

AFRICAN UNDERGROUND: HIP HOP IN SENEGAL (6:14 min)

Directed by Magee McIlvaine, Ben Herson & Chris Moore
Produced by Nomadic Wax and Sol Productions
Winner of the Roots & Rhymes Award



About the Film

I was inspired to make this film when I was writing my thesis in college about the role of Hip Hop on the 2000 presidential election and the positive impact that young people had on creating non-violent peaceful change in their country. The story inspired me to start Nomadic Wax – a global Hip Hop record label and film/events production company.

Our longer film, *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar*, of which this piece is just one part, explores the transformative role of Hip Hop on politics in Senegal, West Africa during the February 2007 presidential election campaign. Looking at the election through the eyes of Hip Hop artists around Dakar, Senegal's capital, this documentary mixes interviews, freestyles and commentary from journalists, artists and politicians. Senegalese society is seen on the brink of democratic change, where Hip Hop artists are one of the few groups not afraid of speaking out, despite real attempts at intimidation. Originally shot as a series of shorts distributed online, *African Underground: Democracy In Dakar* explores the boundaries of guerrilla-style film production and distribution.

Since the production of the film, there have been many developments in Senegal. Many opposition parties have boycotted parliamentary elections, many journalists have been arrested and newspapers that have voiced opposition have been shut down. Change is still occurring in Senegal and we hope that this film will help support the non-violent movement towards a more efficient democratic government.

Filmmaker Bios

Magee McIlvaine, Director

Magee was born in Canada and grew up between East Africa and Washington, D.C. While still in High School, Magee made his first film - a political documentary on the tiny kingdom of Swaziland in Southern Africa. Since then, Magee has increasingly focused his work on international politics and the use of music -- particularly Hip Hop -- as a political tool. Magee continued to make films throughout his time in college. In the past year, Magee co-founded Sol Productions, a non-profit film production company and together with his two film partners has filmed the presidential elections in Venezuela, Senegal and France. Together with Nomadic Wax and Trinity College, he co-founded the first ever International Hip Hop Festival and Conference and is currently working on a film about this groundbreaking event. Today, Magee is working on three additional documentaries.

Ben Herson, Director

Ben Herson is the founder and director of Nomadic Wax – a global Hip Hop record label and production company dedicated to recording, documenting and presenting Hip Hop and underground music from around the world. Herson is also a producer and musician. He has released over a dozen globally acclaimed albums and has recorded and produced numerous singles on compilations worldwide. Ben has also played the drums and percussion for numerous reggae legends, and has produced for Senegal's top MCs co-founding and spearheading the critically acclaimed African Underground series of African Hip Hop. In 2004, Herson also co-founded the Trinity International Hip Hop festival, the first free international Hip Hop festival in the United States. In 2007, building upon his work in Senegal, Herson developed a seven-part documentary series on youth, Hip Hop, and politics in West Africa, titled *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar*.

Chris Moore, Director

Chris Moore grew up in the tiny ski town of Holderness, NH. Chris co-founded Sol Productions with Magee and two fellow students. Since then, Chris has co-directed and co-produced three feature documentaries on three different continents. His first feature was *¿Puedo Hablar? May I Speak?*. A groundbreaking documentary on the hardcore politics of oil-rich Venezuela and its charismatic and controversial president Hugo Chavez, this film has toured universities across the US and Europe. Chris lectures on democracy and conflict resolution, and the role filmmaking can play in both of those areas. Chris continues to tour the world with *¿Puedo Hablar? May I Speak?* and has begun work on a fourth film based out of Cambodia.

Take Action

African Hip Hop (<http://www.africanhiphop.com/page.php?file=africamap.html>)

Follow the development of Hip Hop on the African continent by clicking through each of the countries on this interactive map. Learn how these artists are redefining this genre through their culture.

Afromix (<http://www.afromix.org/html/musique/pays/senegal/index.en.html>)

Search the database of Afromix.com to follow other artists in Senegal and the root of music throughout the African Diaspora.

Muslim Hip Hop (<http://www.muslimhiphop.com>)

Visit Muslim Hip Hop to explore this creative outlet for Muslim artists to express themselves in a halal (permissible) way. Seek dialogue and learn all that Islam has to share with the world through the universal language of music.

For more information about *African Underground: Hip Hop in Senegal* as well as about the rest of the films from the eighth annual Media That Matters Film Festival, visit www.mediathatmattersfest.org or contact us at festival@artsendengine.net.

