**2006**

**14-16 Years**

**2nd Place**

**Pholoso Masenya**

 The Effect of Gangster Rap on the Youth of Today

 Gangster rap music brings forth values, which may be degrading to our lives. It is also a way of life that has helped many people realize their talents and be able to make something of their lives.   Gangster rap music is a way of expressing ones emotion, and the lyrics are written from within. I’d suggest that most of it is an expression of anger so the music is bound to be rough and ruthless, and the videos shoots potray the verses being said in the songs.   However this controversial (gangster rap) side of hip-hop can force elders to get real with young people on issues such as sex, violence, poverty, racism, and sexism. This may make it better for everyone to deal with these issues but also it may portray a wrong message to not only the youth but to everyone else.   Hip-hop as a whole, is an independent, unique, empowering international culture which has opened doors for many other things in life especially for the under class people. When separating Hip-hop and gangster rap you find that gangster rap is really the worst influential as it explores a violent nature, a wild and as they call it, the “free lifestyle” in humans, it deals with words from the mouth and not from the heart, with no real meaning unless it’s anger based, although some statements mentioned may true, but it’s anything but empowering and positive.   Gangster rap music was birthed out of a desire to manifest one's self in a society, therefore, this music culture teaches the youth indirectly, and that you can be who you want to be in the sense of not being what people want you to be. This however is correct to some extend, but it some how encourages the youth to believe that any job goes, just as long as you get paid.   Most of the gangster rap music is nothing but hateful, hurting, degrading, corrupt and in a way I find it to be encouraging our young minds to rebel against not all but most good, and uplifting ways of life. I believe that because of the message portrayed in gangster rap music, it sure plays a big part in the way the youth of today, think, behave and live their lives. I have seen how teens that spent more time watching and listening to music about sex, guns, drugs and violent behaviour tend to practice this in real life.   Rap superstars are seen to be role models to the youth, as it is, the artists themselves consider their lives to be a positive, and they do have good intentions most of the times, and they use their success to help out where they can like anyone who is able to, but we kids tend to follow what we want.   At times we don’t want to be behaved in a well mannered way so we do what we want and I don’t think anyone is to be blamed for all the actions we chose to take, and besides we do learn better from our mistakes.  Their way of living has in a sense “brainwashed” us into thinking that sex before marriage is okay (just don’t have kids); being rebellious towards your elders and the law is fine. When really it isn’t! I strongly believe that gangster rap has to take responsibility for the structure of crime and corruption in our communities today.   In rap videos, men hold the power and women don't and as a result, are subservient. This kind of behaviour makes it seems normal to act out of order, not to respect and take pride in your self, and with this being said it’s highly degrading to women. In all these situations it’s all about THE MONEY!   Parents have to realize that they are also resposibily of the things we watch and learn from TV, they cannot just stick their heads in the sand and expect us to only look at good stuff on the television. Parents need to know what we children are being exposed to. Corruption, sex, violence, and all unhealthy features of this gangster lifestyle are made commercial and this leads us to practice it.   Certainly, rap is not the only music that portrays negative stereotypes or can negatively impact behaviors, and not all rap music should be implicated.   I do feel that all rap music is getting a bad rap. When it shouldn’t really be like that. Yes, there are rap videos that are particularly violent or sexual, but people should look at what is more important, like whether or not these kids act out of disordered behaviors because of gangster rap music.   These are some of the questions people should ask themselves before blaming all the bad behaviours done by the youth on rap music. Maybe you should look at their family structure and the type of parenting kids get.   Because rappers just rap they don’t think, this causes war with every aspect of life, misconceptions are made, and we know that with any type of repeated media exposure of negativity, this will have a big impact on the targeted audience.