealth, Power and Femininity* (Diouf, Mamadou & Leichtman, Mara eds). NY: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Seck was accused of mismanagement of public funds and was jailed for seven months before charges were dismissed in 2006.

<sup>14</sup> *Communauté Francophone Africaine*, the currency for Senegal and many other Francophone countries in West Africa.

<sup>15</sup> Bloomberg Business Week published an article on a vote-buying featuring Senegalese singer Ouza whose song *Le Vote* advises voters to take the money they were being offered by politicians but to vote for their candidate of choice.

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