



# Theatre and Performance as Social Commentary in West Africa: An Ethnographic Study in South Africa,

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## Abstract

Theatre and performance have long served as powerful vehicles for social commentary in West African societies. In South Africa, these forms of expression are particularly significant given their historical roots and contemporary relevance. The research methodology employed a qualitative approach involving participant observation, semi-structured interviews with artists, critics, and community members. Data collection was conducted through ethnographic fieldwork in various cultural institutions across South Africa. During the study period, we observed that theatre productions often highlighted themes of racial discrimination and economic disparity, reflecting the socio-political climate of the region. The findings underscore the enduring significance of theatre and performance as mechanisms for social commentary in contemporary South African culture. Given the identified importance of these arts forms, it is recommended that policymakers consider integrating them into educational curricula to foster greater societal awareness and dialogue.

**Keywords:** *African Studies, Ethnography, Performance Studies, Theatre History, Cultural Analysis, Social Theory, Oral Tradition*

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