

## HANDOUT 2.1.5

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY: TURKISH-GERMAN RAPPERS

#### Cartel: the Gangsta Rappers of Germany

Both famous and notorious, Cartel was group of Turkish-German rappers from Berlin, who became the city's most popular hip-hop artists in the mid-1990s. Rapping in Turkish and a part-German, part-Turkish street slang called Kanak-Sprak, Cartel vented anger against what they saw as mainstream German prejudice against Turks. Their lyrics celebrated Turkish pride, and aggressively condemned neo-Nazism and anti-Turkish feelings. By not rapping in clear German, Cartel taunted Germans to try to understand what they were saying. In fact, "What are they saying? Didn't Pay Attention in Turkish Class?" was a slogan that Cartel marketed on tee-shirts they sold. Cartel modeled their style and attitudes on American "Gangsta" rap. Their lyrics threatened to commit violence against neo-Nazis and other "enemies." Not surprisingly, Cartel's members also got into trouble with authorities, as many Gangsta Rappers did. When they got into a bloody brawl in 2001, some members were nearly killed. Several went to jail. Authorities banned the album from the airwaves until 2004, and members were prevented from performing as a group.

#### Other Turkish-German Hip-Hop Performers

- King Size Terror was the first group of artists to record an entire album of Hip Hop lyrics. It was called *Bir Yabancı'nın Hayatı* (The Life of the Stranger)
- Ceza (pronounced je-ZAH) is a well-selling rapper in both Turkey and Germany. Ceza was born in Germany in 1977 with the given name Bilgin Özçalkan. His stage name means "Punishment" in Turkish.
- Islamic Force was, along with Cartel, one of early imitators of American Gangsta rap. Boe-B, a German of Turkish descent who was one of the band's chief writers has gone onto a solo-career, where he raps about Turkish-German history.
- Azize-A has been called the German Queen Latifah. Azize-A was born in Germany but raps and sings in Turkish. Her song, *Bosphorus Bridge* makes reference to the Bosphorus, a narrow strait of water that bisects the city of Istanbul and formally divides Europe from Asia.

#### Lyrics from "Go-Go" by Cartel

*In these lyrics, Cartel demands that its audience recognize that Turkish-Germans are here to stay – and are neither like older generations of Turks or older generations of Germans. The first line is a reference to a stereotypical depictions of Turks.*

*We're not Ali or Ahmet / Look at the chess board / Whoever disrespects us now / is forced*

*To make their play / You've made us sick long enough / with your swindling.*

#### Lyrics from Islamic Force

*They arrive in Istanbul from their villages / And got searched in the German customs / It is as if they got purchased / Germans thought they'd use and kick them off / But they failed to / Our people ruined their plans / Those peasants turned out to be clever / They worked hard / Opened a bakery or a doner kebab / on each corner / But they paid a lot for this success.*

#### Lyrics from Azize-A:

*We live together on planet earth / And if we want to grow in peace / We need to erase our borders, / Share our rich cultures. / Yes, connect and blend the West / West with the East.*

#### Sources:

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- Kaya, A. (2001) *Constructing Diasporas: Turkish Hip-Hop Youth in Berlin*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.