

The Use of Gospel Hip-hop Music as an Avenue of Evangelizing the Youth in Kenya Today: A Practical Approach

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Abstract

Music is an important component of Christian worship. Globalization has brought about hip-hop culture in Africa, Kenya included, which has influenced the Kenyan youth so much. Although Hip-hop music is very popular with the youth in Kenya, it is viewed by the older, conservative Christians as evil, something that destroys the youth. The feeling of many church leaders is that the youth should ignore this music, something which the youth are not willing to do. This paper argues that Gospel hip-hop music if properly used in the Church can become an essential avenue of evangelization. Rather than refuting this music as satanic, the Church in Kenya should use it to reach the youth who are running away from the Church due to what they term as 'boring services'.

1. Introduction

For the years I have served as a priest in the Church since 1998, I have kept wondering about one thing, 'Why is the Church which is holy allowing hip-hop culture which is evil to slowly enter into it?' The more I have thought about it, the more I have become concerned particularly when the youth are worshiping. What is the future of the Church in Kenya, especially with the current wave of secularization? My experiences in Nairobi city where I worked as the chaplain between 2005 and 2011 and my deep reflection on the future of the Church in Kenya, more so in urban areas have led to this paper. Can hip-hop music be contextualized to become an ideal tool of evangelism in Kenya rather than ridiculing it?

Hip-hop is a kind of music which is mainly characterized by rapping, heavy percussions, fast beats, rhymes and vigorous body movements (Rukungu 2012:11). It is a cultural movement which developed in New York (United States of America) in the 1970s primarily among the African and Latin-Americans and is rapidly spreading to other parts of the world including Kenya (Hip-hop Culture and the Dilemma, 2012). Today the obsession of youth to music particularly here in Kenya has not gone unnoticed (Jayne, 2010). As one of the highly adored forms of leisure, music has grown in leaps and bounds giving rise to Gospel hip-hop, especially in towns and cities. Although the old Christians in Kenya are not so much concerned with this style of music, the youth are interested with the styles, beats and the lyrics of hip-hop music (Makewa 2008:5). For instance, Gospel hip-hop has become dominant in youth programs like overnight prayers meetings (*Kesha* in Kiswahili), bashes, raves, concerts, and rallies among others (Rukungu 2012:1).

Over the last four decades, hip-hop music has developed and spread to different cultures. Due to globalization, Kenya has not escaped from this 'reality' where the youth have adopted this music as an ideal form of worship regardless of what the elders think about it. It has embraced other genres such as *Reggae, Raga, Rock and Blues, Jazz and Bongo* among others raising concern from the church elders (Rukungu 2012:2 cf. Chang 2006:16). Hip-hop music and hip-hop artists have been perceived by some church elders to be leading the youth into alcoholism, drugs and substance abuse, sexual immorality and violence among other vices (Rukungu 2012:3). This music has penetrated into the Church in Kenya and has bred a new genre referred to as *Holy hip-hop, Christian hip-hop or Gospel hip-hop*. The youth in Kenya find this music helpful and suitable for worship as it satisfies their spiritual, emotional and social needs (Chang 2005:18).

However, as we have noted, this music faces rejection from some church elders who associate it with spiritual dysfunction, obscenity, violence, immorality and secularism. They regard it as evil and destructive to the youth (Chang 2005:4). This has raised conflict between the two parties (Rukungu 2012:4).

It is in this background that this paper seeks to explicate how the Gospel hip-hop music can be used in worship for the purpose of evangelizing the youth whom Kajira (2002: 13) informs that are running away from the Church due to boring services. We need to unpack the role of Gospel hip-hop music among the youth as well as investigate its contribution to the spiritual and social life of the Kenyan Christian youth. To inform our study, the research has been conducted in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Diocese of Nairobi. The ACK is the largest protestant denomination in Kenya (Nkonge 2008:54) and the Diocese of Nairobi is located in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and in it we are likely to see how hip-hop music has imparted on the life of the Church in Kenya today, especially in the urban areas.

2. Origin and Development of Gospel Hip-Hop Music

Hip-hop music originated in USA in 1970s and has spread to other parts of the world, including Africa where today it is the main ingredient of West African singers and poets. However, the most important direct influence on the creation of hip-hop music is the Jamaican style of toasting, the act of talking or chanting over a rhythm or beat, which developed in "blues dances", where black American records were played (Rukungu 2012:11). The word hip-hop was first used to refer to a culture in USA that revolved round the lives of youth characterized by rapping, dancing, up-rocking, popping and locking, began by Kool Herc who is regarded the father of hip-hop (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artists>). From the streets of New York among black and Latin-Americans' youth, it spilled out to the streets of White quarters and then to the masses. Today, hip-hop has penetrated into lives everywhere- in the Shows, Music Videos, Dance Schools, Fitness Clubs, Cinemas, Theaters, down centuries to present (<http://www.worldwidemusic.nationalgeographic.com>).

Hip-hop has two main historical eras namely, the Old School Hip-hop (1970-1985) and The Golden Age Hip-hop (1985-1993). Hip-hop became the most admired and the top selling music genre in 1990s (http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Kevin_Stith). The first rap song to go platinum was titled "The Message", released by Grandmaster Flash in 1982. It was being used to call awareness to depravity and had pervasive effect on social structures. This depicted that hip-hop could be used to voice concerns about serious political, social, economic and even religious issues (<http://www.urbanresurgence>), an indication that hip-hop music can be used in evangelization. Dever (2011) enunciates that Gospel hip-hop artists address such topics such as biblical theology, church discipline, conversion, helping the needy, etc and so hip-hop music can be used to enrich the Christian faith. Gospel hip-hop also known as Christian hip-hop, Holy hip-hop or sacred hip-hop is a contemporary music whose roots can be traced to secular hip-hop music but whose culture has greatly affected religions worldwide especially Christianity among the youth because of its multiplicity of music talents (Rukungu 2012:20). This music by some gospel artists is believed to have songs that communicate theological truths and liberation which are core in Christian life (:21).

This may explain why the youth in Kenya are taking these songs very seriously. Some people have labeled all Gospel hip-hop music 'worldly', failing to acknowledge that God has a remnant of rappers who boldly proclaim God's truth through contemporary categories (<http://www.iphoplinguistics.com>), and so it is important that rather than refuting hip-hop music as evil or 'worldly' we employ it to evangelize our youth who will search for it elsewhere if the Church ignores it (Mwenda 2013). Rukungu (2012:12) feels that Gospel hip-hop rappers put the teachings of the Bible into the modern-day context, interpreting it in their own language. He argues Gospel hip-hop music has a more salvific potency message than an ordinary sermon. Themes from the hip-hop world-view give the youth a better way of applying the word of God in their daily lives today.

Watkins (2011:3) argues that hip-hop is the child of the blues. It springs from the same soul-deep need as the blues, a need to lament and to be frank. He calls for a theological exegesis of the music and culture of hip-hop rather than demonizing it. Under the beat and the rhyme he hears reflection of and about life for African-American youth in the city. He denotes that hip-hop culture is experiencing a sea change today that has implications for evangelism, worship and spiritual practices and laments that Christians have often failed to interpret this culture with sensitivity hence the need for gospel hip-hop music.

As a sociologist and a theologian, Watkins understands that while there is room for a critique of mainstream hip-hop culture, listeners of hip-hop music can hear a prophet crying out, sharing the pain of a generation that feels as though it has not been heard (Rukungu 2012: 13) . His work reveals the inherent goodness in redeeming hip-hop music using culture as lens to open up the power of the Bible for ministry. From themes on Christology, Soteriology and Ecclesiology, he gifts as a socio-theologian and a hip-hop devotee who puts things in a way that redeems an essential dialogue for engaging realities of the Church and today's urbanized and global society (Watkins 2011). James Cone commends Watkins for showing hip-hop's redemptive and evangelistic value in its style, prose, syntax, and spirituality. He notes that Watkins takes the reader on an,

Allegorical theological journey into the heart of hip-hop culture with the challenge to examine the culture not just from the surface but from a deeper theological point asking questions such as, where does God show up and speak within and through hip-hop culture? (2012).

Watkins therefore provides resources for Christians to understand that God's truth can also be found in the world of hip-hop and that people can get ministered to through Gospel hip-hop music. Therefore, hip-hop music has evolved and given birth to gospel hip-hop music which is theologically informed to spread the message of salvation among the youth (Godwing 1988). Hip-hop music can, therefore, be used in the Church in Kenya today to evangelize the youth rather than lambasting it as evil.

3. Lessons from the ACK Diocese of Nairobi

To ascertain the impact of Gospel hip-hop music in the Church in Kenya I conducted a research with the help of my Masters of Theology (MTh) students at St. Paul's University between 8th and 30th April 2013.¹ The research was done in the ACK Diocese of Nairobi which covers the whole of Nairobi County. It is assumed that the findings of this study will inform us what is happening in the whole of Kenya, especially in urban areas. This section contains the findings and the analysis of the data. It has the information gathered through the use of questionnaires, focused group discussions, interviews and participant observations. The five MTh students were to distribute the questionnaires while I was involved in focused group discussions and interviews. The total number of the questionnaires distributed was 180. Out of the 180 questionnaires administered to the youth, 150 were correctly filled and returned.² This represents 83 per cent return.

The Diocese of Nairobi has 8 Archdeacons namely Cathedral, Central, Eastern, Embakasi, Githurai, Kasarani, North West and Southern. We ensured that at least 22 questionnaires were distributed to each Archdeaconry, with exception of Central, Eastern, Kasarani and North West Archdeacons which got 23 questionnaires each since they have more parishes than the other Archdeacons.³ The number of questionnaires returned from each Archdeaconry was as follows: Cathedral-20, Central-19, Eastern-21, Embakasi-16, Githurai-18, Kasarani-21, North West-16, and Southern-19 totaling to 150. Random Sampling was employed to select the respondents in each Archdeaconry.

Through focused group discussions and interviews the researcher was able to reach 80 respondents as shown in the table below bringing the total number of the respondents in this research to 230.

Youth (20-35yrs)		Teens (13-19 yrs)	Population
Focused group discussions	5	5	60
Interviews	Youth 20-25 yrs)	Teens (13-19 yrs)	
	10	10	20
Totals			80

Table: 1 Focused group discussions and the interviews

¹ I sincerely thank my Mth students at St. Paul's University led by Rev. Isaac Mbogo the class representative who assisted me in data collection.

² Samples of the questionnaires can be obtained by writing to the author using the address shown on top of this paper.

³ In the Anglican Church, an Archdeaconry is an area under an Archdeacon. An Archdeacon is a priest next below the rank of bishop. An archdeaconry is made of several parishes. In the Diocese of Nairobi the number of parishes in each Archdeaconry is as follows: Cathedral-5, Central-7, Eastern-8, Embakasi- 6, Githurai-6, Kasarani-7, North West-8 and Southern-5.

Through the participant- observation method, I was able to reach the youth as they used Gospel hip-hop songs in their various forums including Youth Sunday services, Concerts, Rallies/revivals, and *Keshas* (night prayer meetings).

3.1 Influence of Hip-hop Music on the Christian Youth in Nairobi Diocese

It was evident from this research that hip-hop music has a remarkable influence on the Christian youth in Kenya today. From the findings, it came out clearly that Gospel hip-hop music has become very popular among the youth in the urban areas in Kenya where 221 (96%) respondents confessed to be aware of it. My observation was that in parishes or congregations where this music is discouraged the number of youth is noticeably small and they are less active as compared to those where hip-hop music is openly encouraged. When hip-hop music is incorporated in church worship, many youth come to church and eventually experience the transformation of values and lifestyles (Kawira 2013).

The Diocese of Nairobi Youth Department is currently organizing rallies titled ‘Beyond the Beats’ which are giving the youth opportunities to perform their favorite songs after which there is an open discussion to unpack the message in these songs. A classical example of contemporary songs that seem to be very appealing to the youth includes *System yakapungala* and *Tobina*, by Dad Owen. Others that have hit the limelight in the diocesan youth forums include *Pages za Bible* and *Touching heaven* by Eko Dydda, *Furifuri dance* by Jimmy Gait among others like *Ugali sauca*, *Hela* and *M Baba*. The youth have attempted to understand the theology in this music and how it enriches their worship and enhances their salvation (Rukungu 2012: 28).

187(81.3%) respondents felt that embracing hip-hop and incorporating it in the Church worship attracts more youth to the Church. They stated that this music can bring the ‘lost’ youth to Church and once there they can be evangelized and eventually adopt a godly lifestyle. One specific question to the youth asked was ‘Are you comfortable with the Church where Gospel hip-hop music is practiced or the one without?’ Of the 150 youth who returned the questionnaires 144 (95.3%), said that they were more comfortable with Churches where Gospel hip-hop music is used while only 7 (4.67%) were against it. This implies Gospel hip-hop music is popular among the youth in the Kenyan urban areas.

Another interesting observation from the questionnaires was that the ratio of females to males among the youth in congregations where Gospel hip-hop music is used is 2:1 (1 male in every 2 females) as opposed to 5:1 (1 male in 5 females) where hip-hop was not used. This is possible because the males tend to move out of the Church to the secular places where there is a lot of vigor and vibrant music (Rukungu 2012:13). It was found that when Gospel hip-hop is used in the Church it attracts more young men. This can be a good tool of retaining young men in the church and solving the detected problem where churches have become a preserve of the women (: 2012:21). The trend that men in Kenya are running way from the Church can thus be contained and corrected.

Although 26 (11.3%) respondents denoted that Gospel hip-hop music cannot lead to the salvation of the soul (spiritual) but may contribute to ‘practical’ salvation, where it can communicate the earthly realities and aspects of life by educating the youth and warning them against such vices as alcoholism, drug abuse, immorality and criminal activities among others, 204 (88.7%) respondents were of the feeling that Gospel hip-hop music makes the service lively, entertains the youth and breaks boredom. It gives them room for their creativity and innovation providing a healthy platform to use their talents in worship. This way, many youth come to Church and are transformed.

181(78.6%) respondents indicated that Gospel hip-hop music affected their relationship with God, friends, parents, teachers and church leaders. They are encouraged to be responsible and challenged to explore their talents. It has made them to connect well with God, believing that God has a good purpose for them. It has helped them develop self-esteem, self-respect, confidence, honesty, respect and obedience to God, their parents and the teachers, boosting social interactions. Some 5 (2.17%) respondents were able to identify the negative effects of Gospel hip-hop music by 3 (1.3%) of them arguing that it is a device used by Satan to mislead the youth and the remaining 2(0.8%) saying that it encourages immorality. They generally felt that hip-hop music is intrinsically bad, destructive and harmful.

Even when it is branded gospel, sacred or holy, it is still a door way to idolatry, secularism and corrupts worship of the true God. 9(3.9%) respondents said that Gospel hip-hop music neither affected them positively nor negatively. Therefore, from the above findings it is clear indication that this kind of music is popular among the youth in Nairobi and Kenya in general and cannot be ignored if the Church is serious about evangelizing them.

3.2. Effects of Barring Gospel Hip-hop Music in the Church

It is evident that Gospel hip-hop has gained popularity among the youth in Kenya where 187(81.3%) respondents expressed the great need to retain and even encourage the use of Gospel hip-hop music in the Church. When asked to comment on the outcome of barring the use of Gospel hip-hop music in the church, 201(87.39%) respondents said that they would immediately cease to attend that church and opt for other churches where they are free to use Gospel hip-hop music. Still on the same question, 17(7.39%) respondents said that they would still go to the church but would feel rejected, unwanted and uncared for. 8(3.47 %) respondents vowed that they would rebel and continue using this music unless literally chased away. The remaining 4(1.73%) respondents were not sure of what would happen but suspected that the youth would become angry, rebellious and stop going to Church. These responses therefore show that the effect of discouraging hip-hop music in the Church is losing the youth. It is healthy to encourage the use of Gospel hip-hop music in the Church for the purpose of evangelizing the youth in Kenya since it has become very popular with them.

4. Youth and Hip-Hop Music: A Theological Reflection

Makewa (2008:5) defines youth as the time when a person is young, the time before a child becomes an adult. Campel and Ritcher (1982:5) see youth as the stage between adolescence and adulthood. It is the time when for the first time one experiences the conflict with the world to develop autonomous self-hood and the necessity of social involvements. From the onset, this is a sensitive stage where a sense of belongingness and identities are developed. David Wong argues that a youth is a person in transition between childhood and adulthood. Thus, a youth is a young person growing into adulthood. This growth can be equated to a journey with rivers and mountains on the road to independent responsibility (2000:1). In this paper, young people aged 13 to 35 years are regarded to as the youth.⁴ These youth are curious, quick to adopt and adapt to new lifestyles in quest for identity, self-esteem and acceptance. They get bored easily and tune out to any input they do not want. Burns and Devries (2000:43), point out that the present generation of youth copes with more stress, anxiety and pressure than the previous generations.

According to Makewa (2008:5) the youth are more drawn to secular media than to Christian media. This is because the secular media has very entertaining programs, with attractive music, while the Christian Medias' programs are boring with dull songs and uninteresting sermons. In Nairobi, for example, few youth tune in to Christian radio and Television stations such as *Hope FM* and *Family Media Television* (Chandran 2004:51-52). This implies that if we hope to retain the youth in the Church, our worship must be lively. This underscores the importance of using a kind of music which is appealing to the youth. The Bible has numerous references on how music is incorporated in worship. For instance, the Old Testament gives a record of how music was used in worship among the Israelites. The most notable example is where David and the Israelites sung and danced with all their might to honour the Lord (2 Sam 6:5). Their singing and dancing were 'powerful' and vigorous. Many proponents of the Gospel hip-hop music use this text to support their music style (Kajira 2002:13). Music inspired people to prophecy and to accomplish great projects. For example, Joshua and his team praised God until the walls of Jericho fell down (Joshua 6:10f). The Psalter has often been cited especially when David exhorts Israelites to worship God with all their strength, to dance and praise God with a joyful noise using all kinds of musical instruments (Psalms 150:3-6). Gospel hip-hop artists use such examples to support their music. We need not to overemphasize the fact that as one of the fastest growing music industries in the world, hip-hop has influenced many youth in Kenya today and there is no way in which the Church can burry its head in the sand if it hopes to be relevant to the youth. Evangelization demands that we do what Arbucle (1990:2) calls 'Earthing the Gospel'.

⁴ Borrowed from the Anglican understanding where in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) the youth are the young people aged between 13 and 35 years.

A Church that has a lackadaisical approach to peoples' aspirations, dreams and recreation in its evangelization is bound to fail.

5. Gospel Hip-Hop Music and Youth Evangelization in Kenya

36% of Kenya's population is youth (Usaidi Kenya 2012). No policy makers or planners of any organization, the Church included can afford to ignore such a large group of people if they hope to succeed. Kajira (2002:15) denotes that the youth are the leaders of today and tomorrow. A nation or an organization thinking of its future can therefore not forget its youth. The major business of the Church is to be involved in evangelization (Nkongwe 2004: 27), but this business cannot be complete without the youth who are the 'Church' of today and tomorrow. The Church in Kenya must devise ways of attracting and retaining the youth.

Makewa (2008:5) illuminates that music is a very powerful tool of evangelization and so should be used to evangelize the youth. This is particularly here in Kenya and Africa in general where music and dance are vital aspects of our culture. In the African Traditional society, music was an important component of worship. All religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals were accompanied by music, singing and sometimes dancing (Mbiti 1975:27). The main aim of this music was to invoke the spirits of the departed, ask for blessings from the divinities and offer thanks and praises to God (Lukwata 2003:153). Since music and dance reflect our Africaness, the tongue must break into song and the body into movement in order to keep with the African trait of spontaneity, vigour and exuberance (:156). The Kamba people say that *Kwina ni Kusunga* (To sing is to dance) which implies that in the African culture, there is no singing without dancing (Munguti 1997: 108). This may explain why hip-hop music which involves vigorous body movement has become popular among the youth in Kenya (see section 3).

Rather than refuting Gospel hip-hop music as evil, the Church in Kenya should utilize it to evangelize the youth since they are more comfortable with it. There is a Kamba proverb which says that *Ileawa na kila yisaa* meaning "An animal is baited with what it eats" (Makewa 2008:5). Therefore what is interesting and appealing to the youth should be used by the Church to reach them. There is an urgent need for the Church to re-formulate a theology that positively enhances the life of the young people. At the end, it is the theological contents and not the tune or style of music that will inform the salvation and spirituality of the youth. Gospel hip-hop music aim at reclaiming what has been lost in worship (Rukungu 2012:22). The idea is not just replacing the secular lyrics with gospel lyrics and retaining the beats and tunes. Gospel artists need to be prepared to take the long route to create their own styles and tunes to ferry the gospel lyrics. Divine inspiration and heavenly wisdom is required to use what appeals to the youth to win them over to God (Gatobu 2013). Evangelization will bear fruits if done according to the will of God. It will be a mark of ignorance not to tap into the power of music since it is indeed a very relevant tool to use in youth ministries (Rukungu 2012:22). It is no doubt that the youth are proud to identify with Gospel hip hop music because it appeals to them (Kawira 2013). The vigorous and more vibrant music is what the youth in Kenya are looking for and will attend every forum including *Keshas* (Kiswahili word for Prayer night meetings) where the choice of music is open with a bias on hip-hop styles (Rukungu 2012: 23).

The Church in Kenya needs not be afraid of using hip-hop music to worship God. It is a powerful tool for evangelism. The Church should realize that it is taxed with the challenging and controversial responsibility of bringing transformation and liberation of the youth from all factors that hold them captives (Kajira 2002:19). It needs to take the advantage of the positive aspect of the Gospel hip-hop music to bring the youth together, evangelize and draw them to Church. Gospel hip-hop music should be integrated into the Christian worship in order to make it (worship) appealing to the youth who sometimes feel left out in today's Church services. This enables them to participate fully in worship and become part of the Church, the body of Christ celebrating His victory over sin and death on the cross.

We need to accept the fact that secularization is now a reality everywhere and instead of running away from it we should incorporate it in our religious aspirations. For instance, when Michael Jackson, who many people consider the pioneer of secular hip-hop music died, some Christian youth joined the rest of the world to mourn for his death. It was amazing to hear the youth in our Kenyan churches eulogizing the fallen legend of secular music, who was popularly referred to as "The King of hip-hop" (Daily Nation, 13 June, 2009). That young people in the Church are developing interest in secular music is not something to hide.

A careful analysis of the newspapers reveals that hip-hop music features prominently in gospel concerts and church events in Kenya today. For example, the Saturday Nation (8 to 22 November 2010) and Sunday Nation (22 October to 23 November 2008) just to mention a few have several articles that covered Christian concerts where Gospel hip-hop music featured as a major recipe. This is an indicator that there is an increased infiltration of the secular hip-hop music into the Christian circles. Similarly, Gospel hip-hop music is also getting an audience in the secular social meetings such as restaurants and pubs where gospel artists are invited and contracted to entertain the clients (Sunday Nation, 4 April 2010). It is therefore evident that the Church will no longer bar hip-hop from her doors without raising an eye brow.

Youth Sunday worship seems to be dominated by hip-hop music. The hip-hop artists are running the show and seem to be devising new styles for their fans to keep them glued to the hip-hop genre. A careful analysis of *Zuqka Lifestyle* magazine and *Buzsz* magazine, incept volumes of the *Friday Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation Paper* respectively, reveals that hip-hop music can no longer be locked out of the gospel categories. For example, an article in *Zuqka* (16 December 2011), featured a young pastor, Allan Muriithi, commonly known as 'Pastor Rhymes' who is very dynamic and hip-hop friendly. The vestments, language, mode of sermon delivery and type of the songs he uses in worship are customized to address the realities of youth. He has attracted many youth through his unique Gospel hip-hop music. Some of his common songs include: *Jehovah's Love*, *Nionyeshe njia* (Show me the way) and *No more hustling*. He goes to schools, churches and colleges to reach out to the youth and engage them in healthy discussion on morals, spirituality and salvation. This is his mode of evangelizing the youth and he has brought many to Christ. There is therefore a lot that the Church in Kenya can learn from this young pastor. To evangelize the youth, we need to device ways of reaching them. This can be enhanced by the hip-hop music which seems to be very appealing to them.

Rob Horge, a Christian hip-hop artist during a press interview in March, 2005 confessed that he sings for God and puts his message in an attractive and entertaining way to the youth. He stated that his main goal is to impact the world and bring a change for a better tomorrow and to give the youth a better life through Gospel hip-hop music. This is his ministry. He strives to bring the message of God in a way understandable and attractive to the youth. He offers his listeners an alternative to explore their talents. He is convinced that it is time when God's people employ Gospel hip-hop music as an alternative in the Church instead of letting our youth to go out to secular places where they end up in self-destructive habits. He says that he want to use Gospel hip-hop music to reach and impact the youth in the whole world (2005). This is a big lesson for the Church in Kenya which must start to see the evangelism opportunities lying in the Gospel hip-hop music. Furthermore as we have already said, vigorous music is not new in Africa. In Africa, music is a religious phenomenon and it is used in worship where all religious activities are always accompanied by music, singing and dancing. Music and dance give outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life and through them Africans express their fellowship and full participation in life (Mbiti 1975: 26-27).

6. Conclusion

Gospel hip-hop music plays a vital role of attracting many youth into the Church, hence an indispensable tool of evangelizing the youth in Kenya today. Due to globalization, we can no longer pretend that Kenya or even Africa as a whole is an Island. When it comes to evangelization, the Church in Kenya must wake up and employ all available avenues to enable her to reach to as many people as possible. So as to reach all people she must learn to contextualize the gospel of Christ to make it relevant and appealing to all races, ages, cultures, sexes, ideologies and philosophies. In this effort, she must not forget the youth who form a large population of Kenya's population. Gospel hip-hop music which is very appealing to the youth today can become a powerful tool of evangelization if properly utilized.

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APPENDIX I:

SOME OF THE GOSPEL HIP-HOP SONGS SUNG BY THE YOUTH IN NAIROBI

Example 1

Kiswahili/Sheng⁵

Yesu ndio amani...you need...We ndio real Winner...let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven... nikiwasa post, You are my refugee camp. Mimi na Jesus sitadunga frotazz... sema Jesus, mapepo sitalose again collabo ya shida na scare crow, haziwezi kuniscare bro

English translation

Jesus is Peace you need; He is the real winner. . . Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Since I have Jesus I will not be in want... in the name of Jesus demons disappear... Poverty cannot scare me.

In this song the youth ascertain that Jesus is the peace they need and in him they are in deficit of nothing.

Example 2

Siku hizi nadara pages za bible by four no-no, haikuwa hivo each and every day mi haffi read the bible, hands inna di air if you are true disciple

Translation:

These days I read the bible, before it was not so. Each day I have a desire to read the bible. If you are true disciple raise your hand up.

This is an exhortation to the youth encouraging them to read the bible daily

Example 3

Aka-fast, siku ten plus thirty, sheto akatry kumtempt lakini wapi, fish mbili mkate tano, na walishiba wase elfu tano ... through Yeye kila kitu ina uwezekano, Alidedi ilikuwa tragic, Akafufuka na si magic, yani Akasulubishwa Akadedi juu ya tree, day three, he is alive, am free

Translation:

He fasted ten days plus thirty, the devil tried to tempt Him but failed. Two fish and five bread made five thousand people full. Through Him everything is possible. He died, it was tragic but He rose again and not by magic. That is, He was crucified on a tree and on day three he rose and I became free.

It teaches that Jesus is able. Nothing is impossible with Him.

Example 4

Mimi ni mtoto wa daddy...Amenidunga pampers ya protection...poverty ikinichapa... enzi za chuo ... nilisota Akaniturn 360, Mpesa ikaanza kuflow, easily, siku hizi story za mala ..., si sisi, nikiimba tell my soul, keep it real, for God , so loved, the world, He gave..soma John 3,16, I believe God nitamwona one day everything will be alright, okay...

Translation:

I am my father's son and He has given me special protection. When poverty comes around I will still praise Him. Since the days in school, He turned me around from poverty, and my M-pesa started to flow easily. So when I sing tell my soul to keep it real, for God so loved the world he gave...read John 3:16. I believe I will see Him one day and everything will be alright and okay.

It shows that God is the protector and provider of His children.

Note

These songs mainly address all aspects of life i.e. physical, spiritual, economic and social etc, hence very relevant.

⁵ Sheng is corrupted Kiswahili mainly spoken by the young people in in Kenya especially in urban areas.