

CALL FOR PAPERS: The Politics of Language in African Hip Hop  
Guest Editor: Msia Kibona Clark

The question of language in African literature was debated in the 1960s and 1970s. At the heart of the debate was: who qualifies as being an African writer? and what qualifies as African literature? African authors like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe weighed in on different sides of the debate. Today a similar debate is occurring in various hip hop communities in Africa. Similar questions have emerged: What are the qualifications for being classified as an African MC? and what qualifies as African hip hop?

Similar to the debate over African literature, the debate over language and hip hop in Africa is rooted in the relationship between Europe (and now the United States) and Africa. Some artists, like Babaluku in Uganda, have advocated for artists performing in African languages. Some artists, like those in the Tema-Yai Nation (TYN) collective in Tanzania, choose to perform in English. There are artists like Emmanuel Jal of South Sudan who switched to English in order to reach a bigger audience. Some artists, like those in TYN, who are more fluent in English, while others, like South Africa's Kanyi, are fluent in English, but choose to rap in an African language. There are also MCs all over Africa who mix languages. African artists often draw from different language pools to write their rhymes. Chuck D (of the U.S. rap group Public Enemy) defined a super MC as follows: "The super MC is the one that can spit in more than two languages." In the context of Africa, MCs will often write lyrics that include a European language and/or multiple African languages.

This special issue will explore the language debate as it manifests in hip hop in Africa. This issue seeks to investigate questions like:

- What is the importance of language in African hip hop?
- How important is language in defining African hip hop, and as a form of space-making for African MCs'?
- Is there a privileging of European languages over African languages in African hip hop?
- What is the relevance of audience reach and marketability in language choice?
- How does the language debate reflect the relationships Africans have with both African and European languages?
- Any other questions related to language and hip hop in Africa

We welcome submissions that address questions surrounding language and hip hop in Africa in diverse ways.

We are inviting submissions of scholarly papers of 8,000 words,. For the journal's style sheet and aims and scope, please see:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=cjac20>

All submissions need to be sent with bios and the contact information of the contributor/s to the special issue editor in the first place. After an initial period of internal review, the articles will be uploaded to the journal's submission system, and sent out for anonymous peer review. Text in languages other than English need to include translations. All abstracts will appear in English and one additional language.

Please send abstract submissions and queries for initial internal review to Dr. Msia Kibona Clark at [msia.clark@howard.edu](mailto:msia.clark@howard.edu) by Monday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of November.