**2006**

 **14-16 Years**

**1st Place**

**Thandeka Khupe**

**16 years**

How are the values of gangster rap affecting youth today? What values are expressed in gangster rap songs?   There are many gangster rap stars nowadays, 50 Cent, The Game, Eminem to mention a few. The gospel these singers are preaching has had a large effect on youths today. One might ask, ‘’what is rap? ‘’ some say it’s a way to express yourself. Yes but is this a good way to do so?   The values of gangster rap have influenced youths in an astounding way. Most youths want to be what the songs say. They want to be just like the singer because they are their hero. This is because they feel it’s the fashion or as they call it, ‘the cool thing to do‘. Youths now care less about their school work, their families, communities and everything around them. Gangster rap has influenced their characters and behaviors. ‘You can still make money without education’ they say. In the gangster world they call them ‘Hustlers’. These people have no focus in their lives at all. Everything has no meaning and value to them.   Gangster rap has caused great dispute in the society. It has lead to a lacking discipline  amongst youths. Due to this, youths portray themselves as cheap, valueless people mainly the girls. For example the way they dress and the way they walk. They expose their bodies so much that one might think they are advertising themselves. And the way they walk makes the boys smile because to them it’s a chance to take advantage. This leads to teenage sex and at the end of the day is the cause of teenage pregnancies.   These gangster rap songs express values that are in a way not acceptable in the society. For example in the Christian community adultery is a sin. They preach ‘no sex before marriage’ but gangster rap promotes that people must satisfy their needs. Statements like,’ Girl turn around let me see your back’, stimulates the boys in wanting to explore the female’s backside. The video clips of these songs show half naked and in some cases totally naked women. This is not a good sight for the boys because it stimulates their feelings and they want to see it for themselves. This brings us back to teenage sex and we can talk about diseases. For example Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and AIDS.   Smoking and taking drugs is also a value expressed in gangster rap songs. Most singers appear on the Television smoking large cigars which produce thick, dark clouds of smoke when exhaled. They smoke in a way that seems prestigious and as if they are doing a good thing. This triggers the youth because it looks like a nice thing so they want to do it. Drugs have caused many problems amongst youth and their families. In some cases it has broken down families. And in other cases it has taken their lives. Youths are driven into doing crazy things like jumping off a high building due to the influence of the drugs.   Violence is another problem in our communities. This is because the youth believe that people will understand them if they break something. Some see it as a way to relieve their anger. The main causes of violence are drugs and alcohol. These stimulate the youth into acting like wild animals. They steal from poor defenseless females and they rob stores. They want to damage everything insight and they want people to fear them. These are some of the effects of drugs and alcohol on youths.

Gangster rap songs also encourage revenge and arrogance. Youths become arrogant due to drugs and they do not listen to anyone even their parents. Actually they do not want anyone telling them what to do or any help. Youths tend to become very upset and they want to revenge. This leads to gang fights and the use of dangerous weapons like guns and knives. They will fight until they kill each other. The next place for them after that is jail; they will have wasted their lives.   I think gangster rap has had a great influence on the youth and unfortunately it has been mostly in a bad way. Its values have damaged or poisoned the youth. Although this is true, I believe that your character is influenced by what you take in. If you expose yourself to bad things, you will end up doing that. I believe, ‘You are what you make yourself’.   I was born in Africa and lived there for ten years; my grandmother did not have television, so I did not see the rap songs on TV or on radio. I have experienced a big change since I came to live in the UK. I can honestly say I enjoy the rhythms of some of the songs and many young people enjoy watching TV but I hope this will never change my values that I was taught by my parents, grandparents and family. I feel that what the rap gangsters’ show does not make me or other young people better members of our society. When I was in Africa I could never have imagined that you can almost walk naked, but this is what the rap gangsters’ show as normal. As young people we are exposed to many things, but we can still grow up to be reasonable if we are given guidance but all those who love us. As an African child I want to contribute to give light to Africa wherever I am. The values that I received form family will make me a better person than the values given by rap gangsters.