

Original Research Article

## Hip Hop Music and 'the Street' Phenomenon in Nigeria

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### Article History

Received: 12.06.2022

Accepted: 07.07.2022

Published: 13.07.2022

**Abstract:** In Africa, hip hop music is now undoubtedly the fastest growing form of expressive art in terms of availability, dissemination and acceptability. Nigeria not an exception, the genre in recent times has become the mainstream music representing the identity and socio-cultural aspirations of the teeming Nigerian urban youth population. Through incursion into the origin of hip hop, this paper examines the inter-connectivity and the inter-relationship between the street and hip hop music with a comparison of the Nigerian and the American street culture in hip hop music discourse. It is quite evident that hip hop music and the street are inseparable with manifestation which are visibly perceived through the Nigerian rap star- Olamide's hip hop philosophy, his choice of language for dissemination, message and didactic use of the genre as an alternative and legitimate hustle as opposed to the now common internet fraud becoming a plague among Nigerian teeming youths.

**Keywords:** Hip hop, Rap Culture, The Street, YBNL, Lagos, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

The roots and evolution of hip hop music as an expressive art has been closely linked and related to the degrading socio-economic and political situation in the Bronx, New York of the 1970's, the city that has been credited with giving hip hop to the world. The evolution of the genre therefore has socio-political implication as a reactionary weapon of the African-American minority (Adedeji, 2015), while 'its development reflected the negative effects of post-industrial decline, political discourse, and a rapidly changing economy (Rory 2019). Where ever there is economical marginalization and political non-inclusion as witnessed in the Bronx, it is imminent that poverty and hardship follows and this will only give birth to its attendant negatively inclined hustling like drug dealing, robbery, pimping and prostitution which are various activities of outdoor nature coalescing into the connotation of 'the street'; which is phenomenon that has greatly contributed to the growth and consolidation of hip hop music. The global acceptance and cultural influence of hip hop is therefore deeply rooted in its appeal to youths around the world, being fascinated by the tales of its origin and being inspired by its message, which they can relate to as addressing their own struggle and 'ministering' to their situation when they come in contact with the music.

The Nigerian music scene caught the hip hop bug in the early 1980's with the release of Ronnie Ekundayo's rap album *The way I feel* (1981) but the genre achieved its popularity and consolidation in the 1990's and early 2000's through series of transformations by creating a unique sound with appropriation of existing musical forms and indigenizing it by infusing the Nigerian languages into it through code-switching assuming a new appellation of "Afro-hip hop" (Adedeji, 2017). This evolution as started by the first generation hip hop artistes like The Remedies (trio of Tony Tetuilla, Eedris Abdulkareem and Eddie Montana), Baba Dee, Lord of Ajasa, Sound Sultan, Ruggedman and 9ice among others who continues till the present time giving the Nigerian variant of Hip hop a global presence and recognition.

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**CITATION:** Wale Adedeji (2022). Hip Hop Music and 'the Street' Phenomenon in Nigeria. *South Asian Res J Art Lang Lit*, 4(3): 92-102.

As earlier explained the attraction to hip hop culture in Nigeria is deeply rooted in the inter-connectivity of music inclined youths to the Bronx model that birthed hip hop –where in their own domain, the condition of living is nose-diving, economic opportunities are drying up, un-employment is on the rise while the gap between the rich and the poor is widening at an alarming rate. Kids in the suburbs of Lagos –the commercial centre of the country where hip hop is became deeply rooted now see the music as a means of expressing angst towards poor condition of living as well as being a legitimate means to escape the poverty of the Ghetto. A major player in this realm is Olamide, whose hip hop artistry and dexterity is discussed further within this research.

### **Hip Hop, ‘The Street’ and the Nigerian Experience**

In discussing hip hop it is practically impossible to exclude the ‘street’ factor based on the fact that hip hop itself is a movement, way of life and music genre that is borne out of the urban street culture. It is not an assumption to say that the concept of ‘the street’ is an inseparable appendage in hip hop music in America and globally wherever hip-hop culture and music exists..

‘The street’ as an expression originated out of African-American culture and has been sold worldwide through the success of hip hop. It denotes the process or ‘place’ of getting an informal education and the acquisition of skills to deal with and get on with the realities of life. It signifies survival and extols toughness, pride and display of masculinity. According to William Oliver:

The street’ is used... to refer to the network of public and semi-public settings (e.g. street corners, vacant lots, bars, clubs, after hours joints, convenience stores, drug houses, pool rooms, parks and public recreational places, etc.) in which primarily lower and working class black males tend to congregate. (Oliver 2006: 919)

This is further clarified by Yasser. A. Payne who views street culture as:

A spectrum of networking behaviours that can be captured through two sets of activities: (1) bonding (e.g. ‘playing the dozens’, ‘hanging on the block’, rhyming, playing basketball, etc. (2) illegal activities (e.g. robbing, selling drugs, committing violent acts, etc.) generally employed to confront the effects of socio-economic impoverishment. (2006: 288)

The evolution of ‘the street’ has a historical bearing immersed in socio-political and economic factors within the African-American community who have suffered years of marginalization, unemployment, racist policing etc., resulting in high incarceration rates, poverty and poor living conditions. To this effect taking part in street activities by young black males is seen as a cogent socialization institution that can redress these issues and give them leverage through hustling to attain economic independence and earn respect.

In furtherance to this, it can be asserted that ‘the street’ came into being as ‘the cumulative effects of intergenerational exposure of historical and contemporary patterns of racial and gender oppression directed against black males to socially construct masculine identities that place emphasis on toughness, sexual conquest and street hustling’ (Oliver 2006: 921). Apart from socialization through bonding and hanging out that can be achieved on the street, it also offers a gateway to many vices where the alternative (illegal) economy operates to its fullest. The ‘street hustler’ believes if he can’t succeed or make it within the mainstream (legitimate) economy due to unfairness, marginalization or ‘no level ground to play’, he might as well succeed within the ‘underground’ (illegal) economy by taking part in illegitimate activities like robbery, drug dealing, pawning, gun running or pimping where he believes he can come to affluence and get the respect he deserves in the society.

The street phenomenon can thereby be seen as a product of struggle and weapon of resistance in the face of limited opportunities, hardship and poverty, a situation which is in existence in many parts of the world even though the root cause might be different from the African-American community. Going through or being brought up on ‘the street’ can also be parallel to ‘the ghetto’ as popularized through reggae music by Bob Marley in describing the deplorable condition of the ordinary people in Jamaica, where ‘the ghetto’ denotes shanty towns and settlements in places like Kingston and inhabitants called downtown people as opposed to the rich and affluent who live in the uptown.

In the Nigerian context, hardship is rife, the unemployment rate is high, and inflation is at its peak, while opportunities are limited. These are similar to the situation that resulted in the resistance which triggered the ‘street’ phenomenon within the African-American community but with a different root cause. While racism and marginalization is a major factor in America, the Nigerian state of affairs is tied to corruption perpetrated by the political class that have sucked the nation dry while they accumulated wealth, putting the nation in a state of economic coma for over twenty years. The gap between the rich and poor widens daily while the middle class has become extinct.

In Lagos, as cosmopolitan as it is, the attribute of poverty is still evident physically. Despite all the massive structures in places like Lekki or Victoria Island where the rich and affluent congregate, there still exist a number of ‘ghettos’ with the most populous one called *Ajegunle* where the likes of Vocal Slender, an aspiring artist, lives and has to

work on a refuse dump site to make enough money in furtherance of his music career (as portrayed on BBC 2 television documentary 'Welcome To Lagos' March 2010).

### **'The Street' and Hip Hop Music**

From the African-American community where hip hop originated 'the street' has been in existence long before hip hop music came on board. It is the realities of ghetto life, poverty and marginalization that fuelled the development of rap and hip hop culture. Hip hop became a platform where the youth can become radical using their music and lyrics to expose the realities of their situation by bringing the activities of the daily life into public sphere, especially glorifying the street activities and singing about them. This makes hip hop and 'the street' inseparable as most of the hip hop MCs have themselves been engaged in one street activity or another. Also the whole concept and development of hip hop itself was based on street hustle, resilience and survival skills, as the genre remained underground for many years but became a phenomenon based on the resilience of its players.

The street activities as amplified in the videos and portrayed in songs can also be seen as one of the factors that sold the music globally. In a way youths in other parts of the world can connect with the realities of the ghetto situation in America to isolate the hardship and decadence in the socio-economic climate of their own society, giving them a motive to resent these and write lyrics to talk about their own situation through the embrace of hip hop. With the subsequent popularity that hip hop is gaining, many African-American youths now see the art form as an alternative to the 'real' street hustle which is illegal, as asserted by William Oliver: 'the economic opportunities associated with hip hop culture are now perceived by many young black men as the new "street game" and a viable and legitimate alternative to selling drugs or committing burglaries or robberies and other forms of street hustling as a means of acquiring money' (2006: 926).

The rapper 50cent (real name Curtis Jackson) is an exemplar in this vein. Having grown up on the street becoming a drug entrepreneur as a teenager, even owning an expensive car like the Mercedes 500 S Class, he eventually ended up in prison, where he perfected and resuscitated his gift of rapping and upon release from prison was to become a big player in the hip hop genre. His 2003 release *Get rich or die trying* was a massive hit. Akon is another act whose street life got him convicted, but he turned a new leaf upon release from prison with his 'Lonely' single catapulting him to the mainstream hip hop scene and eventually adopting the 'Convict' as his recording label name.

### **Nigerian Hip hop and 'The Street'**

In the Nigerian context and using Lagos as a point of reference there is also a prevalence of street activities, some related to and most not related to hip hop but the major connection is that like the American situation, the street phenomenon also is a product of struggle and an object of resentment where ghetto life and hardship is imminent and apparent. Street life in Nigeria in the context of hip hop players is actually in contrast to what obtains in America as regards the activities that go on there, because those on the street in Lagos (Nigeria) are different and were not the ones that transited into performing hip hop or adopting the hip hop culture. We can also link this contrast to who the hip hop generation are in Nigeria, i.e. the hip hop heads, the promoters and players alike whose orientation and educational background are actually different but have connectivity with their American counterparts in terms of ideology as reflected in their resentment to oppressive politicking and their overt culture of resistance.



**Figure 1: Lagos Street Urchins (legit.ng)**

In highlighting the activities of the Lagos Street vis-a-vis the hip hop practitioners in Nigeria, Omoniyi stated: The identities we discern in the HHNL [hip hop nation language] community in Africa are not about 'representing the street' in the US sense because Africa's street for now has a different subcultural topography and belongs to urchins called *Area Boys* in Lagos. Rather the HHNL community (in Nigeria) comprises politically conscious youths liberated by

education and critical of the establishment. They display a different kind of angst; a disdain for maladministration, plundering of state resources and a resultant harsh, economic climate that have left them roughshod and battered. (2009: 123)

The street of Lagos in the real sense is inhabited by the area boys who consist of organised gangs of street children often called ‘*agberos*’ or bus conductors. They roam the street and engage in illegal activities like extorting money from passengers, picking pockets, often selling drugs and always come handy as political thugs. They often organise themselves into brigades or groups depending on what part of the city they reside in, thereby claiming ownership of a particular ‘area’, and will ‘tax’ (extort) from people that come in and out of their area. Perhaps that is how the name ‘area boys’ originated. The street is always immersed in

In most parts of Lagos Island area boys operate illegal car parks and sort of extort money from drivers before they park. The majority of the area boys are illiterate and uneducated with no means of livelihood, and some are probably a product of the Nigerian socio-political decadence caused by corruption which reduced the bulk of the populace to a social underclass. The area boys do not rap or subscribe to hip hop culture and within this class of people *fújì* is the music genre of choice, even though most of the street language and slang used daily by them is now becoming regular lingo in today’s hip hop lyrics.

The kind of ‘the street’ and its dwellers that we have in Lagos has constantly been represented and depicted in most Nollywood films and in actual fact these genre of street oriented and hoodlum infested Yoruba films are now becoming a common fad in recent times. The street characters that obtains here and the kind of activities they engage in can best be understood in films like *Omo Ghetto* (2010 ). *Picture Perfect* (2016) *Ogo Mushin* (2020) and *Kesari* (2018) among others. What has already been posited regarding the kind of personae that run the street in Lagos can best be understood in these films. This is in terms of the people, their orientation, level of education and the kind of activities they engage in. Drama mirrors the society and by extension –the movies, so in this instance these movies represent (though exaggerated at times) the true picture of being on the street –or the hood as often called in Nigeria. It should be noted that to some extent no matter how educated you are, when you come from most of these “hoods”-you will feel the street and the street will feel you. Street life and hustling will almost be your way of life while subscribing to its activities and negativities will now be a choice an individual will have to make.

While the street is being controlled by the area boys the hip hop music and the promotion of the culture is being sustained by different sets of people who had their street life orientation based on their life trajectories. Most of Nigeria’s hip hop artists are educated, and their street orientation is different from their American counterpart. Within the mainstream players of hip hop in the last decade what is discernable is that the majority have a university degree. Rapper Mode 9 is a graduate of Kaduna Polytechnic, Sound Sultan and Ruggedman both have a Lagos State University degree, Baba Dee has a Master’s Degree, 2face Idibia attended a Polytechnic (IMT) in Enugu, Rapper Olamide attended a University, Artist/ Producer ID Cabasa has an M.Sc. degree in Economics while 9ice did a post-secondary school Diploma in Computer Studies. Their street connectivity however lies in the Nigerian situation immersed in a harsh economic climate that has left most young people hopeless, with hip hop offering a creative outlet with which they can be heard and also be empowered financially or otherwise.

Taking a critical look at the Nigerian hip hop scene presently one can see a tremendous influence of ‘the street’ on the music while there are many similarities of these influences in relation to their American counterparts in areas like message/consciousness, street hustling, language and slang and at times portrayal of sexuality. There is distinction or difference however from their American counterparts in the area of illustrating crime or violence, glorifying jail/incarceration, misogyny, drug dealing references and gun running.

### **The Street Trajectory**

From whatever angle one view the street phenomenon, either in the African American perspective or within the Nigerian situation, there is always a common ground which is like a point of convergence in both street experience -Hip hop music, its culture and the economic opportunities it offers folks on the street. On both sides of the divide marginalised and economically oppressed youths see music (hip hop) as a weapon, a means and a valid tool by which they can partake in the mainstream economy and also win big.

For clarity it should be noted that while those representing the street in America and unable to partake in the mainstream economy results into hustling through street activities like drug dealing pimping and so on, their counterpart in Nigeria also engages in many alternative economic activities among which is the latest called “Yahoo Yahoo” (obtaining fund by false pretence through the internet or other fraudulent means). Both sides of the divide engages hip hop music to counter the negative activities associated with the streets by replacing the negative hustle with hip hop



music which now assume the role of the new ‘Street game’ (Oliver 2006). Hence it is not uncommon to refer to the music (rap) hustle as ‘the game’



Figure 2: Ayoola Street Bariga, Lagos (tribuneonlineng.com)

### Street Mode Activated: Olamide, Naija Hip hop, and the YBNL Street Game

In the discourse of the interrelationship and cross-influencing of ‘the street’ and Rap/Hip hop Culture, Cheryl Keyes believed that “the conceptual base of rap music is rooted in street style ... [and] an artist’s use of speech, characters, attitude and crews asserts that the rapper is down with the street” (2004:125). In the same vein Ojoawo 2019 posited that “hip hop music for all practical purpose cannot be separated from the street ... [while] the popularity of the artiste is determined by his/her response to the street culture” Both notions gives credence to the fact that the music (hip hop), the street and its activities are inseparable. Hip hop evolved from the street while any reputable hip hop artistes needs the projection of the street culture in terms of lingo, attitude, and toughness through lived street experiences related lyrically among other parameters in order to ascertain their street credibility. This *Street Cred* often termed ‘keepin it real’ in the rap game separates and distinguishes an authentic rapper from the fake -which in the hip hop parlance is referred to as being ‘wack’-the category of artiste being tagged ‘Wackawikki MCs’ according to the Nigerian rap veteran Eedris Abdulkareem in his rap song of the same title in 2001.

With the establishment of the that the cogent role of the street in the evolution, development and promotion of hip hop music, I want to further situate the award winning Nigerian rapper Olamide and his music against the backdrop of the street phenomenon and assert that his personae and artistic output is a true exemplification of the interconnectivity of the street and hip hop music in the Nigerian rap scene.

Olamide was born and raised in Bariga, a typical ghetto in mainland Lagos. Bariga is formerly under Shomolu Local Government but was elevated as a Local Council Development Area (LCDA) in 2013 by the Lagos state government. This district is well known for entertainment celebrities like 9ice, ID Cabasa , Olamide and Segun Adefila. But beyond this glamour it has a dark cloud over it as a dangerous neighbourhood notorious for violence and being a haven of cultists and gangsters. Aside from this it has an expanse of slums whose outlook reeks of relics and poverty. According to Olamide himself:

Bariga ... [is] not far from the other slums you see across the world, from Mumbai to New York and London – life in the ghetto is almost always the same everywhere. There were days when being able to afford three square meals was a big deal for my family. All of that motivated me to hustle hard – I wanted to see the whole world and experience different cultures from what I grew up seeing (Guardianonline, 2021).

He had his primary and secondary education in Lagos and proceeded to the Tai Solarin University of Education in Ijebu Ode, to study Mass Communication but discontinued after a while due to financial incapability. He started his music career under the tutelage of the veteran producer ID Cabasa, having gone to his Code Tunes Studio to record with a friend at age fourteen. After that studio session as related by ID Cabasa:

I was so impressed that I told him that he’s free to come to my studio at any time. He will come to the studio, then I will make beat while he is writing his lyrics. From there, the interest to have him as part of Coded Tunes developed and the rest is history (2018).



Figure 3: I.D. Cabasa and Olamide (mp3bullet.com)

He released his debut single “Eni Duro” in 2010 which earned him performance at the Hip Hop Awards (now called Headies Award) that same year. In 2011 he released his debut album *Rapsodi* under ID Cabasa’s Coded Tunes label which paraded the hit track “Omo to Shan” which featured Wizkid and garnering massive airplay topping charts on several radio stations. His debut album also got him the 2011 nominations at the Hip Hop Awards as Next Rated Artist.



Figure 4: Olamide –*Rapsodi* 2011 (amazon.com)

After the euphoria of the success of his debut and acceptance as an artiste to watch out for in the already saturated Nigerian hip hop scene, he established his own label the YBNL Nation (an acronym for Yahoo Boy No Laptop) under which he released his sophomore album titled *YBNL* in 2012 which paraded hit tracks like ‘Voice of the Street’, ‘First of All’ and ‘Ilefo Illuminati’ among others. Olamide has not looked back since then going from strength to strength, having released his 8<sup>th</sup> studio album titled *UY Scuti* in 2021 and currently working on his 9<sup>th</sup> album. He has had his fare share of awards and recognition since his career kicked off, this include: The Headies- Best Rap Album (2014) Album of the Year (2014) Best Street hop Artiste( 2015) Artiste of the year( 2015), Nigerian Entertainment Awards- Album of the year(2016), Rap Act of the Year(2016) among others.



Figure 5: Olamide –*UY SCUTI* -2021(topnaija.ng)

For further enunciation of this discourse I will be examining the works of Olamide based on three parameters cogent to Hip hop authenticity in terms of the Street phenomenon or being 'hood' as embellished in his musical output. These I have coined in these simple questions in which his musical art form will answer:

- Who are you?: I am the King 'Sitting on the throne'
- What do you represent?: 'The Voice of the Street'
- Where are you representing? : The hood , I 'Rep Adugbo'

### **Who Are You? I am the King "Sitting on the Throne"**

The exemplification of the street toughness, projection of attitude and show of strength in claiming ones turf or corner was adequately established by Olamide in the track "Sitting on the Throne" where he craftily and creatively employed the power of words to claim the kingship of rap music in Nigeria in a subtle manner. It is a natural phenomenon that, to survive on the street you need to have the attitude, got to be tough, know who you are and be ready to claim your territory. The same concept applies to the game of rap and hip hop culture where street life and attitude continually play out. In the opening of this track Olamide logically referenced two established rappers (MI and Reminisce) but tactfully declared himself the king thus:

*Am sitting on the throne, mi o ba **M.I** j'adu chairman  
Am sitting on the throne, mi o ba **Reminisce** j'adu alaga  
Am sitting on the throne, ama grown man in a young body  
Am sitting on the throne, aint gat beef with nobody  
So f..k what you heard, cuz everybody na king for him Lane*

Translation:

I am sitting on the throne  
I'm not contending Chairmanship with M.I.  
I am sitting on the throne,  
I'm not contending Chairmanship with Reminisce  
I am sitting on the throne, I'm a grown man in a young body  
I am sitting on the throne, I've got no altercation with anybody  
I am sitting on the throne so forget what you heard as  
Everybody is a King in his own turf

In essence whoever that sits on the throne owns the kingdom or lords it over the territory and in this case-the Rap kingdom. However, just like the OG (original gangster) Olamide is, he never claimed this throne by mere words of mouth rather he claimed he is a tested and trusted rapper worthy of the crown which he backed up assiduously with verifiable claims of his exploits in the Rap kingdom thus:

*Won ni mo wa gifted bi Wale.  
Mo se show de london se show ni yankee  
mo ti se show de male,  
awon groups yin wa sako,  
Anybody to ba se bi Were a wa n le...*

Translation:

They say I'm gifted like Wale-(the American rapper)  
I have performed in London  
I have performed in America  
I have performed in Malaysia  
So your group should keep mute  
If you decide to act funny we will cut your wings.

### **What Do You Represent? The "Voice of the Street" (VOTS)**

As the popular saying goes that: if you do not believe in something, you will fall for anything then it should be noted that the Street is the school of life where you cannot afford to be slack, having the right attitude is the key to your survival as you cannot be winking in the dark and expect to get noticed. Rather you stay focused, stay on course and insist your voice get heard. The street was fully exemplified and emphasised in VOTS by Olamide as he fully juxtaposed hip hop and the street while establishing their interconnectivity. He declared:

*Welcome to the streets  
To ba fail bayi, o di dandan ko repeat  
E mi n binu, mo'n para lori beat  
Emi ni boss, emi ni baddo, yeah, emi ni king  
Huh, I'm the voice of the street*

*Yeah, I'm the voice of the street  
E mi n binu, mo para lori beat  
Emi ni boss, emi ni baddo, yeah emi ni king*

Translation:

Welcome to the streets  
If you fail here you have to repeat  
Im aggressive and creative on the beat  
Im the boss and the baddest guy, I am the king  
Yes, I am the voice of the street  
Im aggressive and creative on the beat  
Im the boss and the baddest guy, I am the king

The above fully exemplified the attitude that is needed to survive on the street and by extension in the rap game. According to Olamide failure is a taboo in the street, because if you fail it's a must you have to repeat and the only way to succeed is to be the master in your game which makes him the guru on the beat with lyrical mastery that is unrivalled. This rapper established this right from the onset that he is in the game to win bringing with him all the street swagger and bravado. His debut album titled *Rapsodi* made this subtle statement that only street pundits can decipher, according to Olamide in one of his earliest interviews, *Rap-sodi* is a coinage of Yoruba and English languages which in order words means to rap in an unusual way, to rap out of order or to perform a twisted rap. In summary he is making a bold statement that he has come to set the record straight in the Rap game as a different and spectacular artist with the street flavour and boldness coming to change the narratives.

Another point of note is that to be the Voice on the street, you need to speak the language the street understands bringing us to the issue of one of the creeds of the street which is keeping it real or being authentic. Olamide delivers 90% of his rap and messages using the Yoruba language medium (his mother tongue) which is heavily laden with street slangs and lingos predominant with Bariga the Lagos suburb he is from. This attribute of using the Yoruba language with clear understanding of the topography of his area and the needs of that hood makes his assertion as the VOTS incontestable within this context and to many critics faulting his over-dependency on the Yoruba language he asked:

*Won ni Lyrics mi local ,  
Se Lil Wayne gbo Yoruba?*

(They said my lyrics is local please ask them if Lil Wayne can rap in Yoruba language?)

### **Where are you Representin' - I 'Rep Adugbo'**

In hip hop parlance, the hood or where an individual (artiste) originates from has a strong bond of belongingness to the personae of the artiste which in hip hop translates to the creation of identity, that is to identify with one's root and represent it in all ramifications. This is where the expression "Represent" or simply put "Rep" comes in and becoming a constant feature in the rap /hip hop culture. According to the [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com) Represent 'is phrase showing acknowledgement to one's background, home, social, group or original home of residence...similar to giving shout out to homeboys' To represent in Hip hop translate to an exhibition and projection of a rappers affiliation to his locality, origin or territory which is a core and integral part of the 'streetness' of hip hop culture. This further establishes the notion that rap is 'local' emphasising the importance of spatial influence or position of 'place' now referred to as 'hood' and its support group called - the homeboys. This is a necessary ingredient for a rap act for a rap act and as also enunciated by Murray Foreman 'In rap and hip hop world-...there is a widespread sense that an act cannot succeed without first gaining approval and support from the crew and the 'hood' [and] successful acts are expected to maintain connections to the hood and to 'keep it real' thematically, rapping about situations, scenes and sites that comprise the lived experience of the hood' (2000:72).

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned, I now examine Olamide's 'Rep Adugbo' which literally can be translated as 'Representing my hood' where three major notions of the street culture were established and exhibited thus:

- Keeping it real (being proud of one's origin-here-Bariga suburb).
- Shout out /recognition- (giving big ups to the homeboys)
- Relating street life's lived experiences (exhibiting toughness in lyrical punches and message).

As earlier enunciated, one of the major rap's street code is the exhibition of realness, being proud of one's origin, locality or hood-no matter the situation, irrespective of how bad or dangerous or poor the emergent rappers neighbourhood is, there is a silent code of subscribing to the 'area' in terms of physical closeness, mentions, re-living the life there lyrically and giving shout outs to homeboys all coalescing into the term 'to represent'.



In the beginning of this song Olamide declared with pride and sense of purpose that the piece is for his hood – Bariga, Lagos. With a proud sense of identity he hailed his hood and admonished whoever that feels otherwise about this to go to hell:

I do it for my hood

I do it for my people yeah yeah

*If you think say na taboo*

(If you think it's unheard of)

I am sorry for you yeah yeah

*If e dey pain you make u rep adugbo re, adugbo*

(If you feel otherwise stand up for your hood too)

*Rep adugbo re, oya rep adugbo re, rep adugbo re*

(The time is now, common stand up for your hood)

The declaration by the artist captured the totality of his allegiance to his hood-Bariga while reiterating the whole essence of the music which is to project where he came from by “Representing” it to the fullest.

Closely knitted to this is the concept of homage and its acknowledgement which distinctively emerged alongside the hood affiliation. Homage simply put is a way of paying—or showering respect to others and might also be an acknowledgement of allegiance to a person or an institution. African tradition places huge emphasis on respect and its acknowledgement and specifically the Yoruba culture abhors being dis-respectful but rather encourages a respectable way of living with exhibition of honor which translates to the Omoluabi philosophy of the Yoruba race. In the discourse of hip hop this homage concept has its derivative as “Shout outs” which was well utilised by Olamide in Rep Adugbo mi dishing out his homage comprehensively and spreading his mentions from the Bariga hood personalities like ‘Sala Eleba’ to top ranking celebrities who emerged from Lagos ghettos and suburbs like Pasuma Wonder while acknowledging and genuflecting to their superiority as street lords. He vibed:

*Shout out to Sala eleba, shout out si awon ti o ni ile*

*Alahji Pasuma wonder agba awo to gangster*

*Sir Remi Aluko agba awo to gangster*

*Mc Oluomo agba awo to gangster*

*Osupa Saheed, Saridon P, agba awo to gangster*

Translation:

Greetings to Sala Eleba –the owners of the land

Respect to Alhaji Pasuma Wonder the real gangster

Respect to Remi Aluko –the real ganster

Respect to MC Oluomo –the real gangster

Respect to Osupa Saheed, Saridon P-the real gangster

Pasuma Wonder, Remi Aluko and Saridon P are Fuji music legends that have cut their teeth on the Nigerian popular music scene and whose claim to fame portends some similarities having all emerged from the hoods of Lagos city. Pasuma emerged from Mushin, Remi Aluko from Ebute Meta while Saheed Osupa is a thorough bred Ajegunle indigene. MC Olumo who also emerged from the hood of Oshodi, however earned his celebrity status and street credibility from the Lagos public transportation union, a street general with cult following ruling the street with alleged violence and feasible gangsterism.

As enunciated earlier, to have street credibility as a hip hop head the artist must exhibit some toughness which forms the concluding aspect in Rep Adugbo where Olamide projected his “toughie” disposition by presenting how dangerous it is to live in Bariga as well as re-living the street live lyrically. These were prominently projected and highlighted to showcase and cement his street credibility firstly by establishing how tough it is to live in Bariga neighbourhood by projecting the danger inherent in that hood through revelations that can send cold spines to the system of lily livered:

*Aboki yo squad l'ojumi*

*Askari dodge l'ojumi*

*I am from that kind of hood*

*O ri blood loju mi, plenty thug l'aju mi*

*Ton hot l'ojumi*

Translation:

A random dude drew up gun in my presence

A policeman dodged bullets in my presence

I am from that kind of neighbourhood  
You can see blood in my eyes  
And gansterism in my system

Secondly he vividly projected his own personae as a “toughie” and a thoroughbred Bariga street dude that have witnessed a lot, done a lot and cannot be messed with:

*Omo bariga ni baddo won lon shey bi onya ra*  
*Numero uno don try dey mark o ya holla*  
*Ti anybody ba gbemu e fo si lara, Toka Toka!*  
*Be lo shey ma dun*

Translation:

I am Bariga born and bred, they say I behave like I’m crazy  
Number one has given consent,  
If anybody opposes spray them Toka Toka – (gun shots)  
That how it will sound.

## SUMMARY

Hip hop is a global phenomenon, an expressive popular culture that is youth driven. It has been established that “the street” phenomenon has a huge impact and influence on the content and the players of hip-hop game. Also by tracing the evolution of hip hop in Nigeria against the backdrop of the street notion, and in comparison with their American counterpart one can rightly decipher the disparities in terms of who the hip hop generation are as well as the inhabitants of the street in Lagos, Nigeria against their American counterpart. However, and interestingly the point of convergence and connectivity of the Nigerian hip hop generation (as exemplified by Olamide) with the universal hip hop community is not in doubt. This global goal of the genre is evident as emphatically projected by the Nigerian hip hop generation in terms of vision and the didactic use and purposeful engagement of the music in dealing with the harsh realities of everyday life.

Through the artist Olamide there is no gainsaying the fact that hip hop music and the street are in-separable as fully exemplified and analysed through his music cum hip hop philosophy. He further gave credence to hip hops positivism and believe that the genre can be adopted as the “new street game”-a legitimate source of livelihood on the threshold of his YBNL Nation that you can become successful through your talent and hardwork as opposed to the now popular internet fraud of Yahoo-yahoo that has now become a plague among Nigerian youths. As summed up by Emma Ugolee- a media and entertainment consultant in 2019:

Olamide said YBNL...stands for Yahoo Boy No Laptop. This I thought was one of the most powerful messages for youngsters at the time when the craze for being fraudsters was king. YBNL meant that there were other ways to get rich and he was going to prove this with music. Did he do it? O yes indeed. And more remarkably ... [his] message inspired many more youths to see hope in shutting down the laptop and reaching for the mic.

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