

The documents below consider issues related to arts in an international context. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the paper.

Document 1: adapted from *Graffiti: Street Art or Crime*, a UK newspaper article written by Paul Vallely in 2008. The author is a UK professor in public ethics, who also writes on ethical, political and cultural issues.

A group of London graffiti* artists were jailed in 2008 for up to two years by Judge Christopher Hardy for defacing public property, costing the taxpayer at least £1m. Yet, a New York gallery displays large photographs of these convicts' street graffiti alongside copies of the charges brought against them, to ask whether these men are criminals or artists. Also, in the first display of graffiti street art at a major art gallery, the riverside wall of the UK Tate Modern has been covered in giant murals by six graffiti artists with international reputations from such places as Bologna, New York and Barcelona. So, as a society, we seem to be a little mixed-up when it comes to graffiti. Is it art or the crime of vandalism?

It is a question which prompts different answers in different parts of the world. The curator of the exhibition at Tate Modern illustrates this in saying, 'Brazil is more relaxed about graffiti in general, and in Melbourne, Australia, van drivers compete with each other as to whose vehicle is more decorated with graffiti. However, in other parts of Australia, they are like the UK and people really hate graffiti on vans and trains.'

The question has similarly divided responses within other nations, too. In Toronto, police have just hired a street artist to paint graffiti on walls to help find the man who murdered her brother. However, elsewhere in Canada, after a police crackdown on graffiti artists, a court ruled that a 28-year-old graffiti artist was only allowed into town if he was accompanied by his mother.

Graffiti also divides personal attitudes. There are those like the American artist Elura Emerald, who was also involved in the New York gallery exhibition. She insists, 'Artists who paint on the street are merely expressing themselves, not hurting anyone,' and should not be punished 'but appreciated and celebrated.' Then there are those like Judge Hardy, who in court described the activities of those convicted in London as 'a wholesale self-indulgent campaign to damage street property on an industrial scale'. He admitted, 'It would be wrong of me not to acknowledge that some examples of your handiwork show considerable artistic talent,' but concluded, 'the trouble is that it has been sprayed all over other people's property without their consent and that is simply vandalism.'

A UK graffiti artist was asked if artistic expression could be consistent with the views of those who see graffiti as a symbol of lawlessness. He admitted, 'You can't let people run wild. If there's a clash of rights, obviously those of the owner of the wall are more important than those of the person painting on it. I suppose the greater the cost of removing the graffiti, the greater the punishment should be, though not prison.' This is not far from Judge Hardy's verdict and helps us to answer the difficult question – 'Is graffiti a form of art or an act of vandalism?'

The answer would seem to be then, that whilst graffiti *can* be an art form, it *also* becomes a crime if the owner whose property has been used for this artistic expression considers it to be vandalism.

*graffiti: words or drawings, especially humorous, rude, or political, on walls, doors, etc. in public places

Document 2: adapted from *Justin Bieber Sparks a Graffiti Revolution in Colombia* and *Artist's shooting sparks graffiti revolution in Colombia*, newspaper articles written by Sibylla Brodzinsky in 2013. The author is a correspondent based in South America and co-editor of 'Throwing Stones at the Moon', a book which records the oral histories of Colombia's Human Rights' crises.

When the Canadian singer-songwriter Justin Bieber sneaked out from his hotel to spray graffiti on a long grey wall in Bogotá, Colombia, he provoked a chain reaction. This ended up legitimizing graffiti. Colombian media showed him spraying a mural (wall-art) of a marijuana leaf and the Canadian flag, while the police provided him with security. The thousands of graffiti artists around Colombia then thought: if the police protected Justin Bieber, they should also protect graffiti artists. The previous attitude of the police had been to confiscate their sprays, harass, jail or even kill them.

Responding to the country's outrage at this inconsistency, the head of the Colombian police changed attitude. He then spoke of graffiti as a positive art that expresses "emotions and motivation". He said that society and the police now needed to accept this view. Suddenly 300 artists came from nowhere and occupied the area where Justin Bieber had sprayed his graffiti, and during 24 hours created more than 700 murals. One graffiti artist, who had been working for 25 years empowering the voice of deprived young people, claimed, "We worked until dawn, giving our bodies and souls. We became aware of ourselves and our own rights and that we are a movement."

The mayor of Bogotá issued a decree to promote the practice of graffiti in Bogotá as a form of artistic and cultural expression. At the same time though, graffiti was to be prohibited on certain surfaces, such as monuments and public buildings. Selected graffiti artists were given walls along a main Bogotá roadway as their canvases. There they created colourful murals with political and social messages. One is a portrait of an indigenous woman with the phrase "weaving hope". Another mural highlights victims of the country's half century of internal conflict that has left hundreds of thousands dead, displaced and disappeared. A third shows two homeless people locked in a kiss. Police have gone one step further, by hiring graffiti artists to spray-paint Christmas-themed art on the walls of a police building in a wealthy neighbourhood of Bogotá.

However, recognising graffiti as a legitimate artistic expression has led to an unexpected spread in common everyday graffiti, precisely where the decree prohibits them. A prolific graffiti artist has stencilled artistic images such as pineapple grenades, an amputee with an AK-47 gun as a crutch, and a soldier holding grenade balloons, all of which are found throughout the city. When asked his opinion, the artist responded that authorities have a mistaken notion that if graffiti is officially sanctioned, people will "paint pretty" and play by the rules. "It's the irony of graffiti. Being told where you can paint goes against the spirit of graffiti."

So, what do we learn from these events? In a creative and nonviolent manner, graffiti artists in Colombia have educated all of us about the essence of graffiti art. It is an artistic act of resistance and defiance, which should be a basic right rather than seen as a crime.

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