

Expectations of Feminism

The sun had barely begun to set at 9 p.m. on an August Saturday in Alby, a suburban neighborhood about forty-five minutes from central Stockholm.¹ Soultana, her male co-emcee Bawss, and their Danish deejay That Fucking Sara had finished their set an hour earlier. After seemingly endless miscommunications, they were polite following their performance: watching the next act from the sidelines, taking photos with Swedish teens, finding room in the adjacent youth center for an impromptu interview with someone from a world music nonprofit. But now they were tired, and ready to go back to the hotel.

Soultana sent me to ask whether the festival had the meal vouchers she expected for the next day. Our point person forced a smile when she saw me coming. “I’m so sorry,” she said. “All of tonight’s artists are free tomorrow. We have nothing planned for you.” Though Soultana and Bawss were at the hotel until Monday morning in order to attend the second day of the festival, no further meals were provided.

The staff member called the shuttle driver, and I relayed the news on the sidewalk in front of the youth center. Sara and I looked at each other, then at our friends. Both of us knew they had no more money. As the shuttle pulled up, Soultana ground her cigarette into the pavement and stomped over to the back door. “Shouldn’t we say goodbye?” I said to no one in particular.

“I don’t care,” shouted Soultana in English over her shoulder, in a voice piercing enough to reach the staff’s office on the second floor. “This is the worst festival I’ve ever been part of. Worse than Morocco,” she yelled. “I’m never coming back here.”

Soultana had performed at other international festivals before this 2015 trip, but this case highlights how little control she has over her labor conditions and representation before and during events. While she had previously told stories of confusion or disorganization at other performances, this event was exceptional.

Soultana's and Bawss's expectations of Sweden and Swedish culture made it even more disappointing. As Soultana noted years later, Sweden "is like the Moroccan dream" (personal communication [p.c.], July 2018), imagined as one of the best places to go precisely because it seemed so unlike Morocco. Like many Moroccans, both musicians strongly desired to experience the cleanliness, calmness, and affluence that people so frequently mentioned when chatting idly of emigration. Instead, the disorganization and claims of low funding that Soultana and Bawss encountered throughout the planning and execution of the festival named *This Is Alby* felt similar to Moroccan events. For years, Soultana had argued that sometimes one must sacrifice for a collective goal, performing for low or no pay at events that fell short of her ideals. After all that work, to go to a place so often imagined as a site of fairness, equality, and abundance and have it fail in all the same ways—it was deeply demoralizing.

Her refusal to say goodbye told me she was not only angry, but hurt. For my Moroccan interlocutors, even the most trivial social interactions ideally begin and end by greeting everyone present. I had absorbed this expectation so thoroughly that I experienced the dissonance of a norm being trampled as she yanked the shuttle van's door open. Without realizing it, I was also voicing another unexamined expectation: knowing we would not return the next day, I was suggesting we check on the organizers' feelings and make sure everyone felt appreciated before we left the festival grounds. Soultana was also refusing to perform the caring labor that, as women, she and I would routinely do in our home contexts. ("Shouldn't we?" I had asked.)² After all, "saying goodbye" would doubtlessly have included thanking our hosts and appearing grateful for the opportunity to perform.

This chapter discusses Soultana's reactions to both her unmet expectations and her instrumentalization. *This Is Alby* featured Swedish and foreign performers of African, North African, and Latin American descent to reflect the backgrounds of first- and second-generation immigrants in the neighborhood. While this made Moroccans an attractive choice, the way the festival was advertised, how its volunteers communicated, and how it did and did not anticipate or respond to their musical and personal needs gave Soultana and Bawss the impression that it was their difference that mattered, not their performance. As Soultana remarked when comparing *This Is Alby* to a previous event, "[The organizers in Copenhagen] were so professional, and my program was not just the show . . . I did a lot of workshops too. It was so good, for real. And I felt [that] I'm an artist" (p.c., August 10, 2018).

This chapter explores such events as part of a transnational market for representations of female Muslim resistance to patriarchy or, less often, Islamophobia. I argue that Soultana and other artists are trapped within interlocking expectations, facing assumptions that mirror and reinforce each other. Like many artists from the SWANA region, Soultana's international appearances are often valued

not for their quality, but for the layers of difference her performances index for her audiences. Soultana and other female Muslim artists alternately contend with and benefit from the widespread assumption that Muslim women are more oppressed than non-Muslim women. In addition to her observation that she is seen, as she puts it, “as a case”—as standing in for Muslim women—I note that Soultana and her female collaborators are expected, and sometimes expect themselves, to deal with different treatment, conditions, or wages than their male colleagues. They are called upon to perform caring labor not only for their audiences, who desire to see Muslim women of color refute their own clichés, but for each other when they are frustrated by their work experiences. Like a hall of funhouse mirrors, Soultana must navigate a career generated through and enclosed within this dynamic.

This chapter traces Soultana’s path in relationship to this market for Muslim women’s resistance since 2010, when her career-defining song “Sawt Nssa (Voice of a Woman)” was released. I discuss two events among several past and current projects to describe how this market leads well-intentioned individuals to reproduce assumptions about Muslim women. In both events, the participants identify encouraging interactions between different groups as an important political and cultural goal. Yet in both cases, stereotypes are tolerated or evoked to battle the perceived presence of other stereotypes.

In one example, as noted above, Soultana grappled with her own expectations of a performance and the opportunities it might afford. In the second, she joined a team of women musicians in a trans-Saharan initiative designed to leverage the goals and beliefs of international funders. Together, these examples demonstrate how demand for products of this market stretches across diplomatic, nonprofit, and commercial domains. In both cases, artists cope with the pressures and contradictions of a global north-centered culture industry through sound during rehearsal and performance.

In support of this argument, I convey ways Soultana and I have benefited each other’s careers by making myself quite visible throughout this chapter. Reflecting on the familiar dance of long-term ethnographers with our subjects, in which we wonder how our interlocutors’ perceptions of us shape the information we receive and how our presence shapes their thoughts in turn, has attuned me to that same dynamic in these examples. Soultana has been more than my most involved research participant. Her role has taught me what ethnographers hope to express when they replace “informant” with “interlocutor.” She has listened to, riffed on, and challenged many of the arguments in this book and this chapter. Like a concerned parent, she assumes responsibility for me even when she gains nothing by doing so. Over time she has been a host, a guide, a negotiator, an advisor, a translator of meaning as well as language, a co-author, a co-presenter. I have been these for her as well, sometimes at the same moment. At the same time, whether I like it or not, my research contributes to the market in which her public persona

is valued. While summarizing this as “friends” would obscure more than it reveals about her support for my research, she is nonetheless a dear friend.

THE MAKING OF A “FEMCEE”

As a member of Casablanca’s first wave, Soultana has shaped and been shaped by the ideals described in previous chapters. Like other emcees, her work expresses practitioners’ desired relationship between citizens’ mentalities (*‘aqliyyat*) and the state’s policies by critiquing each, often in the same song. In late 2009, she released her most influential song, “Sawt Nssa (Voice of a Woman).” A daring first-person characterization of a repentant young woman, “Sawt Nssa” simultaneously critiques the conditions driving women to prostitution and the hypocrisy of men who judge them (Salois 2014a).

In Morocco, the song reached an unprecedented level of success for its subject matter, catapulting Soultana into international networks that shared an interest in discovering, promoting, and exhibiting expressions of Arab female resistance. With each new opportunity, she attempted to foreground women’s experiences as one expression of the economic and political challenges facing all nonelite Moroccans, just as the song itself had done. Over time, largely without her knowledge or consent, she was depicted as fighting for women’s rights rather than for Moroccans’. She was also valued more for her ascribed activist identity—which rested on being a woman in two patriarchies, Morocco and hip hop—than as a musician. The more people celebrated this reputation, the less performance organizers and media personnel attended to her and her music.

“Sawt Nssa” has reached more people in more ways than Soultana’s previous or subsequent work. It attracted the attention of the US Embassy in Rabat almost immediately after its debut on Morocco’s privately owned Hit Radio. In spring 2010, I accompanied Soultana to an interview with the cultural affairs officer at the embassy. As we chatted about her family, her introduction to hip hop, and her love of Aretha Franklin and Tupac Shakur, neither she nor I realized the cultural affairs department was considering nominating her for the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) that year.

In April and May 2011, she visited Atlanta, Los Angeles, and New York alongside SWANA musicians and radio hosts on the IVLP. Her trip ended with a performance at Joe’s Pub in New York as part of the French Institute and Alliance Française’s World Nomads festival. The festival’s press booklet neatly summarized Soultana’s appeal: “Soultana is ‘old school,’ in that she is particularly known for rapping about social issues rather than material acquisition and fame. Her songs focus on women’s issues and the challenges faced by her generation, particularly poverty, violence, and cultural matters” (FI:AF 2011: 6). Audiences uninterested in hip hop music, or who assumed all hip hop was about material acquisition, could

find justification for their attendance in this description. Surrounded on the World Nomads program by some of Morocco's best-known artists and cultural brokers, including Mahi Binebine, Mahmoud Guinia, Abdellah Taïa, André Azoulay, and Faouzi Skali, Soultana was one of a handful of women and the only musician performing "Western" popular music in the monthlong festival.

In New York, the show *MTV Iggy* shot a video for "Sawt Nssa" during the World Nomads festival. It was released in August 2011, shortly after *Afropop Worldwide* broadcast its interview with Soultana from the same trip (Baird 2011). *Afropop's* interview focused on Soultana's self-described struggles to gain acceptance as a female performer. In the next few years, as more Anglophone outlets reported on Soultana and her song—now thematized as representative of her entire output—she performed in several European cities, was profiled on Public Radio International's *The World* (Stuckey 2013), appeared on production company Nomadic Wax's compilation *World Hip Hop Women: From the Sound Up* (2013), and was featured in a 2014 German documentary.

International interest in "Sawt Nssa" was heightened by the Arab Spring and the emergence of Morocco's February 20 reform movement, which organized weekly marches in Moroccan cities every Sunday through the end of 2011 (Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeghlally 2012). The blog *Revolutionary Arab Rap* included her in a list of "female rappers," linking to her Anglophone media coverage and translating "Sawt Nssa."³ During the same period, Moroccan festivals that had provided artists' best opportunities for paid performance programmed less or no hip hop.⁴

Both diplomatic practitioners and festival organizers sought Soultana out during this period. Over time, presentations of her narrowed, focusing less on her artistic ability or successes and more on "Sawt Nssa" as activism. Within the United States, public diplomacy practitioners, pundits, and scholars had encouraged the use of hip hop as a tool in Muslim-majority countries since the mid-2000s (Aidi 2014; Salois 2014b). In March 2012, Soultana was invited to reflect on her experiences with the IVLP, alongside Toni Blackman, the first hip hop artist to be a US cultural envoy, at a conference hosted by George Washington University (Jeffers 2012). At Oslo's Mela festival in 2012, the international advocacy group Freemuse quoted her support during a roundtable with their artists of the year, Ramy Essam (from Egypt) and Ferhat Tunç (from Turkey).

The wave of interest in Muslim artists immediately after the early events of the Arab Spring extended to hip hop scholars, who simultaneously critique and participate in discourses presuming hip hop's exceptional capacity to effect change. In 2013, two American Studies scholars hosted a multiday conference in Hanover on the theme of "Hip Hop and Social and Political Empowerment." Funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung, the conference invited twenty-five scholars and five practitioners. The invited artists also spoke during the conference and performed a closing concert at the nearby youth house (*Haus der Jugend*).

Each performer had been suggested by a conference attendee. In discussions with one of the organizers, I made what I thought were persuasive arguments: “If you could take just one artist to represent Morocco or North Africa, I would recommend Soultana . . . she is committed to incorporating a woman’s perspective into her critical output, has a strong command of English, and already has experience speaking about her work with scholars and media (and the US State Department)” (email, February 16, 2012). All of the invited performers had similar experiences in overlapping diplomatic and academic domains.

Soultana’s conference talk shared stories of striving to be taken seriously by Moroccan gatekeepers both as a woman and as a popular musician. She read from a piece originally published at *World Hip Hop Market*, a home for news on international hip hop artists that was, at the time, promoting the compilation album on which Soultana appeared in 2013:

A short time before the festival, the organizers said they wanted to confirm the details, asked that I go and see one of them at his house before the festival. It was late at night, around 10 p.m., the night I went over. . . . When I arrived, I realized that the location was remote and far from where I lived. I met the man in question outside and he invited me inside to “see” his place. When I walked in, there were two other girls and two other men—we were three men and three women—and it was at that moment [I realized] what I had walked into. The man wanted me, Soultana, to “play with him” in order to confirm a place as a performer in this festival (Soultana 2012).

As conference-goers, we were, of course, saddened and angered by this story. We sought to contextualize it within our various expertise in gender studies, critical race theory, political economy, or ethnographic experience in music markets across the globe. Soultana’s experience confirmed something we already knew: while women artists face specific kinds of violence during their careers, those risks are sometimes heightened by prevailing local attitudes around gender roles and the role of women in public life. By including this anecdote in her public persona, Soultana helped make routine sexual harassment visible and inspired others with her refusal to feel shame for someone else’s actions.

Soultana’s conference attendance, and scholars’ responses to her, help elucidate how this market for representations of resistance works. Without recognizing it this way at the time, I accepted the demand driving that market when I suggested Soultana to one of the conference organizers, Heike Raphael-Hernandez. She and her co-organizer Eva Kimminich, in turn, promoted Soultana to the Volkswagen Stiftung when they sought sponsorship. During her panel, Soultana read aloud an interview she had given several months before, performing a live version of the established narrative about herself. Each of us was sincere in our desires, whether that was to support an independent artist, to share stories of injustice, or to make an impact on hip hop scholarship or the German public. We were already aware

of the potential for tokenization: I phrased Soultana's work as "a woman's perspective" within a "critical output," and Raphael-Hernandez emphasized that Soultana's contribution was valuable for her musical experience, not simply because of her gendered trauma. Collectively, we contributed to this market through, not despite, our sincerity, simultaneously disseminating and consuming a true story that had already been packaged as female resistance to gendered Muslim violence.

In 2014, the Danish Center for Research on Women and Gender (known as KVINFO) hosted a weekend event for International Women's Day. Sponsored by the ministry of foreign affairs' Danish-Arab Partnership Program, KVINFO invited Soultana and her male collaborator Bawss to hold workshops with children and to perform at the Royal Library in Copenhagen. KVINFO's press stressed the two emcees' commitment to gender equality, only briefly mentioning other issues discussed in their songs. "Although her lyrics are provocative, she uses her raps to deal with women's lack of rights and the men's moral double standards," an unnamed author summarizes (KVINFO 2014).

Unlike the 2011 World Nomads blurb, which describes Soultana addressing interrelated political issues, here her role as a woman in a man's world is depicted as her only contribution. The piece reinforces expectations that Arab and/or Muslim patriarchy be invoked to justify women's participation: "To have got to where she is today, she has not only had to succeed in breaking into the male-dominated hip hop milieu. She has also had to break away from the traditional role of women in Morocco's conservative, Muslim society, where it is expected that . . . even young women, adopt the role of housewife" (KVINFO 2014). It also calls her, incorrectly, "the only female rapper in Morocco" and avoids mentioning her religious practice, education, reception, or other factors that might complicate presenting her as a presumed secular feminist. These tactics promote reading Soultana as exceptional, Moroccan patriarchy as uniquely virulent, and Danish intervention as appropriate.

Soultana and Bawss respond eloquently throughout the interview. "One of the things I want . . . is to tell women that they are free and that they can do whatever they want with their lives," Soultana is quoted as saying.

Bawss reasons that "women in Morocco do have the right to demonstrate for better rights, but they don't do it. They also have the right to demand their rights, but they don't do this either. Why not? It's because nobody is telling them that they can actually do these things" (KVINFO 2014).

Bawss's quote advocates for precisely the kind of activism the Danish-Arab Partnership Program supports. DAPP grantees' "projects and activities concerning equality" are "specifically aimed to promote the social, economic, and political participation of women, and focus on legislation to prevent child marriages and violence against women."⁵ The agency adopts a colonialist perspective as both moral judge and guarantor of market integration, arguing that "the Middle East and North Africa are ranked as . . . farthest away from equality between the sexes,

and the absence of equality is . . . a key barrier to human and economic development in the region.”⁶ Bawss’s suggestion, that Moroccan women simply do not yet know that the constitution guarantees them equal rights, aligns with DAPP’s construction of the problem as one of participation. His proposed actions, physical protest (“demonstration”) or other kinds of calls (“demand”), also suggest three of DAPP’s four grantmaking domains (human rights, gender equality, media, and labor markets and labor rights) (KVINFO 2014).

I am not suggesting that Bawss or Soultana were misquoted or that they were familiar with DAPP before the interview. Instead, their speech highlights how well they understood the goals and perspectives of their hosts. As guests and employees, both musicians desired to help meet those goals. “Some women asked [Bawss] and he said I support Soultana for what she’s doing and . . . we can talk about the same issues in both female and male side,” recalled Soultana when I asked her about this event and article.

According to Soultana, as the more experienced of the two, she counseled him on what to expect from journalists. “So you knew they would ask him what he thought about female hip hop artists and gender and stuff?” I asked.

“Yes for sure. It’s the 8[th] of March [International Women’s Day]. So sure they will ask him about how it looks working with a female rapper,” she responded (p.c., August 10, 2018).

As DAPP’s Copenhagen event demonstrates, after the initial demand for Arab Spring–inspired programming receded, Soultana’s international invitations shifted further toward expressing an enduring desire to display women who break global north stereotypes about Muslim gender relations. Live performances by Soultana and women in similar positions meet a demand for counterexamples of outspoken Muslim women while also serving to express event organizers’ and audiences’ openness and tolerance to each other. Such events perpetuate parallel discourses about Muslim others in Europe, but also about uneducated non-Muslim Europeans who might harbor anti-Muslim views. Responses to the assumptions perceived to be held by non-Muslims about Muslims, and by Muslims about their own religious strictures, tell audiences that these assumptions still exist. By addressing these twin assumptions, events such as KVINFO’s or *This Is Alby* instrumentalize Muslim female musicians in a struggle over what values will be seen as acceptable in the places these women perform.

THIS IS ALBY

Press coverage of high-profile moments in Soultana’s international career allows smaller initiatives to reproduce the discourse that solidified around her between 2011 and 2014. The volunteers behind *This Is Alby* sought to “program artists from the Middle East and Northern Africa and combine that [with] Swedish artists. We came over Soultana[’]s name while searching on the internet,” recalled her contact

Josefin, a cultural producer in Stockholm who invited the festival's international artists in 2015 (email, Stockholm–DC, August 7, 2018).⁷

In addition to municipal support, funding came from the European Cultural Foundation, a grantmaking office of the European Union, through its program Connected Action for the Commons. An Alby-based nonprofit arts incubator known as Subtopia was a Connected Action “hub” in 2015.⁸ Subtopia created This Is Alby as an alternative to festivals like We Are Sthlm, which draw people into the center of Stockholm and promote, as they see it, a unitary Swedish identity (Duregård 2016). Each edition of This Is Alby is collaboratively organized by young volunteers, who not only choose artists to invite, but learn to handle logistics, publicity, and other important jobs.

The 2015 edition was the first held in conjunction with the municipality of Botkyrka and its existing summer festival, Vi är Botkyrka (We Are Botkyrka) (Duregård 2016). The team of mostly young women from ages thirty to twenty, mostly from immigrant families, who volunteered for This Is Alby were encouraged to program artists who reflected their vision of a multicultural Sweden (Josefin email, August 7, 2018). According to the cultural affairs secretary of Botkyrka, Josefin and a handful of other adults were hired by Botkyrka's Culture and Recreation Office to support the fifteen young volunteers (Rynell and Subtopia 2016).

Both the Botkyrka Culture and Recreation Office and Subtopia sought to celebrate Alby's multiethnic community. Alby shares with similar Swedish suburbs a reputation for high concentrations of immigrants and above-average poverty and crime. The apartment towers that shaded the festival stage had been built during the Miljonprogrammet (Million Program), a state affordable housing initiative, in the late 1960s. As Ryan Skinner notes, steadily increasing flows of European and nonwhite migrants arrived in Sweden starting in the 1960s, leading to a robust discourse about “the perceived novelty of an increasingly heterogenous . . . Swedish society” (2019: 3). In Botkyrka municipality, 60.5 percent of residents are considered “with foreign background” (*har utländsk bakgrund*), meaning they were born in a foreign country or were born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents (Botkyrka Kommun and Statistics Sweden).⁹

Alby is best known in European hip hop circles as the home of the Latin Kings, one of the earliest Swedish-language groups in the early 1990s, whose members are of Chilean and Venezuelan descent (DJ Sara, email, October 11, 2018). Benjamin Teitelbaum notes that the separate group Albys Kungar (Kings of Alby), which includes immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, “gained attention in nationalist circles by crudely insulting ethnic Swedes in their songs.” In 2007, the “white nationalist” rapper Juice released a diss track aimed at these groups (Teitelbaum 2017: 67). In contrast, the international hip hop artists programmed at the 2015 This Is Alby are presented as activists who avoid glamorizing violence.

The program therefore addressed not only anti-immigrant but anti-hip hop sentiment among Swedish audiences.

The mostly Anglophone narrative about Soultana that the volunteers found online suited This Is Alby's promotional goals. Their Facebook advertisements reproduced it in two sentences: "The rapper MC Soultana . . . is named as Morocco's first female rapper and is one of few women in the hip hop scene in Morocco. Her texts focus on women's rights and the challenges facing women in North African countries."¹⁰ The week before the festival, the English-language website Stocktown highlighted the international artists who would perform that year—Soultana, the Sudanese emcee Emmanuel Jal, and Palestinian British emcee Shadia Mansour. The author opened with the national stakes of the suburban festival: "By inviting artists that have fought for people's freedom of speech and expression, Botkyrka is showing Sweden—and the artists' native countries—that they support the fight that these people have had to endure. Furthermore, they stand [as an] example for some of Sweden's other municipalities who need to work on embracing diversity and multiculturalism" (Widman 2015). The article offers a few lines about each artist; Soultana's section links to the 2012 *World Hip Hop Market* interview and asserts that "she's rapping about why she fights to make the female voice heard" (Widman 2015).

The post ends not with an invitation to enjoy the music, but to enjoy a socially appropriate response to the concert: "This is how you celebrate multicultural citizenship. If you are in Sweden on the 22th August, come and get inspired by these awesome brave artists" (Widman 2015). Like most descriptions of Soultana provided by international events, none of the advertising I found for This Is Alby mentioned musical artistry or promised an entertaining evening.

Online narratives about Soultana not only shaped how This Is Alby presented her, but how festival staff interacted with her. Josefin was Soultana's only contact with the organizers, from their first email exchange in early June 2015 to her arrival on August 21. Throughout their preparations for the trip, Soultana and Bawss received information they did not know how to interpret. Josefin's initial email in June 2015 was addressed to Soultana's unnamed manager. It described the festival as "a gig in Stockholm . . . an outdoor festival called Urban Voices with various Swedish and international artists." To help secure Swedish visas, the head of culture at the Botkyrka municipality provided a letter of invitation, writing, "We will also cater for their accommodation in Stockholm, Sweden," for the duration of their stay (Kasapi, email, June 5, 2015). Josefin had also asked for a "technical rider," a document specifying their needs to be appended to their contract. Soultana had never heard the term before and thought it referred to musicians' preferences for microphones and other equipment. When we discussed this after the fact, she mentioned that she found it strange to be given control of decisions she placed in the sound technicians' domain.

During their arrangements, Soultana asked to bring in DJ That Fucking Sara from Berlin. In order for her to accompany them, Soultana, Bawss, and Josefin agreed that Sara's travel would be covered out of the emcees' fee. Sara, in turn, requested turntables and a monitor be provided by the festival (Sara, email, October 10, 2018).

I booked my own flight and arrived separately to Stockholm on August 21, the day before the event.¹¹ When I reached the hotel in Alby, about forty-five minutes southwest of Stockholm, the musicians were concerned. "This hotel is so far," Soultana kept repeating. Until they were picked up at the airport, they had not realized that Alby was a suburb rather than a neighborhood within Stockholm.

The afternoon prior to their performance, I started to understand the stakes of the trip. Soultana, Bawss, and Sara planned to rehearse from 1 to 5 p.m. In the morning, we spent several hours at the mall adjacent to the hotel. We flipped through racks of clearance T-shirts and jerseys, scanned caps and jackets for American sports logos, and prowled the aisles of a makeup emporium, scouting for foundation close to Soultana's skin tone that would withstand the heat of stage lighting. Bringing home international fashions was less important than ensuring the right look for the evening. Knowing how much they would be photographed and videotaped, Soultana and Bawss hunted for the most authenticating apparel available on their budgets.

The tension I felt from Soultana in particular increased throughout rehearsal. We gathered around the coffee table in Sara's hotel room to play tracks the two emcees had written over the past year. Many were composed by Soultana's younger brother, a beatmaker known as Mobezy, and ranged from the ponderous electric piano of "Sawt Nssa" to denser styles inspired by electronic dance music. Some had already been recorded and released on YouTube, but some had not yet been performed live. In each, both emcees supported each other through their respective verses, gesturing on stressed beats and echoing each other's punchlines.

While Sara listened and offered advice on the set list, Bawss focused on rehearsing his entrances, and Soultana expressed her anxiety by joking through the material she knew best. "'Arfti 'Sawt Nssa'? (You know 'Sawt Nssa'?)" she exclaimed to no one in particular as Bawss cued it up, rehearsing her onstage patter. "My solo—it's about one year I haven't . . ." she said to Sara, switching to English and immediately trailing off as she began to listen to the intro.

"You know it," I said from behind my camera.

"I know it because . . . I feel it," she said, with an exaggerated sigh. I suggested they follow this slow track with an upbeat finale. Soultana saw me speak, but did not listen, focused in on her cue. It was Bawss who nailed the pickup to the downbeat, reciting the first line perfectly in time.

By the first chorus, Soultana was trying to lighten her own mood. "Sawt nssa, li 'aliha rani nadi (Voice of a woman, it's to her that I'm calling)," she shouted over her own voice on the chorus. "Sawt lbnat, yda' yfuq ar-rasi (Voice of girls, pretend

my head is awake)," she rapped over the second line, rewriting the original to comment on her forgetfulness. I laughed, and she fell toward me across the hotel bed, reaching out to slap my hand the way Moroccans often do when they delight in their own joke. Throughout the verses, I watched her rely on muscle memory rather than think about her text. Each time she missed the second half of a couplet, Bawss seamlessly filled in, prompting her to recover the end of the line.

During the second chorus, Soultana launched into a fake ballad. Shoulders lifted, palm upturned, eyes squinting in feigned passion, she parodied contemporary Arabic singers, dragging a nasal tone through soupy slides up to each pitch. She abandoned the rest of the chorus as we all giggled, telling Sara in English, "One day I had a performance, and a girl from the organization told me 'I really love this song, and I want to sing R & B on the chorus.' And she was singing like this and I really hate myself," she said with a weary smile. She ran through the last verse, missing the final line, then aped the terrible R & B vocalist again. Sara burst out laughing, while Bawss gave his partner a tepid look. "She was singing like this and I had to stop her, but I couldn't," Soultana protested, shrugging theatrically.

I tried not to laugh along as I filmed. While everyone found the jokes funny, we also knew we were in this hotel room because of "Sawt Nssa." The day before we flew to Stockholm, Soultana and I had discussed her aging parents. Her father's diabetes was causing painful complications, but they could not afford his insulin prescription on a retired police officer's pension. International performances seemed prestigious to her Moroccan colleagues, but the fees varied widely, and one or two a year could hardly support both her and her parents. Sometimes she considered abandoning hip hop and collaborating on pop songs with Mobeezy. They could at least perform for rich kids a few times a year, maybe write for TV commercials. Many encouraged her to emigrate and send money home; unlike other Moroccans, she could give a concert and simply not show up for her return flight. But she felt that critiquing Moroccan society from abroad would make no impact. "If in a few years you see me and I have given up all my *principes* and I am just getting money, you will know it's because of my parents," she said that day, staring into her milky coffee.

The undercurrent of long-term stress seemed to compound the anxiety of preparing for performance, of meeting expectations while hoping for an artistically rewarding experience. "Sawt Nssa" was not just her best-known song; it was her career. I had no fear she would forget the lyrics at the concert. Instead, I heard her coping with the gulf between how she felt and how she was expected to feel on stage.

If Soultana and Bawss felt they had to represent Moroccans in the best possible light, they also had high expectations for their first Swedish event. Picked up at promptly 5:30 p.m. in the hotel lobby, we arrived twenty minutes later at the youth center that would serve as the artists' green room.

The cheery, orange-accented lobby offered bowls of pretzel sticks and bottles of water. For dinner, volunteers pointed us to the local booths selling food on the other side of the stage. Sara and I shrugged this off, but the emcees found it surprising. Many Moroccan events paid little or nothing, but they included sandwiches or substantial meals for their performers. Soultana claimed that organizers “always” provided hospitality at her other international gigs. The lack of food exacerbated worries that This Is Alby might be smaller, and less well-funded, than they had assumed.

The youth center and its surrounding park were just a few meters from the stage, which was set up in the plaza of the Alby Centrum T-bana subway stop. Josefin and volunteers met us in the lobby and escorted us down to the stage for sound check. Soultana, Bawss, and Sara trooped up the steps to the stage while I lingered in front of it. In a moment, Josefin came to find me. “Can you please talk to Soultana?” she asked, steering my elbow toward the stage entrance.

I followed her behind the stage to where the musicians were clustered. There was no equipment at the deejay’s deck, and Soultana was demanding to know why the vinyl turntables Sara had requested were not there. Josefin explained, gently, that she had never received a technical rider with a list of requirements like these. In any case, anyone who wanted to perform with turntables had to bring their own. Sara responded that she rarely traveled with her own turntables, as they were likely to be damaged in transit, and that professionals expected to perform on house equipment at most events. “I’m sorry. It is a very small festival,” repeated Josefin.

Back at the youth center, cradling plastic cups of coffee, the artists discussed how to change their set. In rehearsal, they had planned out how Sara would interact with the emcees. Most of the songs include pre-chorus sections before the final chorus and outro. These moments had little or no new musical material; they were designed for a deejay to show off her technique and energize the crowd. Now, not only would those be empty, but Sara would not even be able to mix from one song into the next. This would force unexpected pauses within and between each song and slow down the energy of the set. Soultana and Bawss sketched out who would address the crowd after each song, glossing the topic of the next piece or asking for audience participation.

Later, we returned to the front of the plaza, facing the stage. I turned away from filming the gathering crowd, filled with clusters of teens and parents with small children, to find Soultana staring at the event posters lining the security fence in front of the stage. “Why is my name not there?” she said, pointing to the list of performers on the poster. “Can you take a picture of that?” said Bawss, gesturing to my camera. Again Josefin apologized, noting that the poster was designed by youth volunteers and pointing out another version that did include Soultana.

In their hours at the festival that evening, the three musicians spent much of their energy encouraging each other. Soultana in particular poured energy into

conveying a joyous atmosphere during the performance. As the more experienced emcee, she had evolved strategies to engage unfamiliar listeners that she rarely used with Moroccan audiences. Over the intro to “LBareh O LYoum (Yesterday and Today),” she asked the crowd, “Do you know how to dance?” She did a little two-step across the stage, bending her knees but keeping her hips and upper body straight, swinging her arms and snapping her fingers in the air. “Just a little bit, just move,” she coaxed, eyebrows raised, looking toward some stone-faced teenagers behind me.

During the second verse, the emcees traded couplets, one describing Morocco “yesterday” followed by the other’s comparison with “today.” Bawss planted his feet and pointed forward, emphasizing stressed syllables with his outstretched hand, but Soultana was constantly in motion. She stepped forward with each of her lines, bending at the waist as if to get closer to her listeners. She also gave focus to Bawss throughout, gesturing to him in time with his entrances while still making eye contact with the audience. During the final verse, Soultana walked up to Bawss and stood eye to eye, visibly encouraging him by smiling and filling in the silences after each of his lines.

The end of “LBareh O LYoum” was constructed to allow for seamless transition into another song, with eight “empty” pre-chorus measures followed by two repetitions of the chorus. After reciting one chorus along with the recording, Soultana stepped beyond the stage monitors for the final eight measures. Surrounded by an attentive but immobile audience, grinning from ear to ear, she shouted, “Dance with me!” Waving her free arm over her head, she chanted, “To the right, to the left! To the right, to the left!” to the beat. Behind her laptop, Sara waved in time, laughing aloud when she caught Soultana’s eye.

Dancing, smiling, and standing shoulder to shoulder with Bawss all displayed a physicality that Soultana would avoid in front of a Moroccan audience. Home hip hop audiences might read these moves as insufficiently focused on her narrative, while some Moroccans would see them as overly feminine, even sexualized. However, in a context where few listeners would understand her lyrics, Soultana sought to engage audiences musically through her own body. Instead of explaining the text of “LBareh O LYoum,” she began by drawing attention to its danceability—the sung chorus, the moderate tempo, and the handclaps on every beat. Even this restrained physical vocabulary departed from her habitual expressions, grounded in masculine comportment from her favorite ’90s hip hop and her ingrained discomfort with appearing to emphasize her femininity in public. By contrast, Bawss made no similar attempts to physically engage the audience.

After the set, Soultana’s caring labor intensified as she met with fans. The group walked offstage into a small crowd of excited audience members waiting at the security fence. The adult women and teenage volunteers included Bawss in their photos, but they shared personal stories and words of encouragement with Soultana. After all of the other audience members had spoken to the musicians, a blond

woman with an Australian accent introduced herself, saying she produced videos for a nonprofit. Would Soultana do a short interview? Yes, of course. As a group, we walked back toward the youth center and found an empty room.

We sat on the floor. Sara and Bawss settled on either side of Soultana while the interviewer tested her camera. All three stared straight ahead in silence for a moment. It was the first time they had rested since leaving the hotel that afternoon.

The interviewer introduced Soultana to her work. "I make videos of small grassroots activists who lift up their voices, and uh, I wanted an interview with you, because you represent women in Morocco." She gave a short laugh, as if to note how self-evident that was. "So if you start off, just, who you are, where you come from . . . your ensemble when you first started, was the first all-women—?"

Soultana had begun to snifle. "Yeah. It was the first group, Tigresse Flow."

"Okay, if you start with that, just as an introduction."

Soultana looked over at me, filming from the corner, and rubbed at her nose. She murmured "'Andk l-barid (I have a cold)" as the interviewer framed the shot. Sara and I made noises of concern. "Yeah," responded Soultana.

"Okay," said the interviewer into her viewfinder, as if she was about to say more. We all fell silent.

When the woman was ready, Soultana began: "Hi, I'm Youssra Oukaf, my artistic name is Soultana. Uh, this is Bawss, and here is DJ Sara. Uh, I'm the first female rapper in Morocco, and uh—I got a . . ."

"And she has a cold," Sara jumped in with a grin, as Soultana sniffed and pointed at her nose.

"So I'm the first female rapper in Morocco, and I started by creating the first female group, Tigresse Flow. We won a lot of prizes of national competitions. And uh, after that I became solo, a solo artist. And uh, I released a song . . . It was 'Sawt Nssa,' 'Women's Voice.' And now I'm working with Bawss in the first female and male album about the politic [*sic*] and social issues in Morocco. That's it." She smiled, followed by another sniff.

The interviewer looked up from her viewfinder and smiled. "So, being a voice of women in Morocco, what is the response that you get?"

Soultana displayed a practiced ease with such questions. Listening to the follow-up, it occurred to me that when Soultana translated the title of "Sawt Nssa," people might assume she was describing herself as the "women's voice." But during the chorus, instead of claiming that voice for herself, she tries to speak it into being: "Women's voice, I'm calling to it / The girls' voices which are lost in my country / The voice of she who wants to speak / The voice of everyone who wants a sign, a door to repentance."¹²

By combining the singular woman in one line with many women in the next, Soultana moves from personal realization to potentially political action. Her text,

and her typical live performance, implicate comprehending listeners as a responsive and responsible public. Without this experience of the song, or this knowledge of the text, interviews like this one placed Soultana back at the center of the narrative she tried to construct with “Sawt Nssa,” replacing her analysis of the problem and its victims with an image of the courageous analyst.

The woman’s additional questions did offer Soultana the opportunity to discuss other issues. But only she was asked questions, and only about hip hop “as a vehicle of social change.” At no point did she offer to pause the interview so that Soultana could blow her nose, or simply rest. While she came away with her interviewer’s contact information, as in many similar interactions, Soultana never learned whether or how this interview was used.

After the interview, the musicians returned to the plaza with me to watch Shadia Mansour perform. A steady stream of young people greeted them at the edge of the audience. In my last photos of the night, Soultana is chatting with a young woman wearing a pink volunteer’s hoodie and matching badge. She tells Soultana that one of her parents is Moroccan, and she speaks a few words of Derija. Someone gives Soultana a T-shirt with the festival logo, and she puts it on over her jersey and wraps her arm around the volunteer’s shoulders for photos. As we walked away, Soultana relayed what her new fan said: she was so excited for this performance, because before discovering Soultana she had no idea women in Morocco were allowed to rap.

By themselves, each of these interactions was small. Collectively, they seemed to contradict the festival’s mission. Back at the hotel that night, Soultana did not accept my argument that a small-town festival simply did not have the resources to do everything she expected. If they weren’t going to treat artists appropriately, she responded, why bring them at all? In English, she struggled to explain that although individuals might not mean to offend, their attitudes toward her and Bawss were clear. “Those things are like—each thing, it’s *there*,” she said, landing on the word as if dropping a weight into her lap. “There is no mistake. Do you see?”

Festivals like *This Is Alby*, designed to counter existing narratives about immigrants for both residents and other Swedes, are increasingly common in the suburbs of Sweden’s largest cities.¹³ I have no reason to believe this event was anything but effective at promoting local progressive politics. Both the adult and teenage organizers were excited about showcasing what they believed Soultana stood for. Like the young volunteer excited to meet Soultana after the performance, several audience members were clear about how meaningful it was that a local festival reflected parts of their backgrounds as racialized residents in Sweden.

At the same time, Soultana’s instrumentalization is central to that programming’s effectiveness. Demand for performances like hers exists precisely because discourses on patriarchy and censorship in Arabo-Muslim culture are already so persuasive. She may be reduced to her music, which is reduced again to activism,



FIGURE 8. Soultana posing with a festival volunteer and fan after her performance, Alby, Botkyrka, Sweden, 2015. Photo by author.

but her live performance cannot be reduced to those discourses. Instead, Soultana's work and, eventually, her person are metonyms for the coming victory of "Western" values in places seen as illiberal. Her work must continue to be seen as rare, and as synonymous with her person, for her to be worth bringing to perform, for her position to be worth celebrating. Though she is asked to rap wherever she appears, she continues to be inaudible, because her texts and contexts are rarely understood outside of her home hip hop community. As both a musician trying to make a living through performance and someone willing to identify as an activist, Soultana is not inherently opposed to being understood as a symbol or a model. However, this event accidentally dehumanized her as it leveraged her reputation.

In retrospect, all parties had assumed we understood each other and that nothing needed to be questioned or made explicit. Instead, Soultana and Bawss were expected to know the customs and competencies of the festival rather than

the other way around. The festival celebrated Alby's self-identification as welcoming and multicultural yet it did not consider whether international artists had different needs or norms. Soultana's expectations about food were particularly revealing. The language of their invitation from Botkyrka municipality, as well as Soultana's prior experiences, left her confident they would not pay for their own meals.¹⁴ The Moroccan musicians perceived that the organizers did not realize how expensive Swedish goods were for them—an ignorance that expressed their immense privilege. Beyond this, Moroccan hosts of every socioeconomic level often expend significant money, time, and energy on hospitality. Since their physical well-being was not ensured, it seemed Soultana and Bawss were not welcome as guests.¹⁵

In addition, whether turntables had been agreed upon or not was more important than it might appear. The trio turned the loss of the momentum Sara's deejaying would have provided into further opportunities to interact with their audience. Building a successful performance despite this issue was vital, because audience members could not be expected to know why Soultana lacked turntables while other musicians did not. Appearing poor and amateurish could feed the exoticism they constantly sought to transcend, especially when they could not control the potentially endless recirculation of photos and videos from the concert.

Moments before they took the stage that night, Sara gave the two emcees a pep talk. She reminded them of all the children gathered in front of the stage and encouraged them to focus on giving those kids a great show. *They look like us*, she did not add. Years later, Soultana described the experience to Yoriyas, a dancer and photographer whose accolades frequently take him to Europe. "I saw that all the immigrants lived in just one neighborhood. And the festival [performers were] just people who looked like them. They didn't bring them to the center of Stockholm. They brought them to a suburb," she explained (p.c., July 5, 2018). Her experience at This Is Alby shaped her understanding of her audience as victims of reduced integration and mobility, irrevocably changing her vision of Sweden as a welcoming destination for migrants.

JOKKO FAM

The choices Soultana, Sara, and Bawss were left to make during This Is Alby required a great deal of caring labor toward themselves, their audiences, and each other. The following example demonstrates how demand for expressions of female Muslim resistance shapes decision-making in communities reliant on global north funding. In 2016 and 2017, Soultana took part in Jokko Fam, an artistic residency and tour organized by the leaders of four music festivals in North and West Africa. Festival organizers' experience with funding from national and international nonprofit, governmental, and corporate sources had led them to change the Jokko project from an unmarked male to an all-women residency, reshaping the

organizers' expectations of the artists and their financial and artistic investment in the process. All of the artists who have participated in the Jokko project did similar kinds of work to create new songs together across different languages, cultures, styles, and personalities. In addition, the all-female 2017 edition was tasked with composing, directing, and finally recovering from its own instrumentalization as Muslim women of color.

According to the organizers, the Jokko project originated in conversations held at a workshop for African arts professionals in Burkina Faso in the late 2000s.¹⁶ Hicham Bahou, who cofounded the Boulevard festival and today directs EAC-L'Boulevard, recalled meeting Senegalese and Mauritanian counterparts in 2008 or 2009 at the Waga Hip Hop Festival in Ouagadougou. "In parallel there was a seminar bringing together independent African festivals . . . that was the first connection" (interview, Casablanca, August 18, 2015).¹⁷ Recognizing that they shared similar funding sources, challenges, and interests, Bahou, Amadou Fall Ba of Fes-ta2H in Dakar, and Monza of Assalamalekoum Festival in Nouakchott designed a trans-Saharan initiative that would promote unity and counter prejudice across North and West African audiences.

Each year of the Jokko project, deejays, emcees, and beatmakers were chosen by the organizers to collaborate on new songs and performances of their individual repertoires. After one or two weeks in residency early in the year, the group performed at each festival over the summer, fall, and following spring. Between 2014 and 2018, the residency rotated between Casablanca, Nouakchott, and Dakar, and ranged from three to six onstage members. Members were invited by festival organizers based on name recognition, previous collaborative experiences, interest in the projects' stated goals, and organizers' expectations for their abilities to work together. The first edition of Jokko launched in 2014 with two male musicians from each country. In 2016, the project included all female artists for the first time.

The Jokko project reflects both progressive Moroccans' and the state's goals for trans-Saharan relationships. The Moroccan state has responded to recent increases in sub-Saharan migration, and a parallel rise in anti-immigrant behavior, with attempts to better integrate migrants (Berrada 2016: 251). In 2013, King Mohamed VI "regularized" some undocumented migrants. The party closest to the monarchy, the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), proposed a law punishing expressions of anti-Black racism (Harit 2013a and 2013b). PAM spokesperson Mehdi Bensaid explicitly addressed common attitudes: "Racism against sub-Saharans must be fought. We also want to fight against racist expressions encountered by Moroccans of black skin. Morocco is an African country, no?" (quoted in Harit 2013a). This bill was "roundly rejected in Parliament," though regularization efforts continued (Aïdi 2020: 66–67).

While Bensaid's phrasing presents Morocco's Africanity as an unremarkable fact, the proposed law represents a distinct shift from state-sanctioned patterns of discrimination that date back to at least the 1670s, when sub-Saharan slaves and

dark-skinned Moroccans were conscripted into Sultan Moulay Ismail's standing army (El Hamel 2013). At the same time, the state has pushed since the early 2010s to open West African markets to its products and to exert political, cultural, and religious leadership in the region.¹⁸

The Jokko project takes a short-term international collaboration model, seen locally across genres at major festivals, and applies it to a centuries-old transregional relationship. Both Moroccan and foreign participants close to the project believe performing transcultural unity on stage can help Moroccan audiences reflect on their own prejudices about sub-Saharanans, Moroccans of sub-Saharan descent, or simply Moroccans with darker skin. "In the diaspora, Afro-Americans [say], 'I'm going to Africa.' The Moroccans say '*Africa-Africa*' [when] they are a part of Africa," observed Amadou Fall Ba, then the head of Dakar's hip hop nonprofit Africulturban. "I think this kind of project can be helpful to show them 'no no, you are part . . . [you are] on the continent'" (interview, Pikine, June 2015).

Ghita Khaldi founded and directs the Moroccan nonprofit Afrikayna, which co-organized the Jokko project. In Moroccan Arabic, "kayn/a" indicates that the subject of the sentence is present; "Afrikayna" thus argues for its own mission statement through a clever portmanteau that translates to "Africa is here [in Morocco]." Khaldi was inspired to create Afrikayna "when I read the first article about [Moroccan] racism. . . . I have some people in my family from these other countries, so . . . I never expected this." For her, artistic collaboration could spur audiences to examine their own ignorance: "When you see your idol on stage with somebody from another country and you like it . . . you're gonna start to know a little about this country" (interview, Casablanca, August 10 2016).

Transporting musicians within Africa is often more expensive than flights to and from Europe. Jokko musicians' flights are paid for by Africa Art Lines, a foundation within Afrikayna designed to facilitate meetings between Moroccan and West African artists. Africa Art Lines is itself funded by the British Council; the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates; the philanthropic arm of the Sharifian Office of Phosphates (OCP), Morocco's partially private phosphates mining company; and other organizations (Khaldi, interview, August 10, 2016).

While Moroccan public and private funding generally covers Jokko's transportation needs, organizers obtain the remaining funding from a range of locations and institutions. Some has come from the philanthropic arms of transnational corporations. Partner nonprofits, often ultimately funded by the same national and international sources, help with in-kind donations of space and equipment. The bulk, however, comes from European NGOs such as the Institut Français, which plays a vital role in the cultural sector of each postcolony, and the Organization de la Francophonie. Fall Ba and Bahou each stressed that obtaining funds from their local municipalities is more difficult than from other sources, while the Institut Français has been a reliable partner in all four participating countries for years.

The original Jokko project was explicitly described as a model collaboration that would promote a transregional musical market and demonstrate successful North African and West African collaborations to diverse audiences despite differences in language, culture, and preconceptions. Since 2016, the project relied on expectations of women's caring labor to express this model and to make up for a complementary disinvestment from the male festival leaders and artistic directors. This can be seen in the 2017 edition's organization, rehearsals, and performances.

The 2017 project was renamed Jokko Fam (short for "famille," but pronounced "femme," double entendre intended). That year, Jokko Fam also expanded to include the Festival sur le Niger in Ségou, Mali. For the first time a Malian emcee, Ami Yerewolo, joined the residency. Four of the musicians from the all-female 2016 edition (hereafter Jokko No. 3) stayed on the project for Jokko Fam.

Like the all-male 2014 and 2015 editions, Jokko No. 3 brought together five musicians to collaborate on a new song and integrate each other into existing songs. The set list created in residency included a well-known solo song from each musician, a few collaborations (or "featurings"), and a group finale of a newly written song. According to musicians from the 2014–16 editions, this set was then performed at each of the three festivals with only slight alterations (interview, H-Name, Casablanca, August 2015; interview, DJ Gee-Bayss, Dakar, June 2015).

Jokko No. 3 was the first edition to record their group song. The team created a video for their song, also titled "Jokko," during their summer 2016 residency in Casablanca. Instead of reflecting the lyrical content, the documentary-style video tells the story of the group's work together against a backdrop of iconic Moroccan sites. Shots of each emcee recording their verses, singing together in the studio, and performing at Boultek are intercut with their travels in Casablanca and Rabat. Each emphasizes moments of friendship and support between the onstage musicians and the 2016 edition's musical producers, Casablancon emcee and beatmaker Masta Flow and Senegalese veteran DJ Gee-Bayss. The original chorus of "Jokko" reinforces the notion of a successful collaboration in which each plays her role to best overall effect: Eben of Mauritania sings a mix of English and French; Soultana double-tracks Eben's vocals and yells "Jokko!"; Fatim Sy echoes the last word of each phrase on the pickup to the next and provides the punchline in Wolof.

We are shining bright like fire (fire!)
 Gonna fight like a lion (like a lion!)
L'Unité go for higher (Jokko, jokko!)
 We are shining bright like fire (fire!)
 Shinin' bright like fire
 [Fatim Sy, spoken:]
 Djiguén bou mane door thi kaw beat man door
 boy sopé yokhoul ney "Jokko!"¹⁹

for Jokko No. 3, which out left Malian emcee Ami Yerewolo. In addition, Yerewolo's legal name, rather than her stage name, was used in the text of the posters. The musicians cited these and other items as evidence of a general pattern of carelessness.

During their Dakar residency, the Jokko Fam team were encouraged to use studio and rehearsal time to record their own solo songs. They also continued to perform "Jokko."²¹ For the first time in 2017, the team was asked to write about a specific idea: domestic violence against women as a pan-African problem. This directive resulted in the group composition "Violence."

Built in minor on a booming bassline, a slow countermelody in electronic woodwinds, and increasingly frenzied strings, the introduction to "Violence" quickly establishes a sense of urgency it does not sustain. A skittering hi-hat switches between duple and triple patterns in the verses, offering the emcees multiple ways to rap with or against the percussion. In a move that increases the emotional pace of the song even further, Ami and Fatim trade eight-measure sections over the first two verses. After the first iteration of the chorus, Eben sings rather than raps in the third verse, while Soultana makes the greatest use of silence and the least use of syncopation in the fourth. As a result, the song gradually decreases in intensity after the first two verses.

The structure of "Violence" also minimized the women's individual contributions in favor of chorus repetitions. With just two lines in French, the language shared by all four emcees and most of their audiences, the chorus aimed to maximize audience participation:

We say "no" to violence against women (No!)
 We say "yes" to everything that women claim (Yes!)
 We say no (No!)
 We say no (No!)
 We say "no" to violence against women²²

After Soultana's verse, the song concludes with six repetitions of the chorus—two over verse material, two over chorus material, and two over a repetition of the percussion-free introduction. Success in live performance thus depended on audiences staying interested through each chorus, ideally shouting "Non!" and "Oui!" with the artists.

Each time the women of Jokko Fam discussed or performed "Violence," the tenor of the room would change. On the first day of their rehearsal week in Casa-blanca, the women ran through the set they had performed at their previous two concerts. As unidentified cameramen drifted in and out of their tiny green-painted rehearsal room, they finished an uproarious version of "Jokko" by joyfully shouting its chorus together. Everyone took a break, falling into chairs and joking, as DJ Zeyna started scratching over high-pitched squeals. The women paused to listen as

the squeals slowed into tinny string samples. “La ‘Violence?’” asked Ami, holding up her microphone like an invitation.

“Contre les armes [Against [all] weapons],” groaned Soultana, prompting grins.

“Oui, pas du tout! On ne parle pas de violence ici [Yes, absolutely not! We don’t speak of violence here],” claimed Fatim in mock-affronted tones.

Ami walked among the seated women as if preening across the stage, exaggerating her diction as she belted the chorus. Each musician climbed to her feet, slower than before, as Zeyna launched the backing track. Bouncing on the balls of her feet, gripping her notebook and mic in the same hand, Ami rehearsed her energizing stage movements as well as her couplets. Soultana opened the notes app on her phone and scrolled to her lyrics. Fatim pulled a folded piece of paper out of her pocket just in time to deliver her verse. As soon as the last videographer left the room, Soultana looked over at me in the corner and rolled her eyes as she sang along with the chorus a third time. During one of several chorus repetitions, Fatim ducked out, and Soultana sank into a chair. Even the normally taciturn Zeyna smiled as Eben and Ami alone ran through the final two iterations of the chorus. The rest of us gave them a round of applause for staying the course.

Each of the Jokko Fam artists was already well known in her home hip hop community, and each had experience on national or international stages. Like Soultana, each was accustomed to journalists stressing their uniqueness. When a freelance journalist asked to record a group interview, they focused on highlighting the Jokko message by emphasizing their successful musical and personal collaboration, citing what they had learned from each other and complimenting each other’s abilities (Doublier 2017).²³

As they gathered in a circle on the rehearsal room floor, the journalist checked her recording’s levels while asking each artist to introduce herself and explain how she knew the other musicians. “And artistically, what do you learn [savez-vous importe quoi]? Who wants to respond?” asked the journalist, waving the microphone in Soultana’s direction. Instead of answering, Soultana mumbled to Fatim, “Lots of things, eh?”

“Lots of things,” affirmed Fatim, leaning forward. “When Soultana raps in Arabic, it takes me back to school [*jessaye prendre le bac*]. And . . . with Ami, it’s the same thing. Together it permits us truly to exchange our cultures, to break stereotypes, to break the chains.”

After a few more questions, the journalist stated, “You are female rappers in Africa. The problems you face are the same.” Ami responded by comparing what she had learned about women’s roles in Morocco to Mali, then transitioning to her own experience: “It’s a so-called Muslim country. So sometimes the society puts pressure on you. And also the family . . . they expect her to get married, to have children. And we, we say that music, and above all rap, it’s a career of the future.

It has taken years and years to make a place, and after to enjoy this. And we need time for this, if the family is going to understand [our careers].”

Eben added, “Mauritania is considered an Islamic country, therefore the women cover everything. . . . It was not easy, I encountered many problems, but I continued because I love rap, I love the music.”

“And working with other women, it gives you courage?” asked Sara.

“Yes,” said everyone at once.

“For me, Jokko is a family . . . we understand each other,” continued Eben. To my left, Zeyna nodded vigorously.

Over the weeks they spent together in 2017, the women of Jokko Fam cultivated solidarity through both positive and negative experiences. The artistic directors did not appear during the women’s rehearsals in Casablanca that week. However, they had told Fatim that the group should rework its set list. Instead of the previous set’s solos and duets, they wanted this performance to include at least three musicians on each song. As a result, the group spent three of their four days of rehearsal integrating each other into solo songs. Integration ranged from teaching foreign chorus lyrics phonetically, to swapping someone in for a verse, to an entirely new piece on shared postcolonial trauma. Throughout the week, the musicians sought to create leading and supporting roles for everyone.

At 4 p.m. on Wednesday of rehearsal week, Mauritanian festival organizer Monza was scheduled to watch a run-through of the set. Instead, he messaged Fatim. He was unable to leave a prior meeting, but the musicians would have to cut their forty-five-minute set to thirty minutes.

This surprise put the group in a doubly difficult position. First, reshaping their set again without disadvantaging anyone was put on their shoulders, while the directors retained final say over the performance. Second, they were scheduled to spend the following day videotaping, so they would have to drop material without additional rehearsal time. After several hours of shooting Thursday afternoon, the group held a tense discussion, eventually cutting three songs and a showcase for DJ Zeyna out of the set. The result satisfied no one. However, everyone agreed to include “Violence” as their penultimate song, followed by an upbeat conclusion with “Jokko.”

By the day of the concert, shared discontent culminated in an argument. The lack of communication from the organizers had exacerbated in-group dynamics. Their argument was ostensibly about whether everyone had contributed equally to the difficult decision of what to cut from their performance. At its height, Eben tried to calm tempers by again calling Jokko a family. They may have disagreements, but “we work them out, that’s what families do,” she said. Yet Ami, who had forcefully argued that she was being left out of decisions made primarily in Wolof, shot back that Jokko Fam “is not a family.” We’re here to do a job, she continued, contrasting the obligations of work and of family.

That night during their performance at Boulevard, the group's tensions were most visible during "Violence." Ami led during the long intro, asking the audience to raise their right arms high with their open palms toward the stage in a "stop" gesture. The other emcees joined in, facing the audience in a row as they launched into the first verse. While Ami directed the audience's attention by watching and interacting with each soloist in turn, Soultana and Fatim sought to connect to the audience throughout, even when silent. Eben interacted the least, standing behind the other emcees and moving center stage only for the chorus.

By the last four choruses, no one was looking at each other. At times, Ami lined up next to another emcee; they would face the audience together, sometimes mimicking each other's movements and gestures. But each emcee also strode her patch of the stage separately. Each held up the open palm gesture at a different time rather than in unison as they had practiced. And downstage from their colleagues, Soultana and Fatim, holding out their microphones to elicit "non" and "oui" throughout the chorus, smiled and laughed at the mix of earnest and mocking responses they received from the young men nearest the stage.

By the time I joined the Jokko Fam team in Casablanca in September 2017, their prior experiences had led the musicians to interpret any changes to their work agreements or creative autonomy as part of a larger pattern of disinvestment. Because last-minute changes were communicated partially or not at all, the musicians often filled in their understanding of the situation by reasoning from their own experiences. Team conversations that might be read as gossip worked to place the organizers' actions in an existing narrative about their motivations and intentions and to ensure that all five musicians agreed among themselves on the truthfulness of that narrative. In other words, the musicians were caring for each others' responses in ways that would enhance the group's performance of solidarity, even as the organizers' actions or lack of actions undermined that solidarity.

Gossip, in this situation, functioned both as a rejection of the team's working conditions and as caring labor within the group. I focus on caring labor here not because female labor is coded as more emotive than male labor on themselves, with, or for others.²⁴ Instead, caring labor is central to my analysis because the Jokko Fam team took its task so seriously. Charged with depicting to their audiences sincere bonds across difference, they built those bonds by validating each other in the face of others' invalidation. As their group interview and countless rehearsal moments demonstrated, each took pleasure in supporting her colleagues, even as they navigated spoken and unspoken scripts.

The 2016 video for "Jokko," which showcased for an international audience the women's joy and pride at working together, underscores the entire team's learned expectation that displays of feeling and solidarity would satisfy viewers

as much as, if not more than, the musical products. When Ami asserted, the afternoon of the concert, that Jokko Fam was not a family, her colleagues appeared shocked by her vehemence. The idea of “family” was not only important because it implied support as the artists took creative risks together. It also made the inequity of their work more bearable. At the same time, the more closely connected the musicians became, the more effectively they could do their job of performing that connection. Building family-like ties was then important labor in its own right.

As organizers and artists explained, the Jokko project demonstrates connection across difference both as a genuine invitation to individual audience members and as a metaphor for regional political relations. Funders, organizers, and artists themselves understood women as better vessels for this message than previous all-male teams; all of these actors considered women more empathetic than their male counterparts.

Organizers also recognized the demand for representations of resistant Muslim women via their long familiarity with the rhetorics and assumptions of development-style funding. In interviews and conversations, Fall Ba repeatedly noted that the female editions of Jokko brought in more funding than in earlier years. Monza, the Mauritanian organizer, commented that “for us, the women respond to a challenge: ‘hip hop is too macho, hip hop has too many men,’ etc.” (interview, Casablanca, September 21, 2017).

Yet while Jokko Fam, as proposed, leveraged global north assumptions about Muslim and African women’s unfreedom for better support, it denied its artists the same creative control their male counterparts had enjoyed. In part, this reflected the fact that several participants in former editions were not only emcees, but producers, deejays, studio owners, and artist managers. Collectively, the women chosen for the 2016 and 2017 editions had fewer of those experiences for the same reasons their presence in Jokko was valued in the first place. While each woman had different goals for her participation in the group, the expectation—reinforced among themselves as well as externally—that they would place solidarity and social cohesion above their own needs kept the collaboration going, but it hindered the gender equality they were funded to promote.

THE DOUBLE BIND: SOLIDARITY, COMPLICITY, AND CARING LABOR

Both of the events in this chapter appeared, according to both organizers and artists, to successfully advance their priorities with their audiences. In both examples, female performers bear the burden of embodying properly international, Westernized, liberal orientations to their audiences, who some of the actors consider not yet sufficiently liberal. Each musician in this chapter has experienced sexism, racism, or other kinds of discrimination. Indeed, Soultana has highlighted the

double standards of the Moroccan government and her fellow citizens throughout her career. But the market for representations of resistance depends on the reification of women's, especially Muslim women's, unfreedom so that consumers find resistance meaningful. In that sense, the artists in this chapter must choose between trading one kind of devaluation for another, or losing vital work opportunities. In turn, as Jokko in particular demonstrates, global north demand for portrayals of "good Muslims" feeds state-sponsored and private representations of the ideal citizen nationally and internationally. As I argued in the previous chapters, musicians' sincerely held values thus overlap with those encouraged by the state in its cultural neoliberalization, even when individual practitioners oppose some or all of the state's policies.

Valued for the potential to represent themselves to others as resistant Muslim women, Soultana and others participate in one aspect of a global north market for "culture"—which can amount to an uneven transnational market for women and people of color's caring labor. World music scholars have been making this point, with different conceptual language, since the 1990s. It is often, though not always, women performers who "teach" global north listeners, inheritors of the benefits of colonial capitalism, what we wish to be true about human connection across difference.

Women in all of the cultures discussed here—including my own white American culture—are expected to perform certain kinds of caring labor while men conduct others. For the women of Jokko Fam, representing themselves as a family was a step toward representing themselves as family to each other, with all the expectations for reciprocity associated with that idea in their home contexts. In the vignette that began this chapter, caring labor became visible when Soultana finally refused to do it. In previous chapters, men organize structures through which they can mentor (primarily male) youths, teaching them that musical and entrepreneurial skills are equally important. Caring labor thus captures the vital role sincerity plays in sustaining market orientations: as individuals experience themselves as both a subject hailed by market discourse and an object circulated in that market, as both producer and consumer of themselves, their recognition and support of that duality in each other renders their position coherent.

The circulating and recirculating demand for representations of resistance I describe in this chapter is not a metaphor. In these examples, African Muslim women are most valuable to organizers whose events form the nodes of this market as representations of themselves, and least valuable when they resist their working conditions. They are human capital not only in Gary Becker's sense, in which individuals' skills and knowledge cannot be divorced from their bodies, but also because their presence allows others to celebrate their own moral superiority, thereby increasing viewers' valuation of themselves (Becker 1993: 40).

Yet the artists in this chapter cannot survive by this market alone. Given my insistence on this framework, one might expect Soultana's remuneration to rise

and fall according to the demand for representations of resistance, according to her currency with consumers.²⁵ Instead, this market devalues artists in two ways. First, it perpetuates stereotypes of unfreedom to ensure continuing demand for counter-representations that appear to perform freedom. Equally important, the artists discussed here have few opportunities to “move up” or successfully negotiate more money as their expertise and recognition grow.²⁶ This is not a metaphor, but a market whose inequalities and constraints are made visible on women’s bodies and in their lives.

I have argued that for Muslim artists, the flip side of gaining international attention is being interpellated into “a discourse whose terms she cannot control” (Salois 2012). Reflecting on the role of white researchers like herself in recirculating hip hop’s “myths of resistance,” Catherine Appert notes, “As [Senegalese emcee] Almamy’s wording uncomfortably reminded me, [‘another white girl’] was an interchangeable link in an endless cycle of researchers unified not only in our geopolitical and racial privilege, but also in our predictable patterns of . . . data retrieval and disappearance” (2018: 187). I would add to these repetitions the deconstructive move central to this chapter. Highlighting the marketed assumptions at work may have the unintended (not unimagined) effect of further circulating those assumptions. In fact, if, as I am arguing, this market’s audience values its ability to transform itself through consumption of the other, then critiques are more valuable than other performances. As I write, I commoditize my own embodied “data retrieval” and the feelingful critiques it engenders. The struggle to decommodify representations of Muslim women artists like Soultana, including the representation you are reading, is readily reincorporated as a preferred version of the commodity.

By detailing women’s caring labor in sound, speech, song, and affect throughout this chapter, I participate in the transformation of individual experiences to illustrations of a larger phenomenon while insisting on the uniqueness of each interaction. This essential sleight of hand powers contemporary ethnographic argument, rendering our deeply personal, contextual, and contingent work legible to others. Even if none of the typical kinds of academic currency accrue to me as a result, I am furthering one kind of literal objectification: transforming women’s words, musicking, and career paths into a symbol and metonym for my argument that can then continue to circulate in the same markets I have described here.²⁷ Are my representations of Soultana and her colleagues somehow better than the versions described above, and if so, in what ways? Am I not doing the same work as the volunteers at This Is Alby, attempting to expand the ways Muslim women are understood as agents by certain global north audiences? Can such instrumentalization be avoided if we are to learn anything? If the answer to the latter question is “no,” then do we merely learn what we wish to learn? Both Soultana’s work and my work are always already woven into historic, recursive relations of complicity with material and intellectual consequences.

As is surely clear by now, this conclusion itself participates in a venerable market for ethnographic virtue. I trained in a moment Bruno Nettl describes as a high point in ethnomusicologists' periodic tradition of internal criticism, in which scholars return to "a sharply evaluative lens" on their collective work (2010: 55).²⁸ These peaks often amplify interventions from anthropology, musicology, or critical theory, resulting in a transdisciplinary genealogy of humanists' diagnoses of power relations. My appearances in this chapter, as researcher or performer of ethnographic authority, highlight how our knowledge circulates in the same markets we study.

This is both heartening and disappointing if one believes research ought to "do something" with and for research subjects. As Jason Pine puts it, "I too am sometimes intoxicated with hope . . . that ethnography can matter" (2016: 311). There is no reason to think it can matter outside the frameworks through which, as musicians, scholars, and people, we constitute ourselves. In the epilogue, I reflect on how pioneering and current practitioners celebrate their own understanding of themselves as potential capital.