

498 words.

John Bush, music critic for AllMusic, suggests A Tribe Called Quest as one of the most influential hip-hop groups of the 1990's, who blissfully narrate societal issues (n.d.). Their song "We The People" is one of the more politically potent songs from their 2016 album "We Got it from Here... Thank You 4 Your Service" (Genius Annotation, n.d.). Through the vocalisation of political injustice, the song can be unwrapped through economic discourse to make sense of attitudes towards "We The People"<sup>1</sup>.

In the first verse, the group state their frequent meal "the ramen noodle", drawing parallels to the cheapness of microwaveable noodles, the prison currency and their low-income commodities (Mohan, Thulaseedharan, Radhakrishnan, 2020). "In the hood, livin' in a fishbowl" is the stuck environment the marginalised cannot escape from. Government intervention should supposedly regulate tax expenditure and make the living experience of all citizens acceptable (Towse, 7). Meanwhile, evident under-development of "the hood", as stated by The Tribe, lacks equity when receiving a positive living environment. When education is compared to a fishbowl, it complements lack of cognitive stimulus. The socio-cultural characteristics of "a show that you can waste your time with" form the cultural conscience, digested by the marginalised. Although the group is US based, a 2005, Canadian study measured the daily time use of cultural activities of citizens, ranking television at the top position with 135 minutes of daily television consumption (Towse, 140), taking "the edge off reality". The intermediaries, or gate-keepers if you will, narrate consumer choice. By dictating taste, when it comes to "street" art, they "overlook" it and therefore "keep us off the charts". Clear criticism here goes towards the intentions of gate-keepers. "The fog and the smog of news media that logs false narratives of Gods that came up against the odds" is a clear statement on the voices which regulate the media and those oppressed by media ownership. Regulations are set in place, by gate-keepers and policy makers, to steer the private market as well as the built heritage of intellectual property (Towse, 27). Private and public media perpetuate misleading imagery of oppressed people, even those who are successful when they have all social-odds against them. The chorus of the song preaches the hegemonic ideals of gate-keeper's social welfare by getting rid of black, Muslim, gay, Mexican and poor "folk" to "gentrify" and not have a "shit hole" society.

When you are in a lower-income strata of society, the odds of social welfare are not in your favour. Pareto efficiency saves the upper class from redistributions and efficient equity, for you cannot make someone better off in society without making someone worse off (Towse, 163). "We The People" gives clear examples of how policy has failed the marginalised and maintained them oppressed through ownership, welfare distribution and gate-keeping. Redistribution of wealth is still a struggle for privileged gate-keepers, in the eyes of The Tribe and their narratives should be vocalised more in order to reach a healthier, intersectional society.

### We The People - A Tribe Called Quest

We don't believe you 'cause we the people  
Are still here in the rear, ayo, we don't need you

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<sup>1</sup> [The Preamble to the United States Constitution](#) begins stating "We The People", meanwhile the very people it is aimed at have no trust in the government nor feel recognised by them. (Genius Annotation, n.d.).

You in the killing-off-good-young-nigga mood  
When we get hungry we eat the same fucking food  
The ramen noodle  
Your simple voodoo is so maniacal  
We're liable to pull a juju  
The irony is that this bad bitch in my lap  
She don't love me, she make money, she don't study that  
She gon' give it to me, ain't gon' tell me run it back  
She gon' take the brain to wetter plains, she spit on that  
The doors have signs with, don't try to rhyme with  
VH1 has a show that you can waste your time with  
Guilty pleasures take the edge off reality  
And for a salary I'd probably do that shit sporadically  
The OG Gucci boots are smitten with iguanas  
The IRS piranha see a nigga gettin' commas  
Niggas in the hood living in a fishbowl  
Gentrify here, now it's not a shit hole  
Trendsetter, I know, my shit's cold  
Ain't settling because I ain't so bold but ay

All you Black folks, you must go  
All you Mexicans, you must go  
And all you poor folks, you must go  
Muslims and gays  
Boy, we hate your ways  
So all you bad folks, you must go

The fog and the smog of news media that logs  
False narratives of Gods that came up against the odds  
We're not just nigga rappers with the bars  
It's kismet that we're cosmic with the stars  
You bastards overlooking street art  
Better yet, street smarts but you keep us off the charts  
So motherfuck your numbers and your statisticians  
F\*ck y'all know about true competition?  
That's like a AL pitcher on deck talking about he hittin'  
The only one who's hitting are the ones that's currently spittin'  
We got your missy smitten rubbing on her little kitten  
Dreaming of a world that's equal for women with no division  
Boy, I tell you that's vision  
Like Tony Romo when he hitting Witten  
The Tribe be the best in they division  
Shaheed Muhammad cut it with precision  
Who can come back years later, still hit the shot?

Still them tryna move we off the fucking block  
Babylon, bloodclot  
Two pon yuh headtop

All you Black folks, you must go  
All you Mexicans, you must go  
And all you poor folks, you must go  
Muslims and gays  
Boy, we hate your ways  
So all you bad folks, you must go

738 words.

This article is written by Andrea Baldin and Trine Ballie for the Journal of Cultural Economics published online in 2021. The paper aims to unfold the heterogeneous characteristics which make up an artist, and their occupational status as a population.

They open their dialogue by stating that concepts for professional and amateur artists are undefined, at least not to a single criterion. A definition for professional artists, according to Baldin and Ballie, is fundamental in order to undertake research on the “economic and social living conditions” (Baldin & Ballie, 2021, p. 528) of creative professionals adequately. Classification of artist's occupation is plethoric, meanwhile what separates *Who is an Artist? Heterogeneity and professionalism among visual artists* is their awareness of amateur and professional artists.

Throughout the literature review they locate studies by Throsby and Petetskaya (2017), Heian et al. (2012) on the definitions of professional artists, where they notice that in both cases the individuals who took part themselves in the study make the choice of whether or not they are artists. This meant that participants who are less active in the arts, are also included in the definition of a professional artist. Later they look at the wages of cultural capital per “professional artists” in Lena and Lindemann's 2014 USA based study. The amount of non artistic jobs held by many creatives can lead to biases in research because artists holding multiple occupations can clash when defining their profession (Alper and Wassall 2006). Through their literature review they find abundance in criteria to define an artist as a study sample. Consequently they open room for determining a clear definition on professional artists, in order to develop “policy and efficient funding schemes.” (531). Many researchers such as Frey and Pommerehne (1989) suggest criteria that can determine who is an artist.

Baldin and Ballie take a turn stating that education is not fundamental in defining a professional artist. What is crucial, however, is finding the difference between amateur and professional artists to explain the heterogeneity and diversity of artists. To explain this, they address a finite mixture model, “which is an innovative contribution to... literature”. It is a complex model used to analyse 1071 electronic surveys answered by visual artists in Denmark. The respondents needed to meet at least one of the criterias: is a member of a main arts organisation, has artistic education or receives grants from The Danish Art Foundation. Their survey was related to the public registers of Statistics Denmark. Through statistical analysis and their finite mixture model six classes were created to define the plurality of an artist:

1. *Devoted to the arts or professional.* Mainly self employed and income derives from artistic work.
2. *Subsidised artists.* Receive most of their income from government subsidies.
3. *Aspiring artists.* Those who cannot sustain themselves only off of their art practice.
4. *Art as a hobby.* Do not consider art as their main activity.
5. *Senior.* Most of their income is from non art related sources.
6. *Workers related to the arts.* Humdrum employees.

Baldin and Ballie have shown that “a finite mixture model can be used to investigate heterogeneity among artists”. 21% of the population are professional artists, this means that less than half of the population can be considered artists professionally. Their results allow for a broad and heterogeneous population of artists and marked a clear definition of a professional artist.

Limitingly, a universal consensus on a definition would allow for international comparison. This research paper is thorough and well written and is another of the many non-artist based contributions into defining what an artist is. They again take an approach of asking people themselves whether they consider themselves an artist or not, and narrow down to six classes of artists. However, a holistic view on external impressions narrating whether someone is an artist or not is also important in formalising such definitions. Furthermore, quantitative research and electronic surveys detach sensitivity from respondents and we do not know if the answers are honest.

I believe a way to extend this research further is recontextualising the six criteria in a non-western environment and seeing how replicable to experiment is. If results are parallel, then it could be said that the criterion and professional definitions are generalisable. Denmark is a culturally developed country (Towse, 2010) and therefore may have more facilitated environments for artists. Is this the case globally? How do we make sure to have a fully representative sample from all *classes* of society?

References:

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