

Ending the 'War Against Youth:' Social Media and Hip-Hop Culture as Sites of Resistance, Transformation and (Re) Conceptualization

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to ameliorate the virulent discursive and material attack against today's 'border' youth launched by large-scale corporations and Western politicians. Specifically, the authors problematize the dominant tropes of youth being mindless, obedient objects who passively accept the stark social reality they experience due to corporate logics trumping the needs and welfare of global citizens. Based on their empirical and cultural work with Hip Hop artists in the US and Canada, and through relevant examples in other global contexts, the authors illustrate that numerous Hip Hop artists are critically aware of the forces causing oppression in their social worlds and are actively employing various forms of social media for personal empowerment and social justice ends. Finally, the authors generate a conceptual model—Hip Hop Activist Praxis—for the purpose of not only articulating the processes utilized by Hip Hop youth, artists and activists, but also aiding concerned scholars, educators and practitioners in challenging their views of youth, Hip Hop culture and technology, and (re) conceptualizing their partnerships with youth.

Key Words: social justice, youth culture, hip-hop, social media, neoliberalism, and resistance

Introduction

Over the past fifteen years, the transnational capitalist class has conspired with Western politicians to launch a "war" against today's globalized youth that is intolerable and

unforgivable (Giroux 2012, Giroux 2010, Males, 1999, Males 1996). In every corner of the planet, youth are grappling with the degenerative effects emanating from corporate logics trumping the needs and welfare of global citizens. For instance, corporate conglomerates continually lower their labor costs by forcing millions of children to toil in sweatshops amid inhumane conditions across sections of China, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Indonesia (Bigelow and Peterson 2002). To take another example, in the United States, the two major political parties have supported gutting social rights for its citizens, such as full employment, public housing, public transportation, public education, and health care (Giroux 2012b; Porfilio & Carr 2011). These developments, along with the growth of criminalizing youth through zero-tolerance policies, militarizing schools, and marketing numerous commodities to children, have left more children growing up poor, homeless, socially disaffected, and/or behind bars (Giroux 2010, Giroux 2012a, Hill & Kumar, 2011; Porfilio & Carr 2010; Ross and Gibson 2007, Saltman and Gabbard 2010).

Unfortunately, the dominant political and social elite have concomitantly wield their power to scapegoat youth for the very oppressive conditions and alienation they create through privatizing all aspects of social life (Clay 2012, Giroux 2012b, Ross and Gibson 2007). They generate spectacles in mass media outlets, such as newscasts, reality television, and music videos, to lull the public to believe youth are utterly redundant and disposable, waste products. Youth are typically characterized as aberrant social creatures who are largely responsible for the world's failing economy, increased violence and crime, and a failing education system (Giroux 2010, Giroux 2012a, Males 1999; Porfilio & Carr 2010).

On one level, the transformative scholars who have unveiled the constitutive forces that are damaging today's 'border youth' as well as revealed how youth are serving as scapegoats for the unjust social arrangements perpetuated by adults should be commended for helping us understand the debilitating nature of global politics and capitalism. Yet, much of their work is ironically complicit in reinscribing the elite's false characterization of youth. By exclusively focusing on the institutions and macrodiscourses causing the stark social reality encountered by youth, they, like the social and political elite, portray youth as mindless, passive objects who are incapable of understanding the nature of social problems they encounter as well as unable to actively ameliorate them (Gordon 2009).

This critical essay serves as a point of departure. In the pages that follow, we provide examples of global hip-hop intellectuals who are far from being mindless creatures who are incapable of understanding the social and economic processes shaping their social reality as well as unable to contest adult power that is responsible for the suffering and misery experienced by millions of young people across the globe (Clay 2012, Gordon 2009). Specifically, we illustrate--through our empirical and cultural work--with hip-hop artists in the US, and through relevant examples in other global contexts, how hip-hop intellectuals' use of social media has the power to challenge commonplace views associated with youth, hip-hop culture, and technology. These case examples also serve as exemplars of the conceptual model—Hip-Hop artist-activist praxis. They elucidate the interplay amongst critical consciousness-raising, coalition building and expressions of solidarity, and mobilization/activism conceptualized in our model. Therefore, the essay provides guideposts for how social media, hip-hop culture, and youth activism can put an end to “the war against youth.”

Reimagining Technology and Youth through Social Media

Like all forms of technology, computing technology is a social artifact that affects and is affected by the social context of its use (Bromley 1998). At today's historical juncture, the dominant powerbrokers use speed technology and social media in for the purpose of cementing their wealth and power. For instance, McLaren (2007) notes how digitized technologies have sped up the circulation and production of capital, which has positioned many women, children, and men, especially citizens of color, to toil in globalized sweatshops and live amid poverty, pollution, and hopelessness. Ali (2011, 185-219) also reminds us that large-scale corporations use the Internet to promote a culture of consumerism to feed their coffers. Leaders of the corporate world have concentrated the Internet "on a small number of websites," where they "create and sort much of the content" and target the content to “a particular audience”.

Despite the corporate world's ability to, arguably, shape the Internet to be mainly a "corporate-interest shopping-mall Web of eBay and Amazon.com" (Norris as cited in Ali 2011, 185-219), there are cyberactivists who carry out globalization from-below, developing networks of support and promulgating oppositional ideas and social and political movements. For instance, since the 1990s, political groups have employed the Internet to develop a

"worldwide anti-war/pro-peace and social justice movement during a time of terrorism, war, and intense political struggle" (Kahn and Kellner 2005, 87-95). In this vein, we now highlight briefly the scope of how global youth have harnessed social media for democratic rather than commercial ends.

Contemporary Youth Activism through Social Media

Unlike youth in previous generations, today's youth are starting to organize around local, community, and international concerns in high school settings, rather than remaining idle until they attend college or university (Fine as cited in Verderame 2009). Social media is now a key platform for facilitating youth activism. It helps youth develop, negotiate, and critically examine both salient and divergent viewpoints that would not otherwise be accessible without a transnational mode of communication (Kahne, Middaugh, Lee & Feezell, 2011). The growth of mass media and social networking have also provided outlets for youth to connect with marginalized populations, build globalized intergenerational networks that are designed to highlight what causes oppression, and unearth political sites and other 'free spaces' where they can lobby for fundamental change in schools and in the wider society (Kippenbrock & Thornburgh, 2009; Verderame 2009). Indeed, both direct political, such as online conversations regarding the news, and nonpolitical, such as interest-based chat groups, associations provide valuable diverse perspectives and increase social capital (Kahne et al., 2011).

The proliferation of online activity has also catalyzed youth civic participation vis-à-vis social media in global contexts. Lin et al. 2010, 839-857 found that at least half of their sample cast a vote online and 1 in 5 signed an online petition among youth spanning five urban Asian cities. Civic activities that engage youth in community matters salient to their personal identities allow them to develop a participatory stance towards social and political issues. Youth are transforming active practices through Internet tools for developing a civic voice in order to position themselves as knowledge producers. As a more horizontal method of civic production, social media allows youth to manifest a transformative activist orientation (Stetsenko 2012, 144-153) towards knowledge appropriation and production, defining themselves and being defined by these egalitarian practices.

Hip-Hop and its Revolutionary Potential

It has been forty years since numerous subjugated youth gathered in New York City in response to the unjust social conditions impacting their schools, families, and communities (Forman and Neal 2004, Chang 2005, Dimitriadis 2001). Through various and innovative forms of cultural production—such as break dancing, graffiti, spoken word, and song—racialized youth have offered powerful analyses and critiques of their social conditions (Hill and Ladson-Billings 2009). Over the past three decades, as Hip-Hop has moved from a local youth movement to an international phenomenon, the corporate music industry has wielded its power to redirect hip-hop's social energies away from critical expressions of struggle, protest, and resistance toward messages of materialism, greed, and individualism (Hill and Ladson-Billings 2009; Roychoudhury & Gardner 2012). Hip-Hop icons of today often describe themselves as successful entrepreneurs (“hustlers in the game”) with their standpoint aligning closely with White, male, corporate executives who promote a materialistic, misogynist, homophobic, and violent image of Hip-Hop culture (George 2005, Magubane 2006).

Despite corporate desire to remake hip-hop into purely a corporate configuration, there currently exists a socially transgressive Hip-Hop counterculture that spans the globe. The alternative movement is marked by the revolutionary fervor emanating from the dissent work of Hip-Hop intellectuals bent on establishing a social order on the ideals of democracy, freedom, and justice. This movement consists of racialized youth from the ghettos of Western Europe, the territories of the Middle East, shantytowns of Southeast Asia, and the favelas of Latin America who have utilized hip-hop as their unique counterspace to explore possibilities for critical inquiry, historical reclamation, as well as an avenue to nurture emancipatory imagination (Porfilio & Viola 2012).

Hip Hop, Youth & Social Media - Promoting Youth Civic Participation

Civic development is facilitated through direct political and in-direct nonpolitical practices. Direct political practices include intended political action towards traditional methods of civic engagement including voting, writing/signing a petition, campaigning or protesting for a specific political cause to name just a few (Levinson 2010, Seif 2010, Putnam 1995,137-174). In-direct nonpolitical practices have to do with community building, coalition building, and developing social capital (Levinson 2010, Sapiro 2004, 1-23, Kirshner et al. 2003, 1-20). To

these ends, youth uphold and build upon common global youth culture in order to preserve and develop culture and express solidarities. Now, we elucidate how social media has been a generative force, aiding in the liberatory, and transformative work of hip-hop intellectuals.

The adults who control global political outlets have yearned to shape youths' political and social engagement as obedient and passive (Sapiro 2004). They have ensured that traditional models of civic engagement do not directly address the social and economic structures that give lifeblood to minoritized youths' alienation, despair, and hopelessness (Ginwright and James 2002, 27-46). Consequently, more and more global youth are isolated when dealing with the multiple subjugations of racism, homophobia, sexism and class (Giroux 2010, Ross and Gibson 2007, Ginwright and James 2002, 27-46, Zill 2012). This rendering invisible of youth voices comes despite considerable evidence that youth are direct participants in events precipitated by civic and political institutions, such as global civil conflicts, war, terrorism and political conflict (Sapiro, 2004).

In response to their lack of agency in formal political outlets, global youth are generating alternative activities and practices that will improve the quality of their lives. Such non-traditional activities may include both the use of social media and artistic production and expression, such as Hip Hop (music, videos, poetry slams, and graffiti), as a means through which youth engage to critique power structures and civic institutions (Levinson 2010). Albeit not direct political practices, non-traditional or indirect political practices offer sites of critical thought, diverse dialogue, engagement with differing viewpoints and the development social capital through solidarity building. Specifically, Hip Hop is a multicultural medium and multimodal discourse (Prier and Beachum 2008, Hull and Nelson 2005, 224). Multimodality is a process of braiding or orchestration that creates a system of signification with a unique expressive power that transcends the collective contribution of its parts (Hull and Nelson 2005, Lambert 2002). For instance, music, fashion, context, time, space, relationships create additional layers of symbiotic meaning to a dance performance (Daiute 2011, 329-336, Lambert 2002). However, research on how social media and Hip Hop support youths' understanding of the socially mediated nature of their reality as well as helps them build dissent movements to eliminate social inequities is underdeveloped (Seif 2010).

Creative approaches for youth organizing that include Hip Hop as a tool for engagement are particularly promising strategies of mobilization (Kirshner 2009, 414-440). Kirshner (2009,

414-440) captures the power in numbers that Hip Hop affords youth who are a part of the organizing Youth Rising, who utilized Hip Hop to finish I can statements, taken from Nas' "I Can" in order to articulate their experiences, hopes, and civic critiques. Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez, & Rodriguez-Muniz (2006) also vividly describe how Hip Hop as youth culture is utilized in Chicago at Batey Urbano to resist and challenge unjust practices of mass incarceration, police brutality, and unemployment that "blame young people as the root" of their own problems (Ginwright and James 2002, 27-46).

Ginwright and James (2002, 27-46) indicates that Hip Hop catalyzes civic engagement at various levels and on many fronts similar to the way use of Hip Hop education curricula transforms the classroom experience for many youth:

At the self-awareness level, young people use hip-hop culture to express pain, anger, and the frustration. At the level of social awareness, they use hip-hop culture to organize, inform, and politicize at the community level. [...] At the global awareness level, hip-hop culture carries some possibility to unite youth through common experiences of suffering and resistance (Ginwright and James 2002, 27-46).

The dimensions of awareness articulated by Ginwright and James (2002, 27-46) are reminiscent of Martin Luther King Jr.'s (1967) insistence on social scientists to see the revolution of spirit and psychological being occurring as a product of the emancipatory knowledge building during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Address to the 1967 American Psychological Association's Annual Conference"). This "creative maladjustment" was a creative, imaginative tool to put forth a different vision of liberation –a different iteration of truth and life that is separate from the social status quo. Thus, youth who are taking a stance, having a position, having a voice and utilizing that voice to actively transform the present into a future through "emancipatory imagination" are engaging in what we will call "Hip Hop artist-activism".

Hip Hop Artist-Activism through Social Media: A Conceptual Framework

The model presented herein builds upon the experiences and expressions of Hip Hop artist-activist youth, in addition to theory and the awareness levels presented by Ginwright and James (2002, 27-46). Hip Hop artist-activism combines liberatory social justice practices with creative artistic imagination in order to transform present circumstances of inequity. According to Aristotle, praxis is 'action that is *morally-committed, and oriented and informed*

by traditions in a field'; whereas Hegel and Marx describe praxis as 'history-making action' (Kemmis 2010). Praxis is a complex cyclical activity involving theory, application, evaluation, reflection and further theory. Praxis is also understood as acts, which shape and change the world (Freire 1972, Smith 2011, Stetsenko, 2012, 144-153). Therefore, praxis is not merely a system of reflection and action, but a system involving endpoints seeking equality and social justice (Freire 1972, Smith 2011, Stetsenko 2009). Freire (1972) describes praxis as *activism*; reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. For instance, praxis is witnessed when oppressed people gain a *critical awareness* of their own condition and struggle *together with their allies* for liberation.

Through cultural production, human beings utilize creativity to think reflexively about theory, evaluate the plan, and make necessary adjustments to the original plan to create or produce an artifact (Smith 2011). Cultural practice generally refers to any manifestation of a culture or sub-culture particularly with regard to traditional and customary practices of a particular ethnic or cultural group. The inter-individual transmission of culture occurs through modeling cultural practices, interaction with products of other individual's behavior(s) or verbal interaction among individuals of a given cultural group (Houmanfar and Ward 2012, 65-75). One example of Hip Hop cultural practice would be the use of the cipher – the communal sharing of ideas through artistic expression in the form of competition-collaboration – in rapping and Hip Hop dance battling (Petchauer 2009, 946-978).

The continual development of Hip Hop cultural practice, in conjunction with Hip Hop culture and philosophy, gives rise to not only Hip Hop discourse but to praxis – a cycle constructed of theory, practice, production, evaluation, and amendments to theory laden with an appreciation for human well-being, equality, and social justice (Prier and Beachum 2008, Smith 2011).

Social media tools provide a space of praxis as activism (Freire 1972, Kahn and Kellner 2005, 87-95). They position the global Hip Hop youth community to engage in critical consciousness-raising, solidarity development, and mobilization/activism. Critical consciousness-raising allows Hip Hop youth to engage in knowledge production and develop civic knowledge by engaging with, negotiating with, and constructing new viewpoints and positions on a myriad of social, political, artistic and activist issues ranging from the uniquely local to the ubiquitously global. Solidarity/coalition building/development is often

facilitated by social media use. Transformative social media use allows global Hip Hop youth to create social networks on common interest, increase social capital, and catalyze social solidarity through common interest, collaborative artistic activity, and development of alliances (Gardner & Roychoudhury 2010). Mobilization and activism of global Hip Hop youth allows for direct action and direct political practice of Hip Hop through social media whereby the cultural tools of Hip Hop culture are applied towards specific social/political causes towards an end of social justice and for the proliferation and reiteration of authentic personal and collective narratives in the search for social justice.

Four Case Studies of Youth Exemplifying Hip Hop Artist-Activism through Social Media

Methodology

Case study methodology has been chosen as the method of scientific analysis in this present study due to the embedded nature of the social phenomenon of Hip Hop cultural production by youth via social media and the contexts that produce such phenomenon. Case study methodology is generally used to represent an aspect of social life that speaks to something larger than the case itself. Here the cases are dedicated to illustrate several ways in which global youth employ social media and Hip Hop for political and social engagement across disparate geographical regions.

Cases (N=4) have been chosen to each represent a typical iteration of the social phenomena described while each being influential in comparison to other cases that could have been chosen due to their influence on the theoretical suppositions set forth. Cases have been chosen to differ on one particular independent axis – geographical region in order to elucidate how regionally disparate social phenomena utilize social media as a means of connecting across geographical borders. Cases here represent social phenomenon within the past two years in the Middle Eastern North African (MENA) region, in the American Northeast, and in Northern Ireland.

Data Sources

Two of the case studies emanate from personal engagement and co-facilitation of curriculum; the Harlem New York case and the case from a large non-profit in Northeastern New York represent co-facilitatory methods whereby one of the authors examined youth engaging with

Hip Hop based curriculum through social media. Here we articulate some of the examinations and iterations of social media catalyzing youth cultural production. The case from Ireland was gleaned through a critical discourse analysis. The case study of the Arab Spring represents an analysis of primary sources written about the social revolution, including interviews with several Arabic hip-hop artists, newspaper articles generate in a numerous alternative media outlets, and videos generated on YouTube by hip-hop intellectuals.

Recruitment

The following case studies emanate from personal engagement and co-facilitation of curriculum as well as a critical literature review on global Hip Hop. The Harlem New York case and the case from a large non-profit in Northeastern New York represent co-facilitatory methods whereby one of the authors examined youth engaging with Hip Hop based curriculum through social media. Here we articulate some of the examinations and iterations of social media catalyzing youth cultural production. The WIMPS case example and the case example from the Arab Spring represent evidence garnered from critical literature reviews of not only the extant scholarly literature, but also of program evaluation data from Watts (2012). None of the data represent analyses of promotional material nor are they analytical abstractions from posters or press releases.

Critical Consciousness-Raising

One of the co-authors designed a critical Hip Hop dance curriculum that she facilitates in a large non-profit organization in Harlem, New York. This site is located within a large nonprofit and operates as an after-school program for high school students ages 13-18. The program is separate from a particular school. While the program supports the performing arts, this is the first critical arts curriculum to be implemented within the setting. Here is the course description:

Jazz (Street jazz, lyrical jazz, and new jack swing dance technique) and Hip Hop (choreography, and uprocking) are combined with traditional Jazz (1920's-1930's) capturing the arts and culture of the Harlem Renaissance. Dance for civic engagement, community mobilization, social change, social justice and spirituality are explored utilizing a cultural historical approach and a Freirean framework of critical and creative consciousness.

The dance program utilizes Hip Hop dance research in order to build writing skills, develop a verbal artistic voice, and cultivates critical consciousness. It is through this curriculum that dancers have begun working on critical research essays and projects, in addition to making decisions on their own to create dance pieces calling to end domestic violence and to articulate a Hip Hop feminism through dance to unite women. The young ladies made some introductory attempts at articulating what a Hip Hop feminism would look like to them, and arrived at two salient tenets sisterhood (Hill Collins 2006) and the ability for women to come together around the issue of domestic abuse. Sisterhood and the importance of the relationships among women of color, particularly young Black and Hispanic women in this case, is also a tenet of Black Feminist Epistemology as articulated by Hill Collins (2006).

The curriculum differs from traditional arts curricula at the site in that it inspired by critical educational, race, feminist, and developmental theory. Moreover, students are employing qualitative research methods within the classroom environment in order to bolster their learning (choreography, performance, understanding and expression) through the arts. Hip Hop critical consciousness-raising through Hip Hop dance research has developed future choreographic projects for young women in the program.

For instance, one young woman in High school has investigated the affordances of tutting in a particular Hip Hop dance crew. This young lady learned how to employ the scientific method in order to: develop a research question, do basic research utilizing scholarly databases, construct a hypothesis and conduct analysis from primary sources material employing theory and methodology of discourse analysis in order to find evidence to inform whether or not the evidence supports her hypothesis. She utilized 2-3 primary YouTube videos taken professionally by a major media outlet of a particular Hip Hop dance crew to

capture her data and analyze the use of tutting in 2-3 phrases of dance choreography. She analyzed what she called "team dance moments," which she described as "moments when the team chose to choreograph and perform 'tutting' to express team solidarity, in addition to ideas and feelings greater than themselves." This young lady was interested in analyzing the affordance of 'tutting' particularly in connection with a particular dance crew and how they employed 'tutting,' to what end, for what purpose. Her hypothesis is that this particular Hip Hop dance crew utilizes tutting in order to represent and embody collectiveness and solidarity. She expands on these ideas by indicating that there are additional layers of meaning (historical, emotional, social, and cultural) as the dancers choose to utilize tutting only at certain points in the routine. Through her utilization of social media, she was also able to collect her data from primary source videos, and analyze the data, explicate it and write an essay to support her hypothesis.

Coalition Building

In Northern Ireland there is an organization whose mission is to make politics relevant to youth, while mobilizing youth to present their perspectives on social and political issues to politicians in order to advocate for themselves and influence policy affecting their lives. The youth organizers are marginalized and experience discrimination based on race, creed, sexual identity, disability, gender & youth status. The Irish organization largely communicates with members and other youth around the world through social media, particularly Vimeo. In addition to utilizing video, this organization demonstrates concerted allegiances to global youth culture, Hip Hop, in order to illustrate congruence with global youth experiencing similar social issues (immigration, marginalization, domestic violence, poverty, etc.) as themselves.

This Irish organization made sure to film Cypher Session 3ⁱ, Northern Ireland's truest Bboy and Bgirl competition. This fusion of Hip Hop and civic mindedness serves as an illustration of Hip Hop activism at the global awareness level, where hip-hop culture carries some possibility to unite youth through common experiences of suffering and common struggles of resistance (Ginwright and James 2002, 27-46). This expression of common experience demonstrates solidarities and is critical in building coalitions that support the extinguishing of oppressive conditions.

Activism & Mobilization

In a large northeastern non-profit organization in the United States, youth are utilizing Hip Hop dance as a means to express their activist stance and desire to end domestic violence. The mission of this organization is to facilitate urban youth democratic practices locally and globally in order to equip future leaders with civic knowledge and skills; this instantiation of youth development is aligned with Hip Hop culture's dynamic interplay between the individual and the collective as well as the inextricable link between the local and the global (Roychoudhury & Gardner 2012). The youth have called attention to the issue of domestic violence within their organization and have expressed to their adult counterparts that they want to mobilize and strike in a creative way. The youth not only want to speak out against domestic violence, but also they hope their Hip Hop dance piece will articulate the complexity of the experiences of people who experience domestic violence. The youth dancers also intend this performance to represent a unified and mobilized front against domestic violence; a force calling for justice, respect, and nonviolence for women, domestic partners, intimate partners, and children who have suffered injury and trauma associated with domestic violence or who are currently negotiating the realities of domestic violence within their homes.

As part of their mobilization plan, the youth dancer-organizers are engaging social media including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. They are advertising their creative dance protest event, their organization, their unification so as to mobilize and bring together other adults and youth together. Their cultural work is not only designed bring awareness to what causes domestic violence, but also is designed to build coalitions with social service providers, hospitals, women and children's rights organizations in an effort to protect people currently experiencing abuse.

Youth use Hip Hop dance as a tool of radical imagination and transformation; as a tool to articulate their positionality and demonstrate unification through political assembly. It also fosters creative mobilization to educate the greater community about the realities and painful experiences of domestic violence; with the hope that their emotionally charged Hip Hop dance piece will strike a chord with people, including those who perpetuate the violence. The youth in the project discussed the feelings of agency that they felt after performing the domestic violence piece publicly. The students suggested that their dance piece was able to touch people on a deeper emotional level to communicate the pain, challenges, and complex emotions experienced by families who experience domestic violence. The students held conversations with audience members after their dance piece that they felt opened the door to future conversations on the issue.

Genesis of the Arab Spring – Hip Hop Artist-Activist Praxis in Action

In the past two years, social media has been a central force for hip-hop intellectuals in the Middle Eastern and Northern African (MENA) region to collectively confront Western powers and political dictators. Social media has aided hip-hop intellectuals to bring

awareness to how the dominant elite wield their political and economic power to control labor and resources in the MENA region. Although numerous Arabic hip-hop artists engaged in activist work, produced music, and generated performances prior to Tunisian fruit-seller, Mohamed Bouazizi resorting "to self-immolation to protest the price hike and political repression" on December 17, 2010, social media became a conduit for amplifying a revolutionary fervor in Tunisia as well as for disseminating ideas and anthems to millions of working-class people across the region who "discontent over poverty, rising food prices, blackouts, unemployment, police repression and political corruption" (Fernandes 2012). In essence, social media allowed hip-hop intellectuals to "advance a political cause that is difficult to advance offline" (Howard as cited in Khondker 2011). For instance, Tunisian hip-hop intellectual, Hamada ben Amor aka El Generalⁱⁱⁱ - "then a relatively unknown rapper - quietly posted the track, along with a simple video, on his Facebook site," (Hebbelewaith 2012), which inspired thousands of youth to rail against former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's, an imperial dictator who supported police brutality, (promulgated) anti-Islamic policies, and institutionalized kleptocracy" for nearly 25 years (Peisner 2011).

Social media has also facilitated joint venture between hip-hop artists and other citizens to engage in cultural work across the MENA region and the globe. For instance, youth have used social networking sites to successfully organize "sit-ins and food-banking for Libyan refugees" (Alshassen 2011). Hip-hop artists across the MENA region, including El General, have also used social media to participate in "critical cross-cultural exchange and dialogue" with hip-hop artists from the US" (Alshassen 2011). The exchanges are dedicated to ensuring youths' voices become central, rather than marginal forces shaping global political culture.

The model presented herein provides a blueprint for understanding the ways Hip Hop artistic practices through social media engage youth civically. In the Harlem non-profit example critical consciousness was raised through research conducted through social media including YouTube as a way of engaging scientific data collection and analysis, achieving the dual ends of critical Jazz and Hip Hop dance education as well as social science methodological education. In the WIMPS example, social media was utilized as a tool for building coalitions amongst similar orientations of youth activist culture creating an orthogonal connection between an artistic model of activist engagement and a direct political model of activist engagement in order to connect philosophically and express that connection through VIMEO.

In the Northeastern non-profit example, predominantly female youth of color are mobilizing to create Hip Hop dance pieces calling for an end to domestic violence and utilizing social media in order to invite people to their performances and broadcast their message of Hip Hop feminism (Hill-Collins 2006). The Arab spring example synthesizes these three modes of civic engagement embodying a Hip Hop praxis: the use of social media catalyzed the growth of a collective critical conscience towards the subjugated state of the working class and poor in Tunisia. It also facilitated a coalition of voices to collectively endeavor and unite under the rap mantra created by El General; the fervor of these combined forces helped spur collective protests and public outcry against the political powers through artistic work, street resistance, and social coalition building with the wider world through various social media.

Discussion

Despite the general failure of critical scholars who seek to ameliorate the youth-hating culture supported by world's political and economic elite, this essay demonstrates that the social media use of numerous hip-hop intellectuals offers the potential to end the "war on youth" as

well as the prospect of building a global culture that supports youths' intellectual, social and emotional needs. Social media has become a transformative conduit that has greatly facilitated youths' praxis. Hip-hop intellectuals are harnessing social media to build upon the revolutionary impulses of hip hop culture. Through social media, youth have been afforded the enhanced ability to engage in artistic performances and academic initiatives that facilitates understanding of what give rises to oppression and injustice, to build coalitions with youth across the globe who are also grappling with social inequalities, and to act inside and outside of their social world in order to transform it. Through our cultural work with hip-hop intellectuals, we illustrate that youth are far from being passive objects that obediently accept the structures responsible for their marginalization and stark social realities. Rather, youth are critical, active artists who hold the intelligence, courage, and imagination to transform the present circumstances of inequity.

Concluding Thoughts and Future Research

To continue the process of ending the "war on youth," we provide several suggestions to critical scholars. First, we encourage them to explore how social media is impacting additional counter-hegemonic forms of youth culture. Through this type of investigation, not only may it be possible to gain deeper insight in relation to what forces youth consider is responsible for human suffering and misery, but also to unearth what role social media plays in supporting a praxis of global activism. Second, we believe critical scholars must heed the clarion call of Mark Anthony Neal to view ourselves as partners with youth in the "new and expanded opportunities for political engagement facilitated through new media" (Neal 2012). By learning from youth who already use social media to become aware and active in the struggle to make the world a better place and by sharing our own insights with youth of how new media can support a revolutionary agenda, we have the potential to build

intergenerational alliances that may more intelligently engage in activist pursuits to build a more humane world. By forging these form of alliances, we may also have the power to redirect computing technology from being a mainly a corporate artifact that increases profits for large-scale corporations to being a social tool for improving the social world. Finally, we encourage scholars to expose their students, colleagues and others concern citizens to the alternative narratives surrounding youth, youth culture, and technology. We believe this form of pedagogy is necessary not only to help others envision youth in socially-generative light, but also to develop a critical forms of conciseness necessary to engage in a collectivist movement to finally end the "war on youth."

ⁱ A music video of DCORP's Cyper Session 3 can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mp5fQZuk3k>

ⁱⁱ A music video by Hamada ben Amor aka El General can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeGJ7OouR0>

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